



November 2023 Issue



NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



In the U.S., November is recognized as Native American Heritage Month. The month is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions and histories and acknowledge Indigenous people's essential contributions to this country.

Native American Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about tribes, to raise general awareness about the unique challenges Indigenous people have faced both historically and in the present, and how tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges.

This month, the Biskinik has chosen to highlight just a few of the many Choctaw tribal members making a difference in their communities and representing the Choctaw Nation as they accomplish their goals and dreams. If you or someone you know is a Choctaw tribal member doing great things, feel free to share their story with us through email at biskinik@choctawnation.com.



Choctaw Nation celebrates Native American Heritage Month

Below is a list of events the Choctaw Nation is hosting this November.

Attending one of these events is a great opportunity to celebrate Native American Heritage Month and learn more about Choctaw Culture.

Visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/native-november/> for more information and to register for this year's Native November events.

November 2:

CHAHTA FEAST OF THE DEAD

The Feast of the Dead is a time of celebration for families and the community to give remembrance to those who have passed on. Join us at the Choctaw RV Park for this traditional Choctaw burial custom to honor and remember our loved ones.

- Potluck Style Meal: 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (Bring a dish to share)
- Family Heritage Crafts: 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. (Bring family photos to scan and copy)
- Memorial Reflection and Ceremony: 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (Share stories about loved ones)

November 3:

CHOCTAW DAY AT THE CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

Help us kick off the 2023 Choctaw Nation Powwow the Chahta way! Admission is complimentary for Choctaw tribal members and Cultural Center members.

- 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Choctaw singing in Kowi Chito.
- 11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Refreshments and conversations in the Chahta Anumpa.
- BREAK
- 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Stickball demonstration.
- 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Demonstration tables.
- 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Traditional games.
- 3:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Social dancing demonstration.

November 3-5:

CHOCTAW NATION POWWOW

Make plans to join us as we kick off Native American Month with one of the nation's largest powwows. Experience the sights and sounds of dancers from all over the country. You won't want to miss it!

Friday, November 3

- 3:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Vendor Booth Setup
- 3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Gourd Dance (Choctaw Event Center)
- 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Dance Specials (Adult Dancers Only)

Saturday, November 4

- 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Vendor Booth Setup
- 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Demonstration (See Gwen Takes Horse) Drum Registration
- 10:00 a.m. Doors Open to Public

- 10:00 a.m. Gourd Dance (Choctaw Event Center)
- 12:00 p.m. Grand Entry
- 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Dance Specials
- 7:00 p.m. Grand Entry

Sunday, November 5

- 10:00 a.m. Doors Open to Public
- 10:30 a.m. Dance Specials
- 12:00 p.m. Grand Entry

November 7:

UNDERSTANDING INDIAN CHILD WELFARE

Learn about the role of ICWA in the Choctaw judicial system with tribal attorneys Gina South, Darrell Mori, and Cory Ortega. This online session will take place November 7 at 1:00 p.m. Register here.

November 9:

CHOCTAW LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

The Choctaw language is an integral part of our culture and sovereignty. Join the Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna November 9 at 1:00 p.m. for an online session discussing the latest language revitalization efforts and how everyone can contribute to the movement.

LACROSSE CLINIC

Join us November 9, from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m., for a special Celebrate Lacrosse Week Pick Up & Play Clinic. The Choctaw Cultural Center and USA Lacrosse have partnered to bring this clinic to the Choctaw Cultural Center. Participants will experience a fun introduction to the sport and get connected to their local community's lacrosse organization. Equipment will be provided for use while at the event.

November 10:

Choctaw Nation facilities closed in observance of Veteran's Day.

November 11:

VETERAN'S DAY CEREMONY

Please join us November 11 in Tuskaoma at 11 a.m. as we express our gratitude and honor our Choctaw veterans who have served and sacrificed for our country during our Annual Choctaw Veterans Day Ceremony.

ART OF FRYBREAD-MAKING

Take part in this tasty educational opportunity. Join us for the Workshop: Fun for All Ages Fry Bread-making Class at the Choctaw Cultural Center. Participants will learn how to make fry bread from the Center's Chef Tanya Nicholas and will have their own fry bread-making kit. Admission is complimentary for Choctaw tribal members and Cultural Center members.

PUCKER-TOE MOCCASINS MAKING CLASS

Have you wanted to learn how to create your own pair of pucker-toe moccasins? Join Brad Joe, Cultural Events Special Projects Program Coordinator, to learn about moccasins and

gain hands-on experience in fabricating a pair of your very own. This class was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, grant number MN-253304-OMS-23 and the support of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Cultural Events Department.

November 13 – 17:

ROCK YOUR MOCS

Wear your moccasins during Rock Your Mocs week, take a photo, create a video or story, add the hashtag #ROCKYOURMOCS and upload it to social media for the world to see and enjoy.

November 14:

LIVING HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER LIVES

Tune in on November 14 from 1:00–2:00 p.m. to hear Dr. Karina Walters explain how traditional Choctaw ways and teachings can have a positive impact on our emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

November 16:

NATIVE REPRESENTATION IN ENTERTAINMENT

Native Americans have made large strides in improving the way they are represented in film, television, literature and other areas, but it wasn't always easy to navigate the world of entertainment. In this online session, Josiah Jones tells his story of breaking into the film industry and encourages others to follow their dreams. Join this WebEx event on November 16 at 1 p.m.

November 17:

HYMNS WITH DISTRICT 9 AND SOCIAL DANCING

Visit the Choctaw Tribal Head Quarters Amphitheatre November 17 for a special demonstration of Choctaw culture. From 9:30 a.m. to 10 a.m., listen to the District 9 Seniors sing Choctaw Hymns. From 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., watch as Choctaw Cultural Outreach demonstrates traditional Choctaw social dances.

MOVIES ON THE PATIO: MOANA

Join us November 17 at the Choctaw Cultural Center as we host Movies on the Patio from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Each month, the CCC shows themed movies based around the seasons and holidays. Bring a friend, family and a chair! Snacks will be available to purchase at this event. Please, no outside food and beverages.

November 18:

LUKCHUK KE PILA

Help prepare the Center's chukkas for the coming winter on November 18 from 1:00 p.m. to 4 p.m. With your help, the Choctaw Cultural Center will create the clay/mud mixture and apply the mud to the bare chukka. This is similar to the winter home preparation of our Choctaw ancestors.

November 20:

STORYTELLING: TRADITIONAL DEER HUNTING

The most important food animal for our Choctaw ancestors was the issi (white-tailed deer). Join us via Webex on November 20, as Ryan Spring shares a story of traditional Choctaw deer hunting.

November 21:

THE RIBBON SKIRT: SYMBOL OF IDENTITY, RESILIENCE, AND SURVIVAL

Ribbon skirts come in a wide variety of styles and colors, and Native women from all tribes wear them proudly to honor their cultures. Join Isabella Aiukli Cornell on November 21, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. for this online presentation on the origins of the ribbon skirt and what they mean today.

November 23-24:

Choctaw Nation facilities closed in observance Thanksgiving.

November 28:

CHOCTAW HERITAGE CULTIVARS

Native plants are critical to the ecosystem of Choctaw Country, and they bring a wide variety of other benefits. Join the Historic Preservation Department November 28 at 1:00 p.m. for an online session discussing how to use culturally significant plants to improve health and quality of life. Register for the WebEx presentation here.

November 30:

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY: WHAT IT IS AND WHY WE FIGHT FOR IT

The Choctaw Nation's Government Relations team will hold an online session discussing the importance of tribal sovereignty in today's world and how we can protect it. Join us online November 30 from 1:00–2:00 p.m. to participate.

Throughout the Month:

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER COLORING SHEETS

Every Wednesday during the month of November, the Choctaw Nation will be releasing a new Native November coloring sheet, highlighting a part of Choctaw culture.

WEAR YOUR REGALIA DAY

Every Wednesday during Native American Heritage Month will be Wear Your Regalia Day. Show your Choctaw pride in style.

THANKSGIVING MEALS

Throughout the Month of November, join your local Choctaw Community Center for their annual Thanksgiving Meals. Enjoy a delicious meal and fun and fellowship with fellow Choctaws in your community.

All events, dates and times are subject to change. Stay up-to-date by following the Choctaw Nation and Choctaw Cultural Center social media or by visiting their websites.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Take pride in the Choctaw flag

Last week, I had a unique opportunity to travel to France to meet with government officials for nation building and to pay our Nation's respects to five Choctaw soldiers who lost their lives in World War I.

The four-day battle of St. Etienne, France, claimed the lives of five young Tvshka Chahta: Corporal Nicholas E. Brown, Private First-Class Edmond Fobb, Private First Class Simeon Cusher, Private Sampson Ward and Private Edmund Cooper. The Choctaw Nation participated in the 105th Anniversary of the battle at the location where these Tvshka Chahta are buried at the American Cemetery in France. I had an opportunity to express what

these brave men meant to the Choctaw Nation as well as the United States.

As I left the ceremony, I felt a sense of pride in our people, and our Nation. The Chahta Spirit of Faith, Family and Culture was on display at the event. It reminded me that our Choctaw people have always answered the call when there is a need. Our Nation offers a helping hand during dire times, and we never expect anything in return – that is the Chahta way. We only ask that others respect our sovereign Nation and honor the agreements that our ancestors secured.

Choctaw pride is a feeling, a way of life, and it flows through the blood of every tribal member of this Nation. Our ancestors fought and died for every speck of soil that we now call our home. It is our right as a sovereign nation to be good stewards of our Nation and honor the history for our people and future generations.

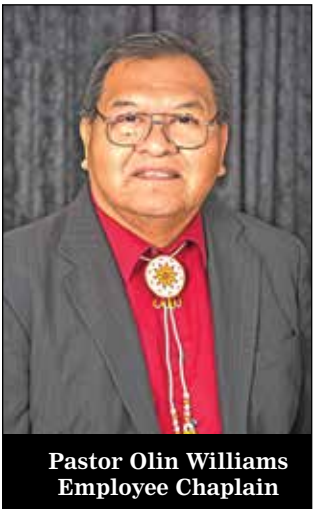
A reminder of our history and traditions is on display in everything we do at the Choctaw Nation through our Great Seal. On October 16, 1860, the Choctaw General Council, led by Chief George Hudson, passed an act at the regular annual session held at Doaksville, that created the Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation.

The Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation, which consists of an unstrung bow symbolizing a peaceful Nation; encompassing three arrows honoring our three Chiefs Pushmataha, Mushulatubbe, and Apukshunabbe; and a smoking pipe-hatchet that represents the desire of the Choctaw people to establish beneficial alliances with neighbors, but also perhaps prowess. The seal has been used on all official papers of the Choctaw Nation since 1860. The seal is a guide for visitors to the Nation to see what we stand for, our traditions and culture.

We mark the day our official seal was created with Choctaw Nation's Official Flag Day, which is held annually on Oct. 16. I encourage everyone to take some time to understand the meaning of our flag. Our flag of purple with the Great Seal in the center is not just a piece of material, but the symbol our sovereign Nation has chosen to represent the Nation to our people and to the rest of the world.

Take pride in our people, our Choctaw Nation, and our flag on this Choctaw Flag Day. We owe it to our ancestors, our tribal members, and the future generations of the Choctaw Nation. We are Choctaw Proud. As I told those in attendance at the American Cemetery in France, "Much like our Choctaw ancestors before them, our tribe has always exhibited a servant's heart. The Choctaw Nation has answered the call time and time again when someone needs help, comfort, or a safe place."

These are the virtues that the Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation represents. Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Critique of Religion

Within any body of religious believers, there is the danger of extremism and fanaticism, which lead to injustice and oppression. The antidote for Christians is to reach for a fuller and truer faith in Jesus Christ.

Documents show that Marx's analysis of religion as an instrument of oppression was anticipated by the Hebrew prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5,6 and 7), Jesus himself conducts a major critique of the religion of His day.

In Matthew 6:7, Jesus says, "But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they will be heard for their much speaking."

This type of religious discourse comes out as judgmental and condemning, quick to give criticism but unwilling to take it.

Jesus is critiquing the people who pray, give to the poor, and seek to live according to the Bible, but they do so to get acclaim and power for themselves.

This is utilizing scriptures to get leverage over others. The prophets and Jesus are not criticizing against prayer, helping the poor, and obedience to Biblical directions for life.

They are emphasizing the potential of this kind of religion to lead to external forms of greed, materialism, and oppression. "Doesn't orthodox religion inevitably lead to violence?" asked one individual. He argues that Christian nations institutionalized imperialism, violence, and oppression through the Inquisition and the African slave trade.

Evidence seems to indicate that religion aggravates human differences until it boils over into war, violence, and the oppression of minorities. True Christianity is a relationship with Christ. The essence of Christianity is salvation by grace. It is not salvation by works or human moral efforts but by what Christ did for us.

This type of belief in being accepted by God by sheer grace is humbling. However, in the twentieth century, violence has been inspired as much by secularism as by religion.

There seems to be some violent impulse deeply rooted in the human heart that expresses itself regardless of what the beliefs are in a particular society. Communist regimes rejected organized religion and belief in God.

Without the influence of religion, they produced massive violence against their own people. Even without the ideology of God, a society will find some other concept and hold on to it to appear moral and superior. Even the ideals of liberty and equality can use violence against opponents to attain their purpose. Mankind is sinful by nature. That's why Jesus said, "Ye must be born again."



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Season of giving is when the Choctaw Nation shines

As we enter the holiday season the Choctaw Nation shows what the Chahta Spirit of Faith, Family and Culture truly means.

The season of giving has always been a time when the Nation shows that giving and generosity are the foundation of our Tribe. The Choctaw Nation has answered the call when neighbors need a helping hand, and our people have always offered comfort in times of need – it is the Chahta way. We take care of our people and neighbors without a thought of reciprocation – it is the Chahta Way.

As a sovereign nation, we have a responsibility to our people and to show tribal and non-tribal members what we are made of and to promote the giving spirit of the Choctaw Nation. The Tribe helps people throughout the year with housing, food, healthcare, and education. Each year during the holidays has always been the Choctaw Nation's time to shine, when our giving spirit is on full display. During this time, we reach deep as a Nation to help our neighbors to make sure their holiday season is enjoyable.

This year is no exception, the Choctaw Nation has announced two donation drives for families who may need a little extra help this holiday season. Keep an eye out for opportunities to support our people and communities! These are just a couple of the planned donation drives planned for the holiday season:

- **CANNED FOOD DRIVE NOW THROUGH NOV. 17:** Drop off non-perishable food items at HQ, Travel Plazas, Country Markets, Head Starts, and Child Care Centers. Donations go to local families, food banks, and churches. For more information, contact cdthompson@choctawnation.com or call 580-642-7205.
- **CNO HEAD START AND CHILD CARE CENTERS COAT DRIVE & EXCHANGE – NOW THROUGH NOV. 17 FOR ALL AGES (CHILDREN AND ADULTS):** If you have an extra coat, donate it. If you need a warmer coat (or have outgrown your coat), exchange it. Drop off coats at any CNO Head Start or Child Care Center throughout the reservation. Call 580-642-7205 or email cdthompson@choctawnation.com for more information.

Luke 6:28: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Yakoke and God Bless!

CNO honors World War I and II Choctaw veterans in France



"What an emotional experience it was to honor our Choctaw Veterans buried in Normandy at the Normandy American Cemetery.

These Chahta Tushka paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Their names are: Eugene Anderson, Aaron Crusher, Wilburn Harkins, Williams Pratt, Jr., Turner Turnbull, Joshua Wilson and Ruel Wilson. We also paid tribute to Daniel McKenzie and Omagene Whitefield whose names are on the wall in the Garden of the Missing."

– Chief Batton

Find out more about the about the Choctaw delegates in France on page 14.



CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHRISTMAS

CATALOG

VIEW THE DIGITAL CATALOG AT
CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM

Choctaw Nation Small Business Development

HOLIDAY FOOD VOUCHERS

APPLY AT CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

THANKSGIVING DEADLINE: OCT. 28
CHRISTMAS DEADLINE: NOV. 25

Available for low-income Choctaw families living within the Choctaw Nation Reservation
One voucher per household.

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services

UPDATE REQUIRED FOR THOSE WITH SOONERCARE COVERAGE

The Oklahoma Healthcare Authority is now requiring all SoonerCare recipients to update their information to continue coverage. Contact a Patient Benefit Coordinator at your local Choctaw Nation Health Clinic to update your information and avoid termination or lapse in coverage.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Tulsa Choctaw reflects on life in the music industry ahead of new album release

By Shelia Kirven

Fame is not unfamiliar to Geoff Bond. He has worked with some of the biggest names in the music and movie business, engineering songs and productions into mega hits.

Though he grew up around celebrities, Bond made a name for himself as a musician, singer and recording artist, but it was being a producer, sound designer and engineer that brought him fame.

Growing up, the greatest in show business were guests in his home. He remembers Tony Bennett, Tony Randall, Donald O'Connor and Efrem Zimbalist Jr. being among the many who came to visit Bond's father, Ridge Bond, a famous actor in the Broadway production of Oklahoma!, and his mother, Maxine, a well-known antiques restoration artist.

His love for music came from his father. They sang together in the car, and his dad taught him to sing harmony. They also sang in the Episcopal church choir.

Bond played guitar and drums as a child and can play music by ear. He started his own bands growing up, and played percussion in the school band, resulting in a college scholarship. In 1970, he began writing songs and graduated from Tulsa University with a radio, television and film degree in 1972.

In 1974, he formed The Blowout Relaxer Band in Colorado.

He began to play the MIDI guitar, where different instruments are set up on each string and earned the nickname, "The One-Man Bond." He even demonstrated his ability to the manufacturer at the National Association of Musical Merchandisers. The Business Journal newspaper said of Bond, "...when he picks a fast melody on his Zeta guitar, a full rock

band blares out of the speakers."

Bond charted his first record release in 1980 and VIP Records signed him a few years later.

He began experimenting while recording at a studio in Memphis and started to work on microphone placement. He was taught guild secrets and engineering by masters of the business, but he is also somewhat self-taught.

After moving to Los Angeles, Bond bought all the digital audio workstations he could afford and began working for Pink Floyd saxophonist Scott Page at The Arena studio. The first week, he worked with artists Edgar Winter and John Anderson. He said it was "eerie" to work with that caliber of musicians, because "nobody makes mistakes; they just don't." He had as much work as he wanted with Disney, AC/DC, Black Crowes, Metallica, Garth Brooks, Bon Jovi, Cinderella and others. He also edited sound and did effects for the mega-hit project Monsters of Rock.

In 1994, Bond returned to Oklahoma and started 21st Century Audio Systems, a 3D audio engineering company, with a friend.

The company remastered the late Jimi Hendrix's music in HD3D from original analog masters, working with the Hendrix family. In a November 2002 story in the Denver Post, Bond said, "I take the Hendrix audio on the 21A computer and do like what people do with graphic arts. I extrude it, give it height, width and depth, depending on what we think the sound design should be."

Hendrix's father said, "Jimi would have loved this." Bond remains one of a handful who have had the chance to work with the Hendrix originals.

He created HD3D virtual experiences for Universal Studios' theme park flight simulator rides in addition to working as editor, sound designer and producer on "This is Garth Brooks," "For Those About to Rock," and the film, "The Doors." He also did effects for movie productions including The Addams Family and Twister. For Twister, Bond used real-time sounds of a shuttle launch slowed down with a binaural microphone inside a metal structure flying apart in air. He said his best effect was created by putting honey next to a microphone and recording the sounds of hundreds of insects buzzing around.

Bond said his favorite career projects were the Jimi Hendrix project and working alongside Alan Parsons to edit MTV videos for the Alan Parsons Project.

His band, B-OND, is set to release a new single LP vinyl in early 2024. "For this release, I'm putting the best stuff together." Bond did his own engineering for the LP, which is how he got into the business of music engineering originally.

He is happy vinyl is back. "I see somewhat of the same ingredients that were present in the 60s are present again. They are fermenting." He believes in fixed print because it can't be altered, that it needs to be analogized and allowed to decay. It is important to him that the arts become true again. "I believe that unless art is rare, it's not appreciated on a certain level. Because digital is so common, we can get anything at any time; nothing is rare anymore."



Photos Provided

Geoff Bond has worked with some of the biggest names in the music and movie business, engineering songs and productions into mega hits.

Bond's wife, Alice, is also a member of the band. She studied music theory at OU and is a classically trained French horn player and pianist. She was in a women's folk ensemble previously, performing Eastern European singing and dancing, and can sing, "...very odd harmonies because of Romanian and Bulgarian influence," according to Bond. He says Alice is the reason he has written so many songs and can apply himself daily. In his career, he says he has written around 300 songs.

His Choctaw heritage and parents' contributions to the arts steered Bond's life, and he is revisiting those contributions and giving back. Recently, he and his sister, Pam, contributed the bulk of their father's Broadway memorabilia and ancestral possessions to the Choctaw Cultural Center.

Choctaw roots run deep in the Bond family, and some of the most prized family items are photos of ancestors who were Choctaw Lighthorsemen.

He said, "Having a degree of blood is a feeling of continuity that I cannot quite describe at the base level, the very base level. It's a feeling of belonging," and when he visits the Choctaw Cultural Center, he says he feels like he is home.

Bond thinks he would get the seal of approval from his dad, not only on the contributions he and his sister made, but also what he has done with his life. "I think he would say, 'You've finally got it.'"

Geoff Bond's music has come full circle, from playing music for himself to engineering for others, and now back to working on his music own again. Looking forward to his band's future and the release of their new LP, he is self-motivated, excited for life, and full of memories of a lifetime in the music business.

For the complete story on the Jimi Hendrix project, visit Sound Art Magazine at <https://soundartmagazine.com/hendrix-in-hd3d-the-red-house-project/>.

You can read more about the Bond family at <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik/choctaw-legend-still-remembered-80-years-later-for-leading-role-in-broadways-oklahoma/>.



Geoff Bond...the early years.

Cindy Humphrey follows dream of becoming a teacher

By Kellie Matherly

Tribal member Cindy Humphrey knew she was destined to be a teacher when she was a little girl playing school with her dolls and stuffed animals. As an adult, she put that dream aside to focus on other pursuits, but she always felt the call of the classroom. In 2019, she achieved her goal to finish her degree in education by the time she turned 50.

The road to teaching was a winding one for Humphrey. She spent years doing tax preparation and other jobs before she decided to look for work in the school system. Without a teaching license, her options were limited, but Humphrey was determined to do what she could to make her dream a reality. For years, she worked in the cafeteria and on the custodial team when she could, but it was her work as a paraprofessional and substitute teacher that inspired her to go back to school to be a full-time teacher.

The decision to finish her bachelor's degree at age 47 was tough, but with the support of her family and a lot of hard work, Humphrey graduated from Texas A&M--Texarkana in 2019. Now, she uses her story as an example for her special needs students.

She often tells them, "You may have some bumps in the road or setbacks, but it doesn't mean you can't reach your goals." Shortly after she finished her bachelor's degree, Humphrey went back to school to get her master's. She has now had her own classroom for five years, working with students in grades five through eight who need extra help with academic subjects. For her, the special education classroom offers much more freedom to meet students where they are and help them.

Humphrey wants everyone to understand that it's never too late to chase your childhood dreams.

"I want people to know that they should never stop believing and striving to attain their goals, no matter their age or obstacles," Humphrey said. "I took longer in my educational journey, and look at me now!"



CNO tribal member working to aid Denver Native American Community through Equal Justice Works Fellowship

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Isabel Dufford, of Colorado, recently graduated from Law School at the University of Denver Strum College of Law. She also received an Equal Justice Works Fellowship to work with the Colorado Legal Services for the next two years, providing direct representation, education and advocacy for the Native American community in Denver in family law matters.

Dufford is honored to pursue a project to serve the Native American community in Denver that will allow her to combine her passion for client-centered legal aid with her background as a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

"As a tribal citizen, I know how important it is that Native families have access to legal services and providers with whom they share a connection, especially in family law where the issues are deeply personal and complex," said Dufford.

She intends to use her position to become a strong voice advocating for the needs of her clients and the Native community and to create positive and lasting change.

Dufford will provide accessible and culturally responsive direct representation to Native American individuals and families who need assistance with divorces, custody, adoptions, guardianships, protection orders, wills, and other family law matters.

She will also develop strong community partnerships with and among non-legal organizations already serving the Denver Native American community. Dufford will form a coalition to meet and respond to the needs of Native families in the area more effectively.

Additionally, Dufford will develop training and a report of best practices and considerations in representing Native families, as well as identify areas that may be ripe for macro-level policy reform and advocacy.

"I'm incredibly excited for this opportunity to do what is essentially my dream job, to serve my community and to have a positive impact," Dufford said. "I'm also so grateful to the Choctaw Nation, particularly the Higher Education Program, whose grants/scholarships were a huge help to me through undergrad and law school."



CHOCTAW VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

NOVEMBER 11 | 11AM

Choctaw Nation Capitol Grounds
Arts & Crafts Building
Council House Road | Tuskahoma, OK

PLEASE JOIN US AS WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE AND HONOR OUR CHOCTAW VETERANS WHO SERVED AND SACRIFICED FOR OUR COUNTRY.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

SUCCESS THROUGH PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Our mission is to assist Choctaw tribal members who have felony offenses in becoming productive citizens.

The program's purpose is to assist in removing barriers preventing our members from reintegrating into the communities in which they live.

SERVICES

- Treatment planning
- Case management
- Referral assistance
- Mental health consultation and referral
- Emergency clothing and food
- Assistance with transitional housing
- Occupational consultation and referral

Please contact our office for prescreening to determine eligibility for services.

For more information, call **800.522.6170** or **580.642.8538**
email us at Reintegration@choctawnation.com,
or visit our [website at choctawnation.com/services/reintegration/](https://www.choctawnation.com/services/reintegration/)

P.O. Box 1210 | 1802 Chikita Hina Durant, OK 74701

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

TIS THE SEASON... CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK

Enjoy the spirit of the holidays as we present our annual Christmas in the Park drive-through lights display at the beautiful Choctaw Nation Capitol Grounds.

Receive a cup of delicious hot cocoa the first three weekends from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm. The event is free and open to the public.

December 1-31, 2023 (opens at dark)
Choctaw Nation Capitol Grounds

FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT TRIBAL EVENTS AT TRIBALEVENTS@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna apprentices graduate from inaugural program

By Chris Jennings

Over the last several years, the number of fluent speakers of the Choctaw language has declined. As most of the generation that can speak the language gets older, learning the language is one of the most important things Choctaw people can do to preserve their identity and sovereignty.

The School of Choctaw Language (Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna) developed a curriculum so they could better teach the language. Choctaw classes are available at several high schools, colleges, Head Start, and online. Despite all of these steps, the declining rate of fluent speakers was putting the Tribe in a crisis.

That's why, with the help of the tribal council, the Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna took its biggest and boldest move yet.

On Tuesday, September 6, that move came to fruition. The first four apprentices in the Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna Apprentice Program were recognized as fluent speakers of the Choctaw language.

The program took work. It was a full-time job in a classroom setting, learning Choctaw. Madeleine Freeman was one of the apprentices. "It was a really interesting experience. I think when I was first going into it, I wasn't really sure what to anticipate, but I knew that it was going to be rigorous; it had to be a rigorous environment," she said.

Freeman, who grew up speaking some Choctaw with her grandmother, took the opportunity very seriously, "From the get-go, it was never just a job; it was never just something that I'd be doing in my free time," Freeman said.

Chief Gary Batton told those in attendance that what these apprentices and teachers were doing highlighted servant leadership, one of the core Choctaw beliefs. By mentoring and

passing down the language and culture, they embody what it is to be and feel Choctaw. "I think it's very important to understand that because we don't want to lose that feeling of who we are as Choctaw people," Batton said.

Preserving the language has been something tribal leadership has discussed for years. Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. Said, "We have talked about how to continue our language, how to preserve it for years to come, and it's an honor for Chief and I to know that you've set out on this path and this vision," he said to the apprentices.

Teresa Billy a Program Manager with the Language Department said, "Because of COVID and having lost numerous elders and speakers in the community, our language was in a crisis mode. It's called language death, when you no longer have children in the home, learning the language and speaking the language, no new learners."

With the loss of a single, fluent language speaker, every Choctaw person loses a piece of their identity. Billy emphasizes this, saying it's who you are. "It says that here's a body of people who have a set of life values, customs, traditions, stories, songs, language, dancing, music, all of that is embedded in language. It's who we are," said Billy.

Billy said they knew with the language crisis occurring, they needed to step up their efforts in teaching the language.

That's when the apprentice program was developed to create a situation where people had to learn the language because that's how they had to communicate. It was a total immersion program, like being dropped into a foreign country.

"They're hearing the language; they're learning the language; hearing the verbs that are embedded in the language; hearing it spoken;



Photo by Chris Jennings

Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna apprentices pose for a picture with their instructors and tribal leadership. The four apprentices have completed a rigorous language program and are now fluent in the Choctaw Language.

looking at words; understanding words or writing sentences; speaking to one another. It's very intense; it's high level," said Billy.

Seeing the apprentices get recognized and hearing them address those in attendance completely in Choctaw, only pausing to translate what they were saying in English as a courtesy. It was a powerful moment for those who taught them.

"This right here is something that just really brings joy to me. Growing up, I never thought that it would come to this. I never thought I would be teaching the language, so seeing this is something special to me. Now, I feel like I don't have to worry as much as I used to," said Dora Wickson, a program manager with the language department.

Anjanette Williston, Director of the Apprentice Program, felt the same way. "It's heartwarming seeing these apprentices, and how much they have developed their proficiency with the spoken language is mind-blowing," she said.

Williston grew up with Choctaw being spoken to her and hearing it in church but says it was never something she sat and learned. Now, it's been generations since there has been a fluent speaker in her family. She has hope

now, though. "You know, it can be taught, this language, it's not going to die if we continue on this track," said Williston.

The success of the first Language Apprentice Program is evident when you look at their next class. What started as five apprentices a year ago has now tripled to 15 in its second year.

The language crisis isn't over, though. Each apprentice gave a message of urgency in teaching the language and encouraging others to learn.

"I'm only 24, and I already feel like I've wasted a lot of time by not doing what's so important. So if you only learn a little bit, you can always add on to that, and you know, hopefully, soon, we'll be speaking Choctaw together," said Freeman.

In closing, Billy told a story of a conversation she had with her late husband, Curtis Billy.

"He [Curtis] said, what would you do if you had anything you could have in the world? What would you want to see? I said I would want to see 50 brand new language teachers. And folks, when we graduate this next 15, we're almost halfway there, and that just makes my heart full of pride, because that seemed impossible five years ago," said Billy.



Jennifer Woods

District 6

Halito! November is a busy month, and we are thankful for so many things, like our new community center, where we will be able to better service our district. The District 6 Community Thanksgiving dinner will be held there on November 8 at 11:00 a.m. The community is invited to be with us as we come together to give thanks for our many blessings.

We had a ribbon cutting for the new Specialty Clinic at the Choctaw Nation Hospital in Talihina on October 13. Our Choctaw singers and princesses were there as we celebrated this much-needed clinic that will provide for the health needs of the people. The \$8.5 million project expanded the Residency Clinic and remodeled the Specialty Clinic. The Residency Clinic added 10 exam rooms, an infusion room, an OMT room, a procedure

room, and a room with a decompression table for spinal decompression therapy. Several spaces are also available for the residents to use for learning and collaborating. The Specialty Clinic remodel included nine exam rooms, two ENT (ear-nose-throat), three cardiology, two pulmonary, one room for Holter sets ups and a room for stress tests and echoes, and more workspace was added. The expansion opens additional appointment space for our patients, decreasing the wait time for both clinics. Provides space for additional services for both clinics, reducing the referrals to other facilities.

We hosted a 'come and go' Human Trafficking Awareness meeting at the center on October 23, and the ROC (Rolling Oklahoma Classroom) was on-site to be toured. The bus provides hands-on safety and security and addresses human trafficking awareness and prevention across the state.

On October 27, we held our ribbon cutting for our newest Affordable Rental homes in Wilburton. This is always a joyful time for the new renters who get their keys and get to start moving into their safe and affordable new homes. The addition of these 20 new houses makes a total of 60 units, including 20 Independent Elder homes in the Wilburton area alone. We have completed the remodeling project of the 14 rental homes in Red Oak and are making good progress on the remodeling project of the 24 homes in Quinton. We are still taking applications for the new LEAP homes we will be building in Red Oak. Please contact us to get an application.

Our CHR's and Community-Based Social Workers have been going to Quinton once a month to assist tribal members in the area with applying for services. This time allows members to get information or learn resources for other needs they may have. The meeting is held at the Community Center located at 1020 Main Street. You can contact our center or the Town of Quinton to find out the date of the next meeting.

We celebrated Halloween on October 30 with our big candy giveaway. It is always a fun, family-friendly time to give out candy and treats to the area's children. It's so good to see so many families together enjoying the festivities.

We will host our District 6 children's Christmas Party on Saturday, December 2, at 2:00 p.m. Please mark your calendars and bring your children to see Santa and get a gift.

We will hold our Veterans Day ceremony in Tuskahoma on November 11 to honor and recognize our veterans. If you are a Choctaw veteran or know a veteran, please make plans to join us during this event.

Our seniors will join other seniors for pecan picking in Idabel on November 14. This is a great time for our seniors to pick pecans, fellowship with other seniors and enjoy a hamburger cookout.

We are also having a monthly cultural activity at the center, so please check the activity calendar for details on when the activity will be held and what the activity will be. We provide a monthly activity calendar that also shows our weekly lunch menu at the center.

We are honored to serve District 6. My door is always open to help my tribal members in any way that I can.

Yakoke and Chi Pisa La Chike.



On October 13, the Choctaw Nation held a ribbon cutting for the new Residency and Specialty Clinics in Talihina. Representatives from District 6 were there to take part in the ceremony.



Davis is Veteran of the Month

Walker Davis, Idabel, Oklahoma, is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month.

He was born in Talihina in 1939 and lived in Stigler and Muskogee. He joined the US Navy at 17 years of age and did Basic Training in San Diego, California He boarded a CVE (88) Military Sea Transport Carrier for a year transporting personnel, supplies and aircraft between Japan, the Philippines, and the United States, then went to Midway where he operated a crash boat, recovering military personnel after plane crashes. The last

two years of his military career were aboard the USS Oriskany, a CVA 35 Aircraft Carrier.

Davis returned to civilian life and began selling shoes and then cars. He was sent to Flint, Michigan, to the GMI Dealer Development Academy for two years to learn the car business and was the only Native American there. He attended school full-time and earned a degree from Bacone College, then purchased the GM dealership in Idabel.

He is now retired but works as a volunteer for the Silver-Haired Legislature, coaches a chair volleyball team and does other volunteer activities. He says that volunteering is one of the greatest things that has ever happened to him. He and his wife, Charloete, have been married for 65 years and have a daughter, Gina, granddaughter Charlee Walls and spouse Shawn, and great-grandson Jace.

Davis is a true American Patriot. His father was in the US Navy and his brothers were in the US Marines and the US Army.

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

Maytubbi is First Language Speaker of the month



Theresa Maytubbi was recognized as the October First Language Speaker of the Month, during the October 14 Choctaw Tribal Council Meeting.

Maytubbi was presented the honor by District 1 Council Member, Thomas Williston. Maytubbi's family was in attendance.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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NOTES & EVENTS

ELDER & COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING MEALS
YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND YOUR LOCAL MEAL.

November 1, 2023 - Wednesday		
Battiest Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Battiest Community Center
Coalgate Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Coalgate Community Center
November 2, 2023 - Thursday		
Tuskahoma Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Capitol Grounds Cafeteria
November 7, 2023 - Tuesday		
Battiest Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Battiest Community Center
Durant Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Choctaw Event Center
November 8, 2023 - Wednesday		
Andlers Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Andlers Community Center
Atoka Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Atoka Community Center
Broken Bow Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Broken Bow Community Center
Crowder Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Crowder Community Center
Hugo Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Hugo Community Center
Idabel Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Idabel Community Center
Smithville Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Smithville Community Center
Stigler Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Stigler Community Center
Wilburton Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Wilburton Community Center
November 12, 2023 - Sunday		
Crowder Community Lunch	1:00 PM	Crowder Community Center
November 14, 2023 - Tuesday		
Broken Bow Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Broken Bow Community Center
November 15, 2023 - Wednesday		
McAlester Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	McAlester Community Center
Poteau Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Poteau Community Center
Spiro Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Spiro Community Center
Wright City Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Wright City Community Center
November 16, 2023 - Thursday		
McAlester Community Dinner	5:30 PM	McAlester Community Center
Talihina Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Talihina Community Center

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Insight into History

Thank you for publishing Chief George W. Harkins's Letter to the American People. This illustrates an important time in our history. I was touched deeply by his words and gained insight.

Brenda Whiteside

Visiting Kindred Spirits

My name is Dolynn Sue (Susie) Bell. My maternal grandmother was Levena Frances Oakes McFarland. Her grandmother was Harriet Everidge who came to Choctaw County, Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears.



Two weeks ago I was in Ireland with a group of Girl Scout Alumni. We had the honor of visiting the Kindred Spirits memorial. Members of my group didn't know about the sculpture, and they didn't know why the Choctaw people felt such sympathy for the plight of the Irish people during the potato famine. It was an honor and privilege to share some Choctaw history with them, and to explain why there is a special relationship between the Choctaw and Irish people. I also had the opportunity to tell them about the companion sculpture that is being erected at Tvshka Homma. Being in Ireland and seeing the Kindred Spirits sculpture was a dream come true for me.

Susie Bell



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA
TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

October 14, 2023

- CALL TO ORDER
- OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- ROLL CALL
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - Regular Session September 9, 2023
- WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - Veteran of the Month, District #1 – Walker Davis
 - First Language Speaker of the Month, District #1 – Theresa Maytubbi
- PUBLIC COMMENTS - None
- REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
- NEW BUSINESS
 - Letter of Reappointment of Candace Perkins to the Choctaw Nation Election Board
 - Letter of Reappointment of Jennifer-Johnson Williams to the Choctaw Nation Election Board
 - Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Deborah Davenport to Serve on the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council
 - Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Robin Counce to Serve on the U.S. Department of Labor Native American Employment and Training Council
 - Resolution Appointing Joseph Jefferson to the Ethics Committee of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
 - Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation Bar Association Rules, Code of Ethical Conduct and Judicial Cannons
 - Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation Criminal Procedure Code
 - Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation Code of Civil Procedure
 - Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
 - Approve the FY2024 Budgets for the Indian Child Welfare Program and the Family Preservation Program
 - Resolution Establishing Chahta Nittak as an Official Holiday of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
 - Resolution Adopting the Official Flag Salute of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- OTHER NEW BUSINESS
- OLD BUSINESS
- ADJOURNMENT
- CLOSING PRAYER

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna - November Language Lesson

Choctaw Question Markers

In Choctaw, most questions end in either **o**, **ho**, or **yo**, these are identified as question markers. The Choctaw question is simply a statement with a marker of **o**, **ho**, or **yo** at the end of the sentence. Here are some examples of statements turned into questions.

Issuba ilvppvt impa.	This horse is eating.
Issuba ilvppvt impa ho ?	Is this horse eating?
Yvmmvt vlla tek.	That is a girl.
Yvmmvt vlla tek o ?	Is that a girl?

Now that we have established how question markers look at the end of the Choctaw question, we will look at examples of when to use the three distinctions of Choctaw question markers **o**, **ho** and **yo**.

1. When the last word in the sentence ends with a consonant, use o ?	
Ilvppvt katos.	This is a cat.
Ilvppvt katos o ?	Is this a cat?
Yvmmvt hattak.	That is a man.
Yvmmvt hattak o ?	Is that a man?
2. When the last word in the sentence ends in a vowel (a, or i), use yo ?	
Ilvppvt katos tohbi.	This is a white cat.
Ilvppvt katos tohbi yo ?	Is this a white cat?
Yvmmvt hattak himitta.	That is a young man
Yvmmvt hattak himitta yo ?	Is that a young man?
3. When the last word in the sentence is an action word (verb) use ho ?	
Katos mvt nusi.	That cat is sleeping.
Katos mvt nusi ho ?	Is that cat sleeping?
Hattak mvt balili.	That man is running.
Hattak mvt balili ho ?	Is that man running?

Turn these statements into questions:

- Ohoyo mvt na yukpa. Q. _____
- Yvmmvt vm ofi. Q. _____

www.choctawschool.com

RUN TO HONOR VETERANS
NOVEMBER 4, 2023

Join us to celebrate veterans at the annual Run to Honor Veterans event. You can walk or run a 1 mile, 5K, 15K or 15K relay course. On-site registration is at 8:00 am and the races start at 10:00 am.



PACE members sign up through PACE



Non-PACE members can download the registration form

Choctaw Nation WarriorWellness

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

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The Official
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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 nonprofit. Deadline for articles and photographs to be submitted is the first day of each month to run in the following month.

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

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

McAlester Community Center
November 10, 2023
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.



Chahta Feast of the Dead

The Feast of the Dead is a time of celebration for families and the community to give remembrance to those who have passed on. Join us in this traditional Choctaw burial custom to honor and remember our loved ones.

Thursday
November 2, 2023 | 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Choctaw RV Park
3650 Enterprise Dr,
Durant, OK 74701

Potluck Style Meal: 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
(Bring a dish to share)

Family Heritage Crafts: 6:30 p.m.-7:30p.m.
(Bring family photos to scan and copy)

Memorial Reflection & Ceremony: 7:30p.m. -9p.m.
(Share stories about loved ones)

ITI FABVSSA

More Choctaw Place Names in “Oklahumma”

In September 2010, Iti Fabvssa published an article titled Choctaw Place Names in “Oklahumma” in response to a reader who asked:

“Dear Iti Fabvssa, I’ve got a question about Choctaw towns and places in southeastern Oklahoma and what their names might translate to in English. If possible I’d also like to know a little bit about their history. Thank you.”

-Ryan

Place names in the Choctaw language are extremely important. They indicate not just a Choctaw presence on the land but often also the way that Choctaw people of the past understood the land and interacted with it. Many of the older Choctaw place names talk about resources that were once acquired at that spot, foods or materials for making things. Other Choctaw names record events that happened at certain locations. Still, other Choctaw place names, generally more modern ones, tie the names of families or individuals to certain geographic features.

The Nation Historic Preservation Department records every Choctaw place name that we can find here on the Choctaw Reservation and anywhere else that Choctaw place names exist. This helps us to learn more about Choctaw history on the land and to better identify and protect important historic areas. This is a work in progress.

This month, we are excited to share some more Choctaw place names from each of our Districts! If you know of other Choctaw place names and are willing to share, please let us know.

State of Oklahoma

The first Choctaw place name we want to mention is the Choctaw word for Oklahoma. In our previous article, we explained the history and meaning behind the name. In the Choctaw language, Okla is the word for people, and Humma/Homma is the word for red. However, we would like to offer a deeper perspective on the meaning of the name. Traditionally, Homma was a kind of war title given to Choctaw people who didn’t retreat (Byington, 1915, p. 170). In this context, Oklahoma translates to people who do not retreat.

District 1

Near Millerton used to be a small Choctaw community named Chula, meaning fox (Shirk 1987: 51). Southwest of Idabel is a place known as Shawneetown. Before the Choctaw Trail of Tears in the 1830s, a village of Absentee Shawnee were living there. Learning of the Choctaw removal to the area, the Absentee Shawnee moved. Choctaws called the area Kvlilh Chukchu, Maple Springs, and later, its name changed to Kvlilh Inla or New Springs (Shirk, 1987, p. 135). South of Idabel is Mintubbe Lake, a natural lake formed when the course of the Red River shifted. Its name comes from Okhvta Minti Vbi or Comes and Kills Lake (Gannet, 1905, p. 46). Mintubi is the personal name of a Choctaw warrior. The Little River is an important river in McCurtain County and acts as the border between District 1 and District 2. Its name in Choctaw is Bok Iskitini or Little River (Hudson, 1932, p. 514).

District 2

Another important river in McCurtain County is the Glover River, which Choctaws have called Chalakki Bok, meaning Cherokee River (Hudson, 1932, p. 514). It is believed that before statehood, a group of Cherokee people settled on the Glover River. It is possible this was a group of Cherokee refugees that moved into the area during the American Civil War due to the devastation the war had on Indian Territory.

West of Broken Bow is Yashau Creek. Yashu was the name of two different Choctaw villages in Mississippi before removal, named West Yashu and East Yashu. We were once told by a

local elder and first language speaker that the name Yashu itself comes from a Choctaw word for cooking pot, but we haven’t heard that from anyone else. Southeast of Broken Bow was an old town that is no longer in existence named Okolona, or Oka Lobali meaning a place caved in or washed out by water (Shirk, 1987, p. 177). To the Northwest of Broken Bow is another town that is no longer in existence that was called Opa or Owl.

Ossi Tamaha is the Choctaw name for Eagletown, and its name means the same in Choctaw. Just south of Eagletown is Buck Creek, called Lapitta Bok or Stag Creek (Hudson, 1932, p. 502). East of Eagletown is the town of Ultima Thule, called Yakni Vlhpisa or measured land (ibid.). Nearby is the stream of Rock Creek called Tvli Bok, or Rock River (Hudson, 1932, p. 501). West of Eagletown is Luksuklo Creek, which translates to Luksi Okla or Turtle People (Hudson, 1932, p. 506). West of Luksuklo Creek is Lick Creek, which was called Peter I Bokushi or Little Creek That Belongs to Peter [Pitchlynn] (Hudson, 1932, p. 506). Southeast of Eagletown is the Mountain Fork Presbyterian Church, which was established in 1837; it is known as Nvnih Lumbo or Round Hill.

Hochatown was known as Hocha Tamaha. Hocha was the name of 1 of 12 families that lived in the area after the Trail of Tears. Daniel Hocha was raised in Hochatown but changed his name to Daniel Bobb and moved to Smithville. Daniel’s son, Johnson Bobb, attended the Folsom Academy in Smithville and became a Methodist Minister and fought in World War I. Johnson’s son, Bertram Bobb, was the Chaplain of the Choctaw Nation and established the Bertram Bobb Bible Camp at Ringold, Oklahoma (Facebook: Kenny Sivard, McCurtain County Historical Society, Home of Daniel Bobb, February 27, 2018).

District 3

Heading north to District 3, we encounter the town of Smithville, known as Hattak Vbi or Man Killer in Choctaw (Smithville, The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture (okhistory.org)). Running by the southside of Smithville is the Mountain Fork River, known as the Nvnih Hvycha or hill river in Choctaw (Hudson, 1932). To the west of Smithville is Honobia Creek, named Nochononubbe Creek. At this time, we do not have a translation. (Honobia Creek, GNIS (nationalmaps.gov)). South of Smithville is the community of Nvnih Chito or Big Hill (Nani-chito, GNIS (nationalmaps.gov)). In the northern part of District 3 are Hontubby, Hontubby Creek, and Hontubby Falls, which all come from the Choctaw words Hoyot Ant Vbi or to wait and kill (Heavener Historical Society, 2013).

District 4

On the southeastern side of District 4 is Sugarloaf Mountain, known as Nvnih Chufvk or Fork Mountain in Choctaw (Mihesuah, 2010). Northeast of Sugarloaf Mountain is the town of Cameron, known as Kvlilh Chaha or High Springs (Shirk, 1987, p. 135). Northeast of Cameron is Tahona or Hoyo Ona, which means goes and seeks (Read 1934: 347). Near Poteau is Cavanal Hill, which is French for cavern. Similarly, Choctaws named it Hochukbi, meaning cave or cavern (Shirk, 1987, p. 117).

District 5

District 5 is bordered on the north by the Arkansas River, which Choctaw people used as a water road to trade with the Quapaw Tribe. We call the Arkansas River the Okhapa Oka Hina or Quapaw water road (Byington, 1915, p. 387). The Choctaw word Okhapa comes from the Quapaw word OGahPah, which is the name they have for their people. North of Stigler is Taloka Creek, which comes from Itola Oka or a place where water remains, such as a dam or a shoal where water has collected (Shirk, 1983, p. 237). Emachaya Creek could be Bok Imachaya or accustomed place creek (Gannet 1905: 32).



Southeast of Longtown is Haytubbi Creek. Haytubbi is a Choctaw warrior’s name, made from contracted words.

Districts 6 & 7

In District 6, north of Wilburton, is a creek called Cunneo Tubby Creek which comes from the Choctaw phrase Kvnia Vbi or goes away and kills, the name of a warrior (Cunneo Tubby Creek, GNIS, nationalmaps.gov). Similarly, in District 7 is the town of Antlers, which also held the Choctaw name Kuniotubbee or Kvnia Vbi or goes away and kills, the name of a warrior (Pushmataha County, The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture (okhistory.org)). Near the town of Nashoba is the Black Fork River, called Bok Lusa or black river (Hudson, 1932, p. 514). Choctaw speakers often hear familiar sounds in the name “Kiamichi River,” but this name appeared on maps before Choctaw people moved into the area. The name Kiamichi comes from the Caddo language Kia May Che, meaning the water running into the stream running into the big river (Carter, 1995, p. 267).

Districts 8 & 9

In District 8, south of Hugo, is Goodland Academy Boarding School. “Goodland” comes from the Choctaw words Yakni Achukma (goodland.org). To the west of Goodland Academy is Hanubby Creek, or Hvnvn Vbi or Hawk Killer (Toomey, 1917, p. 9). To the north of Fort Towson used to be the Chuwahla Female Seminary. Chuwahla means cedar tree. The southern border of District 8 is the Red River, also known as Bok Homma, which has the same meaning in Choctaw. In District 9, south of Bennington is the Chishoktak Church or Chisha Oktak. Its name means post oak prairie (Sue Folsom, personal communication). In the past, as you would come into Durant from the north, you would pass over Chuckwa Creek. Chuckwa may come from the Choctaw word Chukoa or to enter. Crossing Chukwa Creek would mean you had entered the town limits of Durant (Evangeline Robinson, personal communication).

District 10

Before the Civil War, Atoka County was called Shappaway County, a name which comes from the Choctaw words Shvpha Weli, meaning to hold out a flag (Atoka County, The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture (okhistory.org)). Between the towns of Caney and Cook is the town Taloha, a name that comes from Taloa or to sing. North of Atoka is the town of Stringtown called Kvlilh Tamaha in Choctaw or Spring Town (Magby, 2020, p. 52). East of Stringtown is Potapo Creek, which may have been named after a Choctaw individual who lived along the creek (Shirk, 1987, p. 196). On the eastern side of District 10 is Daisy. Daisy used to be called Kvlilh Laua or Many Springs. Kvlilh Laua was the capital of the Choctaw Nation’s Jacks Fork County and held the Choctaw County courthouse.

Districts 11 & 12

In District 11, south of Bache, is the Nvnih Chaha Cemetery or high hill. In the northwestern part of District 12 is Allen, which Choctaw people called Oka Kapvssa or cold springs (Allen, The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture (okhistory.org)). Just to the east of Allen is Arbeca Creek, which gets its name from Bok Abeka Aiasha or sickly or unhealthy dwelling place (Gannett, 1905, p. 12). On the far south side of District 12 is the town of Olney, which is said to get its name from the Choctaw name Pvla Misha or lighted place in the distance (Shirk, 1987, p. 186).

The Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department has been identifying and recording Choctaw Place Names since 2012 in our Choctaw Place Names Database. This digital mapping database is used by our Department to protect our Choctaw historic and sacred sites, repatriate our ancestors, and aid in educating Choctaw youth. We are always actively looking to learn more about Choctaw place names. If you would like to share a Choctaw place name with our Department, please email Ryan L. Spring at rspring@choctawnation.com.

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

CNO Hunter Education Course now available

By Devin Lindley

The Choctaw Nation Department of Wildlife Conservation (CNDWC) is excited to announce that we are now offering a free Hunter Education course. It will be completely online and can be done at your own pace from wherever you may be. The goals of the hunter education course are to teach each student to be a safe, knowledgeable, responsible, and involved hunter. This will help to prevent hunting accidents and to ensure hunting traditions are carried on into the future. So, whether you are new to hunting or are a seasoned veteran, this course will ensure that you have a safe and fun time when you go out into the outdoors to hunt.

The hunter education course will have an introduction, four modules and a final assessment. Within each of the modules, the student will learn in-depth about firearm basics, firearm handling, field safety, and hunter ethics. Once you have successfully completed the training, you will receive a Certificate of Completion and a Hunter Education card that you can carry with you when you are hunting. This card is valid for life in all 50 states and several countries around the world.

Our first tribal member to complete the

hunter education course is 12-year-old Lillian Balzanna. Lillian is the granddaughter of Councilman Eddie Bohanan. We are excited for many more tribal members to complete the course so they can get out there and hunt safely.

This free course is made possible through the partnership between the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society and the National Rifle Association. We are very thankful to both of these groups for helping us give this opportunity to all our tribal members. The CNDWC hopes that this course will allow individuals who otherwise would not have access to hunter education will now be able to take the course.

To access the course, all you will need to do is go to tribeshe.org and then select “Start!” on the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma course. From there, you will be asked to create a free account, and then you will be able to start the course and go through each of the modules and the final assessment.

If you have any questions, email us at wildlife@choctawnation.com. Good luck and be safe hunting!

Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

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

Each site is overseen by a Rental Manager and Maintenance Technician who are 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:

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

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CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Cowan receives NextGen30 award

Emily Cowan recently received a NextGenUnder30 award in the state of Kansas for her work in the non-profit sector.

Cowan is the co-president of the Abandoned Atlas Foundation and founder of the Abandoned Atlas Foundation's divisions in Kansas and Missouri.

Cowan does a lot of work in Oklahoma, where she has helped repatriate many Indigenous items.

She is a published author, writing Abandoned Topeka: Psychiatric Capital of the World, which has sold out twice. Cowan has also been featured on television news over ten times, including Kansas State Network Topeka's "Some- one You Should Know" segment.



Rogers turns 13

Larry Wayne Rogers JR is turned 13 years old July 8.

His friends and family want to wish him a happy Birthday and to let him know that he is "loved very much and we are very proud of the young man he is becoming and we were all Blessed the day he was born."



Lewis turns one

Tristan Lewis turned one on October 2, 2023.

He is the son of Aimee and Ryan Lewis in Bellingham, Washington.

Tuck Alexander Reitzel



Tuck Alexander Reitzel was born July 2, 2023, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, to his proud parents, Tate and Aren Reitzel of Poteau, Oklahoma.

He was welcomed home by five siblings: Lilah, Bianca, Archer, Mia and Magnolia.

He weighed 6 pounds 5 ounces and was 19 and 1/2 inches long.

Fenris Lee Jones

Fenris Lee Jones was born on August 30, 2023, weighing 8 pounds and 6 ounces in Walnut Creek, California.

Fenris is the son of Seth and Megan Jones and the great-great-great-grandson of original enrollee Rosa Lawrence-Jones.



Jones pursues law degree internships

Choctaw member Leah Jones has begun her second year at William & Mary Law School in Virginia after completing an internship this summer at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

Her summer legal experience involved supporting the prosecution of local and federal criminal cases and observation of courtroom proceedings.

In 2024, Leah will return to D.C. to assume a summer legal internship with the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Her assignments will support the enforcement of federal environmental laws, the protection of natural resources, and cases relating to tribal rights and lands.

"My undergraduate degree in environmental science and policy will be useful in my next internship," Leah says. "As a Choctaw, I also have a vested interest in tribal sovereignty and lands."

Leah is grateful for the support she has received from the Choctaw Nation throughout her academic career.

Charles graduates from UF



Ethan Charles of Sarasota, Florida, graduated from the University of Florida on August 12, 2023.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Finance.

He greatly appreciates the Choctaw Nation's financial support and encouragement during his time in school.

Pruszyński promoted to Associate Professor

Jessica Pruszyński, Ph.D., was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor at the University of Texas Southwestern (UTSW), one of the foremost medical research institutions in the United States, effective September 1, 2023.

Dr. Pruszyński is a Choctaw tribal member. A graduate of East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas, she has an M.S. and Ph.D. from Baylor University in Statistics and serves on the UTSW research faculty in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology.



Nesbitts celebrate 60 years

Leon and Melvia Washington-Nesbitt of Richardson, Texas, recently celebrated their 60th Anniversary. They were married October 13, 1963, in Tucson, Arizona, officiated by Rev. T.S. Jackson.

They have three living children, Leon Nesbitt III of Plano, Texas, Donald Nesbitt of Dallas, Texas, and LaDawn Talbott, M.D. of Reno, Nevada. They have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



Anderson retires after 43 Year education career

Kathy Anderson, Talihina Elementary Principal is ready to begin a new adventure as she closes the door on an educational career that has spanned 43 years, nine of which have been as a Golden Tiger in the Talihina Public School District as she is retiring at the end of January.

During Ms. Anderson's educational career she has served in the capacity of Superintendent, Principal, Athletic Director, Coach, Math Instructor, Grant Writer, Director of Indian Education and Educational Consultant.

Ms. Anderson is a 1977 graduate of Stringtown Public Schools. She received her BS in Education from SOSU in Durant where she also played collegiate volleyball. She received her Masters in Educational Administration, Mid Management and Principal's Certification from Texas A & M, and Superintendent's Certification from the University of Texas. She also completed 2 years as a Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University.

Ms. Anderson also received several accolades during her educational career. She was named the Texas 1996 District 16AAAA Volleyball Coach of the year, Recognition for her 200th Varsity Volleyball win, 2006 McAlester Public School Administrator of the Year by the late Dr. Lucy Smith, and most recently the 2022-2023 Kiamichi Valley Leader of the Year.

During her six years as Talihina Elementary Principal Ms Anderson was known for implementing innovative programs and projects for her students.

Ms. Anderson implemented the Reading Renaissance STAR Reading and Math program, Perfect Attendance Incentive Program, Rise and Shine Student Assembly, Fall Harvest Coronation and Student Advisory Team. Ms Anderson also developed and coordinated the Classroom Excursion Project with the late Mr. Darrell Sorrells, Director of the Choctaw Nation Boys and Girls Club.

Under Ms. Anderson's tutelage Talihina Elementary School was named one of the top five Outstanding Oklahoma Elementary Schools by the Oklahoma Foundation of Excellence.

Ms. Anderson plans to enjoy her retirement at Daisy where she is the owner/operator of Anderson Farms a cow/calf cattle operation.

Ms. Anderson commented that while she truly loved her years in education she was excited about beginning the next chapter of her life.

Kathy is the granddaughter of Alice Billy Bacon a full blood original enrollee, and Bethel Anderson, 5/8 Choctaw. She is the great-granddaughter of Crawford Anderson, and the great-great granddaughter of Captain John Anderson of Tuskahoma. She is the daughter of Ruthie (Bacon) Anderson 1/2 Choctaw and the late Kenneth Anderson 3/8 Choctaw.



Duncan earns master's degree

Maxey Love Duncan from Amarillo, Texas, recently received her master's degree in system engineering this past May.

Her great-grandmother was Becky Garner Dodson, and her mother is Savannah Dodson Duncan from Amarillo.



Sparks turns 80

Choctaw tribal member Rodney Jennings Sparks recently celebrated his 80th birthday in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Born August 25, 1943, in Holdenville, Oklahoma, Sparks is a United States

Marine Corps veteran. He is the grandson of Cornelia Mae Lewis Sparks and son of Wilford Jennings Sparks, both original Choctaw tribal enrollees born in Oklahoma Indian Territory.

In the tradition begun by his father, Rod is always happy to help out when family and friends are in need and to share his Choctaw heritage with all his extended family and friends. He and his wife, Jane, plan to celebrate their 53rd wedding anniversary in November.

James wins showmanship buckle

Jocelyn James, a member of the Choctaw Nation, recently won first place and a buckle in the Pontotoc County Fair Horse Show for Showmanship.

Jocelyn was also selected as the President of the Latta FFA Chapter in her Junior year.

She is the daughter of Jerrod and Laura James of Ada, Oklahoma. She is the Granddaughter of Ted and Sharon Brewer of Union Valley, Oklahoma and Pamela McKinney of Broken Bow, Oklahoma.



Broken Bow JOM awarded Exemplary Program Award



At the National Johnson O'Malley Conference in Chicago, Illinois, on September 13, 2023, the Broken Bow JOM program was awarded the highest possible honor for a school, the Exemplary Program award.

Annette Jefferson, JOM parent committee secretary, Faith Parra, high school AILYC sponsor and Connie Phillips, middle school AILYC sponsor traveled to Chicago to receive the award.

The Broken Bow program was chosen because of the hard work and dedication by the Broken Bow JOM parent committee and their support of AILYC students who perform social dancing, play stickball, and participate in numerous cultural and community activities throughout the school year.

"We are so very proud of our JOM program and look forward to continuing great achievements," said Phillips.

JOM is a federal program that provides educational and cultural support to Native students. The local program funds many of the activities in which AILYC students participate throughout the year, such as ribbon skirt and moccasin-making classes, social dance lessons and stickball lessons.

Other parent committee members include Camille Tehauno, Carrie Ward, Cynthia Shomo, and Chelsea Lewis.

Haskell Indian Nations University offers NAIA men's golf team

The Haskell Indian Nations University golf team is a part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division.

The team has recently seen success, with a few of its members winning individual titles and a couple of team duals in the past three seasons.

To become a member of the team, students must be a member of a US federally recognized tribe and be enrolled at Haskell.

Currently, the 10-member team has representatives of the Choctaw, Ute, Three Affiliated Tribes, Warm Springs, Chickasaw, Ho-Chunk, Blackfeet, Salish and Kootenai tribes.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the team, contact coach Layne Braswell at lbraswell@haskell.edu or 785-749-8404 ext. 459.

Coach Braswell, a Choctaw tribal member who grew up in McAlester, graduated from Haskell in 2021.

For more information on the program, visit <https://www.haskellathletics.com/sport/0/5>.



Left to Right: Coach Layne Braswell, Jake Crawford, TQ Barrios, Rickson Bull Calf, Hekili Harry, Mitchell Baker, and Ruben Couture.

HOUSING EDUCATION

The Choctaw Nation Housing Authority Service Coordination Department is offering free Homebuyers and Rental Education Workshops in September for potential homebuyers, new homeowners and renters.

For dates, times and location of classes, please call or email:
580.642.8981
HOUSINGEDUCATION@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Attend a workshop for your chance of a drawing.

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

SCHOOL OF CHOCTAW LANGUAGE NOW ONLINE!

Choctaw Nation proudly introduces Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna webpage! Enroll in classes, explore the language

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CHOCTAWSCHOOL.COM

Scan to learn more about the program.

Choctaw Nation School of Choctaw Language

FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Guide Rate Enhancements and New Food for Participants

Effective September 1, 2023, the amount of food items for participants of the Choctaw Nation Food Distribution Program will increase and new items will be available.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO BECOME A PARTICIPANT, CALL 800.522.6170 OR VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/FOOD-DISTRIBUTION/

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Tribal member signs UFC contract

By Christian Chaney

Payton Talbott, a 25-year-old Nevada native, recently signed a contract to fight in the UFC.

The remarkable opportunity came after he broke a bantamweight record for most significant strikes in the history of Dana White's Contender Series and defeated his opponent, Reyes Cortez Jr., in the third round.

This achievement was incredibly special for Payton; however, it also served as a powerful motivator, inspiring him to push his boundaries and aim for greater heights in the UFC.

"It lit a fire under me because I knew I could've done much better in that fight," said Payton. "I look forward to how much more I can bring to the UFC, and I plan on landing a lot more significant strikes in my future fights."

At the age of 18, Payton ventured into the world of fighting as a means of finding an outlet for his energy.

Initially, he never envisioned fighting becoming his full-time career. However, after securing victories against high-ranking opponents in his early matches, he realized he might have stumbled upon a new career path.

Payton has remained loyal to the gym where he began his journey at 18, dedicating nearly every day to training there. In his opinion, fighting is one of the most authentic sports to our primitive side of winning and losing.

"There aren't many rules, and it's just you and another opponent. It's just the most true thing to my personality," Payton said.

Payton describes himself as "someone with a lot of passions and hobbies outside of fighting."

In his free time, Payton enjoys exhilarating activities like cliff jumping, skateboarding, climbing and other adrenaline-pumping pursuits. He believes these hobbies may contribute to his comfort in the cage, allowing him to enjoy the experience and maintain his composure.

In a recent interview with MMAnews, Payton said he loves figuring people out and wants to get everything he can out of his opponent.

"When my opponent is at his best, then I usually fight at my best," said Payton.

Payton says he will "know his opponents better than their parents, girlfriends, and some of their very close friends" when preparing for a fight.

Payton is committed to consistency in his training and diet and intentionally surrounds himself with a positive



Photo Provided

Tribal member, Payton Talbott (right) recently signed a contract with the UFC.

and supportive circle. He prioritizes leading a fulfilling life by engaging in activities that bring him joy, such as skateboarding and music. These activities play an important role in maintaining his mental well-being leading up to his fights.

Currently, Payton is preparing for his next matchup against Nick Aguirre, who boasts an impressive 7-1 record.

This UFC Fight Night event is scheduled to take place in Las Vegas on November 18. Payton's strategy for the fight revolves around adhering to his signature fighting style, marked by a high volume of strikes.

Payton aspires to remain an active participant in the UFC while being authentic to his own identity.

His plan is to climb the ranks through intense competition, ultimately squaring off against the best contenders and crafting legendary moments that will be etched into history.

"This is where I want to be," said Payton. "I want to fight the toughest guys, and I want to throw hands with the most dangerous people on the planet, and that is what the UFC is right now."

Following the UFC, Payton envisions launching a clothing line, continuing his love for music through the form of DJing and conducting psychology research.

Be sure to watch Payton's upcoming fight on November 18 at 4:00 p.m. CT, available on ESPN+.

Choctaw Nation Tribal Council approves budget for FY 2024

TVSHKA HOMMA,

Oklahoma. – The Choctaw Nation Tribal Council unanimously approved a \$2.5 billion comprehensive expense budget for fiscal year 2024 during the Tribal Council session on Sept. 9. The expense budget is a 1 percent increase over 2023. The new fiscal year begins October 1, 2023.

"Our Tribal Council remains focused on expanding services to meet the needs of our tribal members and to provide economic opportunity for our tribe and our fellow Oklahomans," Chief Gary Batton said. "Even during this time of inflation, we continue to develop strategies to improve lives now and in the future while maintaining a solid financial base."

The approved capital expenses are just over \$186.3 million, down from \$229.4 million last year.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal membership has increased to over 225,332.

The Choctaw Nation plans to hire an additional 726 employees in fiscal year 2024 increasing the total number of associates to over 12,500.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma revenue for fiscal year 2024 is projected to be nearly 3 percent higher than the prior year, driven primarily by increases in commerce and healthcare.

For more information about the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and its services, please visit choctawnation.com.



Lindley, McCoy 2023 Outstanding Elders for Choctaw Nation

DURANT, Okla. – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma recently hosted the 2023 Outstanding Elder banquet to honor the nominees from each district. Each year, the local Community Centers nominate an elder who stands out, exhibits the Choctaw Nation values and goes above and beyond for their communities. Recipients of the 2023 awards are Gary Lindley of Crowder, Okla. and Sandy McCoy of Stigler, Okla.

The award dates back to 1999, rewarding exceptional service from Choctaw Nation elders. This year's event was held on Sept. 28 at the Choctaw Casino and Resort – Durant. The event included cultural activities such as the Lord's Prayer performed by the reigning Choctaw Nation Princesses.

"Thank you for the legacy you are leaving for our next generation," said Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. to the group of elders. "It's amazing to hear how all of our elders take care of each other. You truly embody our values of faith, family and culture."

Lindley was born in 1947 in McAlester, Okla. His grandfather was an original Choctaw enrollee. He was taught to be a proud, hardworking Choctaw who served his country and his people. After serving the country in the Vietnam war, he continues to serve his fellow veterans by serving on various positions for the Disabled American Veterans organization. Lindley served in law enforcement for 26 years and is currently an active member of the Crowder Choctaw Seniors, helping out whenever he is needed.

McCoy grew up in Tamaha, Okla., graduating from Stigler Public Schools. McCoy serves her county, country and fellow Choctaw tribal members by serving on various positions with the election boards. She also gives back to veterans by volunteering with the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars to place flags on veterans' graves. She also helps seniors get to appointments and since her husband's passing, has been put in charge of laughter for "Healing Hearts," a widows' support group.

"Capturing this group of such special individuals is motivational to our staff and reminds us all that anyone can help others, you just have to take action," says Kayla Williams, director of patient relations.



Photos Provided

Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. pauses for a photo with the Outstanding Elders of the Year for 2023, Sandy McCoy and Gary Lindley, along with their tribal council representatives.

Marshall helping to make geoscience more accessible and inclusive

By Chris Jennings

According to the website britannica.com, The broad aim of the Earth sciences is to understand the present features and past evolution of Earth and to use this knowledge, where appropriate, for the benefit of humankind.

Basically, earth scientists or geoscientists are on the front lines for saving the planet. Often, the people occupying this role are rugged outdoor types who are climbing mountains, exploring caves, spending weeks in the field in remote locations and, in general, performing very physical tasks.

Because of that, there's not often a clear pathway for people with a physical disability to pursue a career in geoscience. Anita Marshall wants to change that.

Marshall, a Lecturer at the University of Florida, is the director of the International Association for Geoscience Diversity, a national program dedicated to improving access and inclusion for people with disabilities in the geosciences. She is also the leader of a unique field course and mentoring program called GeoSPACE, which addresses the accessibility and inclusivity of fieldwork.

"When I became a professor, I wanted to change that narrative and show people that everybody can do geoscience. You don't have to be this outdoor athlete to be able to do that," said Marshall.

Marshall, who was in a car wreck 20 years ago that nearly claimed her life, has had extensive reconstructive surgery on her legs. Her experiences and struggles in completing her degree drove her to create the program.

"A lot of it is based on my own challenges as a graduate student. When I was working on my PhD, I found that it was incredibly challenging to find where I fit in. I'm Indigenous, I have a disability, I have all these identities that didn't seem to have a place amongst the people I saw doing geoscience," Marshall said.

Those struggles prove too much for some people, and they walk away from a career that could be their passion. Marshall saw it as a challenge and decided to do something about it. "I decided I wanted to try to do something to fix it. Try to do something that could address these issues and build those spaces that I wished I'd had as a student," Marshall said.

Marshall builds field trips that count towards a degree's outdoor portion, but she ensures they're more accessible.

"I build field trips where everybody can come, and it's wheelchair accessible. We use drones to get to places where people can't walk. And we create these, these, these, these experiences where everybody feels like they're, they are welcome and encouraged to participate," said Marshall.

Students are also able to pick if they work in person or remotely. Marshall says they are the only ones offering this. "This is completely unique to us. For the students participating remotely, we use YouTube live streaming and social media and things to keep them connected to what we're doing in the field. And then the students that are in the field with us, we work very hard to make the entire course accessible and inclusive for as many identities as many backgrounds as we can," Marshall said.

Marshall, who is also heavily involved with the Indigenous Geoscience community, says that being Choctaw



Photo Provided

A Lecturer at the University of Florida, Anita Marshall is the director of the International Association for Geoscience Diversity, a national program dedicated to improving access and inclusion for people with disabilities in the geosciences.

greatly impacts how she teaches. The way many are taught to view the world is that there is only one objective way to see the world and our objective with the environment.

"Our Indigenous heritage shows us that there are many ways to view those relationships. There is a complex intersection between our cultures and the environment. If we bring that into our science spaces, it all goes back again to humanizing our science and helping people think about the human context of the landscapes that we're studying. That's been great to be able to start pulling in on how we teach geoscience from a more indigenous perspective," Marshall said.

Marshall gets a lot of support, but she does get some resistance. "Some of these senior scientists are getting older, and it's harder for them to get around in the field. They start realizing that the ideas I'm talking about could benefit them, too...there are others that feel like what I'm doing is attacking their way of life. They are basically offended by what I do. Those people are very challenging, but fortunately, I seem to be getting more support than I do resistance at this point, which is great," said Marshall.

Marshall gets support from the National Science Foundation so that the students who participate can do so at no cost to them. Unfortunately, out of the over 100 applications they get each year, they can only select less than 20.

Marshall says that in 10 years, she would love to see similar programs at other schools. Her goal in running this program is to show others what can be done outside the traditional geoscience box.

"I'm hoping that this program expands to where many schools offer these accessible and inclusive courses and that our discipline changes to where we won't need a special course. To where everybody's field courses just become more accessible and inclusive and more people-centered than before," said Marshall.



Photos Provided

Pictured left to right, Stacy Shepherd, Michael Burrage, Gary Batton and Jack Austin, Jr.

tions. Judge Burrage also serves as general counsel for CNO.

Shepherd serves tribal members in the departments of Housing, Education, Culture, Outreach, and Special Services, as well as preserving the Choctaw Language. Her previous roles have focused on employment and career development and helping revitalize the Chahta Foundation, a 501(c)3 Nonprofit supporting tribal members through scholarships, wellness and culture.

CNO tribal members named to 55 over 55 Inspiring Oklahomans List

DURANT, Okla. – Four Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) tribal members have recently been named to ion Oklahoma Magazine's "55 Over 55 Inspiring Oklahomans" list.

Included in the list were Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation; Jack Austin, Jr., Assistant Chief of the Choctaw Nation; Michael Burrage, Co-Founder of Whitten Burrage and the first Native American Federal Judge; and Stacy Shepherd, executive officer at Choctaw Nation.

Nominees for selection to the elite listing of Oklahomans must have successful career experiences benefiting Oklahomans. The list also includes high profile public servants, entrepreneurs, scientists, military professionals and more.

Batton has been Chief of the Choctaw Nation since 2014 and with the tribe since 1987. He has served in many capacities, starting in Purchasing and working with the health care system before being appointed – then twice elected – as Chief.

Austin, a US Army veteran, has been with the Choctaw Nation since 1991. He is a certified behavioral health case manager and has previously served as the director of the Choctaw Nation Recovery Center in Talihiina.

Burrage is an inductee of the prestigious fellowship of the American College of Trial Lawyers and has been selected as one of Oklahoma's top lawyers by various statewide publica-

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CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

OHoyo Hlampko Vhleha: THE INFLUENCE OF MATRIARCHS

TEMPORARY ART EXHIBIT – BRAD JOE

OCTOBER 31, 2023 – MARCH 16, 2024

New training made possible in part by Choctaw Nation tribal member Jake Boyd

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation recently partnered with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to offer a five-day Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Train the Trainer (T3) course. The IPC T3 continued a partnership between Texas DPS and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma DPS established in 2022. Choctaw Nation was the first tribe in the nation to introduce IPC into Indian Country.

IPC is a crimes against children class that includes human trafficking. IPC trains officers to recognize indicators a child may be a victim, at risk of victimization, or missing, as well as identifying High-Risk Threats to Children. IPC has been a nationally and internationally sought-after training with a record of producing rescues.

The IPC training is a shift to a unique method of training that includes a multidisciplinary approach. Success in rescues comes from law enforcement, victim services, and prosecution working collaboratively.

This multidisciplinary approach is how the course and T3 teams are designed, training together from day one to foster the team response approach to rescue a child. This method helps break the outdated practice of each discipline individually having their own unique response method to a rescue. This method eliminates delays in a multi-agency response that can overwhelm a victim. IPC helps foster a team approach to make the rescue, prosecution, and rescue process faster and more effective, focusing on the child's needs.

This training was possible in part because of Choctaw Nation tribal member Jake Boyd. Boyd grew up in Durant and graduated from Durant High School, then Southeastern Oklahoma State University, with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. From there, Boyd worked part-time for the Durant Police Department and the Choctaw Nation Wellness Center before joining his childhood career

choice of becoming a State Trooper. Boyd has been employed with Texas DPS since 2012.

Boyd first went through the IPC class in 2015. "I took what I learned in two days and applied it to the Highway Patrol," said Boyd.

After that, it didn't take long for Boyd to use what he learned in those two days to get results. Within six months of taking the class, he was able to use the techniques he learned to rescue his first child. "I applied it and rescued my first child victim roadside, and from there, have made multiple child rescues," Boyd said.

This first case was an adult male with a child victim. Boyd said their story didn't make sense. It was the indicators that he learned in that first class that helped him notice the fact that something wasn't right. From there, he stepped back and looked at it through an IPC lens.

"I used what we call a child-centered/victim-centered approach, and she just confided in me and just kind of broke down and made that outcry of this sexual assault," Boyd said.

After that, the Texas Rangers, Victim Services and Child Protective Services all came together to get the offender arrested and the child rescued safely.

After being on the front lines and making multiple child rescues, Boyd was promoted to Sergeant of the Crimes Against Persons Training Unit at DPS and is honored to bring the IPC training to Indian Country.

There has already been local success resulting from IPC training. In 2022, Boyd brought the IPC training to the Choctaw Nation for the first time. Because of that training, two Johnston County deputies who took that class were able to use their IPC training to rescue a child who was found to be a kidnap victim from another state.

The Texas/Oklahoma partnership is important to Boyd, not just because he's from Durant but because the problem exists here. "Yes, it's happening here within our own communities. This area is such a hub through

here; you have 75 that comes right through Dallas, and it's easy access to Tulsa and Oklahoma City," Boyd said.

Boyd added, "That's why it's important that we reach out to the local agencies that take calls daily, showing up at houses."

Boyd explained that it's not always traffic stops. Sometimes, kids are rescued from bad situations at home. "They've been removed from residences due to physical abuse, sexual abuse or maybe just flat-out neglectful supervision," said Boyd.

Through a grant from the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS), Boyd is now expanding the IPC training to train more officers.

New for 2023, a T3 course was made available to Oklahoma thanks to the COPS grant. Now, other agencies can offer the training in Oklahoma. "This year, we did the two-day training with all the local agencies, and then the last three days, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, was our train-the-trainer course," Boyd said.

The T3 created the first Oklahoma IPC training team. This is significant because it is the first team in Oklahoma but even more significant because it is made up of Tribal Law Enforcement, Tribal Victim Services, and Oklahoma Law Enforcement.

Victim Services was part of the T3 and IPC 2-day training.

As a result, the Choctaw Nation Lighthorse Police, Chickasaw Nation Lighthorse Police, Johnston County Sheriff's Office, and the Oklahoma Highway Patrol can offer IPC training to other law enforcement and first responders in their communities.

The COPS grant is also helping to get the IPC training to different tribal communities across the country.

"It's not just Oklahoma; we're going to train BIA and tribal authorities in New Mexico next month, and we'll be going into the Dakotas next year," said Boyd.

While law enforcement officers are well-



Photo by Chris Jennings

After being on the front lines and making multiple child rescues, Jake Boyd was promoted to Sergeant of the Crimes Against Persons Training Unit at DPS and is honored to bring the IPC training to Indian Country.

trained in spotting suspicious behaviors that can lead to arrests and successful interdictions of drugs, weapons, and currency, this program works to expand their knowledge so they can take a victim-centered approach in these cases and identify those who offend against children.

"Our primary message is, 'Stop waiting for children to ask for your help,' said Boyd. Stop placing the burden on children to ask for your help and to tell us they are victims of crime.

"We recognize indicators; we should be talking to the child and asking, you know, what's going on? Who are you with? Where are your parents, things like that," said Boyd.

"I am a Choctaw tribal member, and very honored and proud of my heritage... We've never had this partnership with any tribal communities before, and to be able to offer the IPC program now and bring it back to my tribe first, it's a great feeling. I'm so very grateful and blessed," said Boyd.

CNO Small Business Development receives Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award

DURANT, Okla. – Choctaw Nation Small Business Development (CSBD) was awarded the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award by REI Oklahoma at the annual Dream Big Oklahoma Awards on Tuesday evening.

REI Oklahoma has focused on fostering economic development and job growth in Oklahoma for the past four decades with an emphasis on community partnerships and relationship building. Every year, it recognizes organizations with similar goals and values at the Dream Big Oklahoma Awards. This year, CSBD received an excellence award for its dedication to encouraging entrepreneurship in Oklahoma through its wide range of programming.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this recognition from REI Oklahoma," said Billy Hamilton, director of Choctaw Nation Small Business Development. "We work hard to give our tribal entrepreneurs – Chahtapreneurs – access to everything they need to make their businesses successful, and we appreciate that our team's efforts haven't gone unnoticed."

Choctaw Nation Small Business Development offers online trainings, business starter kits and templates to assist first-time business owners. Qualified tribal members can receive one-on-one business



Photo Provided

Small Business Development was recently honored at Dream Big Oklahoma Award.

advising for business planning, business taxes, business counseling, business registration, marketing assistance and more.

CSBD also helps connect entrepreneurs with assistance through networking opportunities, matching members with trusted lenders and providing access to other Choctaw Nation small businesses.

Choctaw Nation Small Business Development has helped hundreds of businesses across the reservation through its 5K Forgivable Loan Program, which gives qualified tribal members \$5,000 to put toward business needs, such as startup costs and equipment purchases.

Learn more about Choctaw Nation Small Business Development.

Wadley honored for his contributions to preserving Native American culture

By Christian Toews

The First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, held its annual gala on September 15, 2023. During the gala, Gregg Wadley was honored with a Distinguished Service Award.

Wadley was among six other guests honored that night for their contributions to preserving Native American Culture and supporting the First Americans Museum.

A proud Choctaw tribal member, Wadley raised in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

"I was born a Choctaw. My dad was a Choctaw, and I've been proud of that all my life. He was proud of that and instilled that in me," said Wadley.

After graduating from college, he began working in the oil and gas industry and briefly moved his family to Texas. Not long after moving back to Oklahoma, he founded DataCom Sciences Inc., which provides administrative, technical and systems services primarily to the federal government. This business grew into a large company of 650 employees in 22 states at its sale and merger with Chickasaw Nation Industries (CNI) in 2003. Wadley served as the CEO of CNI until 2009 and has totaled 38 years working with government contracts.

The gala in September highlighted the two-year anniversary of the opening of the First Americans Museum, but it has taken many years to bring the museum to life.

According to Wadley, the state of Oklahoma first initiated the museum in the 1990s. The Oklahoma legislature and the governor formed the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority (NACEA). He was appointed to the board of the NACEA by then-governor Keating and then joined the board of the First Americans Museum Foundation. Over the past 25 years, he has been a major contributor to the formation and success of the First Americans Museum.

Wadley's success in business aligned with his lifelong passion to help his fellow Native Americans. "I think I've got kind of a servant's mentality toward life," said Wadley.

"But I've been very fortunate, and my wife and I decided when we were able to, we would support our passions, and the First Americans museum became one of my passions," he continued.

The story of Native American culture was the overarching idea from the beginning of the museum's conception. Wadley said he wanted people to learn the story



Photo by Christian Toews

Greg Wadley speaks to the audience during the annual First Americans Museum gala.

of Native Americans directly from Native Americans. That has become a reality.

"Our curators are Native, and most of our staff are Native, and they have collected stories directly from the mouths of tribal members from all around the state," he said. "I think we've done a great job of telling the story, and the world needs to know, to be educated about what Native Americans in America are. Not just the history but also the present. We still have much of our culture. We still absolutely enjoy our culture, and we cherish it, and we cherish our ancestry, and we've got values that go back thousands of years. I'm proud of that, and I think the world needs to know that."

Although the museum is fully open, Wadley said there is still an unfinished dream that he hopes to complete.

According to Wadley, when the museum was built, it was a 190-million-dollar project, and they were forced to defer one section of the museum called the Family Discovery Center.

This area will be devoted to children and will require around 10 million dollars to complete.

Wadley urges anyone who can help bring this final project to fruition to get involved in completing "the last piece."

During his acceptance speech at the gala, Wadley said he was thankful and proud of the museum's success.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this distinguished service award. I wanted a world-class museum that attracted people from around the world because I wanted the world to be educated about the tribes here in Oklahoma," said Wadley. "I really believe that education is the key word in what we are doing...I am thrilled to be a part of this project and to see it from beginning to end."

To learn more about the First Americans Museum, visit <https://famok.org>.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know archaeological deposits show that textiles have been made in the southeastern U.S. for at least the last 10,000 years? Textiles are made from long fibers that can be spun into string that is then woven, twined or looped to make cloth.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES APPLICATION PERIOD

DO YOU NEED A JOB?

Applications are open from **November 30 - March 1**

Scan to learn more on how to apply for the program.

Choctaw Nation 477 Programs

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

NEW EXHIBIT

BOK ABAYIA: PRACTICED HANDS AND THE ARTS OF CHOCTAW BASKETRY

SCAN OR GO TO: [BIT.LY/CCC-EXHIBITIONS](https://bit.ly/ccc-exhibitions)

JULY 22, 2023 - MARCH 30, 2024

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICES

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

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

Services are available within **Choctaw Nation Reservation.**

Scan to learn more and to apply!

Choctaw Nation 477 Program

Tribal member, doctor receives national recognition for her work

By Chris Jennings

Dr. Amanda Chisum-Price is bringing national exposure to the Choctaw Nation in the form of several recognitions she has recently received.

Dr. Chisum-Price was awarded the National Indian Health Board's Area Impact Award for outstanding service to advance American Indian and Alaska Native health. She was also nominated by her medical students from the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine for the Gold Humanism Honor Society Award (GHHS), which recognizes physicians for practicing patient-centered medical care by modeling the qualities of integrity, excellence, compassion, altruism, respect, and empathy.

Dr. Chisum-Price is also the first federal appointment as a National Delegate to the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health Center for Indigenous Innovation and Health Equity Tribal Advisory Committee (DHS CIIHE TAC).

Serving as a perfect example of Servant Leadership, Dr. Chisum-Price is quick to point out that this recognition is only possible with the people she works with.

Dr. Chisum-Price said the Area Impact Award was largely based on their work with the breast center. One of the things that makes the breast center stand out is its approach to treating patients. "We try to take more of what would be equivocal to a medicine wheel approach where we're trying to treat the entire patient," said Dr. Chisum-Price.

There needs to be more than just the physical aspect, said Dr. Chisum-Price. "We've built in programs that fit within our health system. They do come to see us here for their medical care. Still, while they're here, we also have built-in an Integrative Behavioral Health program so that they can get some level of counseling at the same time they're here for their visits," said Dr. Chisum-Price.

The Breast Center has also teamed up with the Wellness Center with a 12-week program the Wellness Center does with diabetes patients. "They kind of piggyback together, but it's a

12-week wellness program that the patients go through when they're in their survivorship phase of their treatment where they'll get nutrition counseling, learn about exercise, mindfulness and work one-on-one with a trainer over that period of 12 weeks," Dr. Chisum-Price said.

The Breast Center's success is likely one reason Chief Gary Batton nominated her to serve on the DHS CIIHE TAC. By serving on the committee, which is made up of mostly tribal leadership, Dr. Chisum-Price can bring a surgeon's perspective to an area that could have a national impact on Native health through the recommendations they make to DHS.

"We work with the Department of Health and Human Services through a mandate from President Biden to try to develop new ways to focus on and address health equity issues within our communities. It's an onerous task, but it has been a really good experience," said Dr. Chisum-Price.

Dr. Chisum-Price's dedication to her patients, the Breast Center and her willingness to serve as a national delegate demonstrate her care and compassion. Both are required to receive the Gold Humanism Honor Society Award.

GHHS is a community of medical students, physicians, and other leaders recognized for their compassionate care. GHHS reinforces and supports the human connection in healthcare, which is essential for the health of patients and clinicians.

"The criteria bring a human approach to health care. I think it really fits in with the rest of it, but just to treat patients in a warm, concerned manner of caring individualized for each patient," said Dr. Chisum-Price. "It was a huge honor to me, and the fact that the students had nominated me for that made it even more special because they're with you 24/7 when they're down here, so they see you at the best and the worst."

Dr. Chisum-Price and her staff set some goals when she first came to the Nation 12 years ago, and these recognitions are signs that she and her team are accomplishing those goals.

"We're accomplishing enough things as a group that it's catching some attention and, hopefully, improving health care in the area, which is our overall big goal," said Dr. Chisum-Price.



Photo Provided

Dr. Chisum-Price was awarded the National Indian Health Board's Area Impact Award and the Gold Humanism Honor Society Award.

They're not done yet; there are more things they want to get done. She says they want to focus more on training. And trying to get more help to junior high and high school students interested in a science or health-based field and then trying to get them to stay in the area.

"To me, it's important to get people to our area to want to stay here and take care of our patient's long term. I think we have had some success with the residency program that has changed the composition in a very positive way here at the hospital," Dr. Chisum-Price said.

One of the things Dr. Chisum-Price says is better in the turnover rate in primary care. She said they have doctors who want to stay and treat their patients. The patients can appreciate this, too.

As a Choctaw doctor at the Choctaw hospital treating Choctaw patients, Dr. Chisum-Price says her patients can sense a cultural connection with her.

This idea goes back to her medicine wheel treatment approach. Treating the patient as a whole, including a better cultural understanding, has a deeper impact on their health and wellness, making for a healthier and stronger Choctaw Nation.

CNHSAs urge tribal members to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses

DURANT, Okla. – During this time of the year, respiratory disease is most often circulating in full swing. Common respiratory ailments such as RSV, Influenza, and now, COVID-19 may increase across the Choctaw Nation reservation, a trend predicted by historical data.

Awareness of common symptoms and seeking care when necessary is key to reducing transmission and protecting the health of yourself and those around you.

Common symptoms associated with these ailments include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle/Body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste
- or smell (COVID-19 specific)
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea (More often seen in COVID-19 and Influenza)

Immunocompromised individuals or those with underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk of severe illness from respiratory disease or experience long-term symptoms (such as long-COVID).

Individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or Influenza should be tested. Rikki LaRoche, Choctaw Nation Director of Public Health, notes that Choctaw Nation Tribal members and CDIB cardholders experiencing symptoms can be tested at any CNHSA facility at no cost. Please call your closest CNHSA healthcare facility to determine hours of operation and requirements.

LaRoche also wants to remind Tribal Members that COVID-19 care kits are available to CDIB cardholders who have not yet ordered one through the Chahta Achvffa portal.

If you experience any emergent symptoms, such as blue-ish lips or fingertips or difficulty breathing, please seek emergent care immediately by calling 9-1-1 or going to your nearest emergency room.

Protect yourself from COVID-19, Flu, and RSV

It is common to get sick from respiratory viruses such as COVID-19, flu, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), especially in the fall and winter. There are actions you can take to protect yourself and others.

HOW DO I PREVENT THE SPREAD?

Vaccines
Vaccines are the safest way to build immunity from a virus. Vaccines help the body learn how to defend itself from disease without the dangers of an infection. The immunity you gain from vaccination can reduce your risk of infection and becoming very sick if you do get infected.

Handwashing & Cleaning
Handwashing with soap removes most germs, including respiratory viruses, from your hands. If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can kill these germs.

Air quality improvements
Viral particles in the air spread between people more readily indoors than outdoors. Air quality improvement practices, such as opening windows or using air filters, can reduce the amount of virus you are exposed to.

Masks
Their effectiveness against different viruses varies, but generally masks can help reduce the amount of germs you breathe in. You can also use masks to help protect others if you have a respiratory.

Physical Spacing
The closer you are to a greater number of people, the more likely you are to be exposed to respiratory virus. Generally, infectious droplets and particles are more concentrated closer to the person who is infected.

Testing
If you have symptoms of a respiratory virus, there are tests that can help determine which virus you may have and inform your treatment and prevention actions, like physical spacing and mask use.

Treatments
Prescription antiviral treatments for COVID-19 and for flu are widely available and can lower your risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death if they are started soon after you become infected. Treatment for RSV is supportive care, as there is no effective antiviral for RSV at this time.

OKC Indian Clinic kicks off 2023-24 flu season with vaccine availability

OKLAHOMA CITY – As the 2023-2024 flu season approaches, health officials are encouraging individuals to get vaccinated against the illness. According to a recent study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that about 8 percent of the U.S. population gets sick from the flu each season. This is why Oklahoma City Indian Clinic (OKCIC) is pleased to announce the availability of flu vaccinations for its patients starting October 2, 2023. Our dedicated staff is prepared to administer flu vaccines throughout the clinic to ensure our patients' well-being for the upcoming year.

Flu vaccinations will be offered in the following departments:

Pharmacy:
Patients aged 19 and older can receive their flu vaccines here. While appointments are preferred, walk-ins are always welcome. Our pharmacy services are available between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. To schedule an appointment, please call (405) 595-3100.

Harmony Pediatric Clinic:
Patients aged between 6 months and 18 years can receive their flu vaccines here. An appointment is required for this service to ensure a smooth and efficient experience for all. To schedule an appointment, please call (405) 948-4900 ext. 633.

Public Health:
Our Public Health department is prepared to administer flu vaccines to patients of all ages, allowing both walk-ins and appointments. This flexible option ensures that everyone in our community can receive access to flu vaccinations. To schedule an appointment, please call (405) 948-4900 ext. 461 or 467.

For further information, please contact the Pharmacy at (405) 595-3100. Our team of experts are here to assist patients with any questions or concerns patients may have about the 2023-2024 flu season and flu vaccinations.

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

CHOCTAW EMERGENCY SERVICES PROGRAM

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT UPDATE

Effective October 1, 2023, updates will be made to the Choctaw Emergency Service Program eligibility requirements.

The Choctaw Nation Emergency Services Program assists tribal members in crisis situations. We are dedicated to helping our members during emergencies and are proud to play a role in assisting them to improve their quality of life. Because we are an emergency-only program, our guidelines have been updated to ensure we stay true to our tribe's values and goals of promoting member self-sufficiency and independence while supporting and empowering our tribal members.

Assistance will be available in a one-time-only payment per year: up to a maximum of \$600.

Emergency Assistance (for ages 54 and under):

- Choctaw tribal member
- In need of emergency assistance of at least \$100 (payment amount equals emergency amount)
- Submit required documentation (such as paid receipts, etc. – no quotes or estimates)
- Meet income guidelines

Hardship Circumstance Assistance (for ages 55 and over, Veterans or disabled individuals):

- Choctaw tribal member
- Submit required documentation (such as a detailed written statement of your situation, etc.)
- Meet income guidelines

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/EMERGENCY-SERVICES

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation		
November 1	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 3	Crowder	By Appointment
November 7	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 8	Talihina	10 am - 2 pm
November 14	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 15	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 15	Stigler	By Appointment
November 17	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
November 17	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
November 21	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 28	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 29	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Call 580-642-6007 for an Appointment

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION	
MARKET HOURS	
Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday	
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.	
<i>Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.</i>	
November 2023	
All markets open weekdays, November 1-28	
Closed: November 10, 23, 24, 29 and 30	
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation	
Participants can request a calendar at their location.	
ANTLERS	400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443 <i>Food demo November 9</i>
BROKEN BOW	109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842 <i>Food demo November 16</i>
DURANT	2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773 <i>Food demo November 22</i>
MCALESTER	3244 Afulotta Hina, 918-420-5716 <i>Food demo November 14</i>
POTEAU	106 B St., 918-649-0431 <i>Food demo November 21</i>
<i>This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</i>	

Second-generation OU football player recruited by Lincoln Riley finds his home in Norman

By Christian Chaney

Gavin Marshall, a freshman on the 2023 University of Oklahoma roster, has a deep-rooted connection to the university. His parents, sister, grandmother and both great-grandparents all attended OU.

His great-grandfather, John Curtis Berry, played lineman for the Sooners in the 1930s. Berry not only contributed on the field but also made significant off-field contributions. He established a medical practice on Main Street in Norman and served as a team doctor for OU.

His connection to the Choctaw community led him to provide free healthcare services to fellow Choctaw individuals. His generosity to the town of Norman and the Choctaw people left a legacy that resulted in the dedication of Berry Road in honor of his contributions to the town of Norman.

Gavin attended high school in Frisco, Texas, where he was an all-around athlete. He was not only a standout football player but also part of the basketball, soccer and track teams.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic made Gavin's football future uncertain, as there were doubts about the upcoming season.

He received an invitation from IMG Academy in Florida, which offered him the opportunity to complete his education while traveling across the country to play football. This was a pivotal moment for Gavin's football career.

ESPN televised six of his games, giving him national exposure by putting his talent on display. During his time with the academy, Gavin excelled.

He broke many records, including setting records for the two longest field goals

in the academy's history and the highest number of points scored in a single season. Gavin was surrounded by impressive teammates, with 13 five-star recruits in the mix, including Quarterback JJ McCarty, who now serves as the starting QB for the University of Michigan.

In 2021, Gavin's team was named Max-Prep's High School National Champions. This was a remarkable moment for Gavin, opening doors to many recruitment offers and scholarship opportunities. He received scholarship offers from Arizona State, Air Force Academy and West Point. Additionally, he was given the opportunity to walk on for Florida State and the University of Southern California.

In hindsight, the USC offer is ironic, given that Lincoln Riley recruited Gavin to play at the University of Oklahoma. He committed to Oklahoma in the summer before his senior year, and because of his family history with OU, it was a simple choice for him. Gavin was eager to join OU, so he was determined to graduate early to join his new team in the offseason.

However, Riley had other plans. Riley sent shockwaves through the football world by announcing his departure to USC in late November 2021. He served as head coach of the Sooners from 2017 to 2021, winning four consecutive Big 12 Championships. This unexpected announcement resulted in considerable shock and stress for Gavin and his family.

Gavin found himself at a crossroads and, once again, had to decide about his football career. In the meantime, OU was on the hunt for a new head coach. During this time of uncertainty, Lincoln Riley and USC made an effort to persuade Gavin to flip his commitment. Less than a



Photos Provided

Tribal member Gavin Marshall, a freshman place kicker for the University of Oklahoma has a deep-rooted connection to the university.

week after Riley departed, the OU Athletic Department announced Brent Venables as the 23rd head coach at the University of Oklahoma.

Venables, who served on the OU staff as a defensive coordinator under Bob Stoops, wasted no time trying to get the program back on track. Amongst the turmoil and uncertainty surrounding the football team, Venables reached out to Gavin to ensure his commitment to OU.

During their hour-long phone call, Venables and Gavin hardly talked about football; rather, Venables talked about life, personal beliefs and manhood.

"I was 17 years old trying to make a decision about where I wanted to be for the next four to five years and who is going to lead me, so it was really important to me," Gavin explained.

Venables apparently emphasized the importance of character development and talked about the programs he planned to implement beyond the realm of football.

After the call, Gavin was left with two choices. He could stick with a team that could be potentially going through an entire rebuild, but one that he always aspired to play for and continue his family's legacy or part ways with the Sooners and their new coach for a more stable team. Gavin ultimately chose to bet on himself, and he decided to play for his dream school.

"After that phone call and talking with Coach Venables, it was pretty much all OU from there on out," Gavin said.

This phone call with Coach Venables solidified Gavin's choice, and he has now settled into college life and Norman.

He describes his time at OU thus far as "challenging but rewarding" as he is

learning to balance college and athletics.

He expressed his support for the OU coaching staff in helping him navigate the challenges and responsibilities of a student-athlete, and he says he has enjoyed every step of the way.

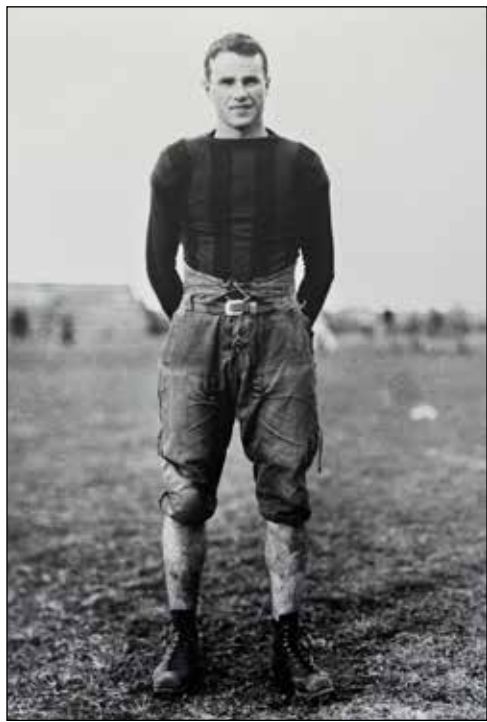
The undefeated Sooners took down No. 3 Texas 34-30 in a historic win in the Red River Rivalry. Gavin said the week leading up to the game is always special.

"Everyone is a little on edge just because of the magnitude of this game and what it means to Oklahoma fans. But when you sign up to play at Oklahoma, you sign up to play in this game." Gavin believes the OU vs. Texas rivalry is the most intense game American sports has to offer, and it certainly lived up to that reputation for his first Red River Rivalry game," said Gavin. "After last year's 49-0 loss to Texas, Gavin said redemption was on many of the players' minds. Prior to the game, OU legends DeMarco Murray, Brian Bosworth and Baker Mayfield had passionate messages for the team. Gavin said his team came out ready to play and fired on all cylinders. From the first snap to the last play, it was clear OU came prepared and determined to get the win. "We were there to conquer and win the game."

According to Gavin, he is incredibly blessed to be in his position. "It hasn't gone without a lot of hard work and a lot of other people pouring into me all throughout my life," Gavin said. "I'm really lucky."

OU looks to remain undefeated as they face tough Big 12 opponents in the coming weeks.

For a list of upcoming games and more information on the Sooners, visit <https://soonersports.com/sports/football>.



OU runs deep in the Berry-Marshall blood. John Curtis Berry (left) played for OU football in the 1930s, and his great-grandson, Gavin Marshall (right), currently plays for the Sooners.

Tribal member follows dream of owning and operating cattle ranch

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Choctaw tribal member Angela Theobald and her family run a working cattle ranch in Peeltown, Texas, outside of Dallas, that Theobald started from scratch.

By day, Theobald works as a nurse and is working toward her nurse practitioner license (AGPCNP) by night.

"A quick shout-out to the Choctaw Nation as the program for Adult Higher Education assisted me several years ago with getting my Bachelor of Science in Nursing and I've applied for assistance with my masters," said Angela. "I went from an EMT-B to RN, BSN working during COVID in ICU/ COVID ICU and now a Primary Health Care Clinic treating lower socioeconomic adults in South Dallas. I hope to open a Primary Health Care Clinic here in my rural community when I get my NP."

With her husband, a fireman and paramedic, and her adult children, Angela started the ranch two years ago and now currently has 19 head of cattle, with over half of them being born on the Theobald's land.

"We just processed our first beef steer for our extended family," said Angela.

However, the ranch isn't just home to cattle. The Theobalds have an assortment of animals—chickens, donkeys, pigs, dogs and cats.

"It's not much, but it's not easy in this day and time to build a cattle ranch from the ground up without any assistance," explained Angela. "We are even doing the entire home renovations ourselves as it was a shell of a house that had to be gutted to the framework, reinsulated, rewired for electricity, plumbing lines reworked. Now that the drywall is up, we are doing the tape, bed, texture and paint ourselves."

"I can't help but to think that my ancestors would be proud, as my family and I work to care for the land and animals under our care," Angela said. "We honor them by naming many of our livestock Choctaw names. We have a baby bull this past year whose name is Chito Homma. And we have some other calves named Ninak and Nushoka. Two of our dogs are named Ahni and Nashoba. And our ranch with associated grass airfield is named Tali Homma, which is also our brand."

If you are inspired by the Theobald's ranch, check out the Choctaw Land Management program who provides technical assistance and creates partnerships with USDA programs to develop conservation practices that protect and enhance our natural resources on tribal (trust and fee) and individual restricted lands, as well as provides workshops for landowners that identify financial assistance, cost-share programs and education. Visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/land-management/> for more information.



Photos Provided



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Choctaw Nation Wheelock Academy

Native ChocTalk preserving tribal stories for future generations

By Shelia Kirven

Rachael Youngman is the creator and host of the podcast Native ChocTalk. She interviews individuals from all tribes who wish to share their stories, ancestral history, traditions and cultural information.

Native ChocTalk was begun for preservation reasons, according to Youngman. "I am hoping to capture all those precious ancestral stories and history for multiple reasons," said Youngman. "Not just for our listeners to learn and enjoy, but also for the families and descendants of my guests to hear the stories in my guests' voices. I also hope in some way we're honoring our ancestors by keeping their memories and names alive."

Each episode takes many hours of research, script writing, interviewing, editing, posting and socializing. The Native ChocTalk team consists of Youngman, a site manager and a graphic artist.

Youngman is proud of her Choctaw heritage.

"My tribe was a big influence on me as I began this podcast," said Youngman.

She promotes information on researching tribal ancestry, Choctaw language classes, Choctaw artists, the CHAHTA Foundation, Choctaw ponies, and Jones Academy on the podcast and website. She grew up in Anadarko, where her dad was the art teacher at Riverside Indian School. Youngman graduated from Butler University, spent twenty years performing as a trained opera singer, and was the youngest recipient of the Young Talent Award from the Metropolitan Opera at age nineteen. She received awards for several years from the National Association of Teachers of Singing for opera competitions.

Youngman has worked in radio, commercials, infomercials and public relations for the Indianapolis Colts. She was publicist for a book about them and led a team promoting the Colts Business Alliance. She has been a dating and relationships columnist, a relationships counselor and currently works in software sales for technology companies.

Her inspiration was her great-grandmother, Ella (Davis) Shofner. Youngman said her sister interviewed the elder for a college paper.

"Ella was full-blood Choctaw, born in 1903. When I was in my late 20s, Ella passed away, and our family was devastated to lose her," said Youngman. "One evening, I thought

of her and regretted not spending more time with her in her last days; then the paper my sister had written came to mind, and I immediately scrambled to find it in the filing cabinet. There it was, tucked away, unread. I sat there, reading every word, and couldn't stop crying."

At age three, Ella had been sold by her mother into guardianship for \$1,000 to a non-Native man, the wealthiest landowner in the area, according to the paper.

According to Youngman, she would not have known the tragic story if she had never read the paper.

Youngman says she is eager to learn more about her tribe and family through this journey.

"I am writing a book about their stories [her family] in hopes to bring them honor," said Youngman.

She intends through the book to preserve her own ancestral stories and wants to give all tribes opportunities to do so as well through the podcast.

"If we do not do that now, those stories will be dust in the wind," Youngman said.

Podcast guests are the experts, and Youngman says she learns from each one. She has interviewed from tribes she had never heard about and those with small numbers of surviving members.

"I feel a sense of urgency to record everyone's stories, but even more so for those tribes whose members are so few," said Youngman. "For my guests who feel comfortable sharing, I am all about helping them capture these important pieces of history for future generations. For many years, and rightfully so, our ancestors were told to hide their stories and not engage in their culture. I find that some elders are still in that mindset. Again, I understand why. To talk to outsiders meant they could be physically harmed or even killed. But now is the time to say no to burying who we are. Storytelling is who we are, it is what we are. And it brings us all together."

She hopes through the podcast, people will want to share stories and dig deep into their histories. She said she believes the best stories are those not found in history books.

"Our people were forgotten for so long. I hope they will no longer be forgotten and will be honored by our bringing their stories to light. This isn't just for family members who have passed," said Youngman. "There are so many still living today who have amazing stories and have accomplished so much - business owners, leaders, artists, volunteers,



Photo Provided

Rachael Youngman creator of the podcast Native ChocTalk.

grandparents and more. Everyone has a story."

Youngman's future goals are to develop a storytelling curriculum for schools and homeschoolers, continue supporting MMIW efforts, and support Native artists and businesses. She also wants to compile the stories from the podcast into a book.

"I feel I owe the women who came before me and paved what was probably a challenging path to work hard and succeed. At the same time, it is humbling, because with success comes responsibility," she said. "I believe our female Choctaw ancestors worked incredibly hard. I have to believe that work ethic is in each and every one of us Choctaw women today, and I hope we are all tapping into that. I cannot help but think our ancestors must be cheering us on."

You can listen to Native ChocTalk on their website, www.nativechoctalk.com, YouTube or most social platforms.

Saige Maxville takes on cancer with a tvshka spirit

Kendra Germany-Wall

Tvshka, war-ri-or

noun

1. (especially in former times) a brave or experienced soldier or fighter.

Saige Maxville, a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, by all definitions, is a warrior. She is a dream chaser, a vibrant light of positivity.

But Saige has been on a complex medical journey that few would ever suspect.

In 2012, Saige had her first noticeable seizure.

Her mother took her to see the doctor, and as there was no obvious reason for the seizure, they decided it was an isolated incident.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, up to 11% of the U.S. population will have at least one seizure in their lifetime, so without an identifiable cause, the doctor wasn't concerned at the time.

MRIs showed nothing of concern, and in every other way, Saige was physically healthy. She was diagnosed with epilepsy, a disorder that, according to the Epilepsy Foundation, 1 in 26 people develops in their lifetime.

She continued to have a relatively normal childhood.

"I did the normal things that a girl would do. Dance, cheer-leading, gymnastics," said Maxville.

However, the seizures continued and worsened.

When Saige transferred to an adult neurologist, an MRI revealed that Saige had a brain tumor.

The doctor believed the tumor to be non-cancerous and suggested monitoring it for a while.

According to the National Institute of Health, about 71% of all brain tumors are benign.

Once Saige turned 20, her seizure activity increased, and the neurologist ordered another MRI.

The tumor had grown, and Saige was referred to a neurosurgeon, who confirmed that the brain tumor was slow-growing and appeared benign.

However, within a few months, Saige was experiencing daily seizures.

Another MRI was ordered, and the neurologist urged her to schedule an appointment with her neurosurgeon immediately.

The neurosurgeon confirmed that the tumor was rapidly growing and that it needed to be removed.

Saige and her medical team entered surgery thinking that the tumor was benign. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

October 15, 2020, a month after surgery, Saige and her family were told it was malignant.

The news was shocking to everyone involved in her case.

"I've never seen a doctor shed a tear before until I saw my neurosurgeon tell me that I had cancer," said Saige. "He truly believed that it was benign just looking at it on a screen."

Saige was referred to an oncologist and radiologist, where she was told that her tumor was a glioblastoma grade IV, a fast-growing and aggressive cancer with an average survival time of 12-18 months.

Saige and her family were advised to do everything they wanted to do together while they had time. However, Saige refused to stop fighting.

Being diagnosed was shocking, but Saige knew she could not let it stop her.

"I didn't let it take over my life. That is one thing that I wanted to make sure of because I was not guaranteed that I

would live past 15 months to two years," explained Saige. "So I was not even guaranteed to survive; therefore, I knew that I couldn't let this take over my life. I did everything I could to fight it."

Saige was referred to OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center neuro-oncologist James Battiste, M.D., for a second opinion.

The first thing Dr. Battiste and his team did was re-assess the tumor sample slides.

They deduced it was either an epithelioid glioblastoma (WHO Grade IV) or a pleomorphic xanthoastrocytoma—most likely a combination. Molecular testing revealed a mutation called BRAF V600E, meaning they could target the tumor cells with two specific inhibitors against that mutation.

Saige's particular brain tumor was rare, and treatment was aggressive, leaving Saige with debilitating side effects.

Following the six-week treatment, Saige continued with a maintenance dose of chemotherapy for another 12 months.

Saige did beat cancer. Victory came when she rang the bell for cancer survivors at Stephenson Cancer Center.

Saige attributes her strength and power to her culture.

"I was already connected to my culture before I was diagnosed with cancer; I was raised that way. Going through treatment, diving deeper into my culture, attending ceremonies more often," Saige said. "Doing more things that had to do with being Choctaw and southeastern in general is something that really helped. Getting more connected with my roots as an Indigenous person."

However, as an Indigenous person, losing her hair was the most devastating side effect.

"To a lot of Native American cultures, our hair is so important," explained Saige. "It is an extension of our ancestors and to lose something so important to you is traumatizing. We did a special hair burning ceremony—my family and I—as we didn't want that hair to go to waste. We wanted to give it back to the creator."

Following the six-week treatment, Saige continued with a maintenance dose of chemotherapy for another 12 months.

Saige did beat cancer and her moment of victory came when she rang the bell for cancer survivors at Stephenson Cancer Center.

During her battle with cancer, Saige continued to peruse her dreams.

"I graduated from college with my associate in history from TCC. During the most aggressive parts of treatment, I walked across that stage with a big smile on my face and grabbed that diploma. I was so happy and proud of myself," Saige said.



Photos Provided

Saige Maxville credits her culture with helping her in her battle against cancer.

Saige has dreams of becoming a history teacher and is working on her bachelor's from Northeastern Oklahoma State University. She hopes to teach students about factual Native American history.

Saige is in her second year as a member of the Tulsa Oiler's Ice Girls dance team and recently finished the inaugural season of the Tulsa Oiler's Football Gold Squad dance team. She tried out for the Ice Girls three months after finishing her intense cancer treatment.

"I was still rusty and very weak. But I was working very hard between that time to get my strength up," said Saige. "I was very thankful that my coach and the judges chose me to be on that team because I was very worried that I might not be strong enough to do this. I might not have the strength or energy, but I'm going to try my best."

If Saige could give anyone reading this who may be going through a similar situation, she would encourage them to continue to live their lives.

"Honestly, if I could give anybody advice who is going through anything that I went through, it is live your life to the fullest. Do not let something that is eating inside you internally destroy your happiness outwardly," said Saige. "That is what kept me surviving, is doing all the things I wanted to do."



Maxville's family was a big support for her during her health battle and continue to root her on in her pursuit of her dreams.



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Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

Choctaw Nation visits France

By Christian Toews

A Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma delegation recently traveled to St. Etienne, France, to commemorate the 105th anniversary of the WWI battle that liberated the city.

Choctaw code talkers were first used during this battle, and five Choctaw soldiers were among the 336 United States soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the four-day battle.

Chief Gary Batton commented on the significance of the events at this battle during a speech at the event in St. Etienne.

“These brave, young Choctaw warriors made the ultimate sacrifice and had no idea what their futures held when they shipped out to France. Each man fought valiantly when called upon to turn back the invading German forces at the four-day Battle of Sent Etienne,” he said. “Unfortunately, these brave warriors did not make it out of that battle and are forever remembered here. We will never forget the sacrifices made by these men and their families to ensure a better life for all.”

A monument now stands at Blanc Mont near St. Etienne and remembers these soldiers.

Chief Batton was invited to lay a wreath at the base of this monument in their honor. This monument’s sign mentions the Choctaw Code Talkers and their contribution to winning the war.

Near this monument is Hill 140, where Joseph Oklahombi and other Code Talkers first used the Choctaw language to defeat the German army during WWI.

On October 8, 1918, Oklahombi and twenty-three fellow soldiers attacked an enemy position and captured 171 prisoners. They seized the artillery at the site and killed 79 German soldiers. These men tended their wounded comrades and held their position for four days under relentless attack.

In the days leading up to the ceremony in Saint Etienne, the delegation from the Choctaw Nation was able to visit many of the critical and historic sites where Choctaw soldiers fought in WWI and WWII. Two ceremonies were held at the cemetery of Meuse Argonne and the Normandy American Cemetery, respectively.

According to the American Battle Monuments Commission, the Meuse Argonne cemetery is 130.5 acres and holds the largest number of American military dead in Europe, totaling 14,246. Most of those buried here lost their lives during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of World War I.

While visiting the graves of the Choctaw men buried here, the story of their bravery was read aloud.

A Choctaw hymn was sung at each grave, and a prayer was said.

The delegation also took sand from Normandy and filled in the soldier’s name on the headstone. This is a practice that highlights the name until the wind and the rain wash the sand away.

Choctaw coins were placed on the headstones, and small flags were planted at the base of the headstones.

At Normandy, the group visited a few sites along the beach where the Americans landed during D-day. Many of the bunkers and craters from bombs have been preserved, and the group visited and stood in the spot where this great and terrible day transpired.

John Hobbs, Senior Executive Officer of Communications and former Executive Director of Public Safety at Choctaw Nation, said, “My thoughts drifted to the fear our soldiers must have felt as they faced this unbelievable battle. As true Tvshkas,

though, they buried their fear and continued to push forward. As a veteran myself, I understand and greatly appreciate the ultimate sacrifice they made on that battlefield. They left home as young men but, on that day, they became heroes that help change the course of history.”

Next, the group went to the Normandy American Cemetery, which covers 172.5 acres and contains the graves of 9,387 American military dead. Most of these men lost their lives in the D-Day landings and ensuing operations, including Choctaw men who fought against tyranny.

The people of France hold the sacrifice of the Choctaw men in high regard. Many French locals had a vast knowledge of the Choctaw’s contribution to the war.

They were eager to share tangible history with the Choctaw people who visited. The mayor of St. Etienne spoke about how grateful she was for the Choctaw people in her speech at the wreath-laying ceremony on Mount Blanc.

While this trip was primarily about honoring the Choctaw veterans and preserving their memory, it offered a deeper connection between the French and Choctaw nations.

Officials from the French government invited Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin to engage in government-to-government meetings. The Chiefs met with Philippe Letrilliart, Deputy Director for the Americas at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. They also met with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty.

“We hope these talks produce opportunities to expand culture and business opportunities for our tribe as well as show that we are having Nation to Nation negotiations to secure our sovereignty. We have had relationships with France and Ireland (since the 18th century),” said Chief Batton in a Facebook post. “We expect to have several more opportunities to demonstrate Choctaw culture and enhance our relationships as a Nation during this trip.”

During the first day in France, the group visited the Musee du Quai Branly in Paris. This museum houses some of the earliest known Choctaw artifacts. These items will be loaned to the Cultural Center in Durant, Oklahoma, for a temporary exhibit sometime next year.

The delegation was able to meet with the curator of the Musee du Quai Branly and discuss the history of the items as well as plans for further collaboration.

The Choctaw Nation has long held the “Tushka” or warrior in high regard. The fearless acts of courage these men showed in pivotal battles during the two world wars will not be forgotten.

These men fought alongside their fellow countrymen to ensure the future we have today. Many didn’t get the privilege of coming home from France, but their memory and honor have been carried across the ocean in the hearts of all who attended the ceremony.

“Seeing the names on the graves of the men from my hometown of Smithville, the ones from McCurtain County, and all those from the Choctaw Reservation or Southeastern Oklahoma was very emotional and something I’ll never forget,” said Shauna Williams, Executive Director of Communications at Choctaw Nation.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of the Choctaw soldier’s contribution to the efforts of WWI and WWII.

From the Code talkers who prevented information from being intercepted to the truly heroic acts of bravery, these Choctaw warriors helped to change the course of history.



Photos by Christian Toews



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

November 2023

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Tribal member, Jake Boyd, brings specialized training to local law enforcement.



Page 12:

Choctaw tribal member and second-generation OU football player finds his home in Norman.

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