


EARTH DAY

2025

Choctaw Nation continues tradition through environmental protection efforts



By Kendra Germany-Wall

For 55 years, Earth Day has been an opportunity to raise awareness and drive action on vital environmental issues.

The Choctaw Nation advocates for the well-being of our planet, including its air, water sources, soil, ecosystems, wildlife and human health.

Earth Day will celebrate its 55th anniversary April 22, with participation from 192 countries worldwide.

According to the official Earth Day website, earthday.org, “people-power” has always been at the heart of Earth Day and the catalyst for change.

“The strength of this movement lies in its grassroots nature, and our power as individuals. It’s the collective voice of concerned citizens that pushes governments and corporations to make bold commitments and take decisive action. By engaging in community initiatives, participating in local and national elections with renewable energy in mind, and making sustainable choices in daily life, individuals are the catalysts for change,” Earthday.org states. “This people-powered revolution demonstrates that when we unite our voices and actions, we can overcome even the most recalcitrant systems and create a cleaner, more equitable energy future for all.”

Each year, a theme is chosen to represent the movement, and this year’s theme is Our Power, Our Planet™.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has long been a supporter of protecting natural resources and conservation efforts.

The connection between the Choctaw Nation and the Earth is a sacred one.

Two oral histories describe the origins of the Choctaw people.

One story speaks of the Creator shaping the Choctaw from clay beneath the Earth. The people then emerged from a cave at the base of a natural hill in Mississippi. This site, Nvnihi Waiya (Place of Creation), is revered as the Mother Mound.

For thousands of years, the Choctaw people have respected the Earth.

Choctaw ancestors used controlled fires to create diverse environments for crops and honored the animals that provided food, shelter, and clothing.

Past and future Iti Fabvssa articles, which can be found at <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik/iti-fabvssa/>, provide information on historical Choctaw conservation and environmental efforts.

As Dr. Ian Thompson, Choctaw Nation’s Senior Director of Historic Preservation, said in his book, *Choctaw Food: Remembering the Land, Rekindling Ancient Knowledge*, “We are all connected to each other through the land. We depend on the Earth to provide the physical necessities that keep us alive.”

Today, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma continues its commitment to environmental protection through its Environmental Protection Services, which include Recycling, Wildlife Management, Environmental Compliance, Water Resources, and Environmental Assessment.








These services, largely supported through federal grants, help protect the environment and educate tribal members and the public so they can take action, advocate and support the environment.

In this month’s issue of the Biskinik, we will highlight some of these programs and services and ways our readers can support the environment not only on Earth Day but every day.



What Can I Recycle at Choctaw Nation?

ACCEPTED PRODUCTS

-  **Paper:** Any paper product that does not have a wax coating or is laminated.
-  **Plastics:** Plastics 1, 2 and 5 (as well as shrink film and plastic bags)
-  **Metal:** Aluminum, steel or tin cans.
-  **Styrofoam:** Styrofoam container and packaging.
-  **Tires:** Tires can be dropped off at a CNO recycling facility.*
-  **Cardboard**
-  **Printer and Toner Cartridges**



MORE INFO

The Recycling Centers are open Monday through Friday, from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. All materials must be clean, dry and empty. *Tires must be dropped off at a CNO recycling facility. Do not place them in roll-offs. For more info on accepted items, contact CNO Recycling.

CONTACT

Durant Recycling Center 580-920-0488 3108 Enterprise Blvd Durant, OK 74701	Poteau Recycling Center 918-649-0343 304 Kerr Ave Poteau, OK 74953
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<https://www.choctawnation.com/services/recycling/>



Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

Upcoming legislative session: Items to keep an eye on

The Choctaw Nation will focus on several items that will be coming up in the new legislative session that we as Chahta deem as priorities because of the value they bring to our tribal members and nation. It is important that we tackle these issues head on so that our tribe will be heard and we have a say in our future and how the state will govern going forward.

Farm Bill

Our focus will be on the new Farm Bill and expanding the Tribal Self-Government and self-determination authorities. In other words, we want to give ourselves full control of the programs instead of having the U.S. government dictate the rules and terms to us.

The Farm Bill is the single largest financial commitment that the U.S. government makes to U.S. food and agriculture producers, providing nutrition assistance, crop subsidies, crop insurance, rural broadband internet deployment and a range of other programs and initiatives. The Farm Bill is an omnibus, multi-year law that allows policymakers to set priorities for the food and agriculture sector for a period, usually every five years.

The next Farm Bill will expire in September 2025, and we will work to ensure tribal provisions that benefit Indian Country are included in the new bill. The Choctaw Nation supports the expansion of 638 Indian Self-Determination contracting and Tribal Self-Governance compacting throughout the USDA. From a prioritization perspective, the Choctaw Nation strongly believes this new Farm Bill includes a provision that makes the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) permanent after a successful pilot program.

NAHASDA

The nation will also turn its attention to the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA). NAHASDA is the primary federal statute governing the development, operation, and maintenance of housing in Tribal communities. Yet despite its crucial role, NAHASDA has not been reauthorized in a decade. As a result, its programs need updating, and funding has decreased by 29% when accounting for inflation, remaining at less than 2% of the overall HUD budget. NLIHC continues to urge Congress to reauthorize NAHASDA and fully fund Tribal housing programs to address the dire affordable housing needs of Native communities.

HUD estimates that 42,000–85,000 people in Native communities stay with friends or relatives because they have no place of their own. Failure to reauthorize NAHASDA and stagnant appropriations further exacerbate the large inequities between Native and non-Native communities and prevent Native housing programs from meeting the urgent housing needs of our people.

Diabetes Program

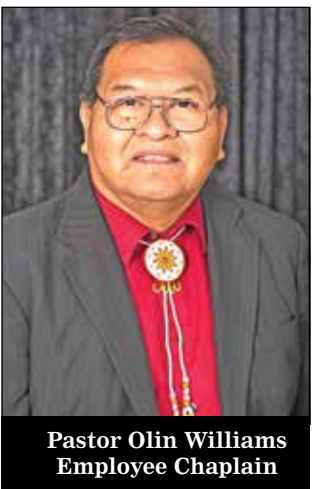
The tribe is in support of reauthorizing the Special Diabetes Program for Native Americans. In response to the diabetes epidemic among American Indians and Alaska Natives, Congress established the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) grant programs in 1997. This \$150 million annual grant program, coordinated by IHS Division of Diabetes with guidance from the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee, provides funds for diabetes treatment and prevention to IHS, Tribal, and Urban Indian health programs across the United States.

Health Service Contract Support Costs

Finally, we support getting Health Service Contract Support Costs approved as mandatory rather than discretionary payments. Congress passed reauthorization and increased the funding to \$160 million. Additional funding for the vital program would help, as Native adults are two times more likely to have diagnosed diabetes (compared with non-Hispanic whites).

We will continue to work with key Congressional members and their staff to ensure that our voice is heard on a national level, so that we can build a brighter future for all tribal members. We will regularly engage with Congressional members and staff in the Oklahoma delegation and on key committees to help shape legislative priorities and the FY 2025 and FY 2026 federal budgets. The future of our tribe is very important, and engaging in these issues will ensure a brighter future for all tribal members.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

What about fear

Have you ever been afraid? Is it wrong for Christians to fear? That may depend on the situation.

There are natural safeguard emotions built into all humans for self-preservation purposes. Should one not be afraid to step too close to the edge of a cliff or ride a roller coaster with a heart condition? It is right and natural to be fearful in such conditions. This applies to believers and unbelievers alike. Does fear exist just in the physical world? Does fear exist in the spiritual world? Is faith the absence of fear? Fear is the motivational element in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

The fear of harm and danger to the physical causes humans to seek security measures. We buy insurance to secure our property. We enlarge the cosmetic industry to enhance our beauty or prolong our youthfulness because we fear old age. We create giant pharmaceutical companies because we fear death. Then, at some point in our life, we consider our eternal soul and its destiny.

(Job 14:14) “If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.” Solomon says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7). This is not physical fear. This is a fear of the unknown in the spiritual realm. The fear of eternity and final destiny.

In the Book of Matthew 10:28, Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Jesus is stating the contrast between the fear of man (physical) and the fear of God (spiritual). The word fear concerning God is different from physical fear. This fear is an affectionate reverence to the bitter wrath and sweetness of the love of God.

Hebrews 12:28,29 tells us, “Wherefore we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” This type of fear being connected to believe and trust, creates a fellowship either within human relations or between human and the divine.

These two types of fears are demonstrated by our Lord in Mark 14: 32-36, “And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Keeping ancestors’ hopes alive through seed program

Choctaws who are interested in obtaining the heirloom seeds of their ancestors should apply soon as supplies are limited. The Chahta heirloom seeds that sprout fruit, and vegetables are different from store-bought produce in that they are natural seeds the way nature intended them to be grown. The fruits and vegetables produced from the heirloom seeds are packed with vitamins and minerals that the ancestral Choctaw tribes needed to stave off illness and provided the energy to hunt and forage food for the tribe.

Applications for the Growing Hope program can be found on the Choctaw Nation website. Applications are accepted January through April each year. Seeds will be mailed to applicants on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last.

Choctaw ancestors knew the importance of our native seeds to grow the crops that would feed their tribe and to carry on the traditional foods that Chahta knew best.

Even in the toughest times of colonization and during the Trail of Tears our Choctaw ancestors would hide their heirloom seeds to ensure that food would be plentiful, and the tribe did not have to rely on the U.S. government. It was the tribe’s way of safeguarding its sovereignty and independence so future generations of Chahta could live, thrive and survive with its heritage intact.

That tradition persists with the Choctaw Growing Hope program that distributes, to tribal members, the heirloom seeds that Chahta ancestors planted to keep the tribe fed and healthy.

According to a recent news story, Jacqueline Putman, Growing Hope program coordinator, explained that traditional Choctaw produce is in many ways more nutritious than other popular foods in grocery stores, and that health is as important to the nation as food sovereignty.

Some of the heirloom seeds were even sent to space on a NASA mission in 2024. Those “space seeds” were planted at Jones Academy and were observed by students for a scientific experiment.

Interest in the Choctaw heirloom seed program is strong; it’s important that those of you who would like to participate in this year’s program, apply now.

It is good to know that something so important to our Chahta tribe is alive and strong and what was coveted so much that it was hidden to ensure our survival is still available today. These heirloom seeds are more than just a food source -- they are the very building blocks of the Choctaw Nation. I am so proud the heirloom seeds are available to ensure the health and well-being of future Chahta generations for many years to come.



Photos by Rylee Tollett
Different types of seeds and plants on display by the Growing Hope Program in the greenhouse at the Labor Day Festival each year.

TRADITIONAL CHOCTAW SEEDS GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

Request by application only

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Email: _____
 Phone: _____

- Please check the **three** plants that you would like to receive seed for:
- Tanchi Tohbi Choctaw Flour Corn
 - Tobi Smith Peas
 - Isito Choctaw Sweet Potato Squash
 - Tvnishi Lambsquarter
 - Hakchuma Perique Tobacco
 - Chukfi Peas
 - Hvshi Pakanli Seneca Sunflower

MAIL THIS FORM TO:
 Growing Hope Project
 163665 N 4355 RD
 Tushkahoma, OK 74574

Seeds from the Growing Hope Program are intended for Choctaw People and Community members. They will be given out on a first come, first served basis while supplies last, hard copy mail in application only. **YAKOKE!**

Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation

CHOCTAW TRAIL OF TEARS

MEMORIAL WALK

Remembering our ancestors and embracing our culture!

MAY 17, 2025

TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS
 Council House Road
 Tuskahoma, OK 74574

CULTURAL DEMONSTRATIONS, LIVE VILLAGE AND VENDOR BOOTHS OPEN AT 9:00 AM

TRAIL OF TEARS CEREMONY AND WALK BEGINS IN THE VILLAGE AT 10:00AM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

PRINCESS PAGEANT

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/PRINCESS-AND-ROYALTY

MDREICH@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
 580.380.5972

Choctaw Nation Princess and Royalty Program

CHOCTAW NATION EASTER CELEBRATION

2025

APRIL 12, 2025 | 10:30 AM

Please join us as we celebrate the Good News of Easter and enjoy fellowship with tribal members and their families.

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Choctaw-Irish Festival

The Choctaw Cultural Center held the Choctaw-Irish festival on March 10 to commemorate the bond between the two great nations.

Attendees were able to browse the art market and see demonstrations of tool making, traditional games, and social dancing. Some lucky visitors were able to participate in the sold-out frybread class.



Photos by Krislan Garside

Banaha demonstrations are always popular at Choctaw Cultural Center events.



Above and Below: Crafts from registered Choctaw artists were available for attendees to purchase.



Above: a blacksmith demonstrates making steel arrowheads. Below: Blakely Turner takes her turn at the popular hat game.

CNO assists schools with emergency spill response preparation

By Tabatha Ketton

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) provided vital support to public schools within the Choctaw Nation Reservation to enhance their emergency response capabilities, particularly in the event of fuel and oil spills. The initiative focused on ensuring schools can handle spill-related emergencies by meeting environmental safety regulations.

“We were interested in serving a community with grant funds we had acquired, and schools on the reservation were a natural choice,” said Jeremy Noah, Environmental Specialist for CNO.

CNO conducted a comprehensive audit across 75 schools to determine emergency response needs within the reservation and evaluated their preparedness for such incidents. The audit specifically focused on the presence of aboveground fuel storage tanks and used oil drums while also assessing compliance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) regulations. Ensuring compliance with these regulations helps schools take the necessary precautions to prevent and mitigate environmental damage in the event of a spill.

Based on the findings of the audit, 52 schools received a variety of spill response equipment tailored to the specific needs of each school. These items included 5- and 95-gallon spill kits, dry absorbent, and spill containment pallets. Additionally, spill response guides have been created for each school to ensure staff and students know the proper procedures in case of an emergency.



Photos by Tabatha Ketton

Sammy Drinkard, District Safety Coordinator/Hugo High School Principal and Jeremy Noah, Environmental Specialist for CNO review Hugo Public Schools’ spill prevention and countermeasure guide.

“It is a relief for us, knowing we have the capacity to respond to spills,” said Sammy Drinkard, District Safety Coordinator and High School Principal for Hugo Schools. “With a response unit like this, it will be a relief to the school district, as spills can be a daunting task to mitigate.”

“We want to ensure that Choctaw Nation schools are well-prepared to handle fuel spill-related emergencies, protecting both the environment and the safety of students and staff,” said Noah. “Individuals in our office like Ryan Page, Environmental Coordinator for CNO, were a key component when conducting the audit and delivering supplies to schools. Our office truly understands the importance of servant leadership in our communities.”

If tribal members have any questions or concerns about environmental safety, including environmental regulations, best practices, and sustainability, they can email Environmental Compliance at ec@choctawnation.com.

Left: Sammy Drinkard and Jeremy Noah, with the spill kit in front of a Hugo School’s trailer.



Colton James, Silversmith

By Kellie Matherly

Colton James is a proud Choctaw silversmith, deeply connected to his heritage and dedicated to preserving his family’s artistic legacy. Drawing inspiration from traditional Choctaw designs and patterns, Colton channels his cultural identity into every piece of jewelry he creates. His work is more than craftsmanship; it is a form of storytelling, embodying the history, traditions, and values of the Choctaw people.

Colton’s journey into silversmithing is deeply rooted in family tradition. His grandfather, a celebrated Choctaw silversmith who worked closely with the renowned Jerry Lowman, introduced the craft to the family. After retiring from his career at the Choctaw Hospital in Talihina, Colton’s grandfather devoted his life to jewelry-making, producing intricate pieces ranging from rings and bracelets to necklaces and watches. These creations, often sold at powwows and cultural events or gifted to friends and family, became a tangible expression of his artistry and generosity.



Choctaw Nation Photos

Colton James shows off some of his silversmith work.

After his grandfather’s passing, Colton’s father continued the family tradition, honing his skills and sharing the craft with the next generation. As a child, Colton often explored the workshop, collecting unfinished pieces, stones, and scraps scattered across the floor. These early interactions sparked his curiosity and led to hands-on experiences where he assisted his father with small tasks like buffing, polishing, and setting stones. Over time, Colton’s fascination with silversmithing evolved into a personal passion.

“I would crawl around and find pieces that were unfinished—some pieces that just needed to be polished up a little bit. I’d give them to my dad, and we would finish them. Eventually, he would have me do some small tasks, like hold the torch, move it back and forth, or hold a piece of solder,” remembered Colton.

One pivotal moment in Colton’s artistic journey came when he decided to create an eagle feather pendant—a piece that would connect three generations of his family. Using a scrap of silver from his grandfather’s collection, which already had an eagle feather design outlined in marker, Colton collaborated with his father to bring the piece to life. Guided by his father’s wisdom and his own emerging skills, Colton crafted the pendant, a symbol of continuity and pride that he wears daily.

“It’s really nice knowing this is something that my grandpa was doing, my dad is doing, and now something that I’m doing. I get to keep it going for the rest of my life. And then, if I have a family in the future, I’ll pass it on to them or teach others,” he said.

Colton’s work reflects his meticulous attention to detail and commitment to excellence. Inspired by the high standards set by his grandfather, he strives to create jewelry that resonates with both cultural significance and artistic quality. While every piece carries personal and familial connections, Colton



Choctaw Nation Photos

Colton James is a proud Choctaw silversmith, deeply connected to his heritage and dedicated to preserving his family’s artistic legacy.

also delights in crafting custom designs for clients, often embedding their personal stories and memories into the jewelry. For example, he once transformed a cherished quartz stone into a pendant for a customer, ensuring the piece could be passed down as a family heirloom.

Beyond jewelry-making, Colton is a multifaceted artist and cultural ambassador. He is also a skilled coppersmith, basket weaver, and stickball player, deeply involved in preserving and celebrating Choctaw traditions. Additionally, his talents have led to appearances in films, television shows, magazines, and newspapers, further showcasing his versatility and passion for storytelling.

Colton’s vision for the future includes opening a dedicated workshop and gallery where he can create and share his art with the public. He dreams of a space where visitors can witness the jewelry-making process, fostering a deeper appreciation for the artistry and cultural heritage behind each piece. Ultimately, Colton aspires to pass down his knowledge and skills to future generations, ensuring that his family’s legacy and Choctaw traditions continue to thrive.

For Colton, silversmithing is more than a profession—it is a way to honor his ancestors, connect with his heritage, and share the beauty of Choctaw culture with the world. Each piece of jewelry he creates carries a story, blending the past, present, and future into a tangible expression of art, identity, and community.

CNO to be first tribe to partner with EPA on UST credential process

By Tabatha Keaton

Earlier this year, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) signed an agreement establishing CNO Environmental Protection Service staff as federally credentialed inspectors for underground storage tanks (UST).

CNO is the first tribe to establish such a program within EPA Region 6, which includes Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, and 66 Tribal Nations.

Through this new role, CNO staff will be able to conduct inspections of underground storage tanks, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and enhancing the nation’s ability to safeguard its land and communities. This program highlights the Choctaw Nation’s leadership and strengthens its ability to preserve its environmental heritage.

“This partnership is an affirmation of our sovereignty, strengthening the Choctaw Nation’s ability to protect our resources and facilities on the reservation for many generations to come,” said Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton. “With this agreement, we can increase the boots-on-the-ground effort to protect our resources, communities, and facilities, and is a great example of what our region can achieve when we all work together.”

This landmark collaboration between the Choctaw Nation and the EPA reflects the tribe’s commitment to preserving its environment and resources for future generations. Chief Batton emphasized that the Choctaw Nation’s Environmental Protection Service department exemplifies servant leadership, actively ensuring that the environment is protected and cared for in the long term.





Eddie Bohanan

District 3

Halito!

It has been a little while since we caught up, but that does not mean we have slowed down any!

We have been busy around District 3 since the start of the New Year. The weather has been cold, but I am glad to start seeing some warmer weather. Despite the cold, there were still plenty of activities going around in District 3.

During the month of February, I had the privilege of attending the Choctaw Nation Livestock Show, McCurtain County Premium Sale, and the Leflore County Premium Sale. Congratulations to all the participants and their hard work!

The Talihina District 3 Senior Citizens held a “Gospel Singing” and it was a great success! They are planning a community Bingo night on April 26th at 6:00 p.m. I invite everyone to

come and enjoy a fun night of Bingo!

During March, a couple of teams from District 3 made it to the OSSAA State Basketball Tournament. Their hard work and determination got them a ticket to the last ever tournament at the Big House. Congratulations to the Whitesboro and Smithville Girls Basketball teams!

Another big congratulations to the Talihina High School Band for making it to State as well!

I am so proud of you all! The Choctaw Nation Youth Stickball League kicked off their season opener on March 8. The Talihina team, Tvshka Waya, finished the first game day with three wins and one tie. Congratulations to everyone for a job well done!

We also kicked off the Choctaw language classes at the Talihina Community Center back in October. The classes are held every first Thursday of the month and are led by District 3 first-language Choctaw speakers. It starts at 5:30 p.m. with a potluck dinner and the class starts after the meal. I invite everyone to come and join us! It is so important for us to learn and preserve our language – It is what makes us who we are as Choctaw people.

If you would like to compete for one of the three District 3 Choctaw Princess titles, the application is on the Chahta Achvffa portal, and the deadline is two weeks before the pageant. The District 3 Princess Pageant is going to be held on April 15. I encourage you to apply because this is a wonderful opportunity to make connections, create everlasting friendships and be a representative of the Choctaw Nation!

I look forward to what the next few months hold and cannot wait to update you all next time on everything that District 3 has done!

Yakoke, Micha Chi Pisa.



Jess Henry

District 4

Halito, District 4 is Ready to Welcome Spring!

As we are having warmer weather, sunshine, and the blooming flowers, it's a perfect time for gardening and spending time outdoors. Let's enjoy all that Spring has to offer in District 4!

The recent groundbreaking for the new Dale Cox Community Center was a memorable occasion for all. Family and friends gathered to honor the legacy of Dale Cox, whose contributions continue to inspire us all. This 10,530-square-foot facility is a much-needed space for activities and events, and it promises to bring the community closer together. Construction has begun and we can hardly wait for the new facility.

In February, Marcella Wilmar celebrated her 100th birthday. Her remarkable milestone is an inspiration to us all.

When I asked her the secret to a long life, she shared this simple but powerful advice: “Be kind to everyone, every day.”

At the February council meeting, Wanda James was honored as a Choctaw language speaker, and JB Adams was recognized as our Veteran of the Month.

The LeFlore County premium sale is always an exciting event. Our youth showcase the animals they've worked hard to raise, demonstrating dedication and commitment. Congratulations to all the young participants for their efforts and success!

March also brought us the joy of Read Across America. This annual event is something I look forward to every year, as our children's energy and enthusiasm fill the room. It's always a pleasure to read to them and share in the excitement of this special day.

In senior news, the Spiro Seniors recently enjoyed a trip to Branson, where they experienced great shows, delicious food, and camaraderie. Meanwhile, Poteau Seniors are planning a trip to New Mexico, and they continue their First Friday Taco Sale each month.

It's truly a privilege to serve District 4. If you ever need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out.

God Bless,
Jess Henry



District 4 has had a lot to celebrate in recent months, from Marcella Wilmar's 100th birthday to groundbreaking Reading Across America events and cattle sales.

Sam is Veteran of the Month

Morris James Sam, District #6, is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month.

Sam was born and raised in California, attending school there until, in 9th grade, he transferred to Jones Academy in Hartshorne, Oklahoma.

In 1979, Sam enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served until 1981, attending basic training in San Diego, California. He trained for work in the Infantry 0311 Grenadier unit. Upon completing Boot Camp, he was stationed at Camp Pendleton, 62 Area, San Mateo, Calif., where he participated in extensive training exercises in preparation for deployment and participated in the Amphibious Parade.

His favorite duty station was a four-month assignment at Pickle Meadows, Calif., home to the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center. As part of his training, he served aboard a Navy aircraft carrier, the USS Tarawa, in the Pacific, witnessing firsthand the strength of the United States Military, an experience he described as awe-inspiring. He earned his PFC Meritorious Sleeve and the Rifle Marksman Badge. He concluded his military career with the rank of EFC.

After serving, Sam traveled between California and Oklahoma, but in 2004, he began working at Jones Academy. In 2011, he moved to the Haileyville School system, where he worked until 2017. He then transitioned to Wilburton Public Schools, where he is currently employed.

Sam is a devout student of the Bible and considers himself a “Soldier of the Cross,” affirming that he serves under the greatest Commander in Chief of all time. He has been married to his wife, Roberta, for seven years and has three children: Andrew, Joshua, and Melissa. He has a proud military heritage as the son of a Marine who served during WWII and the Korean War.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma 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.

James is First Language Speaker of the Month

Andrew James, who grew up in McCurtain County, will celebrate his 70th birthday in August of this year. James comes from a large but close family. His parents and grandparents all had a hand in raising him. He is a full-blood Choctaw, and Chahta Anumpa is his first language. James started singing Choctaw hymns at Hampton Chapel when he was 4. He didn't speak English regularly until he started school at age 5.

His family was in attendance to see him receive this honor.



COUNCIL MINUTES

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA
TRIBAL COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

March 8, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTES
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session February 8, 2025
 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #6 – Morris Sam
 - b. First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #6 – Andrew James
 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Stephen Wright – Individual Speaker – Proposed Constitutional Amendments
 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Letter of Confirmation for Mitchel J. Mullin to fulfill the Choctaw Nation Tribal Court Judiciary Position
 - b. Approve Application to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Tribal Veterans Administration Supportive Housing Grant
 - c. Approve Business Lease No. 4200479074 (G09-3001) in Favor of Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Choctaw County, Oklahoma
 - d. Approve Business Lease No. 4200452974 (G09-2059) in Favor of ET Gathering & Processing, LLC on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Atoka County, Oklahoma
 - e. Approve Agricultural Lease No. 4200458623 (G09-2091) in Favor of Jonathan Ramsey on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Pushmataha County, Oklahoma
 - f. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
 - g. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
 - h. Approve Application for the FY25 Environmental Regulatory Enhancement Grant (ERE)
 - i. Approve a Representative-Signature-Certifier and Administrators for the 2024 United States Department of Agriculture Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant
 - j. Approve Application for the 2025 STOP School Violence Program
 - k. Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation Trust and Restricted Land Leasing Act
 - l. Resolution Supporting the Application to the Tribal Child Support Services (CSS) Program
 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All bills passed unanimously

Want to learn more about Choctaw history?

Check out past and future Iiti Fabvssas at <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik/iti-fabvssa/>.

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Jay Harvey

As the redbuds begin to bloom and the dogwood flowers start to open, we are reminded that spring is upon us. In Southeastern Oklahoma and the Choctaw Nation, spring means turkey season is here. Turkey season runs from April 16 through May 16 in the CNO. The season limit is one tom turkey. Bearded hens are not legal to take by tribal members. All harvested turkeys must be tagged in the field with the taker's name, tribal membership number, and the time and date of harvest. Within 24 hours of the harvest, the bird must be checked in on the Chahta Achvffa portal, where the hunter will be given a confirmation number that needs to be with the bird or available if checked by a game warden.

Now is the time to go and scout your hunting area. Turkeys are easy to locate in the spring. You can go out just before sunrise and listen for the gobbling toms. Toms gobble to let the hens know where they are and that the tom is available for mating. By pinpointing the location of the gobbling turkey, you will have a good idea of where to be on the day you choose to go hunting. Listen for the tom to gobble at an owl or a crow or use a call to mimic these two birds. When you hear the tom gobble, slowly make your way as close as you can without spooking the bird. If you can get to around 100 yards, you should be in good shape. Sit with your back against a big tree facing the direction of the tom. Use some soft yelps, and if the gobbler answers, you are in the game. When you hear the bird fly down, use yelps, clucks and purrs to call the tom to your location. If all goes well, a big, tasty tom will be in your vest before long.

Turkey hunting can be dangerous if hunting on public land or around other hunters. Since you are calling and trying to lure a turkey to your location, sometimes you may be calling another hunter. You should NEVER wear white, red or blue clothing since those are the colors in a tom turkey's head. If you see another hunter, don't wave since the movement may cause someone to shoot in your direction. Yell out or whistle to get the hunter's attention.

Good luck this spring!

Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation

Upcoming Events

Blood Drive – Durant Community Center - April 4 | 10:15 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Durant Community Center 2746 Big Lots Pkwy | Durant, OK 74701 | Join the Annual Blood Drive Challenge and save a life at the Durant Choctaw Community Center. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments can be made at <https://www.yourbloodinstitute.org/donor/schedules/name>. Search "Choctaw" or search by city.

Blood Drive – Durant Headquarters - April 10 & April 11 | 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701 | Choctaw Nation will be hosting two blood drives at their Tribal Headquarters in Durant. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments can be made at <https://www.yourbloodinstitute.org/donor/schedules/name>. Search "Choctaw" or search by city.

Cinema at the Center - April 17 | 7 p.m. | This monthly series features a wide range of films designed around a fun, family-friendly theme. This month, check out Wall-E. We'd love to see you for movie night.

Offices Closed for Good Friday - April 18 | All Day | All CNO offices will be closed for a tribal holiday in observance of Good Friday.

International Denim Day at Wheelock - April 23 | 11 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | Wheelock Academy 1377 Wheelock Road, Unit C Garvin, OK 74736 | Please join us in wearing jeans on this day as a visible means to protest the misconceptions that surround sexual violence. We will have speakers, an awareness walk, information booths and cultural activities.

Kick Up Your Heels - April 26 | 10 a.m. | Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701 | Get ready to "take a walk in her shoes" at the Kick Up Your Heels event. This one-lap walk brings awareness to the issue of sexual violence. Registration is open now through April 7.

Car Seat Checks and Safety Information Event | April 25 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Spiro Community Center | 19400 Aes Rd, Spiro, OK 74959 | It's important to make sure car seats are properly installed. Come by for a car seat check and visit with tribal programs that may be able to assist with other resources. Representatives will be on hand from Guiding Adolescent Parents, Choctaw Nation Youth Outreach, Chahta Inchevka, Choctaw Nation Housing-Envision Program, TIPCAP, Children Matter, and other programs.

Programs & Services

Choctaw Cultural Center Membership - Become a member of the Choctaw Cultural Center today! Your annual membership helps support the preservation of Choctaw culture. Membership benefits include: Complimentary admission to the Cultural Center; advance notice of special events and exhibits, invitations to members only events, discounts at Hvshi Gift Store and much more! Visit choctawculturalcenter.com for more information.

STAR Program - The STAR application is now available. Parents and guardians can apply for their students enrolled in grades 2-12. The application window for the previous fall semester will close on April 1. Apply in the Chahta Achvffa member portal today!

High School Career Tech Assistance - Career Development helps cover expenses for high school junior and senior students who are tribal members, Oklahoma residents and are enrolled at a Career and Technology Center. Eligibility requirements apply. For more information, call 866.933.2260 or email aces@choctawnation.com. Scan QR code to apply.



Princess Pageants - Young Choctaw women, ages 8 - 22 (1/16-degree Choctaw or more), are invited to compete in their respective district pageants. District winners will compete at the Choctaw Labor Day Festival for the overall Choctaw Nation Royalty titles. Upcoming pageants include: District 1 on April 3, District 2 on April 8 and District 3 on April 15. For more details on upcoming pageants and more dates, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/princess-and-royalty/>.

YEA Summer Camps - Summer is right around the corner, and registration for YEA summer camps is now open. The camps are available to tribal members and children of associates. Sign up now through April 15 on the Chahta Achvffa member portal. Camps offered and their dates can be found at <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/yea/>.

Summer EBT - Previously, applications for the Summer EBT for Children program went through our partnership with the Chickasaw Nation. Now, we're launching our own program and application process! Applications open in early April, and this program is available to all school-aged children, regardless of CDIB status. For more information, please call 539-316-3855.

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Yakoke from Goodroe

Kelly Goodroe would like to announce that she has achieved Dean's list for the second time at Bellevue University. She greatly appreciated the help that the Higher Education Program provided and the support of her family while she pursued a bachelor's degree of science in Business Management and Leadership.



Annual Gospel Singing

Grace Indian United Methodist Church will host its annual gospel singing on Friday, April 25, 2025 at Grace Indian United Methodist Church 720 Burger Rd, Hartshorne, OK. (Drive 3 miles North on 12th street, turn east on Burger Rd for 1 mile) Supper is at 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Gospel Singing begins at 7:00 p.m. Hamburger sale begins at 7:00 p.m.

MC - Joe Coley | Everyone is Welcome | Come and enjoy some great gospel music and delicious food.

Celebrate Recovery Native Nation's Zoom 12-Step Study For Native Women

The journey begins on Sunday, April 27, 2025, Sunday (limited space) 5 p.m.-6:30 p.m. CST.

Participants will need the following materials: Celebrate Recovery (CR) Step Study Participate Guidebooks 1 through 4. A CR bible is optional.

For more information, contact Rosalie at wadeinvallejo@hotmail.com or Kim at Kimj5528@yahoo.com.

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation, Home Finance Department, is committed to helping find the right mortgage product for Choctaw tribal members. We understand that every borrower is different, and a variety of products are offered to meet individual requirements. We make the process of securing a mortgage loan simple and straightforward.

Choctaw tribal members living within the Choctaw Nation Reservation can apply for purchase, refinance, and construction loans. These loans are a fixed market interest rate for up to 30 years.

Down payment assistance loans are offered to Choctaw tribal members nationwide. Borrowers must apply with Choctaw Home Finance and be referred to a participating lender for any loans out of the state of Oklahoma.

Streamline home improvement loans are offered to Choctaw tribal members throughout Oklahoma. The streamline loan is up to \$20,000.00 and allows for home repairs and small home improvement projects. Appraisal and inspections may be required.

Credit repair loans are offered to Choctaw tribal members in the Choctaw Nation Reservation. This loan is up to \$10,000.00 and subject to budget/credit counseling requirements.

Loan qualification is based on income and credit history. Let our knowledgeable staff assist you. Call us at 1-800-235-3087 or visit our website, <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/>, for more information.

STAY IN THE KNOW BEFORE YOUR FAMILY GETS SICK!

Check the **Respiratory Health Hub** to see the common respiratory virus levels in our reservation.



Scan the QR code to visit the Respiratory Health Hub

Choctaw Nation Public Health

Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Mail to: Biskinik
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

The Official
Monthly Publication of the
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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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.

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

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

HIGH SCHOOL CAREER TECH ASSISTANCE

Career Development provides this initiative for high school juniors and seniors who are attending an approved Oklahoma Career Tech Program in person. Eligibility requirements apply.



Scan to submit an application.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 866.933.2260 OR EMAIL ACES@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



NEW CHILD CARE FACILITY OPENING IN MCALESTER THIS SUMMER

A new child care facility is set to open in McAlester, OK, offering care for children aged 6 weeks to 5 years, both tribal and nontribal. The program provides a nurturing environment that supports children's development through creativity and learning. Applications are now being accepted to join the waitlist. Secure your child's spot today.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT, CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/CHILD-CARE/

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



HONOR GUARD — POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

APPLY BY CONTACTING: 580-642-8451

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna
Eplil Language Lesson

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna
Time – Hvshi Kanvlli

cheki chohmi kash - recently

Cheki chohmi kash ohoyo ma pisa li tuk. I saw that woman recently.

Cheki chohmi kash California ont falama li tuk. I went to California and back recently.

ahchiba moma ho - yet a little while longer

Ahchiba moma ho okhish ihishi la chi ho makachi tuk. He said I needed to continue taking my medicine a little longer.

Ahchiba moma ho tobi yvt nunvt vlhtaha chi. It's going to take a little while longer for the beans to finish cooking.

shohbi na - until evening

Ofi mvt nuhosi na shohbi tuk. That dog slept until evening.

Ohomba na nittak ont shohbi tuk. It rained until the end of the day.

fokali kash - about (time)

Nittak tuklo fokali kash wanuta kashoffi li tuk. I cleaned the yard about two days ago.

Afvmmi tuchina fokali kash yakni inla ia li tuk. About three years ago I went to another country.

www.choctawschool.com

ITI FABVSSA

The Labor Day Festival and the Annual Iksa Meeting, Part I

By Guest Writer, Reno Crims

This month, Iti Fabvssa would like to answer a popular question, "When was the first Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival?"

Over the next few months, we will be running a series of articles that will discuss the answer to this question by looking at a few important historical events, including the 1938 reconstruction of the Choctaw Capitol Building and the yearly celebration connected to it called the "Annual Iksa Meeting." This Annual Iksa Meeting, and later meetings, would evolve into what we celebrate today as the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival.

There are multiple stories about when the first Choctaw Labor Day Festival was held. Often, people connect its beginning to the Choctaw cultural revitalization movement of the 1970s. They may also recall the earliest instances of the annual Choctaw Princess Pageants in the late 1960s. Many elders also say that the festival was put on in the 1950s by Chief Belvin. Some members of the community point to the similarities that the annual gathering shares to the historic General Council Meetings from the 19th century, which would occur in early October of every year. All of these events and remembrances are associated with the Choctaw Labor Day Festival. However there is more to this history that spans back to the reconstruction of the Choctaw Capitol Building.

Older newspaper announcements of the Labor Day Festival show that during the 1960s and 1970s, the Choctaw community considered the first instance to be in the year 1948. This is an important year for the Choctaw Nation. It marks both the passing of Chief William Durant and the democratic election and appointment of Chief Harry Belvin.

Newly elected Chief Belvin celebrated by holding a festival at Tvshkahomma, which he characterized as the "Choctaw-Chickasaw Labor Day Meet." He held the meeting alongside then Chickasaw Governor Floyd Maytubby. The event was also organized to honor the life and legacy of Chief Durant.

It is easy to assume that the 1948 meeting would mark the finite beginning of the present Labor Day Festival, but this is not the case. On September 9, 1948, the Antlers American published Belvin's intentions to create "an annual custom of the Labor Day gathering of the Choctaws and their friends, resuming the custom which began soon after the restoration of the old council house in the early 1930s under Chief Durant". The "resuming the custom" phrase tells us that Belvin's gathering was expressly a continuation of earlier events that were tied to the renovation of the Capitol Building in the 1930s.

Built in 1884, the Choctaw Capitol Building was in common use until the Choctaw Government was "closed" in 1906 and the Capitol fell into varying states of disuse and disrepair. Over the course of 30 years, the Capitol become hazardous. It was also purchased by the Oklahoma Presbyterian College which initially planned to scrap the Capitol for its bricks and raw materials. It took the combined efforts of the Choctaw Advisory Council to regain the property and provide for the extensive renovation that included reconstructing some elements of the building.

In the late 1930s, the Choctaw Advisory Council, under the supervision of Chief Ben Dwight and later Chief William Durant Administrations, was able to fund the



This crew of Indians formed part of the Emergency Conservation Corp during the depression in the early 1930's at the Indian Hospital. They cleared land, built roads and constructed ponds for \$11 a week.

In the first row, left to right, are: Tony Winlock, William Hampton, Roosevelt Bacon, Bill Baggett, Carl McIntosh, Martin Woods, (unknown), Sweeney Paxton, Morris, Victor Nelson, Frank Burns, (unknown), Ed Wall, Dave Bryant and Crawford Anderson.

Second row (kneeling): Silas McCurtain, Wall, (unknown), Gilbert Bacon, Jack Blue Jim Saul, Bacon, McKinney, Eugene Anderson John Noah, Robert White, Charles Bacon, Bill Baggett, Bentley Beams, Noah, Tom Wall (unknown).

Top row: Blue Anderson, Frank Anderson Sam Jones, Hamp Campala, Aaron Jonnicco Reubin Bacon, D.O. White, Joe Roebuck Burson Hudson, Jewel Daney, Boa Isaac Edmond Wall, Tucker White, (unknown), Bill McCoy, Alfred Pike, Delos Wade, Jess Johnson.

1938-1939 Civilian Conservation Corps – Indian Division, Talihina American.

Choctaw Connect Home receives award

DURANT, Okla. (March 12, 2025) – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) presented the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Housing Authority (HACNO) Connect Home program with the Trailblazer Award at its annual ConnectHomeUSA Summit. The Trailblazer Award recognizes communities with exceptional commitment to ensuring that all people and communities have the skills and technology needed to benefit from a digital economy. HACNO was one of two organizations to receive this award.

HACNO's Connect Home was launched in 2015 to address the digital divide faced

by residents on rural reservations. The program offers internet access, devices, and digital literacy training to individuals in over 1,000 properties, including those within its lease-to-own program, Affordable Rentals, and Independent Elder homes. In January 2025, the program was expanded to include Choctaw Nation employees.

"Connect Home is honored to be recognized by HUD for our success in expanding internet access within our reservation communities," said Josh Raper, HACNO's Connect Home Program Manager. "Our program is dedicated to providing residents with essential re-



sources they need to succeed in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. This award is a testament to our dedicated team and the strong partnerships we have developed with our Internet Service Providers and HUD partners," said Raper.

Connect Home will continue to expand its efforts to link tribal members, employees, and communities on the reservation, in line with Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton's 2020-2025 strategic plan emphasizing broadband implementation and expansion.



Gathering at Choctaw Capitol in 1938 (Taken during the rededication event), Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum Collection.

complete rebuilding of the Tvshkahomma Capitol Building as part of a WPA (Works Progress Administration project). The work was completed by the CCC-ID (Civilian Conservation Corps – Indian Division).

Newspapers at the time stated that Chief Durant boasted the division who worked on saving the Capitol was entirely composed of Choctaws.

The repairs were expected to take approximately four months. Members of the Choctaw Advisory Council advocated to acquire and develop the surrounding two hundred acres. At the end of the renovation, the Capitol was to be used for "educational and historical purposes." It was described as a "museum for the preservation of tribal records (...) and for future activities of the tribe as a whole." On December 9th, 1937, Peter James Hudson announced that a full month's work restoring the Capitol had been completed.

The project's completion in 1938 was celebrated with a two-day event planned by Chief William Durant and members of the Choctaw Advisory Council. During this event, Chief Durant held a program that began with Judge Thomas Hunter, another Choctaw Republic alumnus and Advisory Council member, who presented a piece titled The Traditions and Legends of the Choctaw People.

The event also held a program that honored the history of the Chiefs of the Choctaw Nation stretching back to the leaders of the Skullyville and Doaksville Constitutions (1857 and 1860 respectively). Past tribal leaders were honored by representatives who gave speeches dedicated to each leader's life and legacy. Some notable speakers scheduled for the event included Peter J. Hudson, Muriel H. Wright, Joseph Dukes, Silas Cole, and former Chief Victor Locke Jr.

During this two-day ceremony, they also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the construction of the Nvnih Waiya Capitol Building south of Tvshkahomma, which was completed in 1838. The Nvnih Waiya Capitol Building was the first capital of the Choctaw Nation after removal to Indian Territory.

The event also featured a barbecue organized by Lizzie Aikman, a daughter of former Chief Jackson McCurtain. Lizzie and her mother, Jane McCurtain, had been long-term caretakers of the Capitol for years prior to its reconstruction. The Goodland Indian Orphanage, provided music and other individual singers were featured throughout the celebration. Traditional Choctaw Dances were abstained from, as the organizers believed the custom was wholly abandoned, and Pawnee tribal members demonstrated their dances instead.

Next month, in Part II, we will cover how rededication evolved into the Annual Iksa Meeting, also called the "Annual Gathering of Choctaws." That article will also share significant events of the 1939 and 1940 meetings.

Works Cited

- April 07, 1938, page 1 - The Antlers American at Newspapers.com (Rededication announcement, 1938)
- April 28, 1938, page 1 - The Antlers American at Newspapers.com (Rededication announcement and corrections, 1939)
- May 26, 1938, page 1 - The Antlers American at Newspapers.com (Announcement of Governor Marland's plans for attendance)
- June 02, 1938, page 1 - The Antlers American at Newspapers.com (Announcement the month of 1939)
- July 28, 1938, page 1 - The Antlers American at Newspapers.com (Plans to develop the grounds and museum dept.) (I have found documents from '39 that detail the plan)

Groundbreaking ceremony for new Durant community center

DURANT, Okla. (March 6, 2025) – On Friday, February 28, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma broke ground on a new community center in Durant, nearly doubling the existing facility's capacity.

The new community center is approximately 12,500 square feet, almost 3,000 square feet more than the existing center. The facility will include a large multipurpose room for events and activities, dedicated office spaces, a fully equipped commercial kitchen, and a maintenance building.

Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. led the groundbreaking ceremony, which was attended by members of the tribal council, state and local officials, District 9 tribal members, and Choctaw associates.

"This groundbreaking marks our commitment to fostering growth, prosperity, and opportunity for our tribal members," said Chief Batton. "We are providing more space for education, culture, and connec-



Choctaw Nation Photo

The Durant Community Center is slated to be completed in early 2026.

tion, ensuring that our people have the resources they need. We are proud to invest in the future of the Choctaw Nation and today is another example of how we are working to strengthen our community for generations to come."

The Durant Community Center is slated to be completed in early 2026.

CNO celebrates completion of Broken Bow water project

By Tabatha Keton

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) celebrated the completion of its first water systems project funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and state contributions, marking a significant step toward improving water infrastructure on the reservation.

In partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Energy and Environment, officials recently completed the Broken Bow Water Authority project, which involved the installation of 6,705 feet of 24-inch water main line pipes along Highway 259A. This new infrastructure increased Broken Bow's capacity to supply water to McCurtain Rural Water District (RWD) 5 in Hochatown and McCurtain RWD 6 in Smithville.

The Broken Bow project is just one of 15 planned water systems projects across the Choctaw Nation reservation. Through these projects, CNO has allocated over \$28 million in ARPA funding to enhance water infrastructure in seven counties.

When combined with matching state funding, the total investment in these water system improvements exceeds \$48 million to improve water distribution and quality across southeastern Oklahoma.

Additional communities that will receive funding to improve water infrastructure include:

- Town of Talihina
- Bryan County Rural Water District #2
- Bryan County Rural Water District #5
- Stringtown Public Water Authority
- Pushmataha County Rural Water District #1
- Sardis Lake Water Authority Phase I and II
- Pittsburg County Rural Water District #8
- Town of Garvin
- McCurtain County Rural Water District #6
- Latimer County Rural Water District #2
- Atoka Rural Water District #4
- Pushmataha County Rural Water District #3
- LeFlore County Rural Water District #17

"The Choctaw Nation always looks for ways to improve life and economic development in our communities," Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton said. "Helping to provide clean, reliable water is one of a government's most important functions, and we are glad to play our part."

Completing the Broken Bow project is a significant milestone in the Choctaw Nation's broader efforts to ensure access to safe and reliable water systems for communities across the reservation. These investments in water infrastructure will have long-lasting benefits for the people of southeast Oklahoma.

COLLEGE FYI INVITES YOU TO
CAMP CHAHTA

College FYI is hosting the annual Camp Chahta for incoming college freshmen. The camp is designed to orient first-year students to college life and create a close-knit community of Choctaw students.

For more information scan the QR code

CARL ALBERT
S.E.
E

Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative

Frazier selected

Connor Frazier, a Hugo High School senior, was recently selected to participate in the Native American Athletic Foundation All-Star Event as one of Indian Country's top 60 high school football players who demonstrate leadership qualities and academic success.



Along with the exhibition game held on Jan. 7, players attended a 4-day camp. The camp consisted of working with mentor coaches, hearing from leaders across Indian Country, and attending classes on college preparation, scholarship application, leadership, culture, and community involvement.

The Native American Athletic Foundation partnered with the National Football League (NFL) and Nike to host the game at the Dallas Cowboys' practice facility, The Star, in Frisco, Texas.

With over 30 tribes represented from all across the United States, it was an honor when Connor's teammates selected him as one of two team captains for Team Wa-Ya (Wolf) for the All-Star game.

Connor is a proud Choctaw Nation tribal member from District 8 and is the son of Darren and Michele Frazier.

Balu Ishcomer Ravi

Balu Ishcomer Ravi was born on January 8, 2025, at 9:00 p.m. in San Francisco, California, weighing 8 pounds and 1 ounce, and measuring 20 inches in length.

He is the firstborn child of Lyndsi and Ash Ravi.



Hudson turns 80

Cordell Hudson of Frederick, Oklahoma, celebrated his 80th Birthday on December 28, 2024.

He is a longstanding, proud veteran/tribal member from Smithville, Oklahoma. He enjoys spending his time with his family, church family and friends.



Williston earns degree from ECU

On December 14, 2024, Diana Williston graduated from East Central University with a bachelor's degree in social work. While at ECU, she was inducted into the National Society of Leadership and Success honor society.

Before graduating, she began her career as a social worker for Oklahoma Human Services. She is a first-generation college student who wants to encourage other Choctaw people to reach for their dreams at any age.

Diana is the daughter of the late Angus and Beatrice Williston. She would like to thank Stephanie Lindly at Career Development, her family and friends, and the Choctaw community for believing in her.



Youngs celebrate 70 years together

The family of Jimmie and Loretta June (Humphreys) Young proudly announce their 70th wedding anniversary.

The couple were married on Feb. 7, 1955.



Fleming is Lubbock Top 20 Under 40

Justin Fleming recently received the "Top 20 Under 40" award from the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce.

He is very involved in his community through the South Plains Food Bank, Lubbock Rotary Club, and Big Brothers Big Sisters, among others.

In his career as a community banker, he touches many lives. He is also a proud Choctaw tribal member, along with his toddler son.

"I'm very grateful for this recognition and for the West Texas community I'm honored to give back to," said Fleming. "I'm excited for what's ahead and the meaningful impact we can have on our neighbors."



Fleak turns 96

Robert (Bob) Fleak turned 96 on Dec. 21, 2024.

Bob was born and raised in Oklahoma but now lives in Denver, Colorado.

He has four children and 10 grandchildren who wanted to wish him a happy birthday.



Walker earns scholarship

William Walker, a tribal member and senior at Oklahoma School of Science and Math, has been named a QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship Recipient. This honor grants full, four-year scholarships to some of the nation's most prestigious universities. Walker matched with Northwestern University.

"Being named a QuestBridge Scholar is a significant, life-changing honor for these students," said Tony Cornforth, president of OSSM. "The opportunity to attend the nation's most prestigious universities on full scholarship enables them to broaden their horizons and realize their full potential."

Walker plans on pursuing a degree in Civil Engineering.



Fickert named Small Schools Athlete of the Week

Chase Fickert, a Choctaw tribal member, is a junior at Wilmington High School in Wilmington, Ohio.

He has played on the varsity basketball team since he was a freshman and has maintained a 4.0 academic record in his junior year. Due to his outstanding play, he was selected as the Cincinnati Enquirer newspaper's Small School Boys Basketball Athlete of the Week for Jan. 20, 2025.

He earned over 41% of the vote scoring 21 points, including 5 of 6 three-point shots, in his team's 52-46 win over Washington Court House.



Ira Lynn Barron

Parents Raleigh and Chris Barron are delighted to welcome Ira Lynn Barron into this world on Jan. 3, 2025.

Ira weighed 6 pounds and 6 ounces. Ira is the grandchild of Jennifer and David Barron, and Steven Staples and Christy Staples.

The family looks forward to getting to meet her as she grows in the coming months.

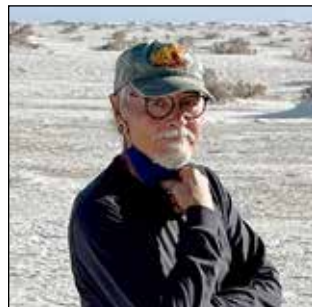


Watkins receives lifetime achievement award

The Society for American Archaeology announced Friday, February 7, 2025, that archaeologist and Choctaw tribal member Dr. Joe Watkins has been selected to receive the Society's 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Dr. Daniel Sandweiss, President of the Society, wrote in his letter of notification: "Congratulations on your achievement! The selection was made by the Lifetime Achievement Award Committee, on behalf of the entire Society. This award is one small way in which SAA can express its appreciation for your outstanding contributions to archaeology."

The award will be presented in person at the Society's Annual Business Meeting and Awards Ceremony, Friday, April 25, 2025, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in Grand Ballroom I of the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel in Denver, Colorado.



Smith turns 96

Geneva Jane Smith of Fanshawe, Oklahoma, celebrated her 96th birthday on December 24th.

She certainly enjoyed her special day even though she was in the hospital recovering from a fall. She celebrated with many family members while blowing out candles and opening gifts as all wished her a big Happy Birthday. Jane is the daughter of Martin and Ethel Duncan. Jane's mother was an original enrollee of the Choctaw Nation.



"Yakoke" from the Carpenter family

"Thanks to the generosity of the Choctaw Nation, Cade Douglas Carpenter has been able to attend Texas A&M University in College Station and intends to go on to law school. He recently became more involved on campus joining Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity while making the Dean's List at Texas A&M's prestigious Bush School of Government and Public Service. Cade also turned 21 in December. It's been an amazing year! We are proud of Cade and thankful to the Choctaw Nation for their support."

– Beth-Ann and Tyler Carpenter

Sanders earns degree from Texas A&M

Ava Sanders of Lorena, Texas, graduated Summa Cum Laude from Texas A&M University on Dec. 12, 2024, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Allied Health.

Ava is currently applying to multiple colleges to pursue her goal of becoming a Physician Assistant. She extends her heartfelt gratitude to the Choctaw Nation Higher Education programs for their invaluable support in helping her achieve her academic and career aspirations.



Hancock earns degree from SNU

Elise Sophia Hancock graduated Cum Laude in December 2024 from Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Oklahoma, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology.

Elise is the daughter of David and Kellie Hancock of Choctaw, Oklahoma, and the granddaughter of Ruth and Gene Hancock.

Elise excelled in her undergraduate studies by graduating a semester early and was a participant in the Choctaw Nation Career Development Program and received the Choctaw Higher Education Scholarship, the Cobell Native American Scholarship, the Hope Rising Scholarship, was placed on the SNU Dean's Honor Roll and is a member of the Oklahoma Indian Honor Student Society, the Oklahoma Choctaw Tribal Alliance and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Elise will continue her education by pursuing a Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree beginning in the summer of 2025.

Elise is very proud of her heritage and would like to sincerely thank the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for their assistance in obtaining her education. Their support was integral to her achieving her educational goals



Thornburg turns 16

Isabel Thornburg turned 16 in December. She is the daughter of David and Elizabeth Thornburg. She attends Milburn School and participates in basketball, softball and the academic team. She enjoys art and would like to become an animator. She is pictured wearing her great-great-great-aunt Edith Billy's traditional dress and medallion.

"Happy birthday IzzyBell! We love you!" – Mom and Dad



Maxwell earns Ph.D. from UCSD

Matthew Maxwell, a native of Durant, Oklahoma, recently received his PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

Maxwell's scientific research could help explain why patients with certain types of cancer—such as pancreatic and bladder cancer—who also have a mutation in the ARID1A gene are more likely to benefit from treatment with a type of cancer immunotherapy known as immune checkpoint inhibitors, compared to patients without this mutation.

The importance of Maxwell's discovery lies in its potential to improve patient selection for treatment with immunotherapy, a critical challenge since fewer than 50% of cancer patients benefit from immunotherapy across most cancer types. However, for the patients who do respond, the results can be nothing short of miraculous. Some patients have been cured of advanced, previously considered deadly cancers after immunotherapy treatment—such as former President Jimmy Carter, who was cured of metastatic melanoma in 2015. Maxwell's findings also provide a rationale for developing new combination treatment strategies that could increase the efficacy of immunotherapy, allowing more patients to benefit from this revolutionary approach.

Dr. Maxwell's research was published in 2024 in Cell, a high-impact biomedical research journal, and was recognized with the UCSD Founding Faculty Award for Outstanding Publication by a UCSD Graduate Student.

Maxwell credits his family—especially his mother, Kim Maxwell—and his tribe, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, for their support of his education and life in science.



YOUTH EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

SUMMER CAMP

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN THROUGH THE CHAHTA ACHVFFA PORTAL

SIGN UP NOW THROUGH APRIL 15

Camps are available to tribal members and children of associates

Choctaw Nation Youth Events & Activities

CHOCTAW NATION MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY

MAY 23, 2025
10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
TVSHKA HOMMA
CAPITOL GROUNDS
163655 N. 4355 RD, TUSKAHOMA, OK

Please plan to attend and help us honor those no longer with us as we remember their sacrifices that made us free. This year's event will include a 21-gun salute and placing of the wreath.

Family and friends are welcome to attend.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAW COUNTRY MARKET

CHOCTAW TRAVEL PLAZA

Anthony Wayne Choate

Anthony Wayne Choate, 54, passed away Feb. 4th, 2025.

Anthony was born May 21, 1970, in Talihina, Okla., to Franklin Choate and Mary Sieger (Polk).

He was preceded in death by his grandparents Melvina and James Polk, and Itsie and Rufus Choate; aunts Martha Polk and May Choate; and uncles John Choate and Rufus Choate Jr.

Anthony is survived by his parents; stepfather Ronnie Sieger; sister Lavonne (Choate) Reichert and spouse Dennis; brothers Chris Choate and James Hall and spouse Amy; extra brother Keenan Billy and spouse Silvia; stepchildren Chinah Dawson and spouse Jenni, Destiny, and John; three step grandchildren; nephews Nashoba Choate and spouse Amber, Travis Choate, and and Jamien Hall; nieces Toni and Landon Dixon, and Joy Hal; great-nieces Tatum, Keigan, and Oaklyn Choate; uncles Dillard Polk, Willard Polk and spouse Sharon, and Melvin Choate; aunt Ruth Morgan; special aide and buddy Carol; numerous cousins; and extended family members and friends.

**Joyce Marie Mills**

Joyce Marie Mills, 82, passed away Jan. 4, 2025.

Joyce was born March 21, 1942, in Okla., to Lessie Arthur and Oscar Turner.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her sister Judy; and husband Gary.

Joyce is survived by her children Wendy, Cindy and spouse Marc, and Jon and spouse Denise; grandchildren Taylor and spouse Chanse, Daniel, Lexie, Jordan and spouse Brad, and Haley and spouse Jake; and great-grandsons Colson and Luke.

**Eleanor Caldwell**

Eleanor Caldwell, 93, passed away Feb. 19, 2025.

Eleanor was born Sept. 13, 1931, in Nashoba, Okla., to Eden Allen and Nancy White Cooper.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Leo Caldwell; son Ernie Caldwell; daughters Earlene Willis, Judy Davis, and Ruth Frazier; brother Robert Cooper; and sisters Edrena Impson and Francis Preston.

Eleanor is survived by her son A.L. Caldwell and spouse Lortha; daughter Pam Wilson; sisters Louise Smith and Virginia; 13 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren; eight great-great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

**Angelia Jo Ward**

Angelia Jo Ward, 69, passed away May 2, 2020.

Angelia was born Sept. 7, 1950, in Talihina, Okla., to Philistine and Katherine (Harrison) Billy.

She was preceded in death by her parents and 4 brothers.

Angelia is survived by her husband James Ward; son James Younger; daughter Candace Shanholtzer; two grandchildren; and sister Phyllis Billy.

**Naomi M. (Horton) Downey**

Naomi M. (Horton) Downey, 90, passed away Feb. 13, 2025.

Naomi was born July 6, 1934, in Hennepin, Okla., to Paul Horton and Willie Mae (Sam) Horton.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Herman Downey; grandson Seger Drew Downey; brother Chester Horton and sister-in-law Mary; brother Lelburn Horton; and adopted son Cesar Gonzales.

Naomi is survived by daughter Sharon (Eudaldo) Castro; son Clifford (Barbara) Downey; numerous relatives and a host of friends.

**Wayne Thomas Hulsey**

Wayne Thomas Hulsey, 75, passed away Dec. 18, 2024.

Wayne was born July 12th, 1949, in New London, Conn., to Lemuel Virgil Hulsey, Jr. and Bernice Elizabeth Swanson Hulsey.

He is survived by his brother Gary Hulsey; half-sister Lora Annette Hulsey; and cousins Kim Bleck (Erwin) and Lora Mueller (Erwin).

**Alexander Henderson Lundy**

Alexander Henderson Lundy, 48, passed away Jan. 24, 2025.

Alexander was born Feb. 5, 1976, in Lawton, Okla., to Alan Lundy and Kathy Poole-Lundy.

He was preceded in death by his maternal grandmother Ellen Cothran; great-grandmother Mary (Battice) Jefferson; great-grandparents Henderson and Gertrude King; paternal aunt Gillie Lundy; and cousin Andrew Sands.

Alexander is survived by his mother; grandfather Bill Cothran; three aunts; two uncles; cousin Chifon Barrow-Poole; many other cousins and extended family members.

**Terrie Sue Allen**

Terrie Sue Allen, 72, passed away Jan. 3, 2025.

Terrie was born July 17, 1952, in Okla. City, Okla., to O.C. (Jack) Allen Jr. and Syble Sue Allen.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Terrie is survived by her daughter Mia Parham and spouse David; son Marc Parham and spouse Renee; grandchildren Morgan Parham and spouse Josh, Shelby Parham, and Jack Garcia; long-time boyfriend David Stewart; his son Kirby Stewart and his children Levi and Sarah Stewart; and beloved dog, Ollie.

**Gary Emerson Harley**

Gary Emerson Harley, 73, passed away Dec. 15, 2024.

Gary was born Dec. 14, 1951, in Talihina, Okla., to Alfred and Rosa Lee (Parker) Harley.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Sharon Crank; and grandparents Leo Harley, Lena Battice, Emerson Parker, and Eve (Wilson) Parker.

Gary is survived by daughters Rosa Deanne Harley Rhodd, and Tammy Minks and spouse Tony; grandchildren Bryce, BrieAnna, Malia, Knatiyah, Steven Jr., Nathan, Brayden, and Addison; great-grandchildren Braylon and Milani; siblings Janet Massey, Alfreda Harley, Alfred Harley Jr., Debbie Wesley and spouse Jimmy, Doug Harley and spouse Tammy, and Leslie Harley; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends.

**Mary Ann Jernigan**

Mary Ann Jernigan, 71, passed away March 5, 2025.

Mary was born Sept. 28, 1953, in Houston, Tex., to Doug and Monia Ramey.

She was preceded in death by her husband Gary Jernigan; her parents; grandparents MacArthur and Goldia Phillips, and Leonard and Willie Ramey; sister Sharia Nichols; and brothers-in-law Richard Nichols and Danny Swofford.

Mary is survived by daughters Neile and spouse David, and Taylor and spouse Joe; son Aaron and spouse Rob; grandchildren Jonathan Vance and spouse Kelsey, Jonah Vance, Joseph Vance, and spouse Faith, Grace Vance, Arya Madiedo, Allie Madiedo, and Matilda Madiedo; great-grandchildren Harper, Hazel, and Cannon Vance; siblings Marty Little, Kyle and Debbie Stokes, Mona Swofford, and Michelle and Steve Fluitt.

**Donna Ann Oiler**

Donna Ann Oiler, 79, passed away Feb. 13, 2025.

Donna was born May 26, 1945, in Hugo, Okla., to Vernon Locke and Betty Jo Cearley.

She was preceded in death by her husband Harold Gene Oiler; her parents; stepfather Clyde Lowery; sisters Patricia McClelland and Debbie Haines; and niece Jessica.

Donna is survived by her sons Arnold Richard (Rick) Oiler and Shawn DeWayne Oiler and spouse Amy; grandchildren Connor Gene Oiler, Nathaniel Thomas Oiler, and Emma Kathleen Oiler; a great-granddaughter; sisters Annette (Bunny) Harrison and Yona Fitzgerald; brother Clyde (Peaco) Lowery; and extended family members.

**Eugene Wayne Worden**

Eugene Wayne Worden, 61, passed away Feb. 21, 2025.

Eugene was born Nov. 28, 1963, in Talihina, Okla., to Don Cleve Worden and Rosie Jane Watson Milam.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Dustin Worden; brother Ronald Milam; and sister Janet Hudson.

Eugene is survived by sons Donald Worden and Christopher Worden; brothers Boyd Williams, Raymond Hudson, and Jimmy Worden; sisters Patricia Harrison, Rosie Milam, and Thelma Milam; five grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other family and friends.

**Eugenia Betts Miller**

Eugenia "Genie" Stallings Betts Miller, 95, passed away Feb. 23, 2025.

Genie was born Sept. 22, 1929, in Dallas, Tex., to Oweta Stallings Betts and Isaac Franklin Betts IV.

She was preceded in death by her husband Frank "Bob" Roberts Miller; her parents; and sister-in-law Lois Dillard Miller.

Genie is survived by daughters Kathryn Miller Anderson and spouse Larry, and Margaret Miller Pierce and spouse Michael; son Thomas Roberts Miller and partner Dawn Hollembek; grandchildren Margaret Meador, Nancy Meador and spouse Frédéric Grandgeorges, Benjamin Meador, Kathryn Pierce, and Timothy Pierce and fiancée April Montgomery; and great-grandchildren Tatiana, Thomas, Charlie Kathryn, and Georgie; brother-in-law Thomas Miller and his family; and former son-in-law George Meador.

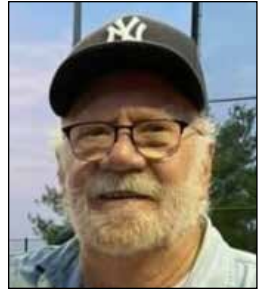
**Leo D. Crane**

Leo D. "Don" Crane, 80, passed away Jan. 24, 2023.

Don was born Feb. 11, 1942, in Centrahoma, Okla., to Emma (Boddy) Rude and Leo V. Crane.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Tammie Hinton; sister Barbara Shearman; Paula Zeek; sister-in-law Jean Beard; and brothers-in-law John Grubbs, Jon Hoskins, and Jeff Hast.

Don is survived by his wife Kathy; children Cammie Soriano, Rory Crane, Ragina "Gina" Shaw, Amanda Merkel, and Michael Crane; 16 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; sister Zedna Faye "Sally" Grubbs; special friend Greg Wynn; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

**Betty Lou Taylor**

Betty Lou Taylor, 61, passed away Feb. 17, 2025.

Betty was born May 21, 1963, in Antlers, Okla., to Edgar and Hazel Billy Taylor.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and sister Linda Taylor Clay.

Betty is survived by her son Buddy Taylor and spouse Amanda Sadler; daughter Benita Taylor and spouse Brandon Temple; brothers Hobie Taylor and Edgar Taylor Jr.; sisters Cinderella Deramus, Mary Taylor, Lisa Donaldson, Anita Schroyer, and Rita Austin of Sobol; grandchildren Morgan, Madison, Mattox, McKenzie, Mason, Haylyn, and Harper; great-granddaughter Madeline; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.



Full obituaries can be seen at www.biskinik.com

Obituary Policy

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

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

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

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

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

Send official obituary notices to:

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

Improving your life by improving the air you breathe

By Chris Jennings

Check any of the state or federal air quality websites, such as AirNow, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Oklahoma Environmental Quality's air quality warning and prediction site. You'll see that much of the Choctaw Nation reservation has no monitoring stations.

Seeing this discrepancy in information, the Choctaw Nation has taken action to improve the measurement and awareness of the air quality on the reservation.

Air quality can be measured in many ways, the most common being ozone and particulate matter. Ozone is a colorless gas that forms when emissions from cars, power plants, and other industries react with sunlight.

Ozone is a big part of what's happening when you see smog. Ozone pollution can affect the respiratory system, causing coughing and throat irritation. It can also make breathing difficult, aggravate asthma, and inflame and damage the lining of the lungs.

Particle Pollution is any particle or liquid droplet in the atmosphere. Particle pollution, or aerosols, has many sources. Fine particles, small enough to get into the lungs, primarily come from combustion in cars, fires, and industry.

James Parsons, an environmental specialist with the Choctaw Nation, stresses the importance of monitoring the local air quality on the reservation. "Nobody else is doing it. The state of Oklahoma isn't monitoring the air quality in the Choctaw Nation. So somebody has to look at it and find out if the air we're breathing is good," said Parsons.

Parsons has been doing indoor assessments of air quality and other environmental hazards for a little over five years and has branched out to monitor outdoor air quality in the last two years.

Parsons has installed air quality monitors at every community center on the reservation. "These measure particulate matter, which is a big part of air quality. The particulate matter they're specifically measuring is a pm 2.5, which is anything bigger than 2.5 microns, much smaller than the human hair," Parsons said.

The readings of these monitors and others belonging to private citizens who've chosen to make theirs public are available at www.purpleair.com.

Since air quality can greatly impact health, the EPA issues color-coded air quality updates to alert people when pollution levels are high enough to be harmful. Many communities have established action plans to limit the impact of poor air quality on bad days.

Parsons explained that the Nation is also taking steps to implement an action plan. We're implementing an air quality flag program at the Choctaw Nation Head Starts. "Somebody at the Head Start is going to look at the Purple Air that's the closest to them, and they're going to hang a colored flag outside of the Head Start."

This system will help Head Start staff and parents know if it's safe for the kids to play outside or if they should play inside that day. This is particularly important for people in sensitive groups who are more likely to be affected by declining air quality.

"For people in sensitive groups, the people that have respiratory issues like asthma, COPD and other things that this pollution affects, this would be an indicator for them that maybe they should stay in the house that day," said Parsons.

Parsons also warned about the dangers of Radon gas. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas released from rock, soil, and water due to the natural decay of uranium. While radon levels in outdoor air are a relatively low threat to human health, radon can accumulate to dangerous levels inside buildings. Radon is odorless, colorless and tasteless, making testing the only way to detect it.

"Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers," said Parsons. While Oklahoma is in a low-risk area for radon, that's based on geological formation rather than testing. Radon has a much higher prevalence in the country's more mountainous regions. Free radon test kits are available to Oklahoma residents, and the EPA has re-

sources for finding radon testing in other areas nationwide.

When it comes to many things that affect outdoor air quality, like fires, vehicle emissions and factories, the only thing you can do is limit your exposure by staying inside on bad days.

However you do have more control over the air you breathe indoors.

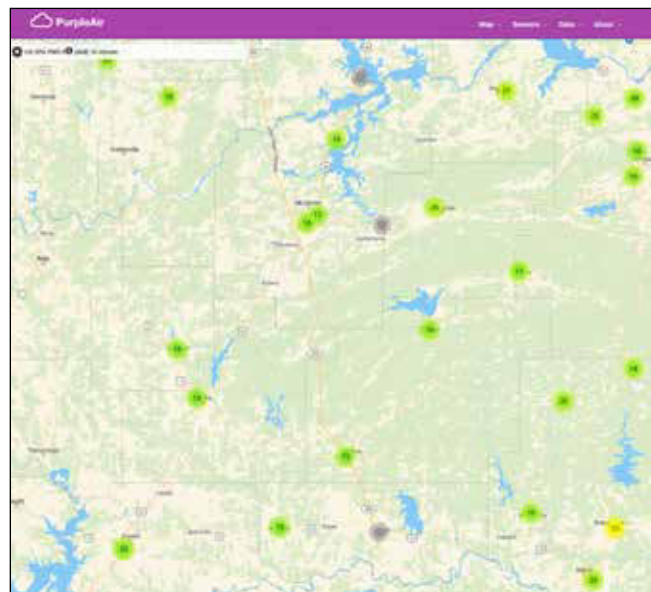
"Since the average person spends 90% of their time indoors, prioritizing indoor air quality is one of the best things you can do for your health and well-being," said Parsons.

Several things can affect indoor air quality. Parsons says smoking tops the list, but cooking and most sprays can also degrade it. "If my son is in his back room spraying disinfectant, within a minute or two, the monitor in my living room will shoot through the roof," Parsons said.

Many people think that just because the air around them smells good, they don't have anything to worry about. Parsons says that's not necessarily the case. Carbon dioxide (CO2), the air we expel, can reach unsafe levels quickly with poor ventilation, crowded rooms, or even driving.

Parsons told a story about how he had inadvertently left a CO2 meter on in his car, which set the alarm off after only 30 minutes of driving. Parson explained how this happens: "Everybody keeps their car on recirculate because that's how it cools the best. Well, you're not letting any fresh air into your car, and the carbon dioxide levels are building up to levels where it's literally putting you to sleep."

One simple thing you can do is introduce more ventilation by opening some windows. The next step would be to get a quality air purifier. Parsons offered several steps to improve your air indoor air quality.



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Air quality numbers for all of the Choctaw Nation community centers along with other public sensors can be seen on the www.purpleair.com online map.

Improve Ventilation

Ventilation is your first line of defense against indoor pollutants. Open windows and doors when weather permits, especially during activities that generate moisture or strong odors, such as cooking and cleaning. Exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens are essential for clearing humidity, steam, and cooking fumes.

Control Humidity Levels

Mold thrives in damp conditions, and high humidity can make your space a breeding ground for allergens like dust mites. Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner to keep indoor humidity levels between 30% and 50%. Address leaks and spills promptly to prevent water damage and mold growth.



Photo by Kendra Germany-Wall
After a 30 minute drive from Sherman to Durant the CO2 levels in the car were over 3000 parts per million (ppm). According to www.CO2meter.com levels between 2,000 and 5,000 ppm can cause headaches, fatigue, stuffiness, poor concentration, loss of focus, increased heart rate and nausea.

Invest in a Quality Air Purifier

Air purifiers with HEPA filters effectively capture airborne pollutants such as dust, pollen, pet hair, and smoke. They are especially valuable additions to improve overall air quality for households with allergies or pets.

Switch to Natural or Low-VOC Products

Many cleaning supplies, paints, and air fresheners release harmful chemicals, including volatile organic compounds (VOC), into the air. Opt for eco-friendly or non-toxic alternatives labeled "low-VOC" or "VOC-free." These products are safer for your health and better for the environment.

Regular HVAC Maintenance

Your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system plays a major role in circulating air. Depending on your system and household needs, replace air filters every 1-3 months. Schedule annual inspections to ensure your system is working efficiently and not contributing to pollution inside your home.

Include Air-Purifying Plants

Houseplants such as peace lilies, snake plants, and pothos can naturally filter toxins out of the air while adding a touch of greenery to your space. While plants are not a replacement for good ventilation or an air purifier, they are a wonderful complement.

Reduce Dust and Pet Dander

Vacuum carpets, rugs, and furniture regularly to reduce the accumulation of dust and pet dander. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to ensure allergens are trapped effectively. Washing bed linens and pet bedding can also help.

Parsons emphasized that if you buy an air purifier, get a quality one with actual HEPA filters and avoid air purifiers that emit ozone. If the cost of purchasing an air purifier is prohibitive, Parsons says there is a DIY solution called Cori-Rosenthal box.

In its simplest form, the DIY system consists of a box fan with a Merv-13 filter taped to the back to pull the air through the filter. More elaborate designs with more filters can be found online.

If you've tried all of these things but think you still have problems with your air quality or other environmental issues in your home, Parsons says you can get help by contacting the Tribal Public Health Department at 539-316-3851.

"If a tribal member that lives on the reservation contacts the Choctaw Nation public health department, we would be able to conduct stuff like mold inspections, lead-based paint inspections, asbestos inspections, or general indoor air quality," said Parsons.

EPIC CHANGE TO CNHSA!

Choctaw Nation Health Services is upgrading to the Epic Electronic Health Records system. Beginning **April 5, 2025**, CNHSA patients will be able to manage their healthcare via a new patient portal called MyChart. Once you visit a clinic, you'll get a unique code to active your account!

FOR MORE INFO:

MyChart® is a registered trademark of Epic Systems Corporation.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

FIND HOPE. EMBRACE RECOVERY.

If you're struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, help is closer than you think. **Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)** combines FDA-approved medications with counseling and therapy to give you the tools you need for a healthier, addiction-free life.

MAT can help you:

- Manage withdrawal symptoms
- Reduce cravings
- Reclaim your life and future

Recovery isn't one-size-fits-all, and neither is our approach. With MAT, you'll receive compassionate, personalized care every step of the way.

Take the first step toward freedom from addiction. We're here to help you every step of the way. **You deserve a life filled with hope and possibility.**

READY TO START? CONTACT US TODAY!
Family Medicine Residency Clinic | (539) 316-6064
Or visit our webpage by scanning the QR code.

Choctaw Nation Family Medicine Residency

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS		
LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 580.916.5609	Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Atoka 539.316.2050	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 539.316.3011	Daily Monday – Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Durant 539.316.3517	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Heavener 539.316.4784	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Hugo 539.316.5089	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:00 pm
Idabel 539.316.4313	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
McAlester 539.316.2431 539.316.2430	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Poteau 539.316.4606	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 539.316.6792	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 FOOD DISTRIBUTION

MARKET HOURS
Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.

April 2025

All markets open weekdays, March 3-27
Closed: April 18, 29 & 30
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443
FOOD DEMO APRIL 8

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
FOOD DEMO APRIL 10

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
FOOD DEMO APRIL 22

MCALESTER 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716
FOOD DEMO APRIL 15

POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431
FOOD DEMO APRIL 17

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

April 1	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
April 2	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
April 4	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
April 8	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
April 9	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
April 11	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
April 11	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
April 15	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
April 16	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
April 23	Crowder	By Appointment
April 25	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
April 29	Stigler	By Appointment

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Call 580-640-6007 for an Appointment

Protect yourself from mosquito-borne diseases: A guide to prevention in Oklahoma

By Christian Chaney

As the temperatures rise, so does the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Oklahoma. The most common mosquito-borne illness in the state is the West Nile Virus, which can cause serious health complications.

As we head into the warmer months, it's important to take proactive steps to protect ourselves and our families from West Nile and other vector-borne diseases.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 1 in 5 people infected with the West Nile Virus will develop symptoms, including fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, body aches and a rash.

For some, the virus can lead to more severe illness, with 1 in 150 infected individuals potentially developing a fatal condition, such as encephalitis or meningitis.

People over the age of 50 are especially at risk for developing a neurological disease from West Nile Virus.

Symptoms of the virus can appear anywhere from 3 to 14 days after infection.

Contact your healthcare provider if your mosquito bite causes a high fever, severe headache and signs of infection.

Unfortunately, no vaccine is currently available for West Nile Virus, which makes prevention even more essential.

Understanding how to reduce mosquito exposure is the best defense against contracting the virus.

There are several effective measures you can take to minimize your risk of being bitten by an infected mosquito:

- **Eliminate Standing Water:** Mosquitoes breed in standing water, so empty containers like bird baths, flower pots and clogged gutters where water can accumulate around your home. Empty your pet's outdoor water bowls and refill them daily.
- **Use Insect Repellent:** Always wear an EPA-registered insect repellent when spending time outdoors, especially during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. Use enough repellent to cover exposed skin.
- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Wear long sleeves and pants to reduce exposed skin when possible.
- **Install Screens:** Ensure that windows and doors have screens in good condition to keep mosquitoes out.

As we enjoy outdoor activities, it's important to remain vigilant and protect ourselves from the risks associated with mosquito bites.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Department of Public Health encourages the public to take these simple preventive measures to join the fight against mosquito-borne illnesses.

To learn more about how you can protect your family, visit the links provided by the CNO Department of Public Health.

You'll find helpful resources on preventing mosquito bites, as well as fact sheets on mosquito-borne diseases.

Together, we can protect our families and create a safer, healthier environment for all Oklahomans.



Choctaw Nation Photos

Left: Mason Emmert sets up a mosquito trap so the Choctaw Nation Public Health Department and CNO Environmental Services can monitor what mosquitos are in the area
Right: Rikki LaRoche prepares one of the many mosquito surveillance traps that will be set up across the reservation.



Choctaw Nation Photo

Tribal members who own or lease over 640 acres on CNO reservation can now apply for new program offering assistance white-tailed deer population management.

CNO Wildlife Conservation opens new program

DURANT, OKLA. (March 10, 2025)—Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) tribal members owning or leasing over 640 acres within the CNO reservation can now apply to the Deer Herd Enhancement Program (DHEP) for assistance in managing the white-tailed deer population on their land.

Landowners and leases accepted into this program will collaborate with a Choctaw Nation Department of Wildlife Conservation (CNDWC) biologist to create a survey plan and establish management goals and objectives, including habitat and harvest recommendations. The goal is to enhance deer habitat and improve population dynamics.

Program participants are responsible for a yearly enrollment fee (\$150 for 640-5,000 acres; \$350 for over 5,000 acres) and will be required

to complete a series of deer population surveys. Biologists will train participants to collect data and provide the necessary tools and standardized data sheets. Participants must comply with the program's requirements for future enrollment eligibility.

The deadline to apply is June 1, 2025. CNDWC will review applications and contact accepted applicants by July 1.

Applications are available at <https://www.choctawnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/DHEP-Application.pdf> or email CNDWC at wildlife@choctawnation.com. Completed applications should be emailed to the Wildlife Conservation team or mailed to Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Department of Wildlife Conservation at PO Box 1210, Durant, OK 74702.

Haskell rehires faculty lost to federal layoffs

By Kevin Abourezk, ICT

Student government leaders at Haskell Indian Nations University — beset after losing nearly 25 percent of its faculty and staff as a result of federal layoffs last month — announced Thursday that faculty members who were terminated will be returning to their positions as adjunct instructors.

The federal layoffs of probationary employees affected nearly 40 employees, including seven faculty members. Haskell University Frank Arpan said in a letter Monday to the "Haskell community" that the rehired faculty members were expected to resume teaching their classes this week.

"Haskell faculty that were terminated in the probationary layoffs will be returning to the classroom to finish the semester under the adjunct contract," he said.

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium, a organization that serves the 34 tribal colleges and universities across the country, posted a statement on its Facebook page Friday afternoon that "25 positions recently terminated at Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute have been reinstated" and thanked Secretary of Interior Doug Burgum for restoring this "vital infrastructure for Indian Country."

"However, there are nearly 30 positions who serve critical needs at these institutions that still need to be addressed," read the statement. "We urge the Bureau of Indian Education to continue to address the abrupt cuts to funding and support. The progress to restore our institutions is a direct result of tireless community advocacy, and we encourage the Bureau of Indian Affairs to maintain its commitment to providing quality education for Native students."

Both tribal colleges are operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, under the U.S. Department of Interior. It's one of many federal agencies impacted by the Trump administration's decision to lay off hundreds of thousands of probationary employees nationwide, including thousands in Indian Country.

The Haskell Indian Nations University Student Government Association shared the news Thursday on its Facebook page, but noted that other employees affected by the Trump administration layoffs were not included. "However, this reinstatement only applies to instructors — other employees who were terminated are not included in this decision. The university acknowledges the difficult circumstances faced by all affected staff and is continuing to explore solutions where possible," the student association stated.

The student association said the Haskell Foundation, which operates separately from the university's federal

employment system, would manage the adjunct instructor contracts. However, the foundation's president, Bo Schneider, told ICT late Thursday night that the university, not the foundation, would be handling the instructor contracts.

"Haskell recognizes the challenges that come with these changes and remains committed to supporting students, faculty and staff during this transition," the student association stated. "We appreciate the patience and resilience of the Haskell community as they navigate these adjustments together."

The foundation launched a fundraiser after nearly 40 Haskell employees, including seven instructors, multiple coaches, administrative and custodial workers and others, were "abruptly terminated on Feb. 14, with their pay ending that very day and benefits only lasting another 30 days," Schneider said.

As of Thursday, the foundation had raised \$140,000 toward its goal of \$350,000.

The layoffs have led to numerous student and campus services being curtailed or closed, including the Student Success Center, which provides academic advising to students.

Arpan said in his letter that the success center would remain closed "due to personnel adjustments caused by the recent layoffs."

"All academic advising will now transition to Haskell Faculty," he said.

Arpan told students that the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation had "graciously offered to partner with Haskell to provide temporary custodial support."

Inside the Coffin Sports Complex on Thursday evening, university administrators honored members of the Haskell women's basketball team, which won the 2025 Continental Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship Tournament held Feb. 27-March 2 at Haskell.

"It's really exciting," said Coach Adam Strom, the team's head coach, who had been laid off but had remained coaching without pay. He was informed Thursday morning that he would be rehired.

His son, Bryan Strom Jr., Quinault Indian Nation, a senior in environmental sciences at Haskell, said he was happy to see his dad get rehired, saying his father had felt "empty" after losing his job.

He said student morale has also improved since learning that faculty would be rehired.

"I think it's a good thing, a great thing actually for the overall students," he said. "I know a lot of people were getting worried and kind of been unmotivated to go to class. It's just a blessing."

About ICT
ICT is an independent, nonprofit, multimedia news enterprise. We reach audiences through our digital platform and as a broadcast carried via public television stations.



Photo by Kevin Abourezk/ICT

Women's basketball head coach Adam Strom at Haskell Indian Nations University celebrates, not just his team's win in the Continental Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship Tournament, but also being rehired after being laid off during Trump administration cuts. He coached the team to the championship without pay.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Choctaw Nation protects vital ecosystem through pollinator gardens and habitats

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation is diligently working to conserve wildlife and preserve the ecosystem within the reservation. However, these efforts extend much further than southeastern Oklahoma; they impact the entire continent of North America.

While Oklahoma native grassland may seem insignificant, it plays a crucial role in the ecosystem. Native plants and flowers are vital for pollinators.

A pollinator can be a butterfly, beetle, bee, wasp, ant, moth, hummingbird, bat or even a small mammal. As their name suggests, these creatures carry pollen from the male part of a flower to the female part, enabling the plant to reproduce. This transfer is a vital life stage for all flowering plants and essential for healthy ecosystems.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website, many foods, beverages, fibers, spices, and medicines we use daily wouldn’t exist without pollinators.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website states that three-fourths of the world’s flowering plants and about 35 percent of the world’s food crops depend on animal pollinators for reproduction.

Many of these pollinators are struggling to survive.

According to the USDA, habitat loss, disease, parasites, and environmental contaminants have all contributed to the decline of many species of pollinators, and there aren’t enough pollinator-friendly plantings to support them. If pollinators keep declining, this could pose a real problem for many food supplies we enjoy today.

The Choctaw Nation has already started planting pollinator gardens in the reservation and hopes to help combat the declining pollinator numbers.

Steve Anderson, an environmental coordinator with the Choctaw Nation’s Environmental Protection Service (EPS), helps oversee the pollinator garden at the Wheelock Academy historic site.

According to Anderson, this is currently the only official pollinator garden within the reservation, but the EPS aims to plant pollinator gardens in every district of the Choctaw Nation.

Anderson’s team worked closely with the Tribal Alliance for Pollinators (TAP), a non-profit organization focused on restoring and creating habitats for pollinators. TAP has provided many seeds for the Wheelock Academy pollinator garden.

According to Anderson, it was critical to plant native plants in these gardens instead of introducing new species.

Some familiar names of the plants in the pollinator garden are big blue-stem, swamp milkweed, buttonbush, bee balm, tall goldenrod, frostweed, slender mountain mint, American basket flower and false indigo, among others.

The Monarch Butterfly is one of the most unique and vital pollinators that will visit the garden. According to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Monarch butterflies are found across North America wherever proper habitat exists. These brightly colored butterflies are divided into the eastern and western populations, separated by the Rocky Mountains.

They are one of the few migratory insects, traveling astounding distances between summer and winter habitats. In the summer, they range as far north as Canada. In the fall, the eastern population migrates to the high mountains of central Mexico, and the western population migrates to coastal California, where they spend the winter.

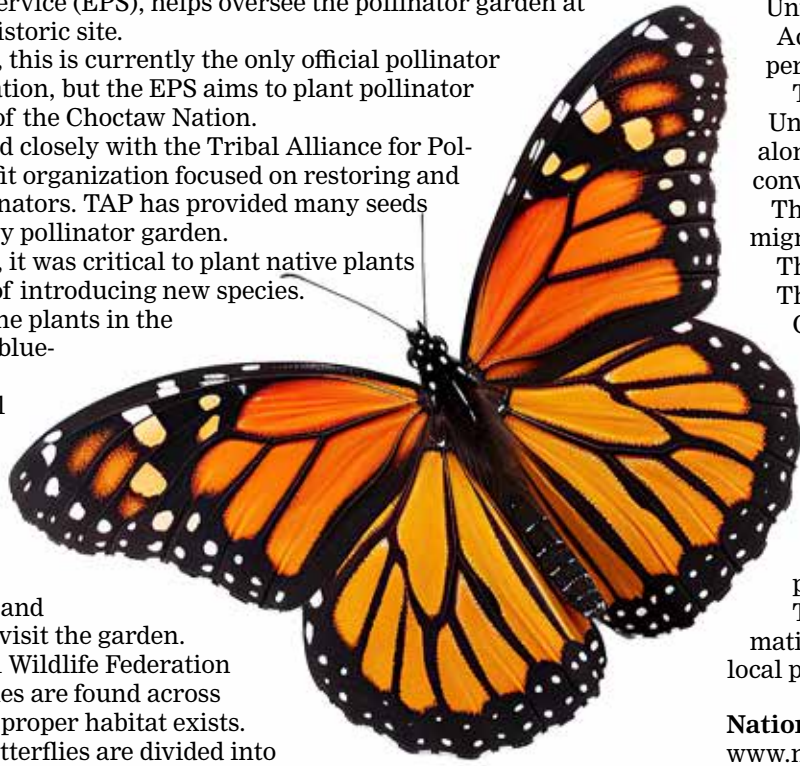


Photo by Christian Toews

(Left to right) Ron Workman and Steve Anderson install a new sign near Wheelock Academy historic site’s pollinator garden and Monarch butterfly sanctuary.

Unfortunately, this vital pollinator is struggling to survive.

According to the NWF, the monarch population has declined by approximately 90 percent since the 1990s.

The NWF also states that monarchs face habitat loss and fragmentation in the United States and Mexico. For example, over 90% of the grassland ecosystems along the eastern monarch’s central migratory flyway corridor have been lost, converted to intensive agriculture or urban development.

The Choctaw Nation’s pollinator garden is a vital stop for the monarchs on their migratory journey.

That is why this garden has also been designated as a Monarch Sanctuary.

The designation is part of the Okies for Monarchs program, developed by the Oklahoma Monarch Society. Okies for Monarchs is a statewide group of 40+ organizations and citizens working together to ensure thriving Monarch migrations for generations to come.

The Choctaw Nation’s EPS works closely with Okies for Monarchs to ensure that monarchs can continue to thrive.

As more pollinator gardens are planted within the Choctaw reservation, these will serve as both pollinator gardens and be designated as Monarch sanctuaries.

Anyone who wants to get involved with the efforts to help pollinators, can plant their own pollinator garden.

The NWF, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Okies for Monarchs all have information on their website to help you develop a garden of plants that best feeds the local pollinators in your area. For more information, visit the websites listed below.

National Wildlife Federation
www.nwf.org

Okies for Monarchs
www.okiesformonarchs.org

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
www.fws.gov



Not all butterflies that look like monarchs are, in fact, Monarchs. This “imposter” is a viceroy who mimics the Monarch for better survival chances.



Photos by Anna Marcy

These photos are from Anna Marcy’s pollinator garden in Durant, Oklahoma. Marcy has seen many butterflies and other common and uncommon pollinators through her garden. Pictured is a black swallowtail pupa on a dill plant. After transformation, swallowtails can be seen across much of North America and parts South America.



A “silver hair street”, or gray hairstreak butterfly and a harmless dirt dauber in background. Wasps and dirt daubers contribute to pollination as well.



Pipevine swallowtail butterflies are considered toxic to predators due to it’s main food source being the toxic pipevine plant.



A question mark butterfly rests on a pear tree. Rotten fruit draw in many pollinators to yards.



A Monarch caterpillar on the left forms into a “J” shape before it becomes a Monarch chrysalis, which can be seen on the right.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Going Green program more successful than ever

By Shelia Kirven

Recycling provides services for environmentally responsible practices through the collection and processing of recyclable material in the Choctaw Nation. Reducing waste streams and returns revenue to the Tribe. Through their efforts, they are not only helping the environment, but teaching the public how to do their part.

Choctaw Nation is working to teach younger generations in its community about the importance of recycling.

Children are engaged audiences for subjects that fascinate them, especially something like the recycling process. They get excited to find out how recycling works and are usually the first ones in the family to encourage and remind others to put items in their proper recycling containers. Then they find out that at the recycling centers, there are huge mountains of paper, cardboard, plastics and Styrofoam being processed, plus forklifts, bailers and compacting machines.

Choctaw Nation recycling centers receive busloads of school children to the Durant and Poteau facilities for in-person tours. Touring the facility gives one a different perspective on the process and reminds visitors why recycling is so important. From sorting to bailing and crushing to compacting, touring the facility is educational for all to see, young and old alike. Local children and faculty also enjoy in-school visits from Choctaw Nation Going Green staff, who teach them how to recycle in their schools and homes, but they also enjoy visiting the recycling centers to see how the process works from start to finish.

When schools request in-person training at their facilities, program associates are happy to visit the schools to educate. They also discuss placing a roll-off dumpster and sorting bins inside the buildings to sort recyclable items. Schools within the reservation that now have recycling roll-offs and recycling programs include:

- Caddo Public Schools
- Caney Public Schools
- Carl Albert State College
- Clayton Elementary School
- Jones Academy
- Coalgate High School
- Cottonwood School
- Durant Public Schools
- Hartshorne Elementary School
- Howe High School
- Idabel High School
- Lukfata Public School
- Moyers Public Schools
- Parker Intermediate School – McAlester
- Rock Creek Elementary
- Silo Public Schools
- Stigler High School
- Talihina Elementary School
- Tushka Public Schools
- Valliant Public Schools
- Will Rogers Elementary – McAlester
- Wister Public Schools

Tracy Horst, Choctaw Nation’s Environmental Compliance Director, Environmental Protection Service, says it only takes a short time after visiting schools and teaching the students how to recycle until the tasks they learn become habits.

“We can save the school on their waste bill by not throwing everything in the trash to make their waste bill go down. And if they recycle, of course, it helps us from a revenue stream for the recycling aspect, but it also helps us from an environmental perspective.”

Students receive an extra treat when the Going Green program promotes contests, rewarding the grades that recycle the most with ice cream or pizza parties.

Schools within the reservation and nearby areas are encouraged to contact the Going Green team to set up services, education or tours or to review current recycling processes to ensure that all recycling opportunities are being utilized.

You don’t have to be part of a school, however, to request Going Green staff members speak to you about their processes or give you a tour of a recycling center. They’re happy to do so for universities, businesses, civic and community organizations, groups, individuals and families. Horst said, “We’re willing to talk to anybody who wants to talk about recycling, just to keep it growing!”

The program works with many businesses and agencies throughout the reservation and outlying areas to educate and assist with their recycling needs.

There are currently 127 recycling roll-offs (dumpsters) placed throughout the Choctaw Nation reservation, with some even on the outside perimeters of the reservation.

A list of roll-off locations can be viewed at <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/recycling/> along with types of items that can be recycled.

Roll-offs are sometimes purchased through grant and program funds, but many organizations also buy their own independently. When the roll-offs are full, Choctaw Nation Recycling takes care of the pickups at no cost.

Items recycled at the Durant and Poteau locations are sold, and the revenue is returned to the tribe to help pay for the program.

“Everything that comes in our roll-offs, we can process and sell,” Horst explained.

Being able to generate funds from recycling is wonderful; however, what is done for the environment is priceless. Recyclable materials that would normally end up in landfills in and around the reservation can be used again to make new items such as carpeting, cereal boxes, egg cartons, newspapers, trash bags, and much more.

Horst explained a new aspect of the Going Green Program that she was very excited



Photo by Chris Jennings

Choctaw Nation Recycling Center workers sort through recently recycled goods dropped off at the Durant Recycling Center.

about, the EPA Exchange Network Grants. The grants are about improving, gathering and using data to your advantage.

The Choctaw Nation received a three-year grant last year worth approximately \$350,000. Through the grant, the program is buying equipment that will allow them to gather more data about the total number of materials coming into the recycling facilities and how they process them.

With the grant funding, the program is obtaining a sizeable drive-on scale for the Durant facility. When a truck comes in to deliver recyclable materials, it will drive onto the scales for a total weight and then again after the truck has been emptied, resulting in a total weight for the materials delivered.

Several cities, such as Durant, McAlester, Ardmore, Oklahoma, and Paris and Sherman, Texas, drive their cities’ recyclable materials to the Durant center for processing. With the new scale, the recycling center can let those cities know exactly how many pounds they brought in. It will also allow the Choctaw Nation to have more data for their own use.

Through the grant, Durant and Poteau facilities have also received Wi-Fi upgrades. They will now be able to livestream data on screens in the facilities so that staff and visitors can see how much material was sorted the previous day and how many roll-offs were brought in and unloaded.

“The employees are going to have a lot more hands-on opportunity to understand what’s going on in the facility,” said Horst.

The first month of tracking data was December 2010 with around 10,000 pounds being processed (just at the Durant Center—Poteau had not opened yet). In 2024, the program recycled almost 500,000 pounds per month, with every bit bailed, sold and reused.

The Durant and Poteau facilities have 18 associates and work closely with the Job for The Day Program. “That program is amazing for us and so helpful,” Horst said.

In addition to community services, Choctaw Recycling centers provide services to tribal facilities.

The public can drop off their recycling at any of the provided roll-offs throughout the Choctaw Nation or are welcome to drop off at one of the recycling centers in Durant or Poteau. Tours are also available and welcome.

To stay up-to-date on all things Going Green, like the group’s Facebook page – Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Service or visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/recycling/> or email Recycling-Center@choctawnation.com.



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



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April (Eplil) 2025

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Biskinik Earth Day special edition introduction.



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Air quality is essential to living a healthy life. Learn about air quality control.



Page 11

Read about Choctaw Nation’s new pollinator habitat and how you can help at home.

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

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