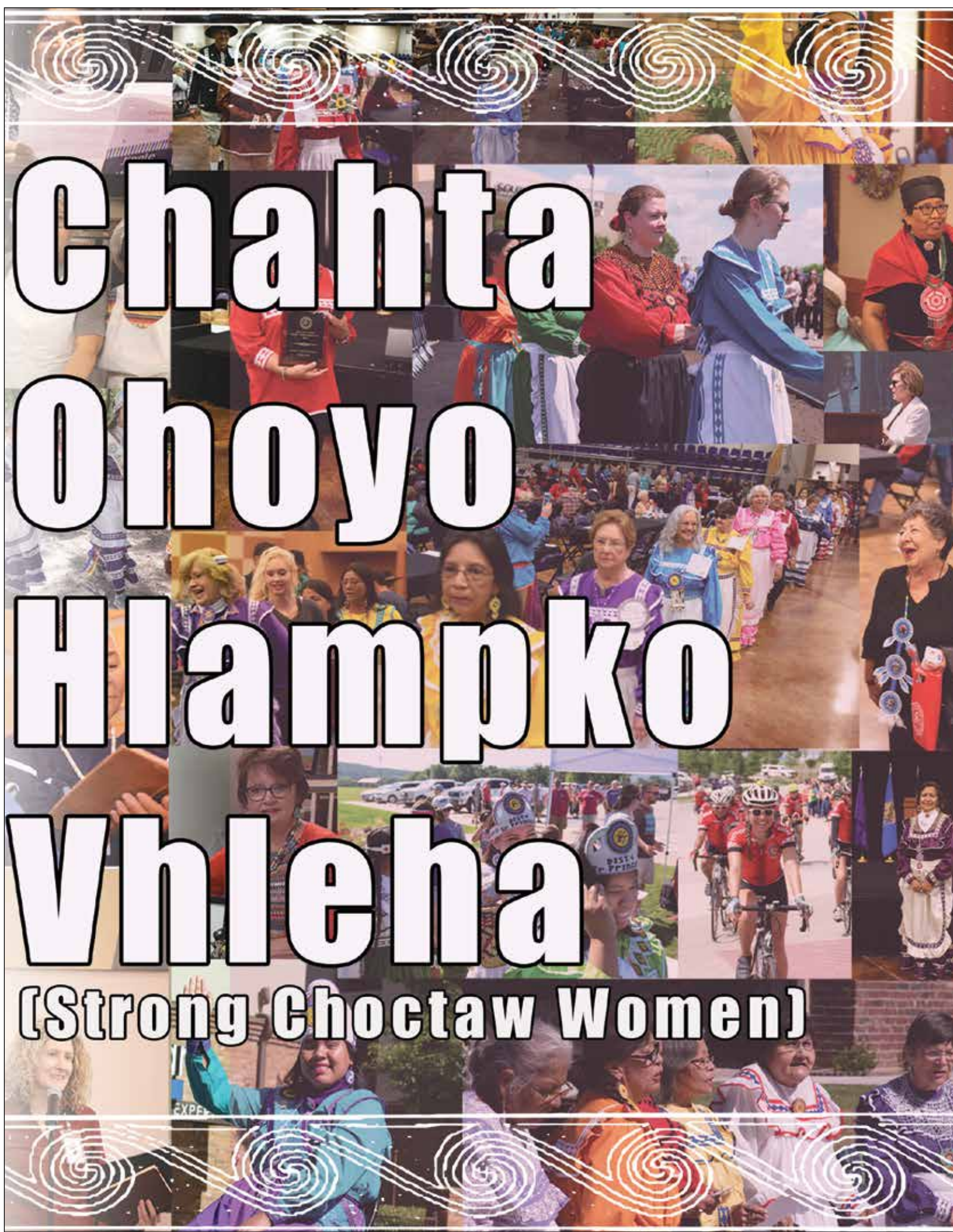




March 2023 Issue



## Highlighting Chahta Ohoyo Hlampko Vhleha (Strong Choctaw Women) this Women's History Month

By Kendra Germany-Wall and Shelia Kirven

March is National Women's History Month. This story will feature several influential Choctaw women who have made a mark on the world.

Before colonization, women held positions of great respect, esteem and power in Choctaw society. Women were recognized as the givers and supporters of life. Men could hold leadership positions, but they worked alongside women with equal say.

Even today, Choctaw women continue to shape the world in all aspects of society, regardless of gender norms and stereotypes.

### Leaders

Jennifer Woods, District 6 Councilmember, sworn into office in 2017, is the only woman currently serving in the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) Tribal Council and one of eight women who have served on the Council since 1980.

The seven former female Tribal Councilmembers include Harriet Wright O'Leary of District 6, Lillian Sullivan of District 11, Edna Belvin of District 8, Lu Bauer of District 12, Dena Cantrell of District 11, Lois Burton of District 4 and Charlotte Jackson of District 5.

Woods worked with Councilwoman Jackson, who was a significant influence on her.

"I think I have a lot to bring to Council as a woman," said Woods. "I often have a different point of view, and with our discussions, we arrive at a good place. The Councilmen and I work well together because our common goal is the people and the needs of the people."

At age 13, Woods went to live at Jones Academy (JA), an American Indian boarding school owned by CNO, located near Hartshorne, Oklahoma. She graduated from Hartshorne High School in 1977 and attended Eastern Oklahoma State College and East Central University, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in human resources in 1983. Woods began working at JA as a student counselor in 1986 and was later promoted to Director of Indian Child Welfare, where she worked for nine years. Woods also worked as the Community Based Social Work Director before filing for office.

Woods is thankful for the opportunity she has to serve on Tribal Council.

"It's a privilege that I don't take lightly," said Woods.

Overall, Woods believes the most rewarding feeling is seeing the Nation's growth, making a difference to improve the quality of life for the Choctaw people and continuing the mission of those who came before her.

"It's a blessed feeling, and thinking of the sacrifices those before us made, just makes me work harder."

One of Woods' inspirations is her grandmother Classie Alberson Wallen, a first-language Choctaw speaker who spoke broken English.

"As a very young girl, I read letters to her from Social Security and responded for her. I walked across town to go pay her bills for her, stood in line with her at the county barn to receive cheese and other staples, mowed the yard and helped do the laundry in a wringer washer every Saturday. We didn't have much money at all, but she always said 'You can be clean and take care of what you have even if it's only a little.' She sewed my clothes on her machine, and she quilted blankets in the living room," said Woods. "She taught me to work hard and do the best job I could and to be kind to people. She always said people have it way worse than we do, so be grateful. She was proud to be Choctaw."

Woods' mother was also resilient and a proud Choctaw artist who inspired her to be the woman she is today.

CNO also has three women serving as Senior Executive Officers (SEOs). Janie Dillard, Tammye Gwin and Teresa Jackson work at the top level of operations and make vital decisions regarding gaming, tribal services and business.

Janie Dillard has been with CNO since 1987, when the tribe began its journey into gaming. A modern-day trailblazer, Dillard set her roots in the gaming industry as a floor manager and was quickly promoted to director for CNO's first bingo hall. By 2001 she was promoted to Executive Director of Gaming, managing CNO's State gaming compact and opening four casinos, including the flagship Choctaw Casino & Resort in Durant.

"When I started with the Choctaw Nation in 1982, we had 100 employees and could barely make payroll from month to month," said Dillard. "Today, we are a thriving nation that has so many exciting opportunities before us. I am glad I have had the opportunity to watch

this organization grow and develop before my eyes. I am blessed and humbled to be part of the Choctaw Nation."

Known for her confidence in steering the tribe's gaming operations in a male-dominated field, Dillard has moved up the ranks, becoming Senior Executive Officer for CNO's Division of Commerce in January 2018. In this role, she oversees 21 gaming sites, 17 travel plazas, three resorts, three country markets and Choctaw print services, providing strategic guidance and optimizing the Nation's revenue-generating businesses.

Dillard encourages women who aspire to be leaders to challenge their comfort zone. "First and foremost, don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and be committed to making life better for those around you. Also, if you make a mistake – own it. Throughout your career, you will make many mistakes, and it's important to own those mistakes and learn from them," said Dillard. "I am a woman working in a man's world and have made a path for myself and other women in the gaming industry. I am passionate about what I do, and I love living the life I do every day. It's what drives me. I start every morning with a daily devotional, which I share with friends on social media. This devotional is what guides me through the day. My motto is to let God guide you, and you will find your passion."

Teresa Jackson began working for the Choctaw Nation in October 1999, shortly after what is referred to as the "new" hospital in Talihiina opened.

At that time, she was responsible for the budget of the hospital and clinics. Jackson then moved to the business office and was over third-party billing for the entire health system. She went on to become the hospital administrator from 2007 to 2013. In 2013, Jackson became the SEO of Health Services and moved on to become the SEO of Tribal Services.

Jackson is thankful for the people she has met and the relationships she has formed along the way.

"It's been rewarding to go in and help people and to know that you may have changed somebody's life at the end of the day," said Jackson.

Currently, Jackson is over all tribal services for CNO, including Health, Housing, Education, Culture, Outreach and Special Services.

According to Jackson, that's around 144 programs and 3,200 employees under her direction.

As one can imagine, Jackson is a busy woman. She has some advice for young women who aspire to be leaders someday.

"First and foremost, family is always first," said Jackson. "Make sure that we always devote time for ourselves and our family."

Jackson suggests that anyone looking for a career path follow their dreams and consider job shadowing. "Sit and visit with other women who are in the roles that they are looking at to see what it's actually like and if that is something they really want to do."

Jackson is impressed by the number of women taking on leadership roles within CNO.

"I've seen so much growth in the Tribe and the number of employees and women who are moving up and wanting to take on those responsibilities," said Jackson. "As women, we have a seat at the table. We have just as many women (at CNO) in top leadership as we do men."

Tammye Gwin is the Executive Director of Strategic Development for CNO. She has worked for the Tribe her entire career, beginning at what was Choctaw Bingo while a student at Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

During her career, she has been part of the team that expanded Choctaw Casinos into one of the largest gaming operations in the United States today.

In 1995, she participated in lobbying efforts for legalizing Class III Indian Gaming in Oklahoma. For 10 years, she served as one of the founding committee and tradeshow coordinators for the first Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association (OIGA) Tradeshow and Conference. Gwin also received the OIGA Chairman's Award in 2008 for her commitment to Oklahoma Indian Gaming.

In 2014 she joined the Choctaw Business Development department. As Senior Director and Executive Director, she led Business, Economic and Small Business Development (ESBD), Tourism and Commercial Leasing. In 2019, she was appointed Senior Executive Officer of Strategy, where she continues to lead ESBD, as well as the Strategy, Reporting and Analytics and Operational Excellence programs.



Jennifer Woods, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council



Janie Dillard, Choctaw Nation SEO Division of Commerce



Teresa Jackson, Choctaw Nation SEO Tribal Services



Tammye Gwin, Choctaw Nation SEO of Strategy

Continued on Page 7



## Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

### Ice storm brings warm feelings

Halito, Winter has shown us, once again, that whatever we have planned can always be changed by some cold winds, rain and ice. Many Choctaw Nation administrative offices were closed due to icy conditions, while commerce businesses remained open during the entirety of the storm and other offices had to remain open for our tribal members and communities.

The dedication and care our associates show in these times of need is inspiring, to say the least. I am overwhelmed by the stories of selflessness, determination, and pride shown by our Choctaw Nation family during challenging times like the recent ice storm that impacted the reservation. We could not function without the hard work of our associates whose commitment to the Nation was on display

during the nearly week-long winter storm.

Even during these weather challenges, our payroll department associates still sent payroll out to our workforce; payments still went out for tribal member services; and checks were still delivered to our vendors. I'm also pleased to share that we used drone technology to help find a water main leak in McAlester during the hard freeze. Our emergency staff and facility maintenance meanwhile, put in long hours to clear sidewalks and parking lots and clean roadways. Yakoke to our associates for the help and assistance provided to our tribal and community members in the terrible weather conditions.

The Chahta Spirit is not just a slogan for the Choctaw Nation, I see it every day in the way our associates work with tribal members and the community. I see it when we get excited about our Nation's growth and new partnerships. I see it when I am out in the community and hear stories about how Choctaw Nation associates go above and beyond to aid our tribal members.

I am humbled and overwhelmed by the stories of determination, assistance, and care from our associates given throughout the year, but especially during times like the ice storm earlier this month in Southeastern Oklahoma that impacted our service area. I am forever grateful for our associates' Chahta Spirit and focus on providing support and care for our tribal members and all the communities across the reservation.

Yakoke for all your hard work and God Bless!



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

### Celebrating Social Work Month

March is Social Work Month, and the 2023 theme is Social Work Breaks Barriers.

The theme "Social Work Breaks Barriers" resonates because social workers are on the frontlines helping our nation overcome a myriad of challenges.

More than 700,000 social workers nationwide, and right here in the Choctaw Nation, entered the profession because they have a strong desire to assist those in need and make our communities, our nation, and our world a better place for all.

For generations, social workers have broken barriers to help people live better lives and continue to do so by empowering people in tough situations.

From the creation of a minimum wage to a 40-hour workweek to the implementation of Social Security benefits, social workers' barrier-breaking efforts helped transform millions of lives. Chances are, over

the course of your lifetime, a social worker has helped you, a family member, or a friend.

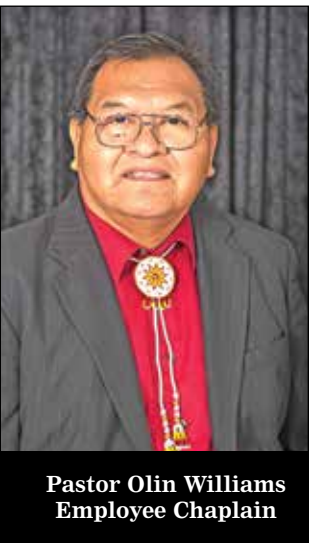
These helping professionals work everywhere — hospitals, mental health care facilities, child welfare agencies, schools, veteran centers, and in local, state and federal government. I am proud to say the Choctaw Nation has many professional social workers available to tribal members for outreach, and I'm proud of the services our social work team does on behalf of the Nation.

For 2022, the Choctaw Nation's Mental and Behavioral Health professionals have taken on 7,142 patients and visited 26,579 more. The Nation's Healthy Aging professionals consist of three social workers, two of which hold a degree in social work. The Social Services team assessed 860 people, referred 803 to care, visited with 748 and transported 165 to get the care they needed.

Social workers were at the frontlines of the global COVID-19 pandemic. When most of us were quarantined at home, social workers were out in their communities—making sure children and at-risk youth were attending classes over Zoom, providing food and other resources to the elderly, helping those with substance-use disorder get the help they needed to stay sober, and helping tens of thousands of people stay connected to loved ones quarantined in nursing homes or hospitals.

They continue to break barriers by improving the delivery of health care and mental health care. The need for more social workers is reflected in data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which notes social work is one of the fastest-growing professions in the United States. An expected 800,000 social workers will join the profession by 2030.

And during Social Work Month and beyond, we urge you to learn more about the profession and what you can do to help assist them in their positive, life-affirming work. Visit [socialworkmonth.org](http://socialworkmonth.org) for more information. Yakoke to our Choctaw Nation Social Work team for the important work they do and the barriers they break every single day.



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

## Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a holiday when people express their affection with gifts and greetings. It is sometimes believed that the origins came from Roman festivals celebrating the coming of spring, but the true origin is vague. Another common legend is that it was named after St. Valentine, who defied the emperor's orders and secretly married couples to spare husbands from war. It is, for this reason, the day is associated with love. The concept of love is deeply rooted in the Bible.

There are four types of love: storge, philia, eros and agape. A child seems to acquire these stages of love in their development. The first love is storge. The infant needs the love of family to develop a sense of belonging. He or she receives love from both Mom and Dad. Security comes from both male and female perspectives of love. This is a love for relatives or kinship.

He or she learns to perform in a group setting. If for any reason storge love is not developed, the child will have difficulty in group performance. Or they will compensate by belonging to the wrong group, such as a cult or gang. Secondly, there is philia love. The child learns to love one outside the family who is not related. This is a true friendship love. He or she discovers love or affection toward other people, animals or nature. The child places his trust in something other than his immediate family. The boy or girl learns to appreciate the world around him or her. As the child grows up, a new love grips his or her whole being. This is eros love. Eros is a romantic or sexual love. The child has grown up to a new stage when the body is getting ready for procreation. The body is developing and causing strong feelings of independence from storge and philia loves. This is the seed of most social illnesses.

Let's look at Genesis 2:25. It reads, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." This was after the creation before the fall of mankind. Now let's read Genesis 3:7. It reads, "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew they were naked: and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons."

This was after they disobeyed God, and sin came upon them. Adam and Eve knew not the storge love because they were created. They knew not philia love because they were the only human couple. But the exposure of eros love was so private that they knew the emotion of shame.

Shame is the moral that contains the eros love from out-of-control activity. In time, intellectualism began to remove shame from eros love.

In the last message to Daniel the prophet, it says, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Intellectualism without morals can create contempt. Contempt creates a drive for more activity without morals. The last love is agape love. This is the unconditional love of God. This is the moral love that sustains all human love in perspective. Without God, all are rampant.

Romans 1: 28 says, "And even as they did not retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

## YOUTH WORK OPPORTUNITIES



TO APPLY OR FOR MORE INFORMATION SCAN QR CODE BEGINNING JANUARY 1



APPLICATION CLOSES ON APRIL 1, 2023

Choctaw Nation Summer Youth Employment Services

PROGRAM FUNDED BY PUBLIC LAW 102-477

## WOMEN VETERANS RECEPTION

**MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**

Choctaw Nation wants to celebrate by reflecting on the history of Native American women's military service.

Join us in honoring women veterans for their service to our country.

**March 30, 2023**

Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant, Pine Room

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
RSVP TO [WARRIORWELLNESS@CNHSA.COM](mailto:WARRIORWELLNESS@CNHSA.COM)  
SHARE YOUR STORY BY MARCH 16 TO [WARRIORWELLNESS@CNHSA.COM](mailto:WARRIORWELLNESS@CNHSA.COM)

Choctaw Nation Warrior Wellness

## STAR PROGRAM APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

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

APPLICATION PERIODS	FALL JAN 1 - APR 1	SPRING JUN 1 - SEP 1
All A's - \$50 GIFT CARD	Apply with Chahta Achvffa at <a href="http://choctawnation.com/chahtaachvffa" style="color: white;">choctawnation.com/chahtaachvffa</a>	
All A's and B's - \$25 GIFT CARD		
Perfect Attendance - \$25 GIFT CARD		

For more information, call 800-522-6170 or visit [choctawnation.com/star-program](http://choctawnation.com/star-program)

**Choctaw Nation** STAR Program



# Preparing for spring weather

By Christian Toews

Spring is a time of change with longer days, blooming trees and warmer weather. Unfortunately, spring also means a time of uncertainty for many people in the mid-western United States.

Dangerous weather can occur throughout the year, but spring increases the likelihood of a severe weather event.

Oklahomans are very familiar with the sounds that emit from our phones or the television when the local weather persons break in with emergency notifications. These alerts can be alarming, but with the proper preparation, this spring storm season can be less frightening.

## Knowing the Facts

According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), The peak "tornado season" for the Southern Plains (e.g., Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas) is from May into early June.

However, tornadoes can happen at any time of year.

In November of 2022 a tornado outbreak that occurred across the Choctaw Nation caused damage in Bryan, Pushmataha, LeFlore, Choctaw and McCurtain counties.

The worst devastation was in Idabel, Oklahoma, where a tornado destroyed or damaged 130 homes and businesses.

The National Weather Service officially determined that the tornado was an EF4.

Jerry Falling's home was severely damaged during this tornado.

"When we drove up my street, I thought, I don't have a home," said Falling.

According to Falling, he used to have so many trees around his house that he couldn't see the highway about half a mile away.

After the tornado came through, all of the trees were gone.

Falling did not have an underground storm shelter at his house, so he went to a local church that is a sturdier structure.

After this incident, he said he would install an underground storm shelter as

quickly as possible.

According to data from NOAA's Storm Prediction Center, there were 984 confirmed tornados in 2022.

It's important to distinguish between a watch and a warning when severe weather strikes.

## Tornado Watch

According to NOAA, a watch does not mean a tornado is present. It means that conditions are favorable for tornadoes and severe weather to form. A watch can cover parts of a state or several states. When a watch is issued, you should watch and prepare for severe weather.

## Tornado Warning

A tornado warning is more dire than a watch. A warning means a tornado has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar, and there is a serious threat to life and property to anyone in the tornado's path. A tornado warning indicates that you should act immediately to find safe shelter. A warning can cover parts of counties or several counties in the path of danger, according to NOAA.

## Preparation

Although there is no way to control the weather or predict it with absolute certainty, there are steps you can take to ensure the likelihood of being protected during severe weather.




Here are some practical steps you can take to prepare for the unexpected this spring, according to ready.gov.

Know your area's tornado risk. In the U.S., the Midwest and the Southeast have a greater risk for tornadoes.

Know the signs of a tornado, including a rotating, funnel-shaped cloud, an approaching cloud of debris or a loud roar like a freight train.

Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and NOAA Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts. If your community has sirens, then become familiar with the

## Spring Weather Facts

**MAHLI CHITO - A BIG WIND**  
Although it covers just 15% of the U.S., Tornado Alley lays claim to nearly 30% of all the confirmed tornadoes in the Storm Prediction Center's database between 1950 and 2012. Tornado alley states include Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Texas.

**MVLAHTA - LIGHTNING**  
The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent lightning tragedies. Many victims say they were "caught" outside in the storm and couldn't get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter.

**HATAFFO - HAIL**  
State Farm paid out over \$3.1 billion in hail claims in 2020, according to an April 2020 analysis by the insurer. Texas was the state with the most hail claims paid for auto and home insurance, with \$474.6 million in losses, followed by Illinois (\$394.2 million), Minnesota (\$259.2 million) and Missouri (\$236.9).

warning tone.

Pay attention to weather reports. Meteorologists can predict when conditions might be right for a tornado.

Identify and practice going to a safe shelter, such as a safe room built using FEMA criteria or a storm shelter built to ICC 500 standards. The next best protection is a small, interior, windowless room or basement on the lowest level of a sturdy building.

Plan for your pets. They are important members of your family, so they need to be included in your family's emergency plan.

Prepare for a long-term stay-at-home or shelter-in-place by gathering emergency supplies, non-perishable foods, water, medical supplies and medication.

During a tornado, having shelter is essential.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Storm Shelter program provides a grant for storm shelters to tribal members who live in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas.

Specific criteria and qualifications must

be met to qualify for this grant which can allow for up to \$3,500 toward your storm shelter.

Learn more about the grant, how to apply, and qualifications by visiting [www.choctawnation.com](http://www.choctawnation.com).


Tornadoes might be the most feared severe weather event, but there are others to prepare for before the spring season ramps up.

A severe thunderstorm, even without a tornado, can be very destructive. Hail can cause significant damage to roofs, vehicles, campers, pets and livestock. High winds can cause damage to roofs, trees, windows, and more.

It's essential to be prepared for severe weather regardless of the presence of a tornado.

Spring weather can cause some anxiety, but having a plan in place can ease stress and feel confident going into this storm season.


To learn more about preparing for all types of natural disasters, visit <https://www.ready.gov>.



## STAY INFORMED WITH CHOCTAW NATION

To receive breaking news and important updates  
**TEXT HALITO TO 888777**

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE PROMPTED TO REPLY TO THE WELCOME TEXT WITH THEIR ZIP CODE TO RECEIVE LOCAL ALERTS. MESSAGE AND DATA RATES MAY APPLY.



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## OKLA CHAHTA CLAN OF CALIFORNIA

### 25TH ANNUAL GATHERING

MAY 6 & 7, 2023

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

- Cultural Games & Activities
- Traditional Choctaw Social Dancing
- Storytelling
- Princess Contest
- Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Jack Austin, Jr., Tribal Council and Tribal Membership Staff
- Many More Fun and Free Activities

For more information, visit [www.oklachahta.org](http://www.oklachahta.org), call 661-319-6308, email [choctawsgoklachahta.org](mailto:choctawsgoklachahta.org) or follow us on Facebook at Okla Chahta Clan of California.







SCAN QR CODE

# HEAD START

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Available to all children who will be 3 or 4 years old by 9/1/23.


FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL  
**580-642-8280**

**Choctaw Nation** Head Start

# ENVISION CENTER

## VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

- Free basic tax preparation for tribal members with a combined household income of \$60,000 and below
- Virtual tax preparation by appointment only
- What tax forms we are able to prepare: W-2, W-2G, SSA-1099, 1099-R, 1099-G, 1099-C, Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Credit
- What tax forms we cannot prepare: Itemized deductions, Schedule C, Schedule D, Self Employment



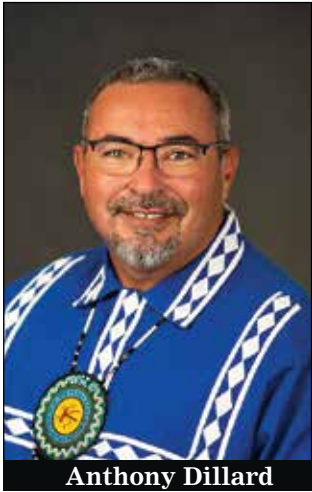
Scan here to schedule an appointment.

580-380-9370

ENVISIONCENTER@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority





## District 10

Halito, Chim Achukma from District 10! I hope you and your families are ready for the spring season! The Choctaw Nation, Atoka Community and Reba McEntire have partnered together for an exciting grand opening of Reba's Place in downtown Atoka, Oklahoma. The three-story historical building highlights the country music star's accomplishments and memorabilia. Reba opened the restaurant with a small concert to the media and VIPs on January 26.

An exciting opportunity with this partnership is the Choctaw Nation Ranches being able to sell their own high-quality beef to the restaurant. They are collaborating with tribal members who own and operate a local processing facility. This will help maximize the ranches profits and provide a farm to table option in the local market. With the worldwide supply chain issues affecting the Choctaw Nation Reservation, this is a key step to mitigate the food sovereignty challenges that we will face in the future.

These are exciting times for Choctaw Nation as we grow our branded Beef Program and look to future partnerships. Yakoke!



Choctaw Nation Photos

Above: Reba's Place officially opened its doors on January 26, 2023. The three-story historical building highlights the country music star's accomplishments and memorabilia.

Right: Choctaw Nation Ranches have partnered with Reba's Place to use high-quality Choctaw beef in the restaurant.



## Doyle Baker is Veteran of the Month

**STIGLER, Okla. (February 13, 2023)** – Doyle Baker, Stigler, Oklahoma (District 5), is the Choctaw Nation Veteran of the Month.

Baker attended Stigler Public Schools through 10th grade and graduated from McCurtain High School in 1965. He married his wife, Sue, that same year and entered the workforce as a welder's helper in Tulsa. During his employment with the National Tank Company, he received draft papers.

On Dec. 6, 1966, Baker was sworn in for service in Oklahoma City with orders for Fort Bliss, Texas where he completed basic training. He was sent to Fort Polk, Louisiana and was to complete Advanced Infantry Training and Non-Commissioned Officer school. Because the Vietnam War grew more intense, his NCO was cancelled, and he was ordered to the state of Washington in preparation for the Vietnam War.

In June 1967, Baker was sent to serve in Vietnam. He was assigned to Delta Company, Second Battalion, 16th Infantry, First Infantry Division, the first unit to enter Vietnam. While serving as an infantry soldier, Specialist Baker's assignments were to search and rescue, secure landing zones, and regularly conduct ambushes on the Vietcong. In Nov. 1967, SPC Baker and Lima platoon were headed out on patrol with a lead vehicle, a tank, that held nine men from the platoon. The lead vehicle hit a land mine,

and SPC Baker and another soldier, who were on the second vehicle, were the only survivors.

Sergeant Baker and his company were caught in the middle of the Tet offensive in February 1968.

Sgt. Baker completed his deployment June 30, 1968, and landed in Oakland, California on July 1. On July 3, 1968, Sgt. Baker was awarded the Bronze Star for service in Vietnam. He received 30 days leave and then given orders to report to Fort Leonard Wood, Mississippi, where his assignment was to train troops in Individual Tactical Training (ITT). Due to his knowledge of conflict in Vietnam and conflicting outdated strategies from WWII, Sgt. Baker rewrote the training objectives. He completed his duty to the Army on Dec. 5, 1968.

He was then called into ministry. Pastor and Mrs. Baker began their ministry in 1970 and have served for 53 years. Forty-two of those years have been with the Garden Heights Freewill Baptist Church.

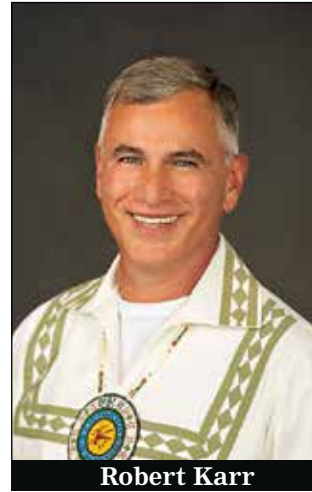
The Bakers have one daughter, Dana, three granddaughters, one great-granddaughter, one great-grandson, and a great-granddaughter to be born in February.

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



## Perry is First Language Speaker of the Month

Joe Perry was recognized as the First Language Speaker honoree during the February 11, 2023 Tribal Council Meeting. Sharona Farmer, daughter of Joe Perry, read his biography and accepted the recognition on his behalf.



## District 11

Halito Chim Achukma from District 11, Spring is around the corner. It's always beautiful and exciting to see leaves back on trees, green grass and warm weather! It's also a blessing to work with Chief Batton, Assistant Chief Austin and the Tribal Council as we look for ways to better serve our "Okla Chahta" (Choctaw people) with more opportunities. I would like to share with you some of the news, events and success stories in District 11.

The groundbreaking for the new clinic expansion in McAlester is set for May 18. Not only will this 70-million-dollar project provide more healthcare services, but with the additional space and doctors, we will be able to see more patients.

Another new program I am happy to see is the medical alert program for 65 and older patients that are homebound. This program is something I have been working on to get implemented in the budget. It's a much-needed service that will help provide some security to our elders who are at risk of falling and allow them to stay in their homes. Check with your clinic provider to see if you qualify and to obtain a prescription.

It was a privilege for Chief Batton and me to visit with McAlester High School football player Erick McCarty. Erick had a phenomenal career at MHS and received a scholarship to attend the University of Oklahoma next fall. We wish him the best and will be rooting for him at OU. Local junior county livestock shows were held in the last several weeks. I am so proud of the Choctaw Nation for all the support given to our students who participated. I was able to attend the Pittsburg, Garvin, and Okmulgee County shows. These kids work hard with their animals all year long and learn valuable life lessons.

Our district 11 seniors have lunch every Wednesday at 11:00 a.m., with a bake sale and silent auction on the second and third Wednesdays of the month. It is open to any CDIB holder age 55 or older and their spouse. We invite you to come and enjoy the fellowship, activities, and food. The District 11 Princess pageant will be held April 13 at the Community Center.

It's an honor to serve the great Choctaw Nation, its citizens and especially District 11! Please let me know if I can answer any questions or help you in any way regarding the Choctaw Nation.

Chihowa vt Achukma  
Robert Karr;  
(580) 579-2680  
rkarr@choctawnation.com

## DOI welcomes new Biden-Harris appointees

**WASHINGTON February 10, 2023**

— The Department of the Interior today announced additional Biden-Harris administration appointees who will join agency leadership to help create jobs in the clean energy economy, steward America's public lands and waters, pursue environmental justice and honor our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribes.

"Two years into the Biden-Harris administration, the Interior Department is making steady progress to strengthen Indian Country, create a clean energy future with climate-resilient infrastructure, address long-standing environmental injustices, and protect our lands and waters for the benefit of current and future generations," said Chief of Staff Rachael Taylor. "Our new team members will play key roles as we continue our progress in the years to come."

The new appointees are listed below in alphabetical order:

- Sara Cawley, Advisor, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
- Lily Greenberg Call, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff
- Justin Horn, Press Assistant
- Lynn Trujillo, Senior Counselor to the Secretary

Sara Cawley, Advisor, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

Sara most recently worked for Earthjustice as the senior legislative representative covering federal oil and gas policy. Sara's prior experience includes positions at the Western Organization of Resource Councils and the National Wildlife Federation. Originally from northeastern Pennsylvania, Sara earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science and environmental studies from Gettysburg College, and a Master of Science in environmental policy from the University of Michigan. Between earning her degrees, Sara spent a year in Denmark on a Fulbright grant, studying collaborative natural resource management, and a year with AmeriCorps Cape Cod, completing hands-on environmental restoration and education projects.

Lily Greenberg Call, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff

Lily Greenberg Call joins the Interior Department after working as a paralegal at Terris, Pravlik, and Millian LLP, a public interest litigation firm in Washington, D.C.



During the 2020 election cycle, Lily was a field organizer in Tucson, Arizona for the Arizona Coordinated Campaign and in Waterloo, Iowa for Kamala Harris' primary race. Originally from San Diego, Lily studied political science and public policy at the University of California, Berkeley. During her undergraduate years, Lily worked on international human rights investigations and humanitarian relief in Greece.

Justin Horn, Press Assistant

Justin Horn most recently served as a special assistant on the White House Infrastructure Implementation Team. Prior to this role, he served as a special assistant to the Director of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships. He served on the Biden for President campaign during the 2020 Democratic Party presidential primary and general election, first as a correspondence fellow and later as a field organizer in Philadelphia. Born and raised in Los Angeles, Justin graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2020 from the University of Pennsylvania.

Lynn Trujillo, Senior Counselor to the Secretary

Lynn Trujillo most recently served on Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Cabinet as Secretary of the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. Prior to that role, Lynn worked with Native American Tribes and organizations across the country as a national Native American coordinator for USDA Rural Development programs. Her past experiences include organizing in Tribal communities and practicing Indian Law in Washington D.C. and New Mexico. Lynn holds a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College and a J.D. from the University of New Mexico School of Law. She is a member of Sandia Pueblo and is also part Acoma and Taos Pueblos.

# CARE KITS

**KITS CONTAIN SUPPLIES TO HELP YOU PREVENT SERIOUS ILLNESS FROM VIRUSES THIS WINTER.**

**Protect yourself from COVID-19, influenza (the flu), and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus infection).**

**ORDER YOUR CARE KIT FROM THE CHAHTA ACHVFFA PORTAL TODAY.**

**Choctaw Nation** Health Services

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580-916-9140  
EXT 83731 OR 83830

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

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**



NOTES

**OKC Zoo Discount**

Starting Friday, January 13, 2023 through Friday, March 31, 2023, the OKC Zoo will provide \$3.00 general admission to guests presenting a valid Tribal WIC Program card. This \$3.00 general admission fee is limited to 4 paying guests per card. Children age 0-2 are always free and do not count as part of the 4. For more information about this discount, you can visit [www.okczoo.org/discounts](http://www.okczoo.org/discounts)

**COVID-19 Care Kit**

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

**Intertribal Community Council of Texas Raffle**

The Intertribal Community Council of Texas (ICCT), a non-profit organization serving the Native American community, announces its Raffle Ticket Fundraiser. This special fundraiser will support all programs and projects produced by the ICCT. A Raffle Ticket is \$50 each and will be limited to only 1,000 tickets. First Place Prize is a beautiful 2023 Indian Motorcycle Scout Cruiser; 2nd Place Prize is a Luxury Weekend at the Winstar World Casino & Resort for 2 nights with Golf Foursome; 3rd Place Prize is a \$250 Target Gift Card. The drawing of winning ticket holders will be held on Saturday during ICCT's "American Indian Art & Culture Festival", April 28 & 29, at the Latino Cultural Center in Dallas, Texas. Winners do NOT have to be present for the drawing. All winning ticket holders will be notified within 24 hours of the drawing. Raffle Tickets can be purchased online at [www.intertribal-texas.org](http://www.intertribal-texas.org) or for questions, email the ICCT at [community@intertribaltexas.org](mailto:community@intertribaltexas.org). The ICCT is proud to be supported by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the City of Dallas Office of Arts & Culture, and the Chickasaw Nation Winstar World Casino & Resort.

**TASTE THE TRADITION**  
 Located in the Choctaw Cultural Center  
 Lunch Served  
 Tuesday – Saturday | 10:30am-4:30pm  
 Paid admission is not required.  
 CHAMPULI CAFE

**Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation**

March 3	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
March 3	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 7	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
March 8	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 10	Crowder	By Appointment
March 14	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 15	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
March 15	Stigler	By Appointment
March 17	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
March 17	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 21	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 22	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 28	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
March 29	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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

**WAR 1950 - 1955**  
**CHOCTAW VETERAN ADVOCACY PROGRAM**  
 Are You a Choctaw Veteran?  
 Let us help guide you to the benefits and services that you have earned.  
 580-642-8451 | [BIT.LY/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY](http://bit.ly/cno-veterans-advocacy)  
**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**  
 TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

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 ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE ACTIVITY?  
 VISIT THE CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER, SPECIAL GROUP RATES ARE AVAILABLE!  
 SCAN THE QR CODE TO PLAN YOUR TRIP

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[VETERANSADVOCACY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:veteransadvocacy@choctawnation.com)  
**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**  
 TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

**Biskinik Announcement Guidelines**

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above. Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements. News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows. We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published. All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.  
**Mail to: Biskinik**  
**P.O. Box 1210**  
**Durant, OK 74702**  
**or email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)**

*Gary Batton Chief*      *Jack Austin Jr. Assistant Chief*

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

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

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

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

**CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR SESSION AGENDA**  
 February 11, 2023

- CALL TO ORDER
- OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- ROLL CALL
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - Regular Session January 14, 2023
- WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
  - Veteran of the Month, District #5 – Doyle Baker
  - First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #5 – Joe Perry
- PUBLIC COMMENTS
  - Isaac Sexton -
- REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
- NEW BUSINESS
  - Resolution Supporting the Application of Oklahoma Valliant Telephone Company, Inc. to the USDA for a Rural Utility Service RECONNECT 4 Program Grant
  - b) Resolution Supporting the Application of Oklahoma Western Telephone Company, Inc. to the USDA for a Rural Utility Service RECONNECT 4 Program Grant
  - Resolution Supporting the Application of Cross Telephone to the USDA for a Rural Utility Service RECONNECT 4 Program Grant
  - Resolution supporting the Application of @ LINK Services, LLC to the USDA for a Rural Utility Service RECONNECT 4 Program Grant
  - Resolution Supporting the Application of Canadian Valley Telephone to the USDA for a Rural Utility Service RECONNECT 4 Program Grant
  - Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Ginger Crawford to Serve on the US Department of Labor Workforce Information Advisory Council
  - Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Robert Griffin to Serve as a Member of the Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Council
  - Approve the Donation of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
  - Approve the Donation of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
  - Authorize Chief to Place Property in Pittsburg County in Trust Status with the United States of America
- OTHER NEW BUSINESS
- OLD BUSINESS
- ADJOURNMENT
- CLOSING PRAYER

All council bills passed unanimously.

**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:  
**Wright City Community Center**  
 March 10, 2023  
 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Chahta Anumpa Aikkhvna March Language Lesson**

**Yukpa**

**yukpa:** n., joy; gladness; good nature; delight; a smile; laughter  
**v.,** to smile; to laugh; to rejoice; to giggle;  
**yukpali:** v., to please; to bless; to make happy; to delight

Siohitek vt a yukpa tuk	My daughter laughed at me.
Ish talowah ma okla chi yukpa tuk	They laughed when you sang.
Yukpa kvf vm achukma tuk.	I had a good laugh.
Vllosi mvt chi yukpa ka ish pisa ha?	Did you see the child smile at you?
Sv na yukpa tuk.	I was happy/glad.
Sv yukpachi tuk.	He/She made me laugh.
Ohoyo mvt yukpa shahli.	That woman laughs/giggles a lot.
Kvta ish i yukpa?	Who are you laughing at?
Ak i yukpo tuk.	I did not laugh at him/her.
Onnakma hvpi na yukpa chi.	We will all be happy tomorrow.
Ibaiyukpa li tuk.	I laughed with him/her/them.
Vlla mvt na yukpa bilia.	That child is always good natured/happy
Chihowa yvt chi yukpa-lashke.	May the Lord bless you.
Taloha haklo likma, sv yukpalichi.	It makes me happy when I hear music.

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



## Poteau father-daughter duo featured in new CNO series, ‘Choctaw Proud’

**DURANT, Okla. (February 6, 2023)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma’s new series of the Together, We’re More campaign titled ‘Choctaw Proud’ features different tribal members each month. This month Choctaw Nation spotlights members of a Poteau family carrying on the Choctaw culture.

Dewayne Hornbuckle and his daughter Kyra Hornbuckle, of Poteau are Choctaw tribal members who share a passion for Choctaw culture, particularly stickball. As members of the Tvshka Homma stickball team, this father-daughter duo is proud to be part of the revitalization of Choctaw culture through this ancient sport.

Dewayne Hornbuckle began playing stickball at age five at the stomp grounds. As the son of a coach and an athlete himself, it seemed natural for Dewayne to follow in his father’s footsteps and join the coaching profession. For over 15 years, he taught wrestling, softball and baseball for Poteau and Tahihna public schools, and when his own children came along, he coached their soccer, tee-ball, softball and baseball teams.

His desire to see young

people, especially Choctaw youth, succeed eventually led him to a change in careers in 2015 when he came to work for the Choctaw Nation’s Youth Outreach program as an advisor. In this role Dewayne mentors a group of young tribal members.

The Youth Outreach program provides a wide variety of services for students who have a hardship at home. Advisors make home and school visits and help with things like long and short-term goal setting. The program aims to give Choctaw youth a positive sense of identity and connect them with their Choctaw culture through group meetings that include language lessons, crafting workshops and more.

For Dewayne, teaching Choctaw culture during his group meetings is an honor, but it is also an obligation because so many generations were not taught the traditions of their ancestors.

Dewayne has passed on his love for stickball to his own children, including daughter Kyra (23), who began playing in the Choctaw Nation’s Yvnsh Homma youth league and now plays center for the Tvshka Homma Ohoyo. Just like



Choctaw Nation Photo

Dewayne Hornbuckle passed his love of stickball to his daughter Kyra. See how their relationship with each other and the game has strengthened their connection to the Choctaw community in the new series, ‘Choctaw Proud.’

her father, Kyra attended stickball games at the stomp grounds at a young age.

According to proud dad Dewayne, Kyra is ‘a great athlete—a natural.’ Others must think so, too, as she was chosen to play on the All-Star team at the World Series of Stickball last year.

For Kyra, stickball is more than a game. It represents the endurance of Choctaw culture and the resilience of the Choctaw people.

‘It just makes me really proud because we’re bringing back our culture, rather than having to hide it or be

ashamed of it,’ says Kyra.

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

For more information about the Choctaw Nation’s Youth Outreach program visit [choctawnation.com/services/yea/](http://choctawnation.com/services/yea/) or learn more about the Hornbuckle story.

## TOT Virtual Journey kicks off in March

Registration is open now virtual walk

**DURANT, Okla. (February 9, 2023)**

– The Third Annual Trail of Tears Virtual Journey starts March 1, 2023 and concludes on May 31, 2023. This year’s virtual/online route will take participants over 620 miles from Nanih Waiya Mound in Mississippi to Nanih Waiya in Oklahoma through cities such as Memphis, Little Rock, and Fort Smith. Participants will have until May 31, 2023 to complete the journey via an app.

The app, called Walker Tracker, uses any step-counter to track and log steps. Participants have a three-month span to complete the journey. The app will display the route, where your team is along the journey and others’ team members are on their journey. Complete instructions are found on the Choctaw Nation webpage.

The Trail of Tears Virtual Journey started in 2021 when the Choctaw Nation Healthy Lifestyles Team brainstormed how to get all Choctaw tribal members outside and moving amidst the



Photo Provided

Pictured above is a map view of the virtual Trail of Tears route for 2023.

COVID-19 pandemic. ‘Giving them the virtual challenge gave a purpose to many of our members,’ says Doris Winlock, Healthy Lifestyle Coordinator. ‘They were excited to learn about the journey our ancestors took.’

Over 1,000 people joined the challenge last year and 700 completed the journey. ‘We wanted to make it reasonable for all levels of activity, so the participants were allowed to have teams of three if they wanted,’ explains Winlock. Participation expanded to 41 states in the U.S. and 3 other countries.

To join the challenge, participants can review the details of the Virtual Trail of Tears. Everyone is invited to participate and upon finishing will receive a medal and certificate through the mail. Winlock says, ‘Round up a couple of your friends and sign up today!’

## CNO law enforcement honored

**DURANT, Okla. (February 8, 2023)** – Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) law enforcement officers were honored Jan. 25 for actions above and beyond the call of duty in 2022. CNO Chief of Police Jesse Petty said it is important for the officers to know they are appreciated for their outstanding efforts. Such ceremonies are held twice each year, said Chief Petty, or more often if actions warrant.

Patrolman Roy Hummel was presented a Life Saving Award for helping with the recovery of a passenger discovered unconscious on a bus; Patrolman Brent Humphries

received a Life Saving Award for administering first aid to a gunshot victim until he could be flown to a hospital; Sgt. Issac James was awarded a Letter of Commendation for deescalating a domestic situation. Also, the Award for Meritorious Service was presented to Sgt. Doug Rinehart after he located an abandoned infant after a shooting; Patrolmen Michael Walden and Robert Toon received Letters of Commendation for being instrumental in calming a suicidal individual; Former Patrolman Nick Wallace, now a Transport Officer, received a Letter



Photo by Krislan Garside

Pictured from left, Patrolman Roy Hummel, Sgt. Doug Rinehart, Sgt. Issac James, Patrolman Robert Toon, Patrolmen Michael Walden and Patrolman Brent Humphries.

of Commendation for his compassionate efforts in saving a dog and her new litter after they had been left to fend for themselves.

‘I can tell you Choctaw

Nation Tribal Police is happy to be of service and are very proud of the men and women who serve our communities,’ said Chief Jesse Petty.

## Hallow awarded merit scholarship

Taylor Hallows earned a \$72,000 merit scholarship based on her ‘personal vision and artistic voice’ presented in the art portfolio she submitted.

Taylor is a senior at Tishomingo High School in Tishomingo, Oklahoma.

‘We are very proud; she’s working very hard and is at the top of her class,’ said Taylor’s mother, Sarah Hallows.

In an announcement on Tishomingo High School’s Facebook page, school faculty said, ‘We have known she is packed with talent for quite some time. We are grateful and so excited that the School of the Arts Institute of Chicago sees it in her, too! Not only packed with talent she leads with integrity, her heart, desire, and passion. Taylor is one of our best here at THS. She is beyond deserving of this acceptance and merit scholarship. We are just so incredibly proud of and for her.’



## Easley graduates from OU, currently pursuing master’s

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Smiths celebrate 70th anniversary

Marvin Smith and his wife, Freda (Brumley) Smith of Neosho, Missouri, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on Valentine’s Day. They were married in Durant, Oklahoma, on February 14, 1953.

Marvin is retired from a long and successful career in retail management across JCPenney, Gibson’s Discount and Alco.

The couple has three children; Farand Smith of Salt Lake City, Utah, Marvena Baker-Shriver of Denver, Colorado, and Nansen Smith of Anderson, Missouri and five grandchildren; Christopher Smith of North Salt Lake, Utah, Corey Smith of Monmouth, Oregon, Joshua Baker of Albuquerque, New Mexico, Tyler Smith of Diamond, Missouri, and Brant Smith of Omak, Washington. Additionally, they have four great-grandchildren; Alina Smith and Makayla Smith of North Salt Lake, Lydia Renfro-Smith and Bodhi Renfro-Smith of Monmouth.



## Smith celebrates 94th birthday

Geneva Jane Smith of Fanshawe, Oklahoma, enjoyed a happy celebration of her 94th birthday on December 24.

She was surrounded by family and friends, including children, grandchildren and great-great grandchildren, to watch her blow out the candles and wish her a happy birthday.

‘We all love you Mom (Nana),’ said Jane’s family.

Jane is the daughter of Martin and Ethel Duncan. Ethel was an original member of the Choctaw Nation.



## Beaver Thomas celebrates 84 years

Mary’s beloved church friends held a party for her before church and then took her to lunch after. Her children and grandchildren all texted or called to tell her Happy Birthday. It was a good day.

‘Love you, Mom and Grandma,’ Anita Kenney.



## Lockett graduates from UC Berkley

Kiley Keawenaokaiolohia Lockett proudly displays her Choctaw Nation stole at her December graduation from the University of California at Berkeley.

Kiley graduated with the highest distinction (summa cum laude) with a major in history and a minor in Native American Studies.

While at Berkeley, she served as an intern at the Native American Student Development office. There, she administered orientation for incoming Native students, assisted at academic conferences, and was in charge of designing, planting and maintaining the Indigenous Community Learning Garden.

Kiley is extremely grateful for all the encouragement and support for her education that she has received from the Choctaw Nation.

## Hendry and McKinney celebrate 25th wedding anniversary

Johnny Hendry and Tawnee McKinney, both Choctaw tribal members, are pleased to announce that they celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on February 10.

They met at Haskell Indian Nations University in 1998 and have been inseparable ever since.

Along with their marriage came two beautiful daughters, Taw-Cre-Nee Redhawk (painter and Business Major) and Madrona Redhawk (model and artist).

They now reside in New York City, designing and hand-making leather purses and accessories.

To celebrate, they took a trip to Las Vegas, where they previously lived before their move to the Big Apple.

Wherever they are, they keep in their hearts the strength and pride of being Choctaw.



## Rev. Williams appointed as Succentor

Grace Cathedral, located in San Francisco, California, recently announced the appointment of the Rev. Joe C. Williams as Succentor.

Williams comes to us from the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma. He was ordained to the diaconate in December 2022, anticipating ordination to the priesthood in the summer of 2023. As Succentor, Joe will play an integral role in the preparation of cathedral liturgy and the care and formation of all who serve worship life.

A sixth-generation Oklahoman and member of the Choctaw Nation, Williams graduated from the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, where he earned his Master of Divinity. Before ordination, Joe was a nonprofit professional, working in development and communications for agencies specializing in hospice, HIV/AIDS care, youth development and adults with developmental disabilities. He studied American History at the University of Tulsa, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership from the University of Oklahoma, as well as certification in nonprofit management.

‘Williams is steeped in the liturgical traditions of the church. He comes to us with a deep life of prayer and commitment to God’s people, as well as the production and management skills necessary to carry out the cathedral liturgy,’ said The Rev. Canon Anna E. Rossi, Canon Precentor, Director of Interfaith Engagement.



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**REIMBURSEMENTS INCLUDE:**

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- ♦ Post-Secondary Fees (up to \$100)
- ♦ Cap & Gown (up to \$50)

To apply for reimbursement, scan the QR code above

The student must be a HSSS member to apply. To become a HSSS member, fill out the Student Record Release through the Chaktla Ach'ha Member Portal.

Choctaw Nation High School Student Services



# Celebrating Women’s History Month

Continued from Page 1

## History Makers

Throughout time, there have been numerous Choctaws who have accomplished extraordinary things. This story only has room for a few examples of Choctaw women making history.

Dr. Muriel Hazel Wright was a teacher, historian and editor.

Born in 1889, Wright was well-educated. She went to Wheaton Seminary (Wheaton College) in Massachusetts, graduated with a teaching degree from East Central University in Ada and did her postgraduate work at Columbia University in New York.

Her paternal grandfather was Rev. Allen Wright, Principal Chief of the CNO from 1866 to 1870, who is credited for giving the state of Oklahoma its name.

Wright served as a teacher and principal in Oklahoma. She also actively participated in CNO policy making, serving as Secretary of the Choctaw Committee, a member and secretary of the Choctaw Advisory Council and a delegate to the Intertribal Indian Council.

She was the editor of the Chronicles of Oklahoma from 1943 to 1973 and authored numerous history articles and features that appeared in newspapers and magazines nationwide.

Wright authored the historical works listed below:

- “The Story of Oklahoma” (1924-1939)
- “Oklahoma: A History of the States and Its People” (1929)
- “Our Oklahoma” (1939)
- “Springplace, Moravian Mission, Cherokee Nation” (1940)
- “A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma” (1951)
- “Civil War Sites in Oklahoma” (1969)
- “A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma” remains a standard reference for studying the state’s Indigenous people.

Wright was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1940. She received the University of Oklahoma’s Distinguished Service Award citation in 1948, the Oklahoma City Business and Professional Woman of the Year Award in 1950, Oklahoma City University’s honorary doctorate of humanities degree in 1964 and the National American Indian Women’s Association Award in 1971. In 1993, the Oklahoma Historical Society launched its Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame, and Wright was among its inductees.

After retiring in 1973, she continued to pursue research projects until her death on February 27, 1975.

Amy J. Pierce was appointed as the first full-time district court judge for CNO’s judicial branch in 2022. Choctaw Nation Chief Justice David Burrage performed her swearing-in at the Choctaw Nation Judicial Center.

Judge Pierce’s experience in Native American law has greatly benefited CNO in the post-McGirt world.

Before CNO, she was partner at Hampton Barghols Pierce, PLLC in Oklahoma City (OKC) and held positions with two other law firms in OKC. Judge Pierce earned her Juris Doctorate from Oklahoma City University after receiving her Bachelor of Science from Oklahoma State University. She went on to complete the Harvard Negotiation Institute program through Harvard Law School. Judge Pierce has been voted a “Top 25 Women in Law” in Oklahoma by Super Lawyers, among other honors.

## Culture Keepers

Within the Choctaw Nation, many departments and individuals are working hard to preserve the culture and language of the Choctaw people for future generations.

Teri Billy is the Assistant Director of the Choctaw Nation School of Language (Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna).

The Choctaw School of Language began with a pilot program teaching Choctaw to five area high schools and Head Start Centers to now holding over 100 courses in high schools, colleges and head starts and over Zoom.

Billy began her journey with CNO’s language department in 2004.

At that time, the department’s goal was to revitalize the Choctaw language, a long process that brought with it the challenge of creating textbooks, classes and curriculum.

Being a curriculum specialist was a skill that came in handy in the program’s early days as Billy and other staff worked together to create textbooks, tools and kits to be used in the classroom.

According to Billy, it is essential to protect the identity of the Choctaw people by preserving their language.

“It is as important for each of us, as well as for our future generations, to connect us to our mother tongue, which relates us to our rich history, culture and language,” said Billy. “This is important to our identity as Choctaw people.”

“My hope is to see a language fire catch ablaze within the communities of the Choctaw Nation, to take the language back and make it alive in the daily lives and homes of Choctaw people,” said Billy.

Billy’s Choctaw roots run deep, and she credits some of that to her grandmother, Fannie Gibson, the most significant female influence in her life.

“She instilled in me a strong faith and belief in the principles of God by living it out daily in many life examples,” said Billy. “The Choctaw way of life was very important to my grandmother. She never learned to speak English, but would not hesitate to stand her ground, to stand for what was right.”

Before passing, her grandmother took it upon herself to preserve a slice of Choctaw history.

“I grew up listening to her sing Choctaw hymns around the house. She loved those hymns so much that in the last few years of her life, she dedicated herself to teaching my cousin many hymns which were not being sung frequently enough, and she didn’t want them to be lost,” said Billy.

Billy has a few tips for those who want to learn the language themselves.

“Start small with words and simple phrases, teach those to others, speak it often (even if it’s to yourself), learn phrases that are important and could be helpful to your family,” said Billy.

Deanna Byrd began her career with CNO’s Historic Preservation Department in 2015 as an intern. Since then, she said it has been a “non-stop journey of professional and personal growth.”

Byrd serves as a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) liaison-coordinator between CNO and 80 institutions nationwide regarding the return of our ancestors and their funerary items. She leads the new Choctaw History Literacy project curriculum, manages the Historic Preservation outreach and research team, authorizes the monthly Biskinik Iti Favvssa stories and assists with other projects.

Preserving Choctaw Culture is an essential aspect of Byrd’s life.

“Preserving our culture is important for me because my family, like many others, faced the impact of generational trauma from the boarding school era. Many traditions and knowledge were not passed down as intended,” said Byrd. “I wanted my family to reconnect and learn as a way to heal the past. I feel preservation is important so that generations ahead will continue to thrive in their identity as Choctaw people.”

According to Byrd, the most rewarding part of her job is that it brings peace to our ancestors.

“It’s a long journey, but when we finally rebury them, we know they feel the love and honor we have for them. There is nothing to describe the feeling of solace that washes over everyone,” Byrd said. “My hope is that we are able to complete our nationwide search to find our ancestors and lessen the burden on the next generation.”

Haleigh Gibson is the 2022-2023 Miss Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

A graduate of Durant High School and cultural educator at the Choctaw Cultural Center, Gibson travels to other states, districts,



Dr. Muriel Wright, Historian (Photo Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society)



Sara Elizabeth Sawyer, Choctaw Author



Deanna Byrd, Choctaw Nation, NAGPRA/ Historical Preservation



Haleigh Gibson, 2022-2023 Miss Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Amy J. Pierce, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma District Court Judge



Teri Billy, Assistant Director, School of Choctaw Language

communities and schools as an ambassador for the Choctaw Nation.

According to Gibson, the most fulfilling part of being Miss Choctaw Nation is meeting different people who share their stories with her.

“As Miss Choctaw Nation, my goal is to make a difference within my tribe, guide others to achieve their goals, touch the heart of the people everywhere I go, tell them to follow their dreams, to share our culture and show them how proud I am to be Choctaw. In addition, being the best ambassador representing the Choctaw Nation.”

Gibson has been involved with the Choctaw Nation and its culture from a young age. She is a Choctaw registered artist and has made medallions for the Chief, Councilmembers and other special projects.

According to Gibson, her mom is her biggest female inspiration.

“My mom has been the most inspirational person in my life; she has taught me to always be strong, work hard and follow my dreams but always be humble and kind. She has always told me that life is what you make of it, to always take chances, push yourself out of your comfort zone because it may open doors for you in the future,” she said.

Gibson advises young girls who aspire to be Choctaw royalty to never give up.

“Win or lose you are still a winner; you were able to stand on that stage in front of people you may or may not know and to show them how proud you are to be Choctaw,” said Gibson.

Sara Elisabeth Sawyer is a Choctaw author whose books focus on tribal heritage. Intensive research is integral to her writing, as she wants to pass on history and culture to her readers. She has been a storyteller for most of her life and published her first story, Contrast, in the Biskinik after participating in the commemorative Choctaw Trail of Tears Walk. A few years later, she was chosen for the Smithsonian’s National Museum

of the American Indian Artist in Leadership Program, which ultimately led to her first book, a collection of short stories with nine other Choctaw authors, “Touch My Tears: Tales from the Trail of Tears.”

She has since published 15 historical fiction books honoring First Americans and Choctaw history and culture.

When asked what her favorite and most rewarding part of her journey being a storyteller has been, Sawyer said, “The readers. I’ve received countless messages over the years from people thanking me for writing and telling the stories that I do.” She said that knowing she is preserving and perpetuating our history and culture is the most rewarding part.

“Our ancestors walked the trail for us. They gifted us with a legacy of endurance, resilience and faith that inspires me to this day. When I think of all they went through to give the Choctaw Nation a future, it kindles the fire in me to tell their stories.”

Sawyer says her mother is her inspiration. “She has such love for our Choctaw history and culture, and tremendous heart and recognition for the sacrifices of our ancestors.” Sawyer’s mother, Lynda, is also her research partner.

She has advice for other Choctaw women or girls who want to become writers. “Tell your story in whatever way you can. Whether orally or writing it in short sentences, share your story. Then begin learning the craft of writing. Diligence and hard work come with the dream of being a writer. But it’s worth it, and I believe you can do it.”

To learn more about Sawyer, visit <https://www.sarahelisabethwrites.com/>.

These are just a few of the thousands of Choctaw women making a difference in the world. If you have a story about an influential woman in your life, please share it with the Biskinik by emailing [biskinik@choctaw-nation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctaw-nation.com) or submitting it online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/news/biskinik/>.

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- Must be a homeowner or rental tenant (must be responsible for own lawn care)
- Other restrictions may apply



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Choctaw Nation Housing Authority



**Shirley Evelyn Johnson**

Shirley Evelyn Johnson, 87, passed away Dec. 11, 2022.

Shirley was born March 16, 1935, near Idabel, Okla., to Josiah and Venia Webster.

She was preceded in death by her daughter Penny Barbee.

Shirley is survived by her husband Bill; daughter Sherry Colbert; son Brent Johnson; seven grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren.

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

**Juanita Sue Severn**

Juanita Sue Severn, 80, passed away Jan. 6, 2023.

Sue was born May 17, 1942, in Los Angeles, Calif., to Louis Oliver and Violet Box Whitfield.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and sisters Alfreda Sandridge and Anna Mae Gouyd.

Sue is survived by her husband Ronnie Severn; son Marty White and spouse Pam; brother Robert L. Whitfield; granddaughters Brandi Watts, and Amanda White Axton; great-grandchildren Kaylee Watts, Conner Perry, Kaeson Watts, Kutter Watts, and Jasper Axton; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Daryl Ray West**

Daryl Ray West, 42, passed away Dec. 22, 2022.

Daryl was born March 19, 1980, in Hugo, Okla., to Ray and Hazle (Murphy) West.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Tony West; grandparents Earl and Leona West and Ernest and Susie Murphy; uncles Winston, Bud, J.W. Lloyd, Pink, Carl, Lewis, Audis, Jimmie, Billy, Frank, and Gary Murphy; aunts Kathleen Murphy Minter and Beatrice West Mahaffey; cousins Sandra Murphy Marshall and Barbara Ride-nour; and brother-in-law Adam Cooper.

Daryl is survived by his sons Daymon and Kaden West and their mother Kimberly Achziger; fur son Lucky; sisters Marsha Magby and Debi West; nephews Aaron Rowden and Chad Magby; nieces Jennifer Kemp, Kristin Payne, Sarah Rowden, and Bailey Clay; great-nephews and nieces Nadalie, William, Kayden, Matthew, Brodey, Kaleigh, Cameron, Mark Calum, Daniel, Tate, Gianna, and Lakota; uncle Amon Murphy; brother-in-law Salomon Rojas; numerous cousins; best friend brothers Jewel "Boo" Burris and Donny Roberson; and a host of other friends in Oklahoma, Texas, and Montana.

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

**April Louise Jessie**

April Louise Jessie, 49, passed away Jan. 9, 2023.

April was born April 27, 1973, in Lawton, Okla., to Roger and Joyce Diane (Jones) Jessie.

She was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents Hubert and Dona Jones; uncles Dwight Jones and spouse Wanda, and Harrell Jones; paternal grandparents Harry and Rubye Jessie; and uncle Tracy Jessie.

April is survived by her parents; brother Jason Jessie and spouse Maci; sister Kimberly Carlton and spouse Lionel; nephews Toby, Tyson, and Tanyon Carlton; niece Maddie Jessie; uncles Mike, Daryl, Harry and spouse Delores, Bruce and spouse Trish, Jeff Jessie, and Marion Jones and spouse Jean; and aunts Pam Thompson and Betty Jones.

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

**Shannon Darneal**

Shannon Darneal, 51, passed away Jan. 17, 2023.

Shannon was born Aug. 9, 1971, in Fort Smith, Ark., to Patricia (Orrison) Darneal and William Darneal.

He was preceded in death by his parents; paternal grandparents Benjamin Alfred Darneal and Edna (Morgan) Darneal; and maternal grandparents Robert Orrison and Nora (Brewer) Orrison.

Shannon is survived by his wife Laura Guss-Darneal; daughters Kassandria Foster and spouse Jamon; Kaitlin May, Asha Darneal and significant other Dominic Hardwick; Aren Reitzel and spouse Tate, Ashley Bray and significant other Wayne Golden, Angellina (Lannie) Bray, and Aubrey Darneal and significant other Dylan Jones; son Jonathan Guss and significant other Gwyn-aeth Morgan; grandchildren Jaxon Foster, Kyan Foster, Zaidi May, Jaxi May, Lilah Davis, Bianca Reitzel, Archer Reitzel, Ezmia Reitzel, Magnolia Reitzel, Everly Parham, Tabrielle Hardwick, Willow Morgan-Guss, and one on the way, Tuck Reitzel; brothers William Randall Darneal and spouse Paula, and James Darneal and spouse Tammy; numerous nieces and nephews; other relatives and loved ones.

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

**Alva Beams**

Alva "Ray" Beams, 82, passed away Jan. 29, 2023.

Ray was born Nov. 13, 1940, in Sulphur, Okla., to Daisy "Granny" Edwards.

He was preceded in death by his wife Karen Beams; brother Byron Beams; his mother; sister Wanda Ford; and son-in-law Jerry Rubia.

Ray is survived by his wife Fran Beams; children Kevin Beams, Curt Beams, Kathy Rubia, and Cyndi Goltry; stepchildren Teresa Duda (Joe) and Troy Wolf (Gina); grandchildren Bethany Kenny (Sean), Beau Beams, Alexa Seering (Isaac), Hayley Goltry (Joey), Maezy Beams, Emma Wolf, Nelson Beams, Mikayla Rubia, Donovan Rubia, and Julia Duda; great-grandchildren Liam Kenny and Samuel "Sam T" Kenny; other family members; Maria Beams; and nieces and nephews.

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

**Garry LeFlore**

Garry "Todd" LeFlore, 56, passed away Dec. 20, 2022.

Todd was born Jan. 21, 1966, in McAlester, Okla., to Garry and Lillian LeFlore.

He is survived by his parents; sisters Leslie Gorman and spouse Lloyd, and Channon Smith; brother Craig LeFlore and spouse Kathy; nieces and nephews Jordan Sadler, Baret Henderson and spouse Justin, Jared Deason and spouse Misty, Tristan LeFlore, Sierra LeFlore, Kinsley Garcia and spouse Stephen, Greyson Smith, and Gavin Smith; along with many great-nieces and great-nephews, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

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

**Bruce Lee Bond**

Bruce Lee Bond, 41, passed away Jan. 23, 2023.

Bruce was born July 1, 1981, in Talihina, Okla., to Lloyd Dennis Bond and Jasney Mae Peters Wade.

He was preceded in death by his parents; paternal grandparents Melcie and Ed Peters; and maternal grandparents Maecian and Osbien Bond.

Bruce is survived by his daughters Jessica Sosa and Annmarie Flores; brother Billy Wade; sisters and brother-in-law Cindy and Richard Bohannon, Annette and the late David Jefferson, and Patricia Shomo; grandchildren Daniela Flores and Evelyn Flores; best friend Leonardo Rodriguez; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Stewart Dwight Whitley**

Stewart Dwight Whitley, 64, passed away May 9, 2022.

Stewart was born Sept. 9, 1957, in Torrance, Calif., to Jacqueline Kay and Harry McLellan Whitley.

He was preceded in death by his father; siblings Pamela, Gayla, and Whit; and his sister Valorie passed a few months after his death.

Stewart is survived by his children Aaron (Vanessa), Brandon, Jessie (Anais), and Jacqueline (Matt); grandchildren Calob, Brenden, Raimye, Alyssia, Erika, Jazmyne, Estrella, Leland, Aaliyah, Ezekiel, Ruby, Perseus, and Scarlett; great-grandson Kylo; his mother; siblings Kayla and Bobby; many beloved aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, cousins, and friends.

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

**Jimmy Dale Ward**

Jimmy Dale Ward, 69, passed away Nov. 19, 2022.

Jimmy was born April 23, 1953, in Fontana, Calif., to Leon Ward and Juanita Tormey.

He is survived by his sister Wanda Munsinger brother Dennis Ward; companion Vivian Robertson; children Ruth Ann Harris, Chris (Blue) Newton, and Farrah Itsy; along with many nieces, nephews, cousins, and grandchildren.

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

**Rhoda Jane Melanson**

Rhoda Jane Melanson, 74, passed away Jan. 18, 2023.

Rhoda was born March 31, 1948.

For the full obituary, please visit [Palm Eastern Mortuary & Cemetery](#).

**Eleanor Ann Holleman**

Eleanor Ann Holleman, 68, passed away Jan. 24, 2023.

Eleanor was born Dec. 29, 1954, in New Iberia, La., to Eleanor Landry and Thomas Holleman, Jr.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Eleanor is survived by her daughter Robin Boatright Stalder and spouse Jon; granddaughters Lillian Elise Stalder and Amelie Anne Stalder; sister Mary Beaulieu and spouse Buster; brothers Tommy Holleman and spouse Vicki, John Holleman and spouse Betsy, and James Holleman and spouse Kelly; godson Charlie Beaulieu; and numerous beloved nieces, nephews, and cousins.

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

**Donna Elaine Melton**

Donna Elaine Melton, 61, passed away Jan. 10, 2023.

Donna was born Sept. 9, 1961, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Max and Doris (Beal) Melton.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and brother Richard Melton.

Donna is survived by her son Max Tyler Melton; sisters Kathryn Suarez and Barbara Matthews; and brother Joe Bob Melton.

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

**Joy Wynell Cochran**

Joy Wynell (Marlow) Cochran passed away Nov. 29, 2022.

Joy was born Feb. 29, in Atoka, Okla., to Toy and Hildred (Armstrong) Marlow.

She was preceded in death by her parents; along with many uncles, aunts and other dear relatives.

Joy is survived by her husband Marvin; son Darrell and spouse Marleah; sister Floy Crawford; grandsons Brad Cochran, and Tim Cochran and spouse Sheila; great-grandchildren Parker Reese Cochran and Reid Elliott Cochran; wonderful caretaker Carolyn Knight; other relatives and many dear friends.

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

**Charles Kent Callahan**

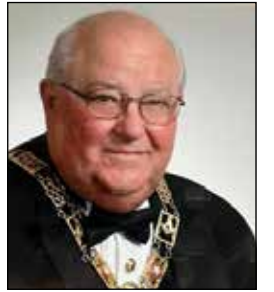
Charles Kent Callahan, 82, passed away Dec. 14, 2022.

Kent was born May 9, 1940, at home in Cyril, Okla., to Raymond Wesley and Helen Adams Callahan.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Roger Ray Callahan.

Kent was survived by his wife Margaret Jo Dodson Callahan; children Krista Kay Callahan Harrison and spouse Eddie, and Bryan Keith Callahan; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; brother Robert Ford Callahan and spouse Iolene; and sister Dana Beth Callahan.

For the full obituary, please visit [John M. Ireland & Son Funeral Home and Chapel](#).

**Jimmie Obe Jr.**

Jimmie Obe Jr., 84, passed away Nov. 20, 2022.

Jimmie was born April 6, 1938, in Lawton, Okla., to Jimmie Obe Sr. and Minerva Blueye.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Viola Bohannon; wife Millie Obe; and daughters Pamela Shumake, Cynthia Maxwell, and Sandra Shumake.

Jimmie is survived by his daughter Janice Chavez; son Jason Obe; granddaughters Mary Padilla and spouse Michael, Justina Faapouli and spouse Lincoln, Charlotte Holder and spouse Justin, Christina Maxwell, and Carmela Shumake; great-grandchildren Kaisala, Jimmie, Pukalani, Junior, Sylvester, Pepe, Senia, Briza, Tata, Zxochiti, Kaitlyn, and Isabel; great-great-grandchildren Lizzet, Nina, Sylvester, Angelica, and Annabella; and special nephew Bruce Jacob.

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

**Lillian Sue Louis**

Lillian Sue Louis, 76, passed away Aug. 12, 2022.

Lillian was born March 16, 1946, in Glover, Okla., to Rev. William J. Louis and Pearley Mae (Franklin) Louis.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters Marie Davis and Dorothy Beller; brothers Ben Franklin, BC Louis, Jesse Louis, Nelson Louis, and William Louis; nephew Jeremy Louis; and nieces Rita and Martha Davis.

Lillian is survived by her daughter Terry Louis; grandson Gabriel Louis; brother Ray Louis; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Elesten Willis Jr.**

Elesten "Wak" Willis Jr., 64, passed away Jan. 10, 2023.

Wak was born July 8, 1958, in Talihina, Okla., to Elesten Sr. and Lilliella Samuel Willis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Amanda Leann Willis; stepson Gabriel Bill Tonihka; brother Norman Samuel; and sisters Ramona Stricklin and Elfreda Willis.

Wak is survived by his wife Tracie Willis, son Jeremy Willis; stepchildren Josh Colbert, Jerimiah Colbert, and Shacy Tonihka; brothers Pastor Edgel Samuel and spouse Jane, Vernon Willis, and Glen Willis and Lisa Pear; sister Alestine Thomas; grandchildren Jayci Willis and McKenzie Willis-Jones, Angelina Armenta, Gabriella Armenta, Jasmyn Armenta, Israel Armenta and Lilliana Armenta, Cambree Colbert, Kylee Colbert, Adaline Colbert, Nevaeh Tonihka, and Kian Bohannon; great-grandchildren Ama'riyah Mathis and Amery Mathis, several nieces and nephews, and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Hettie Harris**

Hettie Harris, 63, passed away Dec. 9, 2022.

Hettie was born Oct. 28, 1959, in Talihina, Okla., to Farrell and Ruth (Jones) Harris.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Connie Harris; and brothers Farrell (Bubba) Harris Jr. and Joe Harris.

Hettie is survived by Debbie and Mickey Benjamin and family; John and Linda Higginbotham; Britni Watson and family; Nadine Davis; Braylee Daniel; Isaac Jacob; several aunts and uncles; numerous cousins; Laura May and L.K. Johnson family; special friends; Class of 1978 at Bennington public schools; Ron and Carol McKee; and Gay Croker Munsell.

For the full obituary, please visit [Prater-Lamp-ton-Mills & Coffey Funeral Home](#).

**Obituary Policy**

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

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

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

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

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

Send official obituary notices to:

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



ITI FABVSSA

# Makers and Masterpieces: Rivercane basketry at the Smithsonian

Over the past few months, Iti Fabvssa has highlighted various traditional arts in the Smithsonian collection and the modern-day Choctaw artists working to carry on these traditions. This month, we conclude our series by discussing rivercane basketry.

Born in a Choctaw community in Louisiana, Fannie Battiest Wesley learned to make rivercane baskets when she was a young girl. She continued to make rivercane baskets after leaving Louisiana and moving to Choctaw territory in the early 1900s. She would harvest and weave the rivercane and find plants like black walnut and sassafras to dye strips of cane to make her designs stand out. Some of the baskets that Fannie made were used around her house. Others, she sold. Collectors like the anthropologist Clark Field, who had one of the largest Native American basket collections, were eager buyers. She taught her daughters and granddaughters the entire process of making rivercane baskets – from harvesting to the completed basket. By the end of Fannie’s life, she had only a few baskets of her own after a lifetime of making rivercane baskets. Years later, one of Fannie’s granddaughters, Eveline Steele, would arrive at the Smithsonian looking for her grandmother’s baskets in hopes of learning from the baskets held in that collection. Currently, Eveline is the only known self-sufficient Choctaw rivercane basket maker in Oklahoma. She has been invaluable in revitalizing and sharing this tradition with the next generation of basket makers.

Another rivercane basket maker is Tom Colvin. Although not Choctaw, Tom grew up learning from two very traditional Choctaw elders in the Bayou Lacombe community of southern Louisiana. They taught him traditional skills for living on the land, how to make traditional Choctaw homes and bird traps, as well as rivercane and palmetto to basketry. They passed along their knowledge with the wish that he share it back with the Choctaw community one day. Tom has also learned from other southeastern tribal communities and their basket-making styles, which helps him identify different basket styles. Today, Tom shares what he has learned from his Louisiana Choctaw mentors with other Choctaw communities, including us here in Oklahoma. If you look inside the chukka in the Choctaw Cultural Center, you will find a rivercane mat harvested and woven by Tom. Most recently, he helped the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians build summer homes with palmetto. Our community has been very lucky to have the opportunity to learn from Tom. Both he and Eveline have helped tremendously in revitalizing Choctaw arts and better understanding rivercane.

Rivercane has been a part of Choctaw life and landscapes where Choctaw people have lived for hundreds of generations. A tall plant that resembles bamboo and grows near water, rivercane was once found all over the Choctaw homeland and in Southeastern Oklahoma, partly because Choctaw people managed the land to produce healthy river cane stands. Today, it is a difficult plant to find. Fire suppression, over-grazing, and intentional destruction have all made it hard to find rivercane patches with tall enough stalks for baskets. Eveline, who used to visit and gather from the same rivercane patches throughout her childhood with her grandmother, found that they were no longer there later when she was an adult. Those who work with rivercane also know to be frugal with harvesting cane since cane is good for making baskets and is hard to find. If you find rivercane on your property and would like to



Photos Provided

Rivercane basket makers Eveline Steele and Tom Colvin examine rivercane baskets at the Smithsonian.

help with efforts to conserve it, please feel free to reach out to the Historic Preservation department.

When rivercane was everywhere, Choctaw people transformed it into numerous objects for everyday life. It has been used for building homes and made into knives, blowguns, fishing spears, traps, shields, flutes, tongs, pottery tools, traditional foods and (most relevant to our article) baskets. Choctaw people have traditionally made rivercane baskets in many different shapes and sizes. A sample of them can be found in the Smithsonian’s collections, from elbow to bullnose to packback baskets to sifter baskets. There is a wide range of forms from different time periods and geographies.

Rivercane basket making is not just weaving; it also requires holistic knowledge of the plant and how to process it. Our ancestors fostered healthy patches of river cane on the landscape by regularly setting fire to its growing areas. This removes competing shade and invigorates the cane’s rhizomes for enhanced growth. In a healthy cane patch of the right age, one has to know which stalks to harvest. During an outing to harvest rivercane, Eveline noted that stalks over 18 inches between the nodes are ideal since the nodes make the splitting and weaving more difficult. After the cane is cut, the cane can be washed and split into strips. Working with rivercane is a challenge that takes great care. Even with a lifetime of experience, one can easily cut oneself with a knife while trying to split the rivercane into pliable strips. Rivercane splints are also sharp, so a jagged edge can quickly draw blood. Each stalk of rivercane has to be carefully accessed for the best places to split. It takes patience and skill to make sure that the strips remain long and uniform in size. After being cut into strips, the outer part of the cane has to be peeled off the hard inside. Once that is done, those peeled strips are shaved down to make them bendable. The strips can be dyed in different colors at this point. Upon completing all these steps, one can begin weaving the rivercane into baskets.

In the hands of experienced basket makers like Tom and Eveline, transforming a few shoots of cane into pliable strips ready for weaving can take an afternoon. For an apprentice, the same amount might take them days. Mak-

ing rivercane baskets requires a good investment in time and commitment to finishing the project. Given this, Tom and Eveline both encourage those interested in rivercane baskets not to give up.

Given the scarcity and difficulty of working with rivercane, commercial reeds have become a popular material for making Choctaw baskets today. Commercial reed can arrive at one’s front porch basically ready for weaving, cutting out all the steps for preparing the rivercane mentioned above. Another one of Fannie Battiest Wesley’s granddaughters who learned from her as well as her mother, Rose Billy, makes her baskets using commercial reed. Commercial reed has been incredibly helpful in making basket weaving more accessible and approachable for many community members. Nevertheless, the knowledge of how to prepare cane for baskets is also very important to pass on to the next generation.

Studying older baskets in museum collections is one way for Eveline and Tom to re-learn old techniques or solutions to problems that they find while making rivercane baskets. Seeing old baskets in person is helpful because they hold knowledge about the possibilities for patterns, shapes and designs. For Eveline Steele, seeing the baskets at the Smithsonian allowed her to compare the natural dyes that we currently use and those used in the past. She stated, “It’s always good to know about dyes but most importantly the ratio and preparation of such dyes. Otherwise, it’s hard to know the many possibilities of dyes, of types and designs of basketry.” She also noted that networking with museum staff and learning from their expertise is invaluable. For Tom, he had traveled with other Louisiana Choctaw basket makers to the Smithsonian to view their baskets back in the 1980s. He recalled that they were only allowed half a day to view the many baskets. While there, he took photos of the baskets that he saw. Since then, he has shared those photos with fellow basket makers and community members whom he has befriended over the years. By sharing his experience back then, many people have been able to learn from that trip even if they did not go themselves. For the 2022 Smithsonian visit, Tom brought a small photo album with pictures of his first visit to share with the museum staff and us. With this second trip, Tom noted that he learned more from the same baskets he saw years ago now that he had gained more experience.

At the Smithsonian’s Museum of Natural History and National Museum of the American Indian, some of the most impressive baskets that are not as common now were the large pack baskets. Tom recalled making some before rivercane became difficult to find; one of his pack baskets is on display in the Cultural Center’s permanent exhibits. He and Eveline studied the museum’s collection intently, taking careful note of the construction and explaining to us why the maker might have made the decisions that they did. Worn on the back, the rivercane pack baskets in that collection incorporate leather straps to wear over the shoulder. Part of the challenge of making a pack basket today is the lack of rivercane large enough to provide support for the bottom.

Working with rivercane basket makers like Tom and Eveline has helped maintain a practice done by generations of Choctaw people. Without the passing of this generational knowledge, this knowledge would have been lost. We hope to learn more about rivercane, how to process it, and how studying older baskets inspires our community to take up the challenge to continue revitalizing this wonderful Choctaw art. If you are interested in learning more about river cane basketry, please see <https://choctawnationculture.com/media/27462/2011.02%20Choctaw%20baskets.pdf>.



Photos Provided

Pictured are Choctaw rivercane baskets from the Smithsonian collection. Scan the QR code for a video from a recent visit to the Smithsonian.



## Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

Storm season is just around the corner! Do you have your storm shelter installed?

The Storm Shelter program began in 2012, and to date, 7,991 storm shelters have been installed in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. All tribal members in these states, regardless of income, 45 years of age and older, are eligible to receive a \$3,500 voucher for an in-ground storm shelter with the documentation they own their home. Those with ambulatory disabilities may receive a voucher for \$5,000 to purchase an above-ground shelter. All expenses over the voucher amount will be charged to the tribal member.

All tribal members in the five states listed above under the age of 45 who own their homes are eligible for a \$1,750 voucher. You are only eligible to receive this benefit once.

The application is available on the Chahta Achvffa portal. You can also contact our housing office for an application and return it with your tribal membership and a copy of your deed to your home (the tribal member’s name must be on the deed). If all eligibility requirements are met, you will receive your voucher. Simply pick the contractor of your choice, and once they have installed the shelter to your satisfaction, present them with the voucher. The contractor will then submit the voucher to Housing for payment.

You may obtain an application by visiting the Choctaw Nation website at [www.choctawnation.com](http://www.choctawnation.com), the Chahta Achvffa portal or by giving us a call at (580) 326-7521 or (800) 235-3087 to have one sent to you.

## GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

APPLICATION FOR TRADITIONAL CHOCTAW SEEDS  
REQUEST BY APPLICATION ONLY

Please check the three plants that you would like to receive seed for:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Isito</b><br>Choctaw Sweet Potato Squash | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Tvnishi</b><br>Lambsquarter     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Tanchi Tohbi</b><br>Choctaw Flour Corn   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Hakchuma</b><br>Perique Tobacco |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Tobi</b><br>Smith Peas                   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Chukfi</b><br>Peas              |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form to:**  
 Growing Hope Project  
 163665 N 4355 RD  
 Tushkahoma, OK 74574

**Contact:**  
 Growing Hope Program Manager  
 918-567-3709 ext. 1016

Seeds from the Growing Hope Project are intended for Choctaw people and family members. They will be given out on a first come, first served basis while supplies last.

**YAKOKE!**

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority

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Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation



# Colorectal Cancer Awareness

By Chris Jennings

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month is observed every year in March. Despite being a leading cause of death in Native Americans, colorectal cancer is a very treatable disease.

Native American cancer statistics vary across the United States by region. According to the American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICF), in the Southern Plains, which includes Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for Native American men, just behind lung cancer. For Native American women, it's the third-highest cause of death behind lung cancer at number one and breast cancer at number two.

### The American Cancer Society's estimates for the number of colorectal cancers in the United States for 2023 are:

- 106,970 new cases of colon cancer
- 46,050 new cases of rectal cancer

The best method for finding colorectal cancer is regular screenings. Traditionally, this has been done with screenings where doctors look for polyps in the colon.

A polyp is a small clump of cells forming in the colon or rectum lining.

Most polyps are harmless, but some can grow into cancer. That process can take 10-15 years, so finding and removing polyps early on is the best prevention for colorectal cancer.

"A lot of times, it [colon cancer] just starts as a polyp in your colon that's never detected. People don't do their screenings, don't do their colonoscopies. Then it can just grow unchecked, eventually spreading into other organs, other body systems and causing bigger issues," said Natassia Zink, an RN with Choctaw Nation Health Services.

### Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in men and women. When combined, it's the second most common cause of cancer deaths. It's expected to cause about 52,550 deaths during 2023.

There are several risk factors for colorectal cancer that you can change.

According to the American Cancer Society, many lifestyle-related things have been linked to colorectal cancer.

The links between diet, weight and exercise and colorectal cancer risk are some of the strongest for any cancer. However, factors like age and family history can unfortunately not be changed.

"Age is a big one, and family history is the next largest. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer, you're much more likely to have something yourself," Michelle Gibson, Director of Preventative Health for the Choctaw Nation.

Gibson lost her father to colon cancer in 2004. Gibson said if he had gotten a colonoscopy as part of a regular health screening, he might not have died so early.

More often than not, there are no symptoms of colorectal cancer, so screening is the best prevention.

The CDC recommends screening for men and wom-

en over the age of 45.

Although, if you have a family history of cancer, your doctor may want to start screening earlier.

Gibson said they go by age, "Whatever age they [the family members] were when they found out they had the cancer, then they would screen sooner," she said.

If they catch colorectal cancer early, it's often treatable.

"If it's found early, they can do a colonoscopy. If it's super early, especially at the polyp stage, they can go ahead and take them out right then and there," said Zink.

There have been major advancements in colon screenings in recent years. However, the stigma surrounding colonoscopies keeps people from getting screened.

Zink, who spends a lot of her time calling people about getting screened, says they're apprehensive as soon as they find out who she is and what she's calling about.

"Everybody knows what a colonoscopy is. Most people know that they don't want one, they're never going to have one, and that's where they draw the line," said Zink.

The Choctaw Nation is taking steps to counteract these apprehensions by embracing new screening advancements.

Zink can send a fecal occult blood test (FOBT) to patients before regular doctor visits.

The FOBT tests don't test for cancer but for blood in the stool, which can be a sign of something wrong in the colon.

The program is part of the Moonshot Grant in partnership with the Oklahoma University Stephenson Cancer Center. Gibson originally started working on the grant, and Zink took over two years ago.

The FOBT tests are done annually as a first step in preventing colorectal cancer.

"The FOBT kit is the first step, so it doesn't stand alone. If it comes back negative, you do another one the next year, if it's positive, then you're still going to need a colonoscopy," Zink said.

Currently, the tests are only being sent to patients before their appointments at the Stigler and Poteau health clinics, but all the Choctaw Nation clinics have them available.

The return rate of the tests sent out ahead of time shows how successful the program is.

"In 2022, I sent out 565 kits, and 425 of those came back," Zink said. Of those 425, 42 had a positive screening for blood in the stool. What that data, that's 42 people who otherwise may not have known there was a problem and needed a more thorough screening.

Before the FOBT kits were sent to patients before their appointments, Zink said the return rate could have been better.

"People weren't coming for their appointments. Or they would be given this kit at the doctor's office, throw it down in the seat of their car, and that's where it would stay until it got thrown away," she said. "When you're going to the doctor, you do everything you're supposed to do before your appointment. You eat right. You try to lose a little bit of weight, especially our diabetics. You want to please that provider when you walk through the door. So that was our big initiative to get these to the patients before their appointment."

The importance of screening for colorectal cancer can't be overstated.

"This is what we need to focus on. Prevention is the key to patients living longer and families not having to go through this roller coaster ride of having cancer or not having cancer," Gibson said.

Talk to your primary care physician about getting screened for cancer with a colonoscopy or the FOBT kit.



Photo Provided

Choctaw Health Services has an inflatable, walk-through colon that was recently set up at the Bigfoot Festival in Honobia, Oklahoma. The colon shows examples of polyps and other common problems that can develop in the colon.

## Food Distribution Headlines

By Chase Ward

As spring is on its way, we are starting to move around and go outside more often. Participating in fun outdoor activities such as gardening, hiking, biking, fishing and recreational sports will help one live a more heart healthy life. Eating protein options lower in saturated fats like grilled chicken, bison, eggs, and fish can also improve heart health. Nutrients called omega 3 fatty acids (or polyunsaturated fats) can improve your cholesterol level and can be found in fish like tuna, salmon and walleye, which are all offered through FDPPIR.

- According to the Mayo Clinic, Omega-3s in these USDA foods can also help in:
  - Lowering blood pressure.
  - Reducing blood clotting.
  - Decreasing your risk of strokes and heart failure risk.
  - Reducing irregular heartbeats

## Granola

- 8 cups dry oats (quick cooking or regular)
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- ½ cup shredded unsweetened coconut (optional)
- 4 cups chopped fruit and nut mix
- ¼ teas. salt (optional)
- 1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon cup and chop using large kitchen scissors)
- ½ cup maple syrup
- ¾ cup unsweetened fruit juice
- Apple, cranberry, or orange (optional)

### Preparation

1. Add oats, coconut, salt and cinnamon to a large mixing bowl.
2. In a separate small mixing bowl, add maple syrup or honey, fruit juice, and vanilla; stir.
3. Gradually pour the liquid ingredients over the oats while stirring the oat mixture.
4. Mix well, so all oats are coated evenly.
5. Spray a large baking sheet (with sides) with pan spray. Place in a 350-degree preheated oven and bake for 30 - 40 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes.
6. Granola should be slightly crunchy and golden brown when done.
7. Remove from the oven and add the chopped fruit and nuts; mix well, so the dried fruit does not clump.
8. When completely cooled and dry, store in a container with a tight-fitting lid.
9. Serve as a breakfast cereal with low-fat milk or use it as a topping for yogurt or low-fat ice cream.



## 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.

### March 2023

All markets open weekdays, March 1-29

**Closed:** March 30, and 31.

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

**ANTLERS** 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443  
Food demo March 7

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
Food demo March 14

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
Food demo March 21

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716  
Food demo March 9

**POTEAU** 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431  
Food demo March 23

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

## WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

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

Choctaw Nation Health Services

**HEALTH FAIRS IN 2023**

Learn about health services offered by Choctaw Nation.

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

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

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

Choctaw Nation Health Services ENHSA 100

### Choctaw Nation Health Clinic Contact Information

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

You may also schedule an appointment via [my.cnhsa.com](http://my.cnhsa.com).



### REDW, LLC and HoganTaylor celebrate relationship with art dedication and donation

**OKLAHOMA CITY**— REDW LLC, a national leader serving Native American communities and tribal enterprises, and HoganTaylor, the largest business advisory and public accounting firm based in Oklahoma, have joined forces to bring REDW clients across Indian Country the added benefits of HoganTaylor's comprehensive technology solutions, including outsourced CIO and technology services, managed services, hardware and software solutions, and cybersecurity services.

"Through collaboration with over 200 Tribal Nations and numerous tribal enterprises, the accounting services of REDW combined with HoganTaylor's technology expertise will provide a more comprehensive solution to meet the needs of our clients," says Victor Flores MBA, MHA, REDW Principal, whose team serves the 38 federally recognized Tribes in Oklahoma. "We're thrilled to be partnering with HoganTaylor to bring technology services to our clients in Indian Country."

This move is the latest for REDW and HoganTaylor, who have maintained a close affinity relationship for several years. REDW's Oklahoma City office is located in the HoganTaylor offices in Automobile Alley. The deeper partnership will allow both firms to better serve their clients and provide a unique value proposition to Indian Country.

HoganTaylor's team of experienced professionals is dedicated to helping organizations use technology as a strategic tool to manage risk, increase productivity, and assure stakeholders of their IT program's compliance with industry standards. This collaboration between REDW and HoganTaylor will ensure tribal clients across the state have the highest level of access to these tools and expertise.

"We're proud to partner with REDW to expand our reach and bring our technology services to their tribal clients," Cody Griffin, HoganTaylor Technology Services Lead, said. "We couldn't be more excited and know this is just the beginning of a long-standing commitment to serve this important sector of the state's business community."



Photo Provided

The HoganTaylor Foundation awarded a \$5,000 grant to MMIW – Chahta. The group was co-founded by Karris Hodge and Christa Lampkin, employees of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

The two firms recognized this partnership during a powerful art unveiling event at HoganTaylor's Oklahoma City office on Feb. 8. The joint event, which featured speeches by key leadership from REDW and HoganTaylor and many leaders from Indian Country, revealed a piece of artwork by Choctaw Nation Master Artist DG Smalling.

The piece will be housed at the HoganTaylor office and was dedicated to in recognition of the ongoing national dialogue concerning Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).

In addition to the dedication, The HoganTaylor Foundation also awarded a \$5,000 grant to MMIW – Chahta in support of their efforts to raise awareness of this important issue. The group was co-founded by Karris Hodge and Christa Lampkin, employees of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO).

On March 15, 2022, President Joe Biden signed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization Act of 2022 which expanded the special criminal jurisdiction of Tribal courts to cover non-Native perpetrators of sexual assault, child abuse, stalking, sex trafficking and assaults on Tribal law enforcement officers on Tribal lands. On April 30, 2022, in recognition of the VAWA reauthorization, the state of Oklahoma recognized MMIW–Chahta as a charitable foundation.

"HoganTaylor is honored to help raise awareness of this important cause through the installation of this artwork and the support of MMIW – Chahta. We're so happy to showcase DG's powerful and impactful artwork in our office," Griffin said.

### Schatz, Murkowski lead live video call with astronaut Nicole Mann, first Indigenous woman in outer space

**WASHINGTON (February 8, 2023)** – U.S. Senator Brian Schatz (D-Hawai'i), chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), vice chairman of the Committee, hosted a video call between Members of Congress and NASA Astronaut Nicole Aunapu Mann — the first Native American woman in space — from the International Space Station.

An enrolled member of the Wailacki of the Round Valley Indian Tribes, Mann was selected by NASA in June 2013 and launched to the International Space Station as commander of NASA's SpaceX Crew-5 mission aboard the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft on October 5, 2022.

"Astronaut Mann is an inspiration to not just Members of Congress, but all of the people we represent," said Chairman Schatz. "Especially the young people, who see someone to emulate, someone to strive to be like, and someone who does their job with incredible joy and determination."

"Yesterday, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hosted a bicameral video link through the NASA Mission Control Center with the first Native American female astronaut, Nicole "Duke" Aunapu Mann, who is currently aboard the International Space Station as Commander of SpaceX Crew-5 mission. With our limited time



Photo: U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

Senators Schatz and Murkowski participate in a video call with NASA Astronaut Nicole Aunapu Mann, Wailacki of the Round Valley Indian Tribes, on February 7.

with Col. Mann, we asked her about how to inspire young Native people to follow in her footsteps, what Congress can do to support them in pursuing such careers, and what advice she has for Native youth interested in STEM. I thank Col. Mann for taking time out of her important mission to meet with us and letting us share in her historic exploration into space," said Vice Chairman Murkowski.

The full video of the event is available at <https://www.indian.senate.gov/hearing/downlink-nasa-astronaut-nicole-mann>.

### Health and Human Services awards \$139 million for diabetes program for Native Americans

**WASHINGTON (January 25, 2023)** – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through the Indian Health Service, is investing \$139 million in funding for the Fiscal Year 2023 Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) to provide diabetes prevention and treatment services for American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Funding awards - PDF have been made to 302 tribal, urban, and IHS sites in 35 states under the new, 5-year grant cycle that began on January 1, 2023. Eleven organizations and tribes are being funded for the first time.

"IHS is committed to eliminating health disparities in communities across the country," said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. "American Indian and Alaska Native communities have historically had disproportionately higher rates of diabetes than other populations. Through education and outreach programs like the Special Diabetes Program for Indians, we are successfully implementing evidence-based and community-driven strategies to prevent and treat diabetes in tribal and urban Indian communities."

Federal data show that the rate of diabetes-related kidney failure decreased by half after implementing population-based diabetes treatment and prevention services like SDPI. The prevalence of diabetic eye disease (retinopathy) has also fallen in American Indian and Alaska Native adults exit disclaimer icon by more than 50 percent compared to reports from the 1980s and 1990s. This is a substantial reduction in the risk of vision problems and blindness in American Indian and Alaska Native adults with diabetes. Although it is not possible to determine specific reasons for these decreases, the diabetes prevention services provided by IHS, tribal and urban Indian health facilities very likely contributed.

"IHS is committed to continuing its support for diabetes prevention and treatment for IHS, tribal, and urban Indian health programs," said IHS Director Roselyn Tso. "Since its inception in 1997, the Special Diabetes Program for Indians has helped to dramatically increase access to important diabetes prevention and treatment services throughout Indian Country."

The Special Diabetes Program for Indians has successfully implemented evidence-based and community-driven strategies to prevent and treat diabetes within American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Using guidance from tribal leaders, the SDPI

has also engendered a national diabetes network for American Indians and Alaska Natives. This work supports the Biden-Harris Administration's goal to end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases by 2030 – all while reducing disparities – and its corresponding National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health - PDF. And for any American Indians and Alaska Natives with Medicare prescription drug coverage who receive health care services outside of the Indian health system, the Biden-Harris Administrations is delivering on increased access to health care and lower costs. Through the Inflation Reduction Act, a month's supply of each covered insulin is capped at \$35.

The 11 organizations and tribes that are being funded for the first time:

- Alaska**
  - Native Village of Eyak, Ilanka Community Health Center, Cordova
- Arizona**
  - Native American Connections, Phoenix
- Montana**
  - Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana, Great Falls
  - Native American Development Corporation, Billings
- New York**
  - Lockport Service Unit, Lockport
- Manlius Service Unit, Manlius**
- Shinnecock Service Unit, South Hampton**
- Virginia**
  - Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Providence Forge
  - Mid-Atlantic/Richmond Service Unit, Richmond
  - Monacan Indian Nation, Madison Heights
  - Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe, King William

The IHS Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention provides programmatic leadership of the SDPI program, as well as extensive training and resources, which are widely used by special diabetes program sites and clinicians across the country.

The IHS, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.7 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to 574 federally recognized tribes in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on Facebook exit disclaimer icon, Twitter exit disclaimer icon, and LinkedIn exit disclaimer icon.

**CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER**

**MEMBERSHIP**

**BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!**

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION

## 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**

**2023 ARTS & CRAFTS VENDOR APPLICATION**

**NOW ONLINE**

**SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER**

#CHAHTALABORDAY



# Spring gardening can be healthy in a number of ways

By Kellie Matherly

There's nothing quite like eating juicy tomatoes or crisp green beans from your very own garden. When the weather warms up and the days get a little longer, it's time to think about planting those spring vegetables.

Home gardening is a rewarding, delicious hobby, but the benefits go far beyond a feeling of accomplishment and great-tasting food. Pulling weeds, planting and harvesting can burn up to 400 calories an hour. Add that to the fact that most gardening is done outside when the weather is nice, and it becomes a perfect activity to improve physical and mental health. Finally, a well-tended garden can produce food year-round, lowering your family's grocery bills.

According to Jeffrey Roebuck, Project Technician at the Choctaw Nation's Agriculture Demonstration Center in Lehigh, one of the greatest benefits of having your own garden is that the food tastes better. "A lot of times the store-bought vegetables have been treated with a gas to make them stay prettier longer," he said. "With a garden, you know what you put into that vegetable, so you know what is going into your body."



Getting kids involved is also a great way to teach healthy activity and eating habits. "It's nice to watch them go out there and see that they can put a seed in the ground, and a month later, they can see what they grew and that it's healthy for them, especially if it's a cantaloupe or a watermelon that they can enjoy the sweet taste," said Roebuck. It may even help picky eaters be more receptive to new fresh foods.

If you're a beginner, planning and starting your own vegetable patch may seem daunting, but with plenty of resources, guides and farming techniques like raised beds and container gardening, it may be easier than you think.

The first step to having a successful garden is to find the right location. Most vegetables need six to eight hours of direct sunlight every day, although there are a few leafy varieties that can tolerate some shade. Your plot needs to have good drainage as well. Wet soil means wet roots, which will lead to root rot and no produce. In addition, rocky soil can inhibit the growth of roots, so it's best to till the soil and remove any barriers to roots.

It is also critical to provide nutrient-rich soil for your young plants. Be sure to mix in plenty of organic matter like compost, manure or humus. The more established your roots are, the more stable your plants will be in the ground and the more they will produce. Avoid areas where there is a lot of foot traffic or high winds that may prevent your plants from taking root.

Roebuck recommends avoiding mass-produced potting mix when possible. "There's a lot of potting mixes out there that have a lot of things in them that won't be suitable for growing vegetables. There's a lot of nasty stuff inside some of that," he said. He prefers to buy from a nursery or a locally owned greenhouse store. They will know what to put in the mix because they are familiar with the soil in the region.

For gardening novices who will be planting a traditional in-ground garden, it's a good idea to start with a small plot at first. Andrea Beck of Better Homes and Gardens magazine suggests a 6'X6' plot, with the garden area divided into square foot sections. The Old Farmer's Almanac suggests a 10'X10' or even up to a 12'X24' plot for beginners.

Raised beds and container gardens are becoming more popular, especially for home gardeners with very little space, physical disabilities or other limitations. With both raised beds and container gardens, those who rent houses or apartments also have the option to grow their own food without breaking their lease agreements.

Container gardens also need plenty of sunlight and access to water, as well as shelter from wind and cold temperatures, but you will reap some appealing benefits. For instance, you will cultivate the ideal soil with the right nutrients, rather than worrying about your native soil's ability to support your plants. You will also have fewer weeds, if any, in a container garden. And perhaps best of all, harvesting is far cleaner and easier. There are even certain varieties of vegetables like tomatoes, strawberries and salad greens that have been specially bred to thrive in containers!

Once you've decided what kind of garden best suits your needs, it's time to choose seeds or plants, and to ensure the most successful harvest, you need to know when to plant them. Seedlings are plants that have already sprouted and are ready for transfer. While some seeds can be sown directly into the soil, other varieties may need to be started indoors and transferred. It is certainly easier to plant a garden from seedlings, rather than seeds, but seeds are less expensive.



Tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, radishes, peas, beans, and herbs such as basil, rosemary and thyme are easy for beginners to grow and can yield a bountiful harvest. The Old Farmer's Almanac has a handy interactive planting calendar that allows gardeners to enter their zip codes to find the best time to plant certain crops using average frost dates. For instance, at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters in Durant, Okla., the best time to plant tomato seedlings is between April 14 and May 5, according to the almanac. You can find this planting calendar at <https://www.almanac.com/gardening/planting-calendar>.

It's best to get your plants from a locally owned shop that understands what will grow well in your area, according to Roebuck. Big box stores and chains tend to ship the same plants to all their stores regardless of whether the plant is suited to the climate there. Read the planting instructions on your seed pack-

## Companion Planting Guide

Carrots	Corn	Tomatoes	Cucumbers
tomatoes, leeks, rosemary, sage and chives	green beans, cucumbers, peas, melons and squash	basil, marigolds, celery, onions, lettuce and spinach	marigolds, celery, onions, lettuce, peas, radishes and spinach

Companion planting is the practice of growing plants together that benefit each other. Plants like tomatoes and peppers grow well together as companions, while others can damage their neighbors or affect the flavor of the plants around them.

et or seedling tag to find out if the plant is disease resistant and whether the plant can survive in the climate where you live, also known as your hardiness zone. The USDA offers an interactive map at <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> that can help you find your zone.

"To make it even easier, especially for a beginner, you want to try to find a vegetable that is disease resistant," says Roebuck. "Being disease resistant means it's been tested and studied, so hopefully, you won't be fighting blossom end rot on tomatoes."

Where you place plants in your newly established garden is also important. Certain plants, such as tomatoes and peppers, grow well together as companions, while others can actually damage their neighbors or affect the flavor of the plants around them. For instance, cucumbers are not friendly with potatoes. A perfect example of companion planting is the Three Sisters garden.

Practiced by Choctaws and other Native American tribes for generations, this technique places corn, beans and squash in proximity to each other to create a perfectly balanced relationship. The corn stalk supports the climbing beans; the beans add extra nutrients to the soil, and the squash creates ground cover to protect the other plants' roots from harsh temperatures. In many cases, planting flowers like marigolds and nasturtiums can help ward off pests in your garden.

The Choctaw Nation's Agriculture Demonstration Centers provide hands-on workshops, trials and demonstrations to showcase gardening trends for tribal members and their communities. Visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/ag-de-mo-centers/> to find out more about upcoming events.

In addition, the Backyard Initiative project offers instructional videos and step-by-step guides for building a traditional raised garden, a universally accessible raised garden, a compost bin and even a chicken tractor. These videos are also available at the Agriculture Demonstration Centers' webpage.

Heirloom seeds for traditional Choctaw crops are also available through the Growing Hope program. This seed bank, curated by the Choctaw Nation's Historical Preservation team, allows tribal members to participate in the revitalization of time-honored Choctaw foodways. Growing Hope also offers workshops for those who want to learn more about the history of these plants and preparing the food once harvested. Aside from the cultural benefits of growing traditional Choctaw crops, there are measurable health perks that come from eating these foods.

Emily Soreghan, a recent graduate of the University of Oklahoma, partnered with Growing Hope to learn more about seed heritage for her term project.

"Food is a keystone of culture. The type of food we eat, our way of preparing and sharing food—these daily rituals connect us to place and time and each other," said Soreghan.

During her time working with the Growing Hope program, Soreghan had the opportunity to help in the revitalization of the Spotted Cane Basket Bean. Using her own raised beds, she successfully cultivated the bean sprouts, which helped mitigate damage to existing Choctaw crops by diversifying the location of the plants. According to Dr. Ian Thompson, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Choctaw Nation, Soreghan's participation helped increase the seed bank for this threatened plant by 50%.

"Seeds differ from most material culture in one important sense: they are alive!" said Soreghan. "Each morning I go outside and stare at the baby bean sprouts rapturously: this living culture, this miracle, this resilient and unique bean."

Right now, the Growing Hope program's seed collection includes several varieties of corn, beans, squash and peas. Lambsquarter and tobacco are also available. From January to April, tribal members can request an application for seeds here: <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/growing-hope/>.

**I AM CHOCTAW PROUD**

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## ART CONTEST

SPONSORED BY CHOCTAW NATION NATIVE CONNECTIONS

OUR FUTURE'S BRIGHT. THE STARS GUIDE US THROUGH THE DARKEST NIGHTS. **WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THE STARS?**

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**THE ARTWORK IS DUE BY MARCH 24**  
WINNERS IN EACH AGE GROUP WILL BE ANNOUNCED BY APRIL 10

All artwork submissions will be compiled into a video submitted to the Native Connections 2023 Digital Media Festival sponsored by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.)

**CONTACT: MELANIE CARRELL**  
**918.302.0052 OR MLCARRELL@CNHSA.COM**

Scan code to submit your artwork

Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Services



# Sexual assault victims can receive SANE services at Talihina Health Care Center

By Shelia Kirven

The Choctaw Nation Health Care Center, Talihina, Oklahoma, offers services for victims of sexual assault through the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) unit certified through the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN).

The group's purpose is to be there when someone is injured in a sexual assault.

According to Debra Dill, RN, BSN, MSN, MHA, SANE-4, LNHA, PRN-Nursing House Supervisor, the group formalized in 2008 is dedicated, good at what they do and particularly cautious about patient privacy.

All victims, tribal and non-tribal, from any location, from teenagers through end-of-life, can be seen.

There is no cost, and no appointment is needed.

"This is a service for victims of crime, so we service anybody who walks through the door," said Dill.

Victims should be seen immediately, if possible, but can still be seen within two days after an assault or up to 120 hours later, dependent upon the SANE nurse's judgment.

Victims with immediate health concerns are seen by emergency room staff first.

"Once we make sure they are okay medically, we can give them antibiotics that prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It is a one-time dose, and then they are referred to go to their health department and follow up with their provider and get a full prescription. We give them immediate medications for STDs. We do have the morning-after pill in case they are afraid of being pregnant," Dill said.

According to Dill, the staff ensures that the victim is not already pregnant.

Education and resource referrals for medical providers are also given, as well as referrals for housing, counseling and other programs to help with physical and emotional wellness.

If the victim wishes to file charges, information and evidence are released to law enforcement. Often, a police officer will be the first contact in the emergency room and even be the one who transports the individual to the hospital.

"By coming and having that exam, I think that helps a victim of violence feel safer and better because we can assure them this is not their fault, and they are okay medically. A lot of times they are afraid," said Dill.

According to Dill, victims need to know that they can help keep others safe from their perpetrators and that telling their stories benefits their own health and emotional well-being.

"We have to understand when someone has been hurt, there is a certain thing they need from that caregiver, and that is mostly peace, compassion and caring," Dill said. "We don't try to influence in any way or guide how a person is thinking at that time. We are simply there to make sure they are okay, let them talk, and then try to help them."

SANEs are available around the clock to do exams in Talihina.

If victims cannot travel there to be seen, they should report to an emergency room or contact a police officer.

Often, if the emergency room is within the local area and does not have an on-site SANE, the victim will be transported to Talihina, or a SANE will be called in.

According to Dill, many hospitals have victim's advocacy centers approximately 45 miles apart in the Choctaw Nation service area. Advocates represent tribal, county and city agencies who work together and sometimes transport victims as needed to locations with SANE examiners.

"Our target is that a person does not have to travel very far to get this done. They have already been through so much, and we do not want to give them more trauma," Dill explained.

Two Choctaw Nation SANE staff members are completing certifications to see pediatric clients at the Talihina hospital.

The first tribal Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) will soon be constructed in Hugo. The center will be open for children who need to be examined by a SANE nurse, be interviewed by counselors and/or police, and be a place where the victim can feel warm and safe.

SANE staff are looking forward to the opening of the CAC and have reached out to offer help with call coverage.

According to Dill, both units must complete the same training standards for adults and pediatric.

"A CAC has processes they must follow in the care of a child victim of violence which supports the child's best interest," said Dill.

For more questions on the SANE unit, email Debbie Dill at [dkdill@chnsa.com](mailto:dkdill@chnsa.com) or call 918-567-7000, ext. 6917. The Choctaw Nation Health Care Center is located at One Choctaw Way in Talihina, Oklahoma.



Photo Provided

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) unit at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina, Oklahoma, provides immediate comprehensive care to sexual assault victims.

## Questions and Answers for Victims of Sexual Assault Nationwide

### How do I report sexual assault?

You have several options for reporting sexual assault:

- **Call 911.** If you are in immediate danger, dial 911. Help will come to you, wherever you are.
- **Contact the local police department.** Call the direct line of your local police station or visit the station in person. If you are on a college campus you may also be able to contact campus-based law enforcement.
- **Visit a medical center.** If you are being treated for injuries resulting from sexual assault, tell a medical professional that you wish to report the crime. You can also choose to have a sexual assault forensic exam. To find an appropriate local health facility that is prepared to care for survivors, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline 800.656.HOPE (4673).

To learn more about the options in your area, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE (4673). You'll be connected to a staff member from a local sexual assault service provider who will walk you through the process of getting help and reporting to law enforcement at your own pace. In most areas, there are specific law enforcement officers who are trained to interact with sexual assault survivors. Service providers can connect you to these officers, and might also send a trained advocate to accompany you through the reporting process.

### Who will I be talking to?

In most areas, there are specific law enforcement officers who are trained to interact with survivors of sexual assault. In addition, many law enforcement agencies participate in Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs), which provide a survivor-centered, coordinated response to sexual assault. SARTs incorporate medical personnel, law enforcement, and sexual assault service providers in your area. They work together to organize the investigation, reduce repetition of questions and interviews, and facilitate communication among all agencies involved.

### Is there a time limit on reporting to the police?

There is no limitation on when a victim can report a crime to police. However, in many states, there is a limitation on when charges can be filed and a case can be prosecuted. This is called the statute of limitations. Statutes of limitation vary by state, type of crime, age of the victim, and various other factors. Visit RAINN's State Law Database to learn more about the criminal statutes of limitation where you are.

### What are some common concerns about reporting?

If you have questions or concerns about reporting, you're not alone. The list below may have answers to some common questions that are on your mind.

- **The perpetrator got scared away or stopped before finishing the assault.** Attempted rape is a serious crime and can be reported. Reports of attempted rape and other assault are taken seriously.
- **I know the person who hurt me.** About 2/3 of victims know the perpetrator. It can be unnerving to be violated by someone you know. Regardless of who the perpetrator is, sexual assault is against the law.
- **I've been intimate with the perpetrator in the past, or am currently in a relationship with the perpetrator.** Sexual assault can occur within a relationship. Giving someone consent in the past does not give them consent for any act in the future. If you did not consent, they acted against the law—and you can report it.
- **I have no physical injuries, and I'm worried there's not enough proof.** Most sexual assaults do not result in external physical injuries. It's important to receive medical attention to check for internal injuries. You can also choose to have a sexual assault forensic exam to check for DNA evidence that may not be visible on the surface.
- **I'm worried law enforcement won't believe me.** There has been great investment in police training on this topic. While there are occasional exceptions, most law enforcement officers are understanding and on your side. If you do encounter someone who isn't taking your case seriously, ask for their supervisor and let your local sexual assault service provider know.
- **I don't want to get in trouble.** Sometimes minors are afraid of being disciplined, either by the law or by their parents, because they were doing something they shouldn't have when the abuse occurred. For example, a teen might have been consuming alcohol, or a child might have been breaking a house rule. It's important to remember that sexual assault is a crime—no matter the circumstances. Nothing you did caused this to happen.

### Do I have to report to get rape kit?

By law, you are not required to report to law enforcement in order to receive a sexual assault forensic exam, commonly referred to as a "rape kit." The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 has made it easier for someone to have a "Jane Doe rape kit," where they are given a code to identify themselves if they choose to report later.

### Does it matter whether or not I know the perpetrator? Can I still have an exam?

There is value in having a sexual assault forensic exam performed, regardless of whether or not you know the identity of the perpetrator or perpetrators. DNA evidence collected during the exam can play an important role in the case against the perpetrator.

### Will I have to pay for the exam?

By law, you should not be billed for the direct costs of a sexual assault forensic exam. The way states handle this law can vary. Since 2009, states have been required to provide sexual assault forensic exams for free or via reimbursement, regardless of cooperation with law enforcement. Starting in 2015, health facilities will no longer be able to charge for exams up front and ask for victims to file reimbursement through their insurance later. If you have questions about a bill your received related to your exam or about any other aspects of the process, you can contact your local sexual assault service provider or state coalition.

For more information and resources on the topic of sexual assault, visit <https://www.rainn.org/>.

#### Legal Disclaimer

The Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) website provides general information that is intended, but not guaranteed, to be correct and up-to-date. The information is not presented as a source of legal advice. You should not rely, for legal advice, on statements or representations made within the website or by any externally referenced Internet sites. If you need legal advice upon which you intend to rely in the course of your legal affairs, consult a competent, independent attorney. RAINN does not assume any responsibility for actions or non-actions taken by people who have visited this site, and no one shall be entitled to a claim for detrimental reliance on any information provided or expressed.

# WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Devin Lindley

The Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation Department was formed this past year to help conserve the fish and wildlife on the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Reservation for future generations of tribal members. This past fall, the department successfully administered its first hunting seasons, including Black Bear, Whitetail Deer, Turkey and Furbearer.

With the help of other CNO departments, the Wildlife Department created a fish and game registration (check-in) system found in the Chahta Achvffa membership portal. This check-in system was created to allow tribal members to be able to check-in the animals that they harvested within the Reservation. So, it is important that when you harvest an animal, you report it through Chahta Achvffa because the harvest data collected from the check-ins will be used to share harvest information with other agencies and ensure that games species are properly managed within the Reservation for generations to come.

Harvest check-in was an overall success this year for all game species across the Reservation. There was a total of eight black bears checked-in this year, and all were taken within the archery season. The breakdown of checked bears was balanced with four females and four males. Fall turkey season had three turkeys checked in that were all taken with archery equipment. Whitetail deer hunters this past fall harvested 1,116 antlerless deer and 1,328 antlered deer for a total of 2,444 deer across archery, muzzleloader and gun seasons. Some encouraging statistics from the harvest data come from the hunters themselves. Within the CNO, 53.1% of the deer harvested were taken by hunters aged 30 and under. Also, 34% of the deer were harvested by Choctaw women. These strong numbers are a testament to the cultural ties and significance of hunting for the Choctaw Nation and are above the national averages.

The Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation Department would like to say YAKOKE to everyone for their cooperation this past fall and for making the inaugural CNO hunting seasons a success. We look forward to seeing our tribal members be successful on future hunts.

## Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation

## ACHIEVE YOUR DREAM OF BEING A DISTRICT PRINCESS OR TRIBAL ROYALTY

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## Choctaw Nation Cultural Services



### New housing options coming to CNO in 2024

By Christian Chaney

Choctaw Nation recognizes the housing demand and increases in rental rates nationwide. Due to the Durant Casino Expansion opening, there is a significant shortage of market-rate rental housing in Durant and rental rates and housing demands are at an all-time high. Choctaw Nation is preparing to decrease these demands in three Choctaw communities. Multi-family and single-family housing complexes will be available in each of these locations, and tribal members who accept positions with Choctaw Nation may be eligible to receive

relocation assistance from the Human Resources Department. Three housing complexes are coming soon. The complexes will be located in Durant, Calera and Broken Bow. The Haven, Durant location, consists of 216 units and will open in June 2024. Rosehill Lane, Calera location, consists of approximately 176 single-family rental units. Timber View, Broken Bow location, will include 120 units and support approximately 435 new jobs at the Hochatown Resort. Each complex will have amenities, like a dog park, clubhouse and playground. Tribal members and employees of the Choctaw Nation will have

preleasing priority to these units. A groundbreaking ceremony for The Haven took place on Jan. 19. Chief Gary Batton said, "This is about growing our economy. Making everybody's lives better, tribal members and non-tribal members. That's what we are all about. Our slogan says, 'Together We Are More' and we truly believe in that. Our council is doing an awesome job appropriating dollars so that we can make reality like today happen." For more information on other Choctaw Nation Housing services, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services>.



Photo by Christian Toews

Multi-family and single-family housing is coming to the Choctaw Nation in 2024. Choctaw Nation broke ground on one of three future apartment complexes on January 9.

### Denver Community Meeting

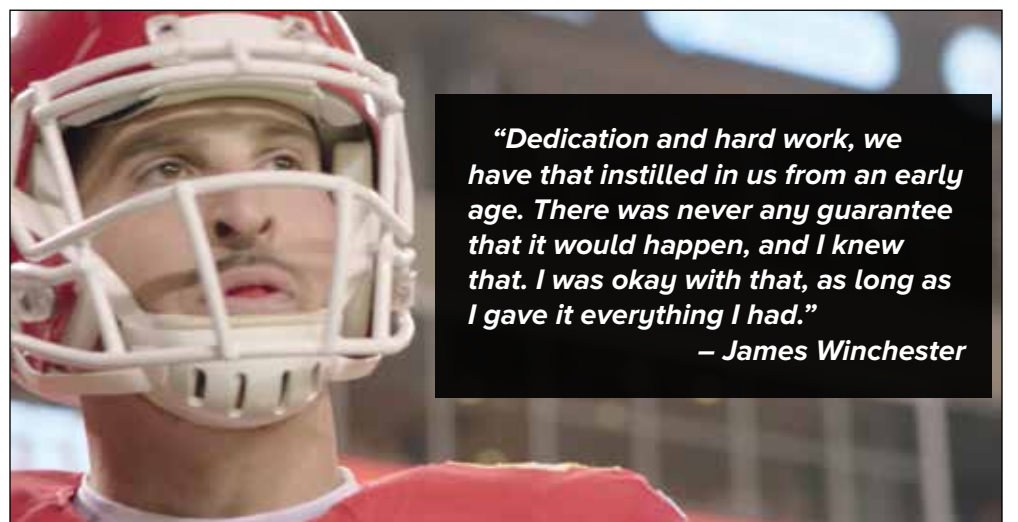


### San Francisco Community Meeting



### Winchester is two-time Super Bowl Champion

The Choctaw Nation Congratulates the Kansas City Chiefs and Choctaw tribal member James Winchester on their Super Bowl LVII win. For Winchester, this marks his second championship with the Chiefs. The long snapper from Washington, Oklahoma, snapped both the AFC Championship and Super Bowl-winning field goals. Winchester grew up with a love for sports. He went from youth football to the University of Oklahoma, where he played from 2008 to 2011. Through hard work and determination, Winchester is now in his eighth year in the NFL. Winchester defied the odds, powering through adversity and tragedy to get to where he is today.



*"Dedication and hard work, we have that instilled in us from an early age. There was never any guarantee that it would happen, and I knew that. I was okay with that, as long as I gave it everything I had."*  
 – James Winchester

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**March 2023**

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 Learn about how regular screenings for colorectal cancer can save lives.

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 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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