



November 2021 Issue

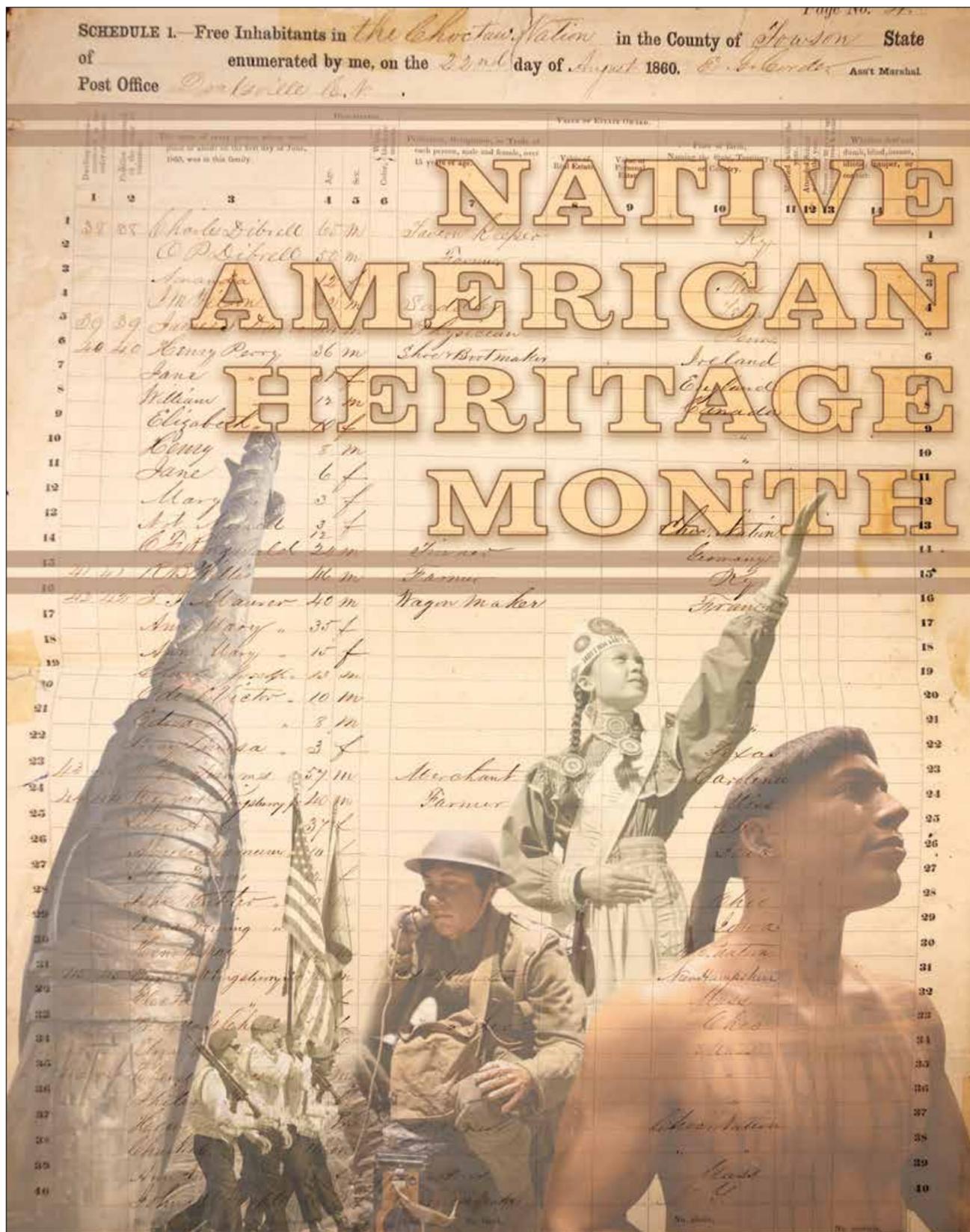


Photo illustration by Chris Jennings

Celebrating Native American Heritage Month

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Every November is recognized as National Native American Heritage Month.

This month's issue of the Biskinik is dedicated to the accomplishments and successes of Choctaw tribal members around the world. In this issue, we will spotlight only a few of the thousands of Choctaws who are making a positive change in the world and living out their dreams.

History

Native American Heritage Month is a time to celebrate Native cultural heritage and educate others of tribal history.

Native American Heritage Month began as a week-long celebration during November 23–30, 1986. In 1990, a joint resolution was approved by President George H.W. Bush, which called for November to be named National American Indian Heritage Month. Similar proclamations have been issued by every president since 1994, designating the entire month of November as National Native American Heritage Month.

The month is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions and histories and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people.

There are more than 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States, and Oklahoma itself is home to 39 federally recognized sovereign nations.

Native culture, traditions and language are intertwined into the fabric of life in America.

Native American Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the public about tribes and raise general awareness about Indigenous people's unique challenges throughout history.

It is also a time to celebrate how Native Americans have worked to conquer these challenges.

One way to celebrate Native American Heritage Month is to be a cultural keeper.

According to Choctaw Cultural Services, culture keepers are those who carry traditional knowledge, teachings, and stories and share them with the community to ensure cultural continuity.

Language

Another vital factor in preserving culture is protecting Native languages.

"When our ancestors began interacting with European and American settlers, we learned to speak their languages in order to be successful in trade and government relations. Over time, fewer and fewer people spoke Choctaw fluently. Our children were even forbidden from speaking their native language in schools and in some Choctaw homes," explained Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. "Today, we are strengthening our language through the Anumpa Aikkhvna school. Our language experts and fluent speakers teach the Choctaw language to students in communities and public schools across our reservation."

The Choctaw Language Program started with three public schools during its pilot. Now, it employs 21 teachers and serves approximately 3,000 people weekly through its website, community classes, public schools, colleges, online classes, early childhood and elementary classes.

Chahta language is taught by distance learning, which allows the language instructor and students to interact in real-time. An estimated 1300 students are currently learning the Choctaw language daily through the 14 Head Start centers, two elementary classrooms and 42 Oklahoma public high schools served within the Choctaw Nation's boundaries.

Classes are offered to college students enrolled at Carl Albert State College and Southeastern Oklahoma State University as well.

Community classes are available at 30 sites both within and outside of the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation. Community classes are free of charge and are open to the public.

Historian Curtis Billy states, "The language sets us apart from other tribes; we don't want to lose our unique sounds and our emphasis. We want to be good stewards of our language to pass on to the next generation. The language is used to pass on our traditions and oral stories."

You can also learn a bit about the Choctaw Language by reading the monthly language lesson in the Biskinik.

For more information about the School of Choctaw Language, visit <https://www.choctawschool.com>, or call 1-800-522-6170.

Culture

Choctaw cultural traditions and history are also preserved through the efforts of the Choctaw Nation's Cultural Services department.

Services include classes for the community and tribal employees, educational presentations, storytelling, cultural exhibits and demonstrations, and educational and resource materials related to culture.

The Historic Preservation department also works to assist the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma community in preserving its living heritage by protecting sacred sites and historic sites and aiding community efforts to maintain and revitalize Choctaw traditional culture.

Anyone interested in learning more about the history and culture of the Choctaw people should visit the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, Oklahoma.

The Choctaw Cultural Center is dedicated to exploring, preserving and highlighting the culture and history of the Choctaw people. The exhibits are immersive and told from the Choctaw perspective – honoring the physical and spiritual journey of the Choctaw people, or the "Chahta Nowvt Aya." The Cultural Center includes over 100,000 square feet of rich, engaging exhibitions, a vast Living Village, classrooms, a theater, a café and a gift shop.

The Choctaw Cultural Center offers tours, classes, demonstrations and films on a daily basis.

Hours of operation are Wednesday-Friday 10 a.m. through 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. through 7 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m. through 5 p.m.

Site tours begin at 2 p.m. daily (or by request, based on educator availability).

The Choctaw Nation wants to know how you intend to celebrate Native American Heritage Month. Share your story by using #TogetherWe'reMore on social media or by visiting <https://www.choctawnation.com/together-were-more>.

For more ways to stay up to date on what is happening in the Choctaw Nation, visit <https://choctawnation.com>, or follow the Nation on all social media platforms.



Photo by Choctaw Nation

The Choctaw Cultural Center includes over 100,000 square feet of rich, engaging exhibitions, a vast Living Village, classrooms, a theater, café and retail that bring the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture to life



Photo by Choctaw Nation

The Choctaw Cultural Center features breathtaking artwork and scenic views.



Photo by Rylee Tollett

Cultural Keepers are those who carry traditional knowledge, teachings and stories and share them with the community to ensure cultural continuity. Above: The Cultural Keepers statue located near the stickball field.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Future Strategic Goals

Halito, It's October and the start of a new fiscal year for the Choctaw Nation!

As we embark on a new and exciting year, I wanted to take the time and share with you our strategic goals and strategies for fiscal years 2021 through 2025.

Our first goal is to support service delivery to improve quality of life. Enhancing the well-being of tribal members is very important. We'll do so by advocating, allocating resources, and remaining committed to improving quality of life and tribal member self-sufficiency and independence.

The second goal is to strengthen financial growth and economic stability. We want our businesses to grow, to reduce our costs, and to strengthen local economies.

Our third goal is to protect and promote Choctaw culture and exercise sovereignty. The Choctaw Nation will assert, defend, protect, promote and exercise our rights as a sovereign nation to improve the economic, environmental, social and cultural prosperity.

The fourth goal is to become the employer of choice. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma wants to attract, retain and support professional growth to develop a diverse workforce for the Nation and our local communities.

Our fifth and final goal is to achieve digital transformation. We want the Choctaw Nation to be strategically positioned in the digital economy through access to broadband, adoption and implementation of systems, workflows, analytics, and innovation.

We want our tribal members, associates, and local economies to thrive, and we feel that these five strategic goals will lead us to success.

Yakohe and God bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

The Church Member

In the Book of Numbers, we find God taking the initiative concerning His plans and purposes for His people.

God is a God of order and discipline, so He is organizing His people.

The tribe of Levi was chosen and separated from the other tribes for a specific duty.

“Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me.” Numbers 8:14-16.

The Levites were chosen for a personal relationship with Jehovah. They had a specific service to perform.

“But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.” Numbers 1:50.

The sons of Levi had their own particular ministry. And these specific tasks were appointed by the High Priest under the will of God.

The Gershonites had to look after the curtains of the tabernacle and carry them on the journey. The Kohathites carried the furniture and the sacred vessels from inside of the tabernacle. And the Merarites transported the boards and other props of the tabernacle.

This is a picture or type of church today. Each church member has a specific service to perform for the church to develop and function as specified by God.

The Merarites who were responsible for the materials for the foundation and structure of the tabernacle can be compared to the modern evangelists and soul winners who go out and work in the pioneering work of forming a new local church in the wilderness.

Without the foundation and structure, there could be no tabernacle (church). The work of the Gershonites is a type of the modern pastor.

The curtains, hangings and coverings typify for us the righteousness of Christ. It is the task of the pastor to stay with the newborn babes and to lead the flock into the growth of spiritual maturity.

The Kohathites were given the task of carrying the sacred vessels from within the tabernacle.

This is a type of Bible teacher. The teacher speaks of deeper truths of sacred scriptures and conveys the message of the Word of God to God's people.

It was necessary for all the Gershonites, Kohathites and Merarites to perform their duties to make possible the tabernacle to carry the whole council of God.

It is the same in the modern church today.

Each child of God in the church should pay faithful attention to their calling to complete the body called the church.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12.

When a church member is not performing the tasks and gifts given to them, the church is not functioning at maximum capacity. Each church member must seek God's will for them and contribute to the church body.



CHRISTMAS MEAL VOUCHERS

2021 APPLICATION AVAILABLE BEGINNING OCTOBER 23 ON
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS
November 26 | 4:30 PM

Please complete the Chahta Achvffa online application and attach a copy of income verification for all household members, as well as a utility bill (water, natural gas and electric bills only – propane will not be accepted.)
Must live within the Choctaw Nation service area.

Vouchers will be mailed: Friday, December 3
Please be respectful when redeeming vouchers. Services can be denied for inappropriate behavior.

877-285-6893 | 580-326-8304

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Honoring Those that Serve

It's November, and we're closing in on the end of 2021. Veteran's Day is Thursday, November 11, and it's a time for us to honor those who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

The Choctaw Nation is proud to honor its veterans.

Each month, at the regular session of the Choctaw Tribal Council, a veteran is recognized from their respective district.

If you have had the opportunity to visit any of our facilities, you will have noticed the veteran parking sites.

The Choctaw Nation Veterans Advocacy Program works to assure that Choctaw veterans receive benefits and services on par with other veterans. They also assist veterans in decreasing barriers or impediments in their attempts to access these services and treat them with respect and dignity by Veteran

Affairs service providers.

The program serves Choctaw veterans by assisting with the eligibility and entitlement of veterans and their dependents. The Veterans Advocate will assist with contacting the appropriate VA service provider in their area.

These are just a few of the ways we work to honor our veterans.

According to the 2010 Census, it is estimated that over 150,000 veterans identified as American Indian and Alaska Native alone. The U.S. Department of Defense estimates there are currently over 24,000 active-duty Native service members in the United States Armed Forces.

The Choctaw Nation wants to continue to do its part by honoring the men and women who have sacrificed so we can enjoy our liberties and freedom.

If you are a veteran and need assistance, please call (800) 522-6170. God bless.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

Spears signs to play new kind of collegiate sport

By Chris Jennings

With the growing popularity of eSports or competitive video gaming, kids across the country are signing college scholarships to take their love of gaming to the next level.

Choctaw tribal member Justice Spears is one of those young gamers. He recently accepted a scholarship to play eSports at Carl Albert State College in Poteau, Oklahoma. "I've been playing video games for pretty much my whole life, probably around three or four. I started playing different LEGO games, and then slowly, I just progressed through different kinds until I got to where I am today," said Spears.

Now Spears specializes in Call of Duty: Warzone and NBA2K21 and is ranked number one preseason for Call of Duty.

Spears says eSports takes the same kind of dedication as any other sport. According to Spears, you have to put in the time practicing movements during the game, even to the point where you go back and watch game film to see what mistakes you made and what you can do better.

Spears is uniquely qualified to compare eSports to more traditional sports. He also runs cross country at Carl Albert.

Spears says the running actually helps his gameplay.

"It's really helping me stay in shape so that when I'm playing the game, I'm not having any medical problems or any alertness problems," explained Spears.

According to the Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities, with the addition of eSports to college athletics, colleges see a higher retention rate of kids who might have otherwise decided not to finish school.

After college, there are career opportunities related to gaming like game design, software development, audio engineering, animation, artwork, and for a lucky few, gameplay testing and professional gaming.

According to esportsarnings.com, top professional gamers can make over \$60,000 a year before bonuses and sponsorship deals. That adds up to much more than many minor league baseball players.

If you're interested in playing eSports in college, Spears says grades are a big part of it.

"Right now, you can get scholarships for eSports, but they're not gonna be able to pay your whole way. You really got to get those grades up so that way you can get the academic scholarships to go on top of your eSports scholarships," said Spears.

According to Spears, the best advice he can offer to others interested in eSports is to "Just practice and have fun; you have to have fun with it. You don't want it to become a job."



Photo Provided

Justice Spears recently signed with Carl Albert State College to play eSports. Spears specialized in Call of Duty: Warzone and NBA2K21 and is ranked number one preseason for Call of Duty.



Photo Provided

Shelley Dennis is carving a name for herself in Hollywood. She currently serves as staff writer for "The Conners."

Dennis selected as staff writer for The Conners

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw tribal member and Clayton, Oklahoma native Shelley Dennis has been selected as a staff writer for season four of ABC's sitcom series, "The Conners."

The Conners began in 2018 as a spin-off continuation of the long-running series Roseanne and is produced by Werner Entertainment.

Dennis previously completed work as a staff writer in an all-native writers' room for the new and upcoming Netflix animated series for children ages 6-8, Spirit Rangers. The series follows a Native American trio in a National Park who can transform into their own animal spirits.

After completing her work on Spirit Rangers, Dennis was selected as one of 13 individuals to participate in the 2021 Disney Writing Fellowship in January. The one-year writing program was created in 1990 to offer advanced professional development to writers and help them secure staff assignments through the Disney General Entertainment Contest series, with a nearly 100% hiring rate with Disney. Dennis participated in the comedy category of the program, which has historically helped secure established award-winning careers for writers, producers and showrunners.

Dennis is also an accomplished actress, appearing in productions such as Days of Our Lives, Criminal Minds and the Tonight Show with Jay Leno. She has performed stand-up comedy and has been a fashion model

who lived in Milan, Italy, after receiving an invitation from a modeling agency to move there. She modeled successfully in both Italy and Germany, appearing in several publications, including teen magazines and Vanity Fair.

She attended Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton and graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in Drama and Dramatics/Theatre Arts in 2005.

Dennis is very passionate about being Choctaw, sharing her identity and creativity in her work, and encouraging others to do the same.

"As a Choctaw, it's time that your voice be heard. Your work to be seen, read, worn, admired. Historically, in order for our people to survive, they had to mimic the white man; they could not be Choctaw. Today, the world's like, 'express yourself! It's safe now!' But it's not that simple. That doesn't remove centuries of suppression. And it won't go away on its own. We must actively, consciously fight against it. Remember this every time those little voices in your head tell you, 'you're not good enough' or 'nobody cares'. Today, our culture's survival is based on our ability to take up space in the world. Your creativity isn't just about you. It's also honoring our ancestors who had so much inside of them to give but never had the chance. You owe it to them, and you owe it to yourself."

For more on Shelley Dennis, visit her website at <https://shelleydennis.com/>.

Sixteen-year-old college student and ballerina excelling in New York City

By Shelia Kirven

Sixteen-year-old Stormi Rain Arnold, a Native American ballerina and college student, has overcome many obstacles in her personal life and has become a role model for others. She has not let her struggles with partial deafness, impaired vision or difficulties with speech slow down her dream.

Arnold was a home-schooled student with deep roots in Eagletown, Oklahoma. She has already earned her high school diploma and is enrolled in New York's Morrisville State College, where she has completed her first semester and is on the Dean's list.

A student of the art of dance with an emphasis in ballet, Arnold earned Maximum Velocity Artist for the Velocity Dance Convention Season Finale in Las Vegas and is currently a member of Studio B's Senior Company, earning multiple

awards during their 2020-21 dance season.

Past dance experience included attending the Donna Frech School of Dance, the New York Institute of Dance and performances at the New York Dance Festival.

Her dance company knows Arnold as someone who is a joy to work with and someone who dances with grace and passion. Arnold balances her dance training and her college classes well.

"Going to college full-time and being a company dancer is very overwhelming, but at the same time, there are feelings of empowerment and success. I do struggle with having free time, but that's just a part of it all. I do, however, manage to fit in a few hours a week to just relax and have me time or hang out with my friends."

Arnold plans to obtain a master's degree in English, and hopes to become a Pre-K or Kindergarten teacher in either Hawaii or New York City.



Photo Provided

Stormi Rain Arnold has accomplished quite a bit thus far in life. The 16-year-old graduated high school early and is currently enrolled in college, where she is studying ballet.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

LABOR AND DELIVERY DEPARTMENT

An integrated behavioral health counselor, Carly Blemmel, MSHR, is dedicated to maternal mental health helping with issues such as postpartum depression.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

SCHEDULE A RIDE WITH TRIBAL TRANSIT

Did you know?

You can schedule your ride on the Tribal Transit vehicles through your **myCNHSA app** or online at **my.CNHSA.com**.

Rides are available for non-emergency medical visits to those living within the Choctaw Nation reservation. They must be scheduled 5 business days in advance. The full list of eligibility and procedures is available in the app or online.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of a contagious disease, such as coughing, fever, loss of taste or smell, etc., you will not be able to use the Transit rides and will need to provide your own transportation to your appointment.

Choctaw Nation Tribal Transit

News of the Nation



On September 17, Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr., District 6 Councilwoman Jennifer Woods, District 4 Councilman Jess Henry and District 7 Councilman Joey Tom took part in the Ribbon Cutting for the new library/reading center in Red Oak, Oklahoma. The Choctaw Development Fund provided a match after the community raised funds through spaghetti dinners, community garage sales and other efforts led by late tribal member Jodie White.



The Durant Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution on September 15, proclaiming October 11 as Indigenous People's Day in the city of Durant. Chief Gary Batton and District 9 Councilman James Dry were in attendance to represent the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



On October 9, a ribbon-cutting was held for the Stringtown Gazebo in Stringtown, Oklahoma. Joey Lansdale, President of the Stringtown Legacy Group, esteemed members of the Stringtown Legacy Group and family members of the late Jerry Lansdale were in attendance to celebrate. In July 2019, the Choctaw Nation and the Choctaw Development Fund awarded the city \$13,075 to construct the gazebo that will be utilized for community events, cultural activities, and programs to enrich and promote Native American Heritage.



Jennifer Woods

District 6

Halito, from District 6.

We have been busy getting ready for the re-opening of the in-dining of the community center, which will resume in-house eating on November 3. We're looking forward to having our Choctaw seniors back in the house. Volleyball practice will resume on November 12 at 10 a.m.

Heritage Day is November 1. We will have cultural activities and sampling of traditional foods. November 5 at 7 a.m., we will have prayer at the community center. This event is open to everyone and will be followed by breakfast.

We are still providing our Children's snack packs on Mondays 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at 103 Leland Street, in the old Head Start building.

November 9, we will have family/community bingo and a potluck at 6 p.m. Our veteran's dinner will be on November

10 at 11 a.m., and we will be closed for the Veterans Day holiday on November 11. The District 6 Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner will be on November 17. We have so much to be thankful for. Please come and join us for a terrific meal and fellowship.

The holiday vouchers are out for Thanksgiving and Christmas. If you missed the October 22 deadline for Thanksgiving, you can still apply for Christmas.

We are honored to having our tribal law enforcement and the Director of Law Enforcement for the Choctaw Nation Department of Public Safety, Jesse Petty and Captain Henry, awarded the Life-Saving award on October 11. The award went to Patrolman Rigby and Patrolman Watkins for their outstanding duties and response to a scene of critical injury performed on August 13. Their quick thinking and dedication to service assisted in the sustainment of life during a moment of crisis—Yakoke to both officers.

We are looking forward to our District 6. Princesses Riley, Greenlee and Omba will be assisting on Thanksgiving and other activities.

If you need help with any of the applications for tribal programs, please come by, we will be glad to assist you.

It is always my honor to serve our great District 6, and my door is always open. I enjoy visiting and listening to our tribal members.

Happy Thanksgiving! Our Choctaw Nation and District 6 are so blessed and thankful for all the programs available to help our members have better lives, like education, housing, food distribution, health care. Let us always remember to thank our Veterans who paid the price for our freedoms and the privileges we have today; some paid with their lives. Thank you for your service, and we love our veterans. God Bless, and please come and see us anytime.



Photo Provided

There are many things planned for District 6 in November. Councilwoman Jennifer Woods and the Wilburton Community Center staff are busy planning and preparing for the return of in-person events.

CNHSA earns Gold Seal of Approval

(DURANT, Okla. October 14, 2021) – The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) has earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval® for Accreditation by demonstrating continuous compliance with its organization's commitment to providing safe and quality patient care.

CNHSA underwent a rigorous, unannounced onsite review earlier this year. During the visit, a team of Joint Commission reviewers evaluated compliance with hospital and clinic standards spanning several areas including emergency management, infection prevention and control, leadership, medication management, and patient rights and responsibilities.

The Joint Commission's standards are developed in consultation with health care experts and providers, measurement experts and patients. They are informed by scientific literature and expert consensus to help health care organizations measure, assess and improve performance.

"As a private accreditor, The Joint Commission surveys health care organizations to protect the public by identifying deficiencies in care and working with those organizations to correct them as quickly and sustainably as possible," says Mark Pelletier, RN, MS, chief operating officer, Accreditation and Certification Operations, and chief nursing executive, The Joint Commission. "We commend Choctaw Nation for its continuous quality improvement efforts in patient safety and quality of care."

"Choctaw Nation leadership is proud of the quality of care the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center and the outlying clinics provide to the communities we serve," says Todd Hallmark, Executive Officer of Health. "The accreditation by The Joint Commission reinforces the excellence we know our hospital to uphold. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continually added to the challenges of preparing for an audit of this scale, but the staff maintained excellent quality."

For more information on The Joint Commission, visit <https://www.jointcommission.org>.



Photo by Deidre Elrod

The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority recently earned joint Commission Accreditation by demonstrating continuous compliance with its organization's commitment to providing safe and quality patient care.

Choctaw Nation Community Center Holiday Dinners

Thanksgiving Dinners	Smithville	December 14, 2021
November 8, 2021	<i>Community @ 11:30 a.m.</i>	Antlers
Battiest	Stigler	<i>Senior @ 12 p.m.</i>
<i>Community @ 4:30 p.m.</i>	<i>Community @ 11:30 a.m.</i>	Stigler
November 10, 2021	Wilburton	<i>Community @ 11 a.m.</i>
Atoka	<i>Community @ 11 a.m.</i>	December 21, 2021
<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	November 18, 2021	Talihina
Broken Bow	Talihina	<i>Community @ 11 a.m.</i>
<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	<i>Community @ 12 p.m.</i>	December 22, 2021
Crowder	November 19, 2021	Durant
<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	Tuskahoma	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>
Spiro	<i>Community @ 6 p.m.</i>	Poteau
<i>Senior @ 11:30 a.m.</i>	Christmas Dinners	<i>Senior @ 12 p.m.</i>
Wright City	December 1, 2021	Smithville
<i>Community @ 12 p.m.</i>	Battiest	<i>Community @ 11:30 a.m.</i>
November 15, 2021	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	Children's Parties
Broken Bow	Coalgate	December 5, 2021
<i>Community @ 6 p.m.</i>	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	Tushkahomma @ 2 p.m.
November 17, 2021	December 8, 2021	December 6, 2021
Antlers	Atoka	Battiest @ 4:30 p.m.
<i>Senior @ 12 p.m.</i>	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	December 9, 2021
Battiest	Broken Bow	Atoka @ 4:30 p.m.
<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	December 13, 2021
Coalgate	Crowder	Broken Bow @ 6 p.m.
<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	December 16, 2021
Durant	Hugo	Heavner @ 5 p.m.
<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	<i>(Heavner cafetorium)</i>
Hugo	McAlester	December 19, 2021
<i>Community @ 11 a.m.</i>	<i>Senior @ 11 a.m.</i>	Wright City @ 2 p.m.
Idabel	Spiro	December 21, 2021
<i>Senior @ 11:45 a.m.</i>	<i>Community @ 11 a.m.</i>	Smithville @ 5 p.m.
McAlester	Wilburton	
<i>Senior @ 12:30 p.m.</i>	<i>Community @ 11 a.m.</i>	
Poteau	Wright City	
<i>Community @ 5 p.m.</i>	<i>Senior @ 12 p.m.</i>	

All dinners and parties are drive-thru and at the corresponding community center unless otherwise listed.

Limited-time free delivery with \$50 purchase! Kick shopping to the curb. Start your order today!

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JUROR SUMMONS

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation		
November 2	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 3	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 5	Crowder	By Appointment
November 9	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 10	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 12	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.
November 12	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
November 16	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 17	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 17	Stigler	By Appointment
November 18	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 30	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna November Language Lesson

Atvpa

Uses of a commonly used verb: atvpa – v. to be an over-plus; exaggeration; excess; to overgo; to superabound.

In today's speaking it is used for emphasis, as in 'too much'.

Anumpuli kvt atvpa.	He/She talks too much.
Impat kvt atvpa.	He/She eats too much.
Lvshpa kvt atvpa.	It's too hot.
Tuksvlit atvpa.	He/She works too much.
Vlla mvt atvpa.	That child is too much/ out of hand (Behaviorally 'acting up').

Placing 'ont' in front of 'atvpa' denotes 'beyond the place of origin'.

Anumpuli kvt ont atvpa.	His/Her talk is getting out of hand.
Impa kvt ont atvpa.	He eats way too much.
Lvshpa kvt ont atvpa.	It's just way too hot.
Kaa yali yvt ont atvpa.	The price of a car is way too much.
I shulush vt falaya kvt ont atvpa.	His shoes are way too long.

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BISKINIK

Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Mail to: Biskinik

P.O. Box 1210

Durant, OK 74702

or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

*Gary Batton
Chief*

*Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief*

The Official
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of the

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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 October 9, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session September 11, 2021
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #1 – Walker Davis
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Isaac Sexton – Individual Speaker - Burial Program
 - b. Lin Ogg – Individual Speaker - Appreciation
 - c. Donald Glass – Individual Speaker – Dental Health
 - d. Nellie Meashintubby – Group Speaker – Keeping Tribal Citizens Informed
 - e. Faith Parra – Group Speaker – Dealing with Choctaw Youth, Love and Loss
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Present Choctaw School of Language Teacher Certificate to Dustin Bohanan. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - b. Letter of re-appointment of Gwenda Taylor to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Ethics Commission. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - c. Letter of re-appointment of Marion Fry to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Ethics Commission. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - d. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year 1 of 5 for Project Embrace 2 Grant. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - e. Approve the Funds and Budget for the Economic Adjustment Assistance Cares Act (Emerging Aviation Technology Center). **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - f. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY20 and FY21 for COVID (Emergency COVID-19) Grants. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - g. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY20 Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP). **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - h. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year 1 and 2 (of 3) of the Connecting Kids to Coverage Program. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - i. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year 1 of 5 for the 2020 Injury Prevention Program (IPP). **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - j. Approve the Funds and Budget for Years 1 and 2 of the Getting Adolescents Motivated and Educated Project (GAME). **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - k. Approve the Funds and Budget for the 2020 Department of Justice Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitations: Project Empower (CTAS PA 5) and Project Strong Expansion (CTAS PA 6). **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - l. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY20 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Advanced Assistance (PDM-AA) Grant. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - m. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year 1 of 5 for the FY21 Teach 2 Reach (T2R) Program. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - n. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY21 Basic Library Grant. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
 - o. Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY21
- Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG). **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- p. Approve the Funds and Budget for the Tribally Engaged Approaches to Lung Screening (TEALS) Subaward. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- q. Approve the Funds and Budget for National Children's Alliance Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) Subaward Program. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- r. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY20 Tribal Children's Advocacy Center Expansion Initiative for Child Abuse Victims. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- s. Approve the Funds and Budget for the National Congress for American Indians for the Disaster Preparedness Grant. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- t. Approve Application for the Emergency Grants for Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- u. Approve Application for the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG)—American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- v. Amend CB-59-21, A Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Public Health and Safety Code. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- w. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- x. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- y. Approve the Capital Expenditure for the Renovation for the New Wilburton Community Center. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- z. Approve a Capital Contribution of \$6,181,400 to Choctaw Global, LLC for Investment in Waco Marketplace Investments, LLC and Emerald Cottages of Round Rock, LLC. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- aa. Approve Funding for the Construction of Billboards to be Located in Hochatown, Oklahoma. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- ab. Rename the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Color Guard to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Honor Guard. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- ac. Authorize the Chief of the Choctaw Nation to Donate the Wheeler Federal Building Located in Durant, Oklahoma. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- ad. Authorize the Chief of the Choctaw Nation to Place Property in Pittsburg County in Trust Status with the United States of America.. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- ae. Authorize the Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to Place Property in Bryan County in Trust Status with the United States of America. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- af. Amend the Choctaw Nation Fish, Game and Animals Code. **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**
- ag. Approve to Name the Jones Academy Elementary Building the "Robert E. Smith Elementary Building". **Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed**

9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

10. OLD BUSINESS

11. ADJOURNMENT

12. CLOSING PRAYER

Councilman Ward was not present.

Choctaw veteran honored for WWII service

By Shelia Kirven

Bill Parker, 96, didn't start to talk much about his World War II days until just a few short years ago when he decided to call a Tulsa newspaper to tell his story.

A Tulsa resident himself, his story came out in the Tulsa World on July 4, 2016.

According to Parker, originally from Haskell County, he was the first U.S. soldier on Omaha Beach on D-Day.

He miraculously survived the invasion unharmed, though the mission was reported to have had 96% casualty loss.

In an interview with the Tulsa World, Parker explained that it's hard to forget an experience like that.

"I think about it every night. There's no way getting away from it," said Parker. "I spent 70 some odd years trying to forget all this. I guess it needs to be brought out in the open. I'd like to let the younger generation know that there is nothing free and that we paid a big price for being free."

Parker was drafted in 1943.

He arrived in England in January 1944 and was assigned as a replacement troop to the 116th Infantry's 2nd Battalion. He was tasked with leading the charge out of the English Channel

and onto the French beach, the first assault on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944.

In a tulsapeople.com story written on him, Parker said he "learned he marched 600 miles (some of that with a foot so swollen from shrapnel, he briefly thought he was going to lose it) across France and Germany until 'I met the Russians on the other side of the Elbe River.'"

Parker was honored by the Choctaw Nation on Sept. 14, 2021, for his service.

"I don't know if you realize what you mean to us as the Choctaw Nation," said Chief Batton. "We fight, but we fight for the right causes. We fight for the good things in life and that's what you've done. You fought for our freedom. You represent Choctaw, you represent Oklahoma coming from the big city, McCurtain, Oklahoma, and the United States. I just appreciate you so very much for all that you've done and what you stand for."

During the ceremony, Parker was presented with a Choctaw flag and other items at a special lunch hosted by the All Veterans Association at Kirk of the Hills in Tulsa.

Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. believes Parker's fortitude is a testimony to his strong Chahta blood.

"I am always humbled to hear the stories of our great Chahta veterans.



Choctaw Nation Photo

Bill Parker, originally from Haskell County, says he was the first U.S. soldier on Omaha Beach on D-Day. Parker was honored by the Choctaw Nation on Sept. 14, for his service.

They have endured much yet exemplify the faith, family, and culture of their tribe. What a special individual," said Austin.

Parker didn't even talk about his wartime experiences with his wife Colleen, who he fell in love with while in high school and married in 1945. The pair met at a pie supper while they were students at McCurtain High School. Colleen passed away in 2018.

Finally, in 2016 he decided to contact the Tulsa World. He said after his story came out, he received calls and letters from all over the world.

Parker is a Tvska Chahta and credits his older brother Jim for making him tough enough to survive WWII.

According to Chief Batton, Parker says he rides his horse every day and epitomizes living out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture.

Tony Burris remembered as Korean War hero

By Shelia Kirven

Tony Kenneth Burris, a young Choctaw man of 21, voluntarily enlisted into the U.S. Army at the beginning of the Korean War in July 1950 without telling anyone he was going to do so. Born one of 10 children on May 30, 1929, in Blanchard, Oklahoma, he was the son of Samuel Jr. and Mabel (Curry) Burris. He was also the great-grandson of Gabriel Burris, born in Mississippi in 1816, who came with his parents to Indian Territory and who in 1849 was appointed Supreme Judge of the Third Judiciary of the Choctaw Nation.

Burris received basic training at Fort Riley, KS., advanced training at Fort Belvoir, VA., and was sent to Korea in February 1951. He served with the 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. Burris' company earned the nickname, The Fighting Vagabonds of the Second Division.

Burris was involved in battles where he helped lead his squad to safety, including one on his birthday, when he said in a letter home that he led "17 men out without a scratch."



Photos Courtesy of The Tony Burris Project

Pictured is the Tony Burris Memorial in Blanchard, Oklahoma.

In 1951, his company was destroyed. Burris escaped but was wounded. He then went on to lead the charge at Heartbreak Ridge, where he died a hero near Imok-Chong, North Korea.

By the time he was 22 years old, U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Tony K. Burris had given his life for his country, dying on Oct. 9, 1951, in Korea. Burris posthumously received the Congressional Medal of Honor cited during the Korean War, the only Choctaw ever to have done so.

He was also awarded the Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, United Nations Service Medal, Republic of Korea War Service Medal, and Combat Infantryman Badge.

From Burris' last letter written home to his family five days before his death, he said, "I've learned that a man is in more danger from the enemy if his back is turned retreating than he is while charging."

His Medal of Honor Citation, signed by President Harry S. Truman, cited: "Sfc. Burris, a member of Company L, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and outstanding courage above and beyond the call of duty. On Oct. 8, when his company encountered intense fire from an entrenched hostile force, Sfc. Burris charged forward alone, throwing grenades into the position and destroying approximately 15 of the enemy. On the following day, spearheading a renewed assault on enemy positions on the next ridge, he was wounded by machine gun fire but continued the assault, reaching the crest of the ridge ahead of his unit and sustaining a second wound. Calling for a 57mm. recoilless rifle team, he deliberately exposed himself to draw hostile fire and reveal the enemy position. The enemy machine gun emplacement was destroyed. The company then moved forward and prepared to assault other positions on the ridge line. Sfc. Burris, refusing evacuation and submitting only to emergency treatment, joined the unit in its renewed attack but fire from hostile emplacement halted the advance. Sfc. Burris rose to his feet, charged forward and destroyed the first emplacement with its heavy machine gun and crew of 6 men. Moving out to the next emplacement, and throwing his last grenade which destroyed this position, he fell mortally wounded by enemy fire. Inspired by his consummate gallantry, his comrades renewed a spirited assault which overran enemy positions and secured Hill 605, a



Pictured is the Tony Burris Memorial in Blanchard, Oklahoma. Tony K. Burris, a young Choctaw who volunteered for service in the Korean War, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the United States government's highest and most prestigious military decoration, recognizing those who have distinguished themselves by acts of valor.

strategic position in the battle for 'Heartbreak Ridge', Sfc. Burris' indomitable fighting spirit, outstanding heroism, and gallant self-sacrifice reflect the highest glory upon himself, the infantry, and the U.S. Army."

In 2007, Burris was honored with a statue in his hometown of Blanchard, Oklahoma, where he is buried.

For more information on his life and to read a series of Burris' letters to his family, visit The Tony Burris Project Facebook page.

A book on his life has also been published entitled Tony K. Burris: The Hero, The Person, The Letters, and is available through Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Two Choctaws selected for scholarships in Ireland

(DURANT, Okla.) – One of the Chahta Foundation's most prestigious education offerings is the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship, which includes tuition and expenses paid by the Republic of Ireland for a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma student. This year, for the first time, two young tribal members have been awarded scholarships. Claire Green Young and Austin West recently arrived at University College Cork, located in Ireland's second-largest city, for a full year of study.

The Chahta Foundation provides opportunities for Choctaw people, mainly in the field of education. To date, over \$2.5 million in scholarships have been given nationwide to over 500 Choctaw students. Competitive scholarships are available from the trades and first-year college students to doctoral degrees.

The Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship was instituted in recognition of assistance by the Choctaw people towards the people of Ireland during the Great Famine of the mid-nineteenth century and to deepen the relationship between the two nations today.

Simon Harris, the Government of Ireland's Minister for Higher Education, said, "I am really delighted to see the success of the Choctaw Scholarship program, with two Choctaw Nation students choosing to study in Ireland this year. The scholarship program was initiated to provide a big 'Yako' (thank you) to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, to recognize the great act of generosity and humanitarianism shown towards the Irish people during the Great Famine. These scholarships help foster greater ties between our two nations, and I look forward to continued growth and cooperation. I would like to extend my congratulations to this year's successful scholars, Claire Green Young and Austin West, and I look forward to welcoming them to Ireland. I wish them both an enjoyable and productive time as they undertake their studies at University College Cork."

Young, 22, plans to work toward her master's degree in museum studies while at Cork.

Young grew up in Wright City and is the daughter of Ellen Green Young and the granddaughter of R.C. Green and Sharon Green. The Wright City High School student was admitted to Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, after graduation in 2017. She was involved in Native Americans at Dartmouth and worked to recruit Native American students, among other activities, as a Senior Fellow.

Young also participated in the Religion Department Foreign Study Program in Edinburgh, Scotland, and the History Department Foreign Study Program in London, England. Receiving as much independent work as allowed in the archives of the British Library, she said, "I got to study tribal history from where the colonies originated." In addition, Young has completed several research projects on Choctaw tribal history and language.

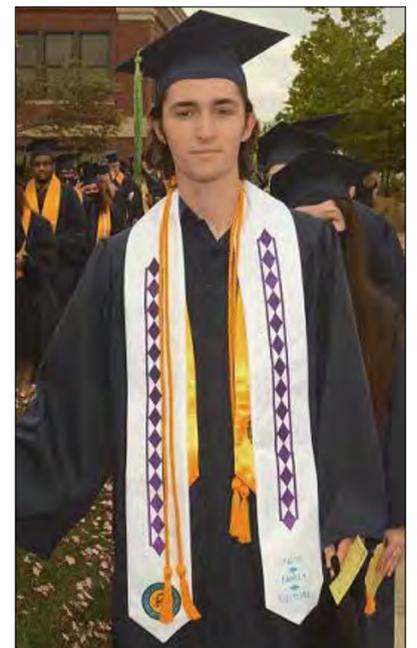
Young said her "academic experiences, study abroad and commitment to Choctaw culture" led her to apply for the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship. In the future, she plans to seek a doctoral degree in Choctaw tribal history and religion.

West, 23, will be working toward a master's degree at Cork in international public policy and diplomacy.

West earned an Associate in Arts in political science from Tulsa Community College. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in political science with minors in international relations and global studies from the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) – all with a 4.0-grade point average. He graduated from UCO on May 7.

During his year of study in Ireland, West said, "I am also looking forward to getting into college clubs and learning about Irish culture."

The Chahta Foundation is in its 10th year of connecting people who want to make a difference in their communities. For more information about the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship and other educational opportunities offered by the foundation, visit www.ChahtaFoundation.com. To make or inquire about tax-deductible gifts to the Chahta Foundation, potential donors may contact the foundation at info@chahtafoundation.com or 800-522-6170.



Left: Chahta Foundation's Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship recipient Claire Green Young is now studying at University College Cork. Right: Austin West is one of two young Choctaws selected by the Chahta Foundation this year to receive the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship for study at University College Cork.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Rick G. Whitson

Rick G. Whitson, 74, passed away Aug. 3, 2021.

Rick was born Nov. 19, 1946, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Roy E. and Loretha Whitson.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Rick is survived by sister Sharon Lander and spouse Herschel; nephews Anthony Lander and spouse Jo, and Christopher Lander and spouse Katie; great-nephews Grayson, Travis, and Ryan Lander; great-niece Theodora "Theo" Lander; and numerous cousins.

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

**William Richard LeFlore**

William Richard LeFlore, 51, passed away Aug. 8, 2021. William was born Nov. 12, 1969.

He is survived by brothers Stephen LeFlore, Joseph LeFlore, and Jean LeFlore; sisters Patricia Schmidt, Dixie LeFlore, and Mary Hannan; and granddaughter Melody Walls.

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

Merida May Hamilton

Merida May Hamilton, 85, passed away Aug. 20, 2021.

Merida was born April 20, 1936, in Talihina, Okla., to Simone and Winnie (Ollie) Carshall.

She was preceded in death by her daughter Korina Kay Rutledge; sons Anthony Kron and Jimmy Dale Carshall; her parents; brothers Lee and Alvin Carshall; and sisters Josephine Harjo and Esther Ford.

Merida is survived by her son Willie Carshall and spouse Jessica; daughter LaRoyce Richardson and spouse Avery; grandchildren Ashlee Ratliff and spouse Russtin, Cody Richardson and spouse Haleigh, Jerry Carshall and spouse Tiffany, and Anthony Rutledge; great-grandchildren Jayden Burger, Gavin Burger and Journi Ratliff; along with other relatives, loved ones, and friends.

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

**Elizabeth Ann Vaughn**

Elizabeth "Libby" Ann Vaughn, 86, passed away Aug. 16, 2021.

Libby was born June 27, 1935, in Fort Smith, Ark., to Clifford and Minnie Reeder.

She was preceded in death by her parents; son Robert Vaughn; and sister Helen Titus.

Libby is survived by her husband Carl Vaughn; son Carl "Skip" Vaughn Jr. and spouse Nancy; daughter Sandy Hotalen and spouse Doug; brother David Reeder and spouse Sue; four grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

For the full obituary, please visit Miller [Jones Mortuary and Crematory](#).

**James Colbert Jr.**

James "Kuggie" Colbert Jr., 70, passed away Aug. 27, 2021.

Kuggie was born July 13, 1951, in Talihina, Okla., to James Colbert Sr. and Mary Lou (Winship) Colbert.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Hildia Colbert; and nephews Charlie Colbert and Kalen Colbert.

Kuggie is survived by sisters Judy Guthrie, and Catherine Mendoza and spouse Francisco; nephews James Colbert and spouse Rebecca, and Chuck Guthrie; niece Ashley Cusher; great-nieces and nephews Kayleigh Colbert, Michael Colbert, Cavan Cea, Cadence Cusher, and Harrison Cusher; special nephew Ronnie Cusher; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Ami Elizabeth Standridge**

Ami Elizabeth Standridge, 37, passed away Aug. 16, 2021.

Ami was born June 29, 1984, in Antlers, Okla., to Bonnie K. Neese and Herman Johnson.

She was preceded in death by her granny Ruth Nelson; aunt Cindy Rosson; and uncle David Rosson.

Ami is survived by her son Easton Drake Standridge; her parents; brothers Jarod Neese and spouse Jennifer, and Jake Johnson; grandfather Elwood Nelson; aunts Tessa Brown, and Peggy Amos and spouse John; uncles David Neese and Steve Neese; niece Jasmine Burch-Neese; nephew Aiden Ross; cousins Justin Weathers and children Lillian, Lazarus, and Declan, Megan Weathers-Needid and children Hayden, Spencer, and Corbin, Cody Neese, Jason Neese and daughter Alyssa, Kirbie Rovolis and daughter Addison, Kylie Brown, Kaitlin Lopez and children Penelope and Noah, James Brown, and John Amos; significant other Stetson Bruce; and a host of other cousins, friends, and relatives.

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

**Norman H. Hickman**

Norman H. "Chief" Hickman, 85, passed away April 5, 2021.

Chief was born July 14, 1935, in Corinne, Okla., to William Kenneth and Myrtle (Musgraves) Hickman.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Billie Ruth Hickman; and brother Billy "Jr." Hickman.

Chief is survived by his daughters Norma Karins and spouse Mark, and Phyllis Owens and spouse Scott; grandchildren Cody Owens, Shay Grange and spouse Clinton, Skyler Karins, and Brittany Eakin and spouse Brady; great-grandchildren Lexi, Kilee, Karlie, Keegan, and Emberly; along with special nieces and nephews.

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

**Charlene Tidwell**

Charlene "Choc" (Mintz) Tidwell, 92, passed away Aug. 23, 2021.

Choc was born Jan. 20, 1929, to Jerry Edward and Seelah Mintz.

She was preceded in death by her husband Paul; and son C.E. "Smokey" Tidwell.

Choc is survived by her sister Jane Mintz; children Zandra Schooler, Anna Tidwell, Roger Tidwell, Anthony Tidwell, Paula Morris and spouse Joe, Stephanie Tidwell, Shannon Tidwell, and Max Tidwell and spouse Angela; daughter-in-law Frances Tidwell; grandchildren Devon Lambert and spouse Amy, Sundie Morris, Rachel Luscombe and spouse Josh, Jake Ferguson, Jennifer Tidwell, Callie Roberts and spouse Darrell, Jessica Tidwell, Noah Keever and spouse Amanda, Alyce Weber and spouse Phillip, Skyler Tidwell, Sara Tidwell, and Sydney Tidwell; great-grandchildren Zoe Morris, Zaiden Crowell, Morgan and Mason Luscombe, Hannah and Emily Webb, Ethan and Kori Roberts, Bella Wright, Bennett Ricca, Noah Paul, Mason, and Brooklyn Keever, Finnley Weber, and McKenna Tidwell.

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

**Virgil Gene Belvin**

Virgil Gene "Buddy" Belvin, 86, passed away Aug. 28, 2021.

Buddy was born Feb. 10, 1935, in Bennington, Okla., to Henry and Sarah Belvin.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Henry "Poochum", Vernon, Johnny, Richard, and "Baby Belvin"; and sisters Jimmie Lou Hunt, Lavada Duke, and Virginia (Weaver) Rutledge.

Buddy is survived by sons Bradley Belvin, Paul Belvin, and William Belvin and spouse Kim; daughter Melissa Brown and spouse Ricky; grandchildren Kevin Bryant and spouse Ashley, Ashlie Clark and spouse Stephen, Dustin Belvin and spouse Stephanie, Dillion Belvin, Kaitlyn Crawford, and Sarah Frailicks; great-grandchildren Braydee, Kagann, Kacin, Bryant, Berkley, Avery, Everly, Riggan and River; the mother of his children Ruby Kelley; sister Debra Bacon; brothers Dante Belvin and spouse Loretta, Solomon Belvin and spouse Lana, and Jerry Belvin; sister-in-law Sue Belvin; special caregiver Brenda Holliday; and many loved family and friends.

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

**Jessie Floyd Truman White**

Jessie Floyd Truman White, 28, passed away Aug. 16, 2021.

Jessie was born Aug. 25, 1992, in Ada, Okla., to Gordon Dale White and Cheryl Ann Lang.

He was preceded in death by his brother Marvin White; grandparents Floyd and Mildred Lang, and Frankie and Johnny White; uncles Joe White and Carl White; and aunt Tammy Williams.

Jessie is survived by his husband Nathaniel Brandon Corley; his parents; sisters Melissa Lorange and fiance Chris, Stormy Bradford and spouse Ryan, April McClure, and Rikki Watts and spouse Trevor; brother Gordon Dale White Jr.; nieces and nephews Paetyn Lorange, Braelyn Lorange, Jaxton Bradford, Emily Gayle, Glenn Gayle Jr., Gage Gayle, Clinton Gayle, and Krew Watts; great-nephew John Gayle; mother-in-law Barbara Calaway; father-in-law Michael Calaway; uncles James White, Eugene Lang, and Terry Lang; aunts Johnna White, Glenda Tatum, Amie Soeton, and Brenda Sue Lang; along with other relatives and many dear and loved friends.

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

**Ernest Benjamin Risenhoover**

Ernest Benjamin Risenhoover, 90, passed away Aug. 23, 2021.

Ernest was born Aug. 27, 1930, in Russellville, Okla., to Benjamin and Stella (Ginn) Risenhoover.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Winburn "Windy" Risenhoover, Bobby Risenhoover and Harold Risenhoover; and sisters Paulette Henley, Frankie Welton and Linda Risenhoover.

Ernest is survived by his wife Doris; daughters Kathy Stephensen and spouse Willard, and Kimberlee Bishop and spouse Teed; grandchildren M'Lissa Wipfli and spouse Greg, Brittny Stephensen, and Benjamin Bishop; great-grandchildren M'Kenzie Wipfli and Cole Wipfli; sisters Bertha Harris, Dorothy Mansfield and spouse Jimmy, and Sandy Garrett and spouse Pat; sisters-in-law Sharon Risenhoover, Nola Stockton, and Bea Voss and spouse John; and many cousins, nephews, and nieces.

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

**Iva Marie (Wilson) Smith**

Iva Marie (Wilson) Smith, 83, passed away Sept. 6, 2021.

Iva was born Feb. 13, 1938, in Maysville, Okla., to J.E. and Iva Venea (West) Wilson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; siblings Janice Kay Lundy, and J.R. Wilson and spouse Aileen; son Robert Archie Huff; and spouses Archie Huff and Alford Hendrix.

Iva is survived by her brother Jimmy Wilson and spouse Carrie; daughters Regina Golden and spouse Loyd, and Linda Jo Morgan and spouse Kenny; granddaughters Mika McBride, Melissa McBride, Mia Golden, and Crystal Chumley and spouse Chad; grandsons Robert Huff and spouse Ashley, Ace Morgan, Dalton Morgan, and Jason Golden and spouse Teresa; great-grandchildren Robert Huff Jr., Canaan Griffin, Rambo Huff, Wesley Chumley, Jacoby Jackson, Raygan Huff, Rileigh Huff, Garryn Harvey, Aspen Chumley, Jasey Golden, and Jolie Jackson; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins.

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

**Aubrey Ervin Irons**

Aubrey Ervin Irons, 80, passed away Aug. 2, 2021.

Aubrey was born Dec. 30, 1940, in Valliant, Okla., to Richard Aubrey and Lilly Bell (Beene) Irons.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his late wife Betty Ann; stepfather Dave Kellum; daughter Audrey Ann Crawford; and sister Catherine Treaster.

Aubrey is survived by wife Martha Irons; son Aubrey E. Irons Jr. and spouse Ashley; daughter Sharesa Hunter and spouse Robert; stepdaughters Lisa York and spouse Bruce, Disariee Murphy, and Ishalia McCombs and spouse Jack; sisters Marie Roberson and Cathy Black and spouse Mike; grandsons Cody and Christian Williams, Aerin Irons, Allen, Trey, Jared, Travis and Cameron York, Marc Deller, and Robbie McCombs; granddaughters Kristin Nabors, Leslie Crawford, Alyssa-Ann Irons, Ella York, and Cheyenne Deller; five great-grandchildren; many nieces and nephews; and numerous other family and friends.

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

**Julia Charlene Wood-Durrence**

Julia Charlene Wood-Durrence, 51, passed away Sept. 3, 2021.

Julia was born March 22, 1970, in Hugo, Okla., to James "Chick" Wood and Gladys Joan (Noah) Wood.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Natalie Ann Wood; and niece Jamie Rose Wood.

Julia is survived by her daughter Molly Elizabeth Durrence and companion Zach Webb; son Aidan Noah; sisters Debbie Raper and spouse Ronnie, Robin Taylor and spouse Jay, Dorothy Potter and spouse Ron, and Rose Neal and spouse Greg; special friends Toni Strickland and Wayne Durrence; along with many nephews, nieces, aunts, and cousins.

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

**Jonathan Dene Moses**

Jonathan Dene Moses, 41, passed away Jan. 16, 2021.

Jonathan was born Aug. 29, 1979, in Tahlequah, Okla., to Jonathan Joc Moses and Carolyn Sue (Barrows) Moses.

He was preceded in death by grandparents Roland Barney Moses, and James and Annie Mae Barrows; uncle Rodney Ray Moses; aunt Mary Ann Reece; and cousin Dakota Bratcher.

Jonathan is survived by daughters Kamden Lean Moses and Natorian "Tori" Bree Steveson; grandmother BoDene Hill Moses; his parents; siblings Shawn Dixon, Austin and Marisa Moses, and Catherine Moses and Rhet Wike; nieces and nephews Skye and Coner Reed, Scout Dixon, Saige Dixon, Austin Moses, Ella and Oliver Wike, and several aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Checotah Funeral Services](#).

**Rhonda Laeh Hamilton**

Rhonda Laeh Hamilton, 71, passed away Sept. 10, 2021.

Rhonda was born July 17, 1950, to Roy and Billie Martin.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and grandson Logan Hamilton.

Rhonda is survived by her children Kimberly Swanson and spouse Randy; Eric Hamilton and spouse Heather; grandchildren W. Hunter Swanson and spouse Kathryn, Baylee Swanson, Jesse Hamilton, Evan Hamilton, Landon Hamilton, and Ethan Hamilton; sister Cheryl Faires and spouse Karl; nephew and niece Darren Faires and spouse Whitney, and Deidre Beach and spouse Scott; great-nephews and nieces Dylan Faires, Dalton Faires, Drew Faires, and Karlee Beach; along with many long-time friends.

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

**Wilbur Dale Jones**

Wilbur Dale "Diesel" Jones, 74, passed away Aug. 5, 2021.

Diesel was born July 6, 1947, in Talihina, Okla., to Levison Jones and Edna Winship.

He is survived by his wife Sue; daughter Nikki Jones Lehr and spouse Chris; son by marriage Peter McLevish and spouse Amy; grandchildren Grace, Devin, Rowan, Loren, and Reese Loeh, and Raegan McLevish; along with a host of loving family and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Bunch Singleton 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



13 years for Mumford

Mason Mumford celebrated his 13th birthday at home with a pool party surrounded by family and friends. Mason was born July 4 and has been an explosion of energy ever since. He is the firstborn son, grandson and cousin.

Happy birthday, baby boy. Love, Nana, Poppy, Momma, Uncle Scottie, Uncle Jason, Aunt Isha, sisters Alexis and Kadee, brother Breck, and cousins Henry, Huck and Harper.

60 years for the Ayers



Don and Carole Ayers celebrated their 60th Anniversary. After graduating from NW Classen high school, Don and Carole met while working as lifeguards at the Paseo Plunge in Oklahoma City. The story goes that Carole asked Don to take out the trash, and he said, "If you'll go out with me." The wedding was held Oct.

7, 1961, and Don has been taking out the trash now for 60 years.

Before retirement, Don and Carole enjoyed service careers; Don for the Oklahoma City Police Department and Carole as a surgical RN.

Don and Carole enjoy spending with friends at the Choctaw Community Center, participating in Choctaw Cultural and language, "tinkering" with their Model A's, as well as beekeeping. The couple has five children; Cindy Rice (Larry), Stacy Pierce (Greg), Mark Ayers (Tara), Don Ayers (Erin), Tuula Niiranen Franck.

Twelve grandchildren Daniel, Aaron, Carole, Dylan, Weston, Amanda, Ceclia, James, Jackson, Amelia, Elora, Carson and four great-grandchildren Hayden, Zoey, Morgan and McKinley.

Thornton graduates law school



Samuel B. Thornton JD, Graduated from the University of Colorado, Wolf School of Law in Boulder, Colorado, May 2021.

He received his undergraduate degree in Engineering from UC-Boulder in May 2018.

Sam passed the Colorado State Bar Exam Oct. 7, 2021. He plans on practicing transactional and or corporate law.

Sam is the son of Larry Thornton of DuPont, Washington, and Darlene Ditmore of Causey, New Mexico. Sam is a descendant of the Folsom and Robinson Choctaws.



75 years for Stolz

Eric Ira Stolz celebrated his 75th Birthday on Oct. 23 with his wife Carole and family.

Stolz Lives in Manteca, California, and is the father of four daughters, Annette, Janette, Dawn and Christina. Stolz has eight grandchildren John, Eric, Kyrstin, Kyndall, Kourtney, Kayla, Tiffani and Glen; and three great-grandchildren John Jr., Alexandria and Eric Jr.

Sophie Rey Hoklotubbe



Sophie Rey Hoklotubbe was born Aug. 23, 2020, to parents Matthew Hoklotubbe and Samantha Longman.

Grandparents Thomas and Robin Hoklotubbe, along with great-grandparents Edwin and Suzanne Hoklotubbe are very proud and happy about the arrival of the newest Choctaw member.

Los Angeles-born Sophie is excited to show her Choctaw spirit on the field or golf course soon with her Papi.



Osyka Jones

Osyka Jones was born Sept. 1, 2021, in Walnut Creek, California, weighing 7 lbs and 5 oz.

Osyka's parents are Seth and Meghan Jones.

She is the three times removed great-great-great-granddaughter of original enrollee Rosa Lawrence-Jones.



Robinson pitches no hitter

Choctaw Nation tribal member, Emily Robinson, led the Caddo Lady Bruins to a victory and the state title of Class A State Championship 3-0 over Cyril, Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021, in Oklahoma City. Robinson threw a no-hitter game and was only one walk away from a perfect game.

Out of the three runs scored by Caddo, Robinson was the recipient of two of the runs. Caddo Lady Bruins is a young team on the field. Only a few players are upperclassmen, with Emily being a junior.

There is no doubt Emily is an excellent athlete. Her coach, Dustin McKay, said, "She is a beast in the circle." It has taken heart, soul, dedication, and lots of sweat and practice to reach Robinson's level.



Looper works as an extra

Jared Looper is currently working as an extra in the movie Killers of the Flower Moon.

The film is based on David Grann's non-fiction book Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI.

The film is being film directed and produced by Martin Scorsese alongside other notable names such as Leonardo DiCaprio (actor/producer), Jesse Plemons, Lily Gladstone and Robert De Niro.

21 years for Davis

Jera JuliAnn Davis of Texarkana, Texas, celebrated her 21st birthday June 27, 2021.

Her parents are Keith and Sharon Davis, Texarkana, Texas. Her grandparents are Earl and Ann Davis and Donald and Bobbie Scott, Idabel, Oklahoma.



Hoff homecoming princess

A Choctaw tribal member, Avery Hoff, was voted Freshman homecoming princess 2021 for Ardmore High School in Ardmore, Oklahoma.



Double birthday celebration for the Holsons



William Holson, Jr. of Owassa, Oklahoma, celebrated his 70th birthday in September. William is the son of William Holson and Wilma (Newby) Holson.

His son Jonathan of Sand Springs, Oklahoma, celebrated his 40th birthday in August.

The pair celebrated together with family at Broken Bow Lake, with five of William's 10 grandchildren in attendance.

T2R TEACH TO REACH PROGRAM

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Teach To Reach is a program available to assist Native Americans who have been accepted into the teacher education programs at the following partner universities ECU, NSU, OSU, OU, SOSU or UCO.

Choctaw Nation Career Development



80 years for Large

Roscoe (Rocky) Large will celebrate his 80th birthday on Nov. 15.

He is the grandson of original Mississippi Choctaw enrollee David F. Pebworth. Rocky's mother, Ola Pebworth Large, was born

in Boswell, Oklahoma, in 1908.

Rocky was the middle son among five siblings. Rocky was born in Casa Grande, Arizona.

He served his country in the U.S. Army and later married and had two children, Amanda and Bert.

He worked in the grocery business and later became a truck driver. Amanda was deceased in 2008. Rocky has one grandson.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

ITI FABVSSA

A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1900-1910 (Part I)

Iti Fabvssa is currently running a series that covers the span of Oklahoma Choctaw history. By examining each decade since the Choctaw government arrived in our new homelands using Choctaw-created documents, we gain a better understanding of Choctaw ancestors' experiences and how they made decisions that have led us into the present. Given the importance of the events of this decade, we have split the 1900-1910 period into two articles. This month, we will be covering 1900-1905, a tumultuous time in which Choctaws were preoccupied with the creation of citizen rolls and allotments.

Despite years of fighting against the division of their lands, Choctaws were ultimately forced to accept allotment with the passage of the Atoka Agreement. Allotment, a method of dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands, would completely transform Choctaw society. For thousands of generations, Choctaws communally owned our lands; with allotment, it became easier to take Choctaw lands from Choctaw people. Since the Choctaw and Chickasaws were brought together by their 1855 treaty, both nations had to approve the agreement. In 1898, Choctaw and Chickasaw voters ratified the Atoka Agreement, which outlined the procedure for how their lands would be allotted. Components of the Atoka Agreement were then integrated into federal legislation called the Curtis Act, an extension of the 1887 General Allotment Act, from which the Five Tribes were originally excluded. Quickly after the agreement's approval, the U.S. Dawes commission began taking applications to enroll Choctaws. The Dawes Commission was made up of U.S. officials, lawyers and numerous clerks. A notable figure who was part of the enrollment process was Grant Foreman, who later became one of Oklahoma's most well-known historians of the Five Tribes. The rolls that they created were later called the Dawes Rolls; these same rolls are the basis for enrollment in the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma today. To enroll and become eligible for an allotment, individuals had to travel to where the Dawes Commission had set up camp and appear for an interview. The Dawes Commission set up its Choctaw enrollment office in Atoka but also traveled to various sites to enroll those who could not travel that far.

Families traveled from all over to enroll. Individuals would be cross-referenced with existing Choctaw Nation census and roll records; if they did not appear on rolls created by Choctaw Nation, the commission took testimony from other Choctaws regarding the individual in question. While Choctaw government officials did their best to alert Choctaw community members about allotment, some individuals were not able to come in person. This forced the Dawes Commission to spend considerable time and money locating Choctaws who were on the government rolls but had not appeared before the Dawes Commission. Often people changed their names or had since passed away, which added to the confusion.

The unique nature of the original 1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek and their later 1855 treaty with the Chickasaws made their allotment process more complicated than that of the other Five Tribes. One important treaty provision was regarding the Choctaws living in Mississippi, who were eligible for allotments in present-day Oklahoma. To uphold this provision, the Dawes Commission traveled to Mississippi to enroll Choctaws there. In order to receive their allotment in Choctaw Territory, the Mississippi Choctaw would have to relocate to present-day Oklahoma before the Dawes rolls were closed. This spurred the last wave of Choctaw removal from our homelands from 1902-1903. One major problem was that many of these Mississippi Choctaws did not have the money to move to Indian Territory on their own. Given that many of these Choctaws did not know English, this made them vulnerable to land speculators who offered money for transportation to Indian Territory in exchange for half of their allotted lands. A group of Mississippi Choctaws was also targeted by an attorney who sought to sell Choctaws into slavery. This history of these Mississippi Choctaws' experiences during this period is explained in greater detail in the December 2017 Iti Fabvssa titled "Last Choctaw Removal to Ardmore." Additionally, some of the people who the Dawes Commission listed as "Mississippi Choctaw" on the rolls actually came from communities in Louisiana.

Throughout this period, the Dawes Commission was plagued by fraudulent applications. When many of these fraudulent citizens were denied, they would appeal to the U.S. courts to overturn the decision. Although several of the cases were legitimate and able to appeal the decision and get enrolled successfully, the vast majority of these cases were by people with no real claim to Choctaw citizenship. These people became known as "court citizens." To keep them off their rolls and stop them from receiving the lands secured by the 1830 treaty for Choctaw people, the U.S. established the Choctaw-Chickasaw Citizenship Court to handle all these cases. Choctaw Nation hired the outside law firm, Mansfield, McMurray and Cornish, to fight those cases. When the Dawes Commission went to Mississippi, they also received a flurry of fraudulent claims by white people who lied to try and receive allotments in Indian Territory.

Although people began applying for allotments in the 1890s, the rolls were not finalized until 1902. These rolls were cross-referenced with Choctaw censuses from previous years and various other rolls created by the Choctaw government. This was by no means an easy task. The Dawes Commission, and their small army of clerks, were constantly swamped with applications. After months of intense work, the Dawes Commission closed the Choctaw citizenship roll in preparation for the allotment of Choctaw lands on September 25, 1902. Now that the Dawes Commission had a list of all Choctaw citizens who registered in time, it had the difficult task of assigning lands to individuals before them. But before that could begin, issues with Choctaw and Chickasaw enrollment forced the Nations to re-negotiate some of the terms of allotment with the U.S. government; the subsequent agreement would become a major factor in Choctaw Nation's 1902 election.

In October 1902, the Choctaw Principal Chief and Chickasaw Governor ordered a special election regarding the Supplemental Agreement, which clarified some details of the Atoka Agreement. Prior to this election, Choctaw executive committee on the Supplemental Agreement had issued several pamphlets and circular letters on the document, inviting all citizens to make their concerns known to the commission so they could be addressed. In that same election, Choctaws would also vote for the chief. The race between Green McCurtain and Thomas W. Hunter was highly contested and watched by U.S. officials who worried how the election outcome might affect the ratification of the Supplemental Agreement. This election was highly contested particularly because of court citizens who organized against McCurtain. Although Choctaws did not know it at the time, this would be the last time they voted for their chief and had their full government until 1975. After the U.S. government cleared accusations of election fraud, Green McCurtain was declared the principal chief.

Chief Green McCurtain, who originally opposed allotment early in his career, became an advocate for allotment, ultimately putting his signature on all Choctaw and Chickasaw allotment patents. Like generations of Choctaw leaders before him, McCurtain was faced with a difficult choice. He calculated the decision to accept allotment so the Choctaw Nation would have a greater say in how allotment was instituted. This choice continues to affect Choctaw families today, particularly those who still hold their families' original allotted land. With the Supplemental Agreement passed and a new chief elected, the process to divide up Choctaw lands



Members of the Dawes Commission used mules and buckboards to enroll Choctaws in the more remote areas. Seated are Jacob Homer, the Choctaw interpreter, and W.P. Chaney. Photo courtesy of the W.P. Chaney Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

could really begin. Choctaw allotments averaged 320-acres plots depending on the value of the land, while Freedmen received considerably small plots. The coal, asphalt and timberlands were not included in the lands divided up for allotment. These lands would be collectively sold to the highest bidder at a later date; their sale would become increasingly important throughout the mid-1900s.

In 1905, representatives from the Five Tribes met to develop a plan to create their own state. Representatives met at Muskogee and drafted a constitution for an Indian-run state known as the State of Sequoyah. If admitted by the U.S., this state would have been the 46th state and would have been a successor to the governments of the Five Tribes, which U.S. Congress was planning to disestablish altogether. Notably, the proposed State of Sequoyah would not have been a confederacy of tribes, but the tribes would have been disestablished altogether in order to conform to the U.S. system. This proposal was sent to U.S. Congress, but President Theodore Roosevelt made it known that he preferred that Oklahoma and Indian Territories enter the Union as a single state rather than two. With this, Indian Territory faced a future in which they would be enjoined with Oklahoma Territory. Next month, we will delve into more detail regarding statehood and its impact on Choctaw Nation and its citizens, covering the 1906-1910 period.

Additional reading resources on this period are available on the Choctaw Nation Cultural Service webpage (<https://choctawnationculture.com/choctaw-culture/additional-resources.aspx>). Follow along with this Iti Fabvssa series in print and online at <https://www.choctaw-nation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>. If you have questions or would like more information on the sources, please contact Megan Baker at meganb@choctawnation.com.

1. Letter from Green McCurtain to J.S. King, December 4, 1902, "General Correspondence and records: 1902 (December 1-22)", Green McCurtain Collection, WHC, OU, 10. <https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/gmccurtain/id/466/rec/75>
2. Letter from D.C. McCurtain to Green McCurtain, September 19, 1902, "General correspondence and records: 1902 (January September)", Green McCurtain Collection, WHC, OU, 8.



CHAHTA HOMESTEAD PROJECT: 1830-1930

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

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Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma offers quality, safe and affordable rental units to low-income tribal families, with a preference for our Choctaw families throughout the Choctaw Nation Reservation. The Affordable Rental Housing program enables residents to participate in a family-oriented housing community at a rent rate within the family's means.

The Housing Authority currently manages 17 Affordable Rental Housing site locations, consisting of 326 units across the Choctaw Nation Reservation, with an additional 110 units planned to be constructed. The units are equipped with a refrigerator, stove, and central heat and air conditioning.

Each site is overseen by a Rental Manager and Maintenance Technician who is responsible for the overall operations and physical integrity of each unit and property. Together, they strive to deliver quality service to our tenants while maintaining compliance with policies and lease agreements.

Eligibility requirements for the Affordable Rental Housing program are as follows:

- Applicant must have a CDIB Card.
- Applicant household must meet income guidelines.
- Household members age 18 and older must pass a nationwide background check.
- Applicant must provide two previous landlord references or notarized statements of reference by non-family members.
- Applicants must have income at the time of application to pay monthly rent and maintain utilities.

Affordable Rental Housing is currently offered at the following locations:

Antlers	Caney	Quinton	Wilburton
Atoka	Coalgate	Red Oak	Wright City
Bokoshe	Hugo	Savanna	
Broken Bow	Idabel	Stigler	
Calera	Poteau	Talihina	

Choctaw Nation

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Housing Authority



Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative

Choctaw Nation program helps treat diabetes and prediabetes

By Chris Jennings

November is Diabetes Prevention Month, a time when communities come together to increase awareness of diabetes and prediabetes.

Native Americans are three times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes. The Choctaw Nation has taken steps to decrease those numbers. By instructing tribal members to make positive lifestyle changes, they can prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes.

An essential first step is to be screened for diabetes and prediabetes. Prediabetes is when blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be called diabetes.

Community Coordinator with the Choctaw Nation Diabetes Wellness Center, Lee Ann Sherrill RN, CDE, said, “Prediabetes is something that you can do a lifestyle change for to prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, over 88 million American adults have prediabetes, and 84% are unaware they have it. Adults, as well as children, are also at risk for Type 2 diabetes. A significant cause of this is an unhealthy lifestyle.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood obesity affects about 14.4 million children between 2 and 19 years old. Obesity is defined as a body mass index at or above the 95th percentile.

If you or your child have been diagnosed with prediabetes or are at risk, you can participate in the Nation’s Diabetes Prevention Program to help prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes.

Take small steps: Trying to make lifestyle changes can be challenging. By making changes one at a time, success rates can increase.

Exercise more. Experts recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity five to seven days a week. Start slowly by breaking time periods up throughout the day.

Keep track. Track your progress with your phone or online tracker to record what you eat, your weight and how active you are to help stay accountable. Challenging family and friends can also serve as motivation.

Eat healthier. Choose foods that are high in fiber and low in fat and sugar. Make sure

your plate has a good balance of vegetables, protein, and carbohydrates. Gradually switching to smaller portions is also a good way to reduce calories. Portion control is the main thing.

- One serving of meat or poultry is about the size of the palm of your hand or a deck of cards.
- A 3-ounce serving of fish is the size of a checkbook.
- A serving of cheese is like six dice.
- A 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta is like a rounded handful or a tennis ball.
- Two tablespoons of peanut butter are like a ping-pong ball.

Cut out sugary drinks. Any drink with added sugar can have harmful consequences. Drinking one to two cans of sugary drinks can increase your chances of getting Type 2 diabetes by 26%.

Many health problems can be associated with diabetes—heart disease, kidney disease and blindness, to name a few.

“Mainly, we see the eyes, the heart, the kidneys and the feet affected by high blood sugars, but it can affect the whole body,” explained Sherrill.

Diabetes Educators in Choctaw Nation clinics can help you learn to control your diabetes and live a healthier life.

Sherrill has seen first-hand the good that can come from these programs. “I was going through my book today, and I have a patient that started with me in the diabetes program on April 4. Their A1C was a 10, which is high. I had a follow-up visit in the last month, and their A1C dropped to six, which is wonderful,” said Sherrill.

Early detection and treatment of diabetes can decrease the risk of developing diabetes complications.

If you have diabetes, please see your educator in a clinic closest to you. If you’re interested in prevention and take the risk test or have been told you have prediabetes, check out the website for the Diabetes Prevention Program.

For more information and other resources, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/diabetes-wellness-center-0>.

Take the prediabetes screening test

CDC Prediabetes Screening Test



COULD YOU HAVE PREDIABETES?

Prediabetes means your blood glucose (sugar) is higher than normal, but not yet diabetes. Diabetes is a serious disease that can cause heart attack, stroke, blindness, kidney failure, or loss of feet or legs. Type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented in people with prediabetes through effective lifestyle programs. Take the first step. Find out your risk for prediabetes.

TAKE THE TEST—KNOW YOUR SCORE!

Answer these seven simple questions. For each “Yes” answer, add the number of points listed. All “No” answers are 0 points.

Yes	No
1	0
1	0
1	0
5	0
5	0
5	0
9	0

Are you a woman who has had a baby weighing more than 9 pounds at birth?

Do you have a sister or brother with diabetes?

Do you have a parent with diabetes?

Find your height on the chart. Do you weigh as much as or more than the weight listed for your height?

Are you younger than 65 years of age and get little or no exercise in a typical day?

Are you between 45 and 64 years of age?

Are you 65 years of age or older?

Add your score and check the back of this page to see what it means.

AT-RISK WEIGHT CHART

Height	Weight Pounds	Height	Weight Pounds
4'10"	129	5'7"	172
4'11"	133	5'8"	177
5'0"	138	5'9"	182
5'1"	143	5'10"	188
5'2"	147	5'11"	193
5'3"	152	6'0"	199
5'4"	157	6'1"	204
5'5"	162	6'2"	210
5'6"	167	6'3"	216
		6'4"	221

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Diabetes Translation



If your score is 3 to 8 points:

This means your risk is probably low for having prediabetes now. Keep your risk low. If you’re overweight, lose weight. Be active most days, and don’t use tobacco. Eat low-fat meals with fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods. If you have high cholesterol or high blood pressure, talk to your health care provider about your risk for type 2 diabetes.

If your score is 9 or more points:

This means your risk is high for having prediabetes now. Please make an appointment with your health care provider soon.

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Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

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November 2021

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Nutrition ed and food demos November 4 and 17

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Nutrition ed and food demos November 3 and 16

MCALISTER 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716
Nutrition ed and food demos November 10 and 23

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431
Nutrition ed and food demos November 9 and 24

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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:

Spiro Community Center
November 10, 2021
9:30 – 11:30

DIABETES PREVENTION PROGRAM

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

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

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Child and Adult Care Food Program Announcement

The Choctaw Nation Child Care & Development, Head Start & Early Head Start Programs announces its participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All participants in attendance are served meals at no extra charge to the parents. In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Veggie Soup

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- Salt and pepper
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 sweet potato, diced
- 1 can diced roasted tomatoes with juice
- 1 tablespoon of garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup chopped green beans
- 1 cup of butternut or acorn squash, diced
- 1 1/2 cups chopped spinach

Preparation

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion, salt, and pepper to taste and cook, occasionally stirring for 8 minutes. Add the carrot and sweet potato, stir and cook for 2 more minutes.
2. Add the canned tomatoes, garlic, oregano, and red pepper flakes. Stir in the water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, for 20 minutes.
3. Stir in the cherry tomatoes, green beans, squash, and cover and cook for 10-15 minutes. Stir in the spinach. Add more salt and pepper to taste.

Dan Trujillo stronger than life's obstacles

By Christian Toews

Dan Trujillo's life is marked by overcoming challenges. He was diagnosed with Acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a deadly form of blood and bone marrow cancer, when he was only three years old. It took seven years of chemotherapy and fighting before his cancer finally went into remission. Dan is now 39 years old, and cancer was just the beginning of his life's challenges.

When he was around the age of 22, he began cooking and selling Methamphetamine. According to Trujillo, he began using and selling the drugs and did so for ten years. Dan decided to go to a rehab facility and get clean. He was living in Colorado and heard about the Choctaw Nation's rehabilitation program. He said he called the rehab and was told they would put him on the waiting list, but Dan didn't give up.

"I drove down and knocked on the door and told them I need to be in here. They finally let me in," he said.

After going through the rehab clinic, Trujillo said that he was clean from drugs, but he still wasn't healthy.

After rehab, Trujillo commented on his health, saying, "I got clean and sober in rehab and felt like I was getting healthy, but I wasn't healthy because I was still 376 lbs."

He was able to join the Choctaw Wellness Center and began working out.

"This has been the place to help me become successful with weight loss. Over the last seven years, I've lost 180lbs of body fat, all through diet, nutrition, and exercise," said Dan. "I didn't have any weight loss surgery. The only surgery I had was to remove loose skin after losing so much weight, and I paid for that out of my pocket."

Dan recently found out that one of the chemotherapy drugs that saved his life as a child also heavily contributed to his obesity.

Dan attributes his success to hard work and setting

goals through all three of these significant life battles.

"I made my goals bigger than my excuses," he said.

This level of determination has propelled Dan even further. He now competes in body-building competitions throughout the year. He said he is now proud to show off the body he has worked so hard to have.

"I used to try and hide my body, but now I wear tighter clothes and can feel confident in them because of all the work that I have done," Dan said.

Trujillo didn't stop with his improvement. He is now a full-time employee at the Choctaw Nation's Wellness Center in Durant, and he helps people achieve their goals.

Dan holds multiple fitness and nutrition certifications and is very passionate about helping people achieve their goals in fitness.

"Honestly, weight loss and body-building are what I'm best at. I want to help you look and feel your best," said Dan.

Dan said anyone could do the things that he has done, but you have to want to.

"My biggest thing is, once your goals are bigger than your excuses, there is no stopping you," explained Trujillo.

He urges anyone looking to lose weight to focus on what you are eating even more than your exercise program.

"You can train them till you're blue in the face, but if they aren't eating right, it isn't going to do any good. Nutrition needs to be number one. Training is the second part of it, but the food is everything," he said.

He said that he uses his story to inspire people and motivate them to start or continue their weight loss journey. As a parent himself, he wants to encourage parents to take charge of their health for their children's sake. "You say you'd die for your kids, well why not live for them," said Dan. "Stop feeding your kids junk; stop eating junk; get into the gym and start living for them," he continued. Dan emphasized that nothing

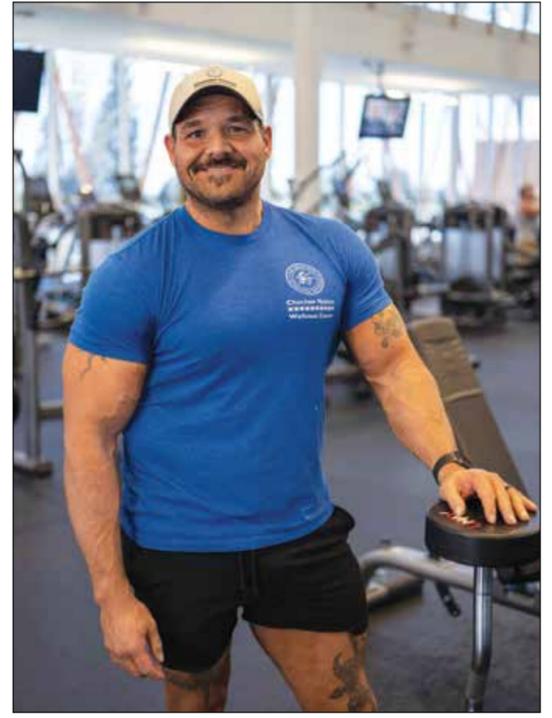


Photo By Christian Toews

Dan Trujillo survived childhood cancer and later substance abuse. Now, he strives to inspire and motivate others.

will motivate you unless you are ready to do it, but he encourages everyone to take control of their health for themselves, their family, and friends.

Dan lives with his wife Mo Trujillo in Calera.

He is available for clients and consultations at the Choctaw Wellness Center in Durant.

For more information on the Choctaw Wellness Center, visit <https://choctawwellness.com>.

Fox and the Red Hares finding their rhythm after pandemic

By Christian Toews

Fox and the Red Hares are an American rock band from Riverside, California. Members of the band include Justin Lee Fox (lead vocals, guitar), Jose Nevarez (drums), Jeff Subauste (bass) and Lucas Schneider (keyboards, harmonica).

Justin Lee Fox is a proud Choctaw tribal member.

According to Fox, his grandfather began telling him about the Choctaw culture when he was very young. He told him stories and inspired him on a life-long journey to connect with his Choctaw roots.

Fox said that his Choctaw heritage has influenced the music and stories that he has written.

"I think it's influenced me in many ways. One of them is the storytelling I do through music," he explained.

According to Fox, he was artistic from a very young age and was involved in theater as a child.

"I started off as a theater kid. I was really into acting and singing," Fox said. Fox picked up a bass guitar at 17 and then transitioned to the guitar around 19.

Fox said he has been writing music and playing in bands ever since then.

He started Fox and the Red Hares about five years ago, and they have released two albums since then.

Justin said that the COVID-19 pandemic

impacted their ability to perform. "We played our last show right before the first COVID-19 lockdown," he explained. "When you love to play, and when you love to entertain, it's a part of you. When you have to be isolated for an entire year, it drives you a little crazy. You want to go out and perform and be with your band, and we couldn't even have band practice."

According to Fox, things are beginning to open back up slowly, and they have recently started rehearsing again.

The band has used the time away from performing to write new songs and work on a music video releasing soon. Justin encourages everyone to support local artists.

"Support artists you love

because if you don't, they will break up and be gone," he said.

Fox encouraged every artist or anyone interested in music to have patience and keep working.

"Just keep working at it. Don't give up. There have been times when I thought I would just sell my music equipment and do something else. The biggest thing is don't lose hope. Just keep going even if it's just for you," Fox said.

He also highlighted the importance of humility and being a nice person in the music industry.

Fox and the Red Hares music is available on all major music services. You can also find more information and upcoming events on their website at foxandtheredhares.com.



Photo Provided

Tribal member Justin Lee Fox fronts the American rock band Fox and the Red Hares

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Choctaw Nation School of Choctaw Language

Burson flies high coaching Irish Olympic athletes

By Shelia Kirven

Ian Burson is not your typical 25-year-old, as he has already had a lifetime of incredible experiences and is in the process of planning for his next adventures.

A Choctaw tribal member who grew up in Carson City, Nevada, Burson currently resides in Salt Lake City, Utah, one of the epicenters of the winter Olympics for the entire world.

Burson explained, “It’s kind of the place where everyone comes to train no matter what country you represent at the games.”

Salt Lake City is the headquarters of the U.S. Ski Team and home to all of the facilities one would need for training.

Burson currently coaches Irish athletes, working with Snow Sports Ireland. He is looking forward to accompanying skier Bubba Newby and snowboarder Seamus O’Connor as their coach to the Winter Olympics

in Beijing in 2022, walking out in the opening ceremonies with the athletes under the Irish flag.

Burson also works for Park City Ski and Snowboard Club, one of the largest winter sports clubs in North America, and is part of a team that coaches every ski event available. Burson himself works with students who choose to ski half-pipe, a structure used for extreme sports such as snowboarding, skiing, freestyle BMX, skating and scooter riding. Half-pipe skiing has been a part of the Winter Olympic Games since 2002. There are only four half-pipe courses in the U.S.

He says he is excited about upcoming qualifying games in which he will be accompanying the Irish athletes before the Olympics, including Austria and Calgary. Once Burson and the Irish athletes begin traveling in November, they won’t stop until the Olympics in China.

“We still have to qualify, more or less, but we’re planning as if we’re going just for logistics sake,” Burson said. “The Austrian training camp is very important to get the athletes ready for the competition season that will basically make or break their Olympic hopes. We are very much hoping to get some training in and have some decent good results at the competitions and have some fun doing it.”

Both Irish athletes have been Olympian participants before.

“I’m very, very excited to be representing the relationship between the Irish people and the people of the Choctaw tribe. It’s a very special thing.”

Burson started skiing at the age of 10 but really got into the sport when he was 12-13 years old. That is when he began learning about the half-pipe courses.

“I started skiing at a young age, and I loved going up in the mountains. I grew up in Carson City and around Tahoe, and the surrounding ski resorts were 45-minutes to an hour



Ian Burson catches some serious air. Half-pipe skiing is a sport that he has mastered.



Photos Provided

Ian Burson, 25, currently works for Snow Sports Ireland. Burson gets to coach Irish athletes through his job and will accompany the Irish team as they enter the Winter Olympic Games in 2022.

away, and that’s where I was at every weekend. One year I joined a team and began competing and did pretty well. That kind of took over my life. Until this point, everything I’ve done is with skiing. I competed and eventually made it to World Cup level, trying to go to the Olympics myself and never actually making it, which is totally fine. But as soon as I stopped competing, I got out of it and went straight into coaching, which was really cool. Now I am coaching at the same level I competed at, World Cup skiers and athletes as well as younger kids that are filtering into the program. I am the sole half-pipe coach for our program, so I take athletes aged generally around 13-14 all the way to 25 and travel with them and train and compete at different venues and different levels of competition and try to help them to achieve their goals and have fun with it.”

Skiing and instructing are not the only things that Burson has had on his mind lately.

He recently started back to college and is attending classes through Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, a school that has previously trained astronauts. Burson is working on a bachelor’s degree in Aeronautics.

But that’s not all for Burson, as he is also about to begin a flight school

program with United Airlines in Good-year, Arizona.

Burson explained, “I have always loved flight.”

According to Burson, it will take about three to four years to get all the licenses and certifications he will need, then taking his turn at flight instructing to build hours. As soon as he meets their hour requirements, when there’s an opening at the regional airlines, he hopes to be pulled in for a job for a United regional carrier.

After Burson returns from the Olympics and starts the flight program, his future in skiing is up in the air. He says he has done a lot of cool things in his life and checked off lots of the boxes. “I have set this goal for myself, and I’m going to do what it takes to reach this goal and become a pilot,” explained Burson. “As for skiing outside of that, I don’t know if this season is my swan song from skiing and coaching. I’ll always be a skier. I will always go ski. That’s just who I am. I have spent my whole entire adult life at the top of the half-pipe in one regard or the other.”

According to Burson, ending his coaching career and ending at the Olympics would be a great conclusion to that chapter.

Dr. Lourrinda Renée continues to serve others

By Chris Jennings

Dr. Lourrinda Renée has been working to keep people safe for over 20 years. Whether that was working in emergency management in the oil and gas industry, writing about safety in agricultural restoration or as a law enforcement officer, she has taken the safety of others to heart.

It wasn’t all easy. Hard work and dedication have helped Rene succeed, regardless of the field.

“I put myself through school and became a police officer in the 90s,” said Renée.

While working for the Oklahoma City Police Department, she was one of the first responders to the Oklahoma City Murrah Building bombing.

During the investigation, Renée continued to work at the bombing site, taking reports and other documentation.

While off duty at the OKC police department, Renée worked on the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System for the U.S. Marshall Service, also known as ConAir. Among the federal prisoners she transported was Timothy McVeigh.

Renée is proud of her service during that time, saying, “I was just one of the chosen ones to make sure that McVeigh made it to the grand jury indictments.”

While moving into more of an emergency management-related career, Renée says she was one of the first females to graduate from Oklahoma State University’s Fire and Emergency Management master’s program.

Renée has a long list of achievements that would make most Choctaws proud: National Association of Professional Women VIP Woman of the Year, 2015; the cover of the January 2016 Women of Distinction Magazine; serving on several boards of directors in safety-related fields, and working as a project manager and Incident Command Operations Chief for Security and Law Enforcement in Homeland Response Drills that helped to prepare the military to interact with civilians in times of emergency response.

On top of these accomplishments, Renée has also had several professional speaking engagements helping others become better at what they do.

She’s not satisfied with just these accom-

plishments. Renée was also recently accepted into the National Emergency Management Advanced Academy, the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s flagship program for emergency management professional development.

Renée puts a high value on continuing her education, saying, “If you don’t stay up with the times, then you’re not going to be the best responder; you’re not going to plan the best; you can’t lead the best.”

“I think education and continuing training is the best way to succeed in your life,” said Renée.

Enforcing her beliefs in education, she serves as a Content Chair for six Dissertation Students in Leadership and Safety Climate and Safety Culture for Grand Canyon University.

When it comes to her heritage, Renée is proud of her Choctaw blood. She remem-



Photo Provided

Keeping people safe has long been a passion of Dr. Lourrinda Renée’s. She has worked for more than 20 years, taking the safety of others to heart.

bers learning Amazing Grace in Choctaw as a kid and helping other graduates at Oklahoma University with a blessing ceremony.

Renée stresses that it doesn’t matter what you look like; it’s what’s in your heart that counts.

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Rewards found on Pacific Crest Trail trek

By Chris Jennings

A 2,653-mile trip from Mexico to Canada through desert terrain, the snow-filled High Sierra and Cascade Mountains of Northern California, Oregon, and Washington may seem like a good road trip. For Mitch McCoy, though, it was a long walk.

For 156 days, McCoy traveled the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), staying ahead of wildfires that consumed thousands of acres in all three states.

In July of 2020, McCoy turned 60, but with COVID-19 in full swing, he could not celebrate the significant milestone.

"I couldn't even celebrate with my kids and do a big 60th party or anything like that, so it's kind of a big fizzle," said McCoy.

Just after his birthday, in September of 2020, McCoy had back surgery, an L4/L5 fusion. During his recovery, McCoy decided he was going to tackle the PCT.

There are three major through hikes in the United States. The Appalachian Trail (AT), the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) and the PCT. The AT is the more popular of the trails.

"They're all tough, and they're all beautiful, I'm sure, but the Appalachian Trail's more populated...I wanted more of a wilderness experience. There's more diversified scenery and more tranquility in the Pacific Crest Trail," said McCoy.

When McCoy told his family about his plan, he was met with some surprise. His girlfriend scratched her head, bewildered. His daughter just thought he was crazy, reminding him that he had never even backpacked before.

"She thought I was crazy for sure, but by the end of this, my daughter was one of my biggest supporters," said McCoy.

One of his stepsons was able to join him on the trail for a few days. They experienced heavy rain, blown-down trees

that were hard to climb over and extreme heat. McCoy said it was fun watching him get an idea of how difficult it [the PCT] really is.

"There's a level of appreciation that he has now that nobody else in my family will be able to understand," said McCoy.

On July 3, 2021, McCoy turned 61 while on the trail and was rewarded with a close-up experience of a cinnamon-colored momma bear and her two cubs.

McCoy had several other rewarding experiences on the trail, but one sticks out. On the day he started the hike, he met another man who was also starting. They hiked together for a while, becoming friends, but eventually separated, only seeing each other occasionally. As the hike ended, they eventually met up again, finishing on the same day.

"I was so happy to see him, he's a lifelong buddy now, and we work out together on Zoom every day," said McCoy.

McCoy says these kinds of moments happened all through the hike. "There really is something about being one with nature. You get out there, and she kicks your butt



Photo Provided

Mitch McCoy takes a moment to celebrate finishing the Pacific Crest trail at the trail's Northern Terminus on September 4, 2021. McCoy turned 61 while on the trail and says it was the toughest and most rewarding experience of his life.

and then she gives you these incredible rewards."

On September 4, 2021, McCoy completed the trail.

When asked if he would do it again, he simply laughed and said, "No, I'm one and done."

He's glad he did it though. "On a mental, physical and emotional level, this was by far the toughest and most rewarding challenge I've ever faced in my life," McCoy said.

Take a trip this fall and visit the Choctaw Cultural Center

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Fall is the perfect time for a road trip, and Choctaw Country is the perfect backdrop for a fun-filled weekend getaway.

There are so many fun things to do in the area this fall, truly something for everyone.

If you consider yourself a foodie, Choctaw Country is home to some of the state's best culinary hotspots, breweries and wineries.

Don't forget to check out one of the many festivals and events happening in the region this month, like the Talihina Fall Foliage Festival November 6 or the Beavers Bend Folk Festival and Craft Show November 12 through the 14.

If learning more about Choctaw culture and history piques your interest, consider adding the Choctaw Cultural Center to your list of road trip destinations.

The award-winning Choctaw Cultural Center, located in Calera, invites you to immerse yourself in the story of the Choctaw people through 14,000 years of history.

The building spans over 100,000 square feet and houses two exhibit halls, an auditorium, a children's play area, as well as a café and gift store. On a daily basis, guests can immerse themselves in Choctaw history and culture through tours, classes, and workshops, participate in a game of stickball or try out social dancing.

From the moment you walk through the door, you are sure to be amazed by the beauty and ambiance of this remarkable place. Everything down to the tiniest details has been crafted with the Choctaw people in mind. The diamond and basketweave textures throughout the main lobby reflect essential elements of Choctaw tradition. Even the stone used for the floor around the Central Fire was quarried locally in Stigler.

As you make your way through the

immersive permanent exhibit, you may even recognize some familiar faces. Living Choctaw tribal members are reflected in the life casts throughout the landscapes. These life casts, created from 3-D scans and plaster casts of tribal members, lend an even higher level of authenticity to the exhibits. These exhibitions bring technology and tradition together to tell the story of the Choctaw people.

The Luksi Activity Center was created with the young (and young at heart) in mind. Featuring two different styles of Choctaw dwellings, a log slide and a giant Luksi (turtle) where children can sit and hear traditional stories, this area is sure to become a favorite spot to learn about the Choctaw culture through play.

Just outside of the main building, step back in time to a living Choctaw village. In this spacious outdoor section of the Center, you will see demonstrations of traditional Choctaw crafts, dances, stickball and gardening techniques. You can also take a stroll around the magnificent ceremonial mound, modeled after Nanih Waiya, the Mother Mound, located in the Choctaw homelands of modern-day Mississippi.

The Choctaw Cultural Center also offers a variety of learning experiences for guests of all ages. Immersive experiences and cultural interactions are sure to become special memories. There is something for everyone from cultural art forms, social dancing, and learning how to make your own traditional meal.

Guests can participate in various lessons, workshops, programs and demonstrations throughout the Choctaw Cultural Center. The facility also houses multiple classrooms, including a teaching kitchen and a pottery room.

Classes offered include Chahta 101, which highlights the history, government, culture and language of the Choctaw



Photo by Choctaw Nation

This fall, visit the Choctaw Cultural Center to immerse yourself in Choctaw culture and learn about the rich history of the Choctaw people.

people. Another class offered is Chahta Anumpa, which seeks to promote the pronunciation of the Choctaw language and general understanding of words within the Choctaw Cultural Center. Each class runs for approximately 20 minutes.

More in-depth workshops, approximately an hour-long, are also offered at the Choctaw Cultural Center. Workshops recommended for those 12 and under are offered on Thursdays and Saturdays. Workshops for those 12 and over are offered on Fridays and Saturdays. New classes and workshops are added every month. School/group visits are also available upon request.

For more information or to reserve a school/group visit, call 833-708-9582 or visit choctawculturalcenter.com.

The Choctaw Cultural Center is dedicated to exploring, preserving, and showcasing

the culture and history of the Choctaw people, bringing the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture to life. Today is the day to start planning your visit.

The Choctaw Cultural Center is located at 1919 Hina Hanta Way Calera, OK 74730.

The entrance is located off Choctaw Road, west of the intersection of Choctaw Road and Highway 69/75 in Durant.

Guests of all ages are welcome. Admission is complimentary for Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal members. General admission for adults is \$12. Discounts are available for children, veterans, senior citizens and college students.

Hours: Wednesday - Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Sunday 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Closed: Monday and Tuesday

For more information, visit choctawculturalcenter.com.

Celebrating inaugural Choctaw Flag Day

The Choctaw Nation celebrated the inaugural Choctaw Flag Day Oct. 16.

As part of the observance, everyone was invited to celebrate by flying the flag at their homes, businesses and on their vehicles. People worldwide participated using #ChoctawFlagDay.



This flag represents strength, pride and family. I looked at my grandparents as my example of leadership. They taught me about family, love and respect. I proudly display my flag for them.

— David Vercher



In honor of #choctawflagday I made this quilt! The seal used in this quilt was rescued from a Choctaw Flag being retired after flying over the casino in 2015. I cherish the flag and what it represents Faith, Family & Culture. Now I will always have an important piece of our Choctaw Flag.

—Georgia Yeager



Photo by Chris Jennings



Photo by Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation Color Guard (top) raised the Choctaw flag, and the District 9 singers (center) opened the Flag Day ceremonies at the headquarters office in Durant on Friday, October 15. The official Choctaw Flag Day was October 16, the date the Choctaw seal was adopted in 1860.



My dad (Bart Bryns), my sons, and I carried the tribal flag with us on our 8-mile hike to Black Mesa this week and unfurled it at Oklahoma's highest point.

— Jared Bryns

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Tribal members hold special walk to honor Choctaw people affected by COVID-19

Christian Toews

The Choctaw culture of tradition and honor was on full display Saturday, Sept. 18. A group of tribal members gathered to honor the Choctaw people who have been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic.

However, the events that took place on Saturday honored more than just recent history.

Choctaw drummers, princesses, friends and family gathered to walk from the newly opened Choctaw Cultural Center gates to the stickball fields about half a mile away.

This walk and stickball game began as an idea of Levi Battiest. He said the idea came out of having COVID-19 twice and being isolated. "It hurt me to see people who lost loved ones who didn't beat COVID. It really touched my heart to do a walk in their honor to show them that we are still here as Choctaw people. I still want our Nation to thrive," explained Battiest.

According to Battiest, the drums represent the heartbeat of the Choctaw people, serving an important purpose in the walk.

The drums used during the walk were hand-made by Garrison Joe.

According to Joe, the drums are significant to him and the Choctaw people.

"The drums mean a lot to me because how I learned was passed down from my uncles," he explained. "The drums don't just signify stickball or anything like that. There are other things like get-togethers, festivals, and services and that kind of stuff. Back in the day, when this thing went off, people knew something was going on. They used to say you could hear it for miles and miles."

According to Joe, these drums, which are

smaller and made to be carried and played, have become more popular in recent years.

"These drums have really become the heartbeat of the Choctaw Nation now with the rise of the youth that are learning the culture now. They are wanting to play the drums now," Joe explained.

Joe is hopeful that this tradition continues to grow.

"Now that it's booming up here in Oklahoma, hopefully, there will be a whole wide range of drummers," said Joe.

Shelly Louis attended the walk and said this event was a start toward keeping with the traditional Choctaw culture of being very community-oriented.

"I told Levi thank you for doing this because we need to come back to being community-oriented again, and this is a start right here," stated Louis.

The walk took approximately twenty minutes to complete.

After the walk, the group performed the opening ceremonies for the stickball game. Choctaw princesses in attendance performed the Lord's Prayer.

Brenner Billy is a cultural center employee and took part in both the walk and the stickball game.

"It really hit home for all of us that played. We had this camaraderie because we all had people in our lives who have been affected by COVID, definitely powerful to me. Even though this might have been something small we were just reminded of everyone who has passed or been affected," explained Billy.

Choctaw culture is still alive and well. With events like the memorial walk, young people are continuing the legacy of their ancestors through song, dance, language and other traditional practices.



Photo by Christian Toews

According to Garrison Joe, traditional drums are handmade and use deerskin to give each drum a unique sound.



Photo by Christian Toews

The walk started at the gates of the cultural center in Durant and ended at the stickball field, about half a mile away.



Photo by Christian Toews

A group of drummers of all ages lead the memorial walk Saturday, Sept. 18.



Photo by Christian Toews

Garrison Joe, who handmade the drums, leads the drummers during the walk.

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