



Photo by Chris Jennings

May 2025 Issue

Clouds begin to form in the late afternoon along State Highway 70 near Boswell, Oklahoma. Thunderstorms are most likely in the spring and summer months and during the afternoon and evening, but they can occur year-round and at all hours. The greatest severe weather threat in the U.S. extends from Texas to southern Minnesota, but no place in the United States is completely safe from the threat of severe weather.

Stay alert, stay safe during the spring storm season

By Christian Chaney

As storm season approaches, knowing how to protect yourself, your loved ones and your property is crucial.

Spring and early summer bring an increased risk of severe weather events like tornadoes, hailstorms, high winds and flash flooding.

Fortunately, the Choctaw Nation offers services through Emergency Management and the Housing Department to help tribal members stay safe and recover from severe weather.

Severe Weather Safety

In 2024 alone, Oklahoma experienced a total of 152 tornadoes across the state.

Understanding the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning could save lives.

A tornado watch means conditions are favorable for a tornado to form, so you should be prepared and have a plan in place. A tornado warning, on the other hand, means a tornado has been spotted or detected by radar.

Immediate action is required at this stage, as there is imminent danger to life and property. Seek shelter immediately.

The most serious alert, a tornado emergency, is issued when a violent tornado has touched down and poses an extreme threat to human life and surrounding structures.

The National Weather Service recommends being "weather-ready" at all times. Being "weather-ready" means checking forecasts regularly, staying informed about local news and signing up for weather alerts.

Make a communication plan with your family that includes where to go if a tornado warning is issued, and practice it so everyone knows what to do.

Identify a safe space in your home, such as a basement or an interior room with no windows. If you don't have a basement or safe room, an interior bathroom or closet can provide protection in many cases.

Keep emergency kits in your safe area stocked with essentials like bottled water, flashlights, batteries, a radio and first-aid supplies.

If a tornado is approaching, take shelter immediately.

Stay tuned in to your local weather station and move quickly to your designated safe space. Avoid large open rooms like gyms or cafeterias, as they are structurally vulnerable during strong winds.

If you're outdoors, get indoors as quickly as possible.

Mobile homes, tents, sheds and barns are not safe. If you're in a vehicle and can't make it to a shelter, you may stay in the car with your head covered or abandon the vehicle and lie flat in a low-lying area like a ditch.

After the storm passes, continue monitoring weather reports, as storms can come in multiple waves.

If someone is injured, provide first aid until emergency crews arrive.

Reach out to family and friends to let them know you're safe.

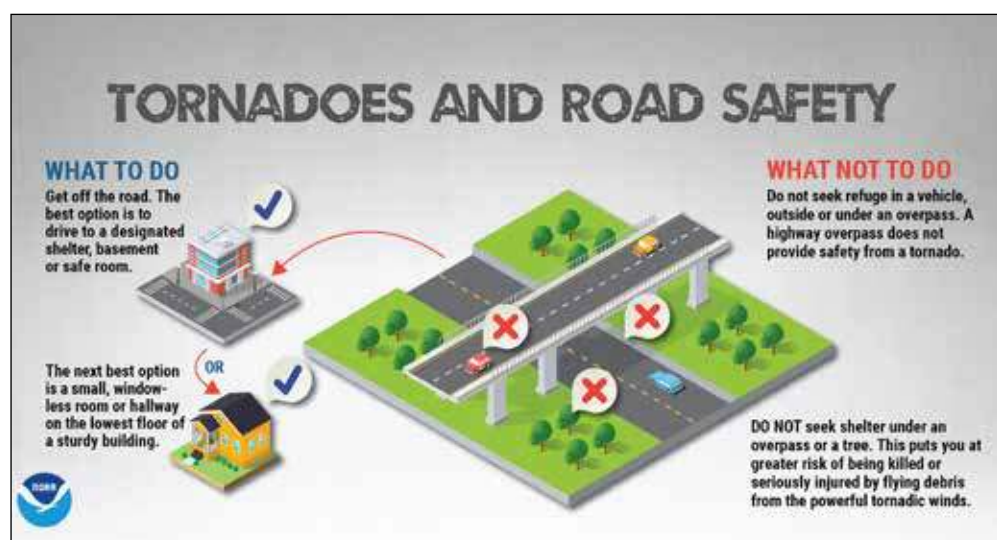
When assessing damage to your property, wear long sleeves, pants and sturdy shoes. Be cautious around damaged buildings and avoid downed power lines. Document any damage to your property through clear photos and written details.

Storm Shelter Program

To assist tribal members in preparing for storms, the Choctaw Nation Housing Department offers a storm shelter grant for eligible members.

This one-time grant applies to both new and existing homes as long as the shelter is installed at the applicant's primary residence in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas.

For mobile homes, the applicant must own both the house and the land.



National Weather Service Graphic

A highway overpass is one of the worst places to seek shelter from a tornado because of the potential of getting hit by flying debris. As a last resort, the NWS says to lie flat in a ditch, ravine or below-grade culvert to protect yourself from flying debris. If no ditch is available, you may remain in your vehicle, put on your seatbelt, lower yourself below window level, and cover your head with your hands or a blanket.

Those aged 45 or older may qualify for the full grant amount of \$3,500, while those between the ages of 18 and 44 may be eligible for \$1,750. Additionally, applicants with a documented ambulatory disability may qualify for a \$5,000 grant toward an above-ground shelter.

More information and application forms can be found at choctawnation.com/services/storm-shelters or by calling 580-326-7521.

The Choctaw Nation's Emergency Management Department also offers support through its Wind Mitigation Program, which provides a \$1,500 voucher for approved home reinforcement projects for tribal members within the service area.

These home upgrades include strengthening garage doors, installing hurricane straps on roofs, or applying shatter-resistant film to windows.

Homeowners may also use the voucher to install storm shutters or remove dead trees and limbs that could fall during high winds. These improvements can significantly reduce storm damage and increase household safety.

To apply or view the complete list of eligible projects, visit choctawnation.com/services/wind-mitigation or call 844-709-6301.

Storms can be unpredictable, but with preparation and support from programs like those listed in this story, tribal members can be better equipped to face severe weather.



Photo by Chris Jennings

A lightning strike can be seen ahead of traffic on U.S. Highway 75 in McKinney, Texas. According to the National Weather Service (NWS), a typical cloud-to-vehicle lightning strike will strike the vehicle's antenna or along the roofline. The lightning will then pass through the vehicle's outer metal shell and then through the tires to the ground.

TORNADO MYTHS

Tornadoes Never Strike Twice

Cordell, Kansas, was struck by a tornado on May 20, three years in a row (1916, 1917 and 1918). In Guy, Arkansas, three tornadoes hit the same church on the same day.

Big Cities and their Tall Buildings are Protected from Tornadoes

Many cities in the U.S. have been directly hit by tornadoes in recent years, including Miami, Salt Lake City, Birmingham, Oklahoma City, Houston, Fort Worth and Nashville.

Large Lakes Protect Nearby Areas from Tornadoes

While cold water and the cool air on top of the lake can provide a locally stable environment, chances are a thunderstorm producing a tornado moving toward a cold lake has something much larger driving it than the cold water can inhibit.

Open Windows Prior to a Tornado Strike to Equalize Pressure Inside the House to Prevent it from Exploding

Opening the windows is absolutely useless, a waste of precious time and can be very dangerous. Don't do it.

Information via National Weather Service

Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

CNO Honors and Advocates for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People

Each year, we ask our Choctaw tribe to wear red to raise awareness for missing and murdered indigenous people. This year our Choctaw Wear Red Day for MMIP will be on May 5 followed by the Choctaw Nation's Annual MMIP Awareness Walk at 8 a.m. on May 10 in Antlers, Oklahoma.

The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System's January 2025 statistics show that more than 875 American Indian and Alaska Native missing persons have been reported missing across 34 U.S. states. Oklahoma is third on the missing indigenous people list with 89 missing following Arizona with 90 missing and Alaska with 325 missing indigenous people.

This past February, 14-year-old Emily Pike, a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, was found dead outside of the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona. Her death drew

a national spotlight on the plight of missing indigenous person cases throughout the U.S. The Choctaw Nation recognized the passing of Emily with a Wear Red Day on March 19 where we asked our Associates to wear red to honor the 14-year-old Apache girl's life.

The Choctaw Nation is dedicated to bringing awareness to the MMIP cases, not only in Oklahoma but across the U.S. Our reservation is home to a successful nonprofit called the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women-Chahta organization. This Calera, Oklahoma-based organization is one of the most prominent voices for the MMIP cause.

MMIW-Chahta works tirelessly to raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and educating on domestic violence and healing.

My challenge to all the Chahta is to raise awareness for our missing and murdered brothers and sisters so that their cases are not forgotten and there will be justice and closure for the victim's families.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Choctaw Nation Honors Military, Elects Princesses in May

The month of May will host several princess pageant competitions in districts throughout the Choctaw Nation. With additional pageants to come in June (after several pageants were held in April), this is the time of year where contestants' thoughts turn to practice and perfecting their plans for their individual competitions.

Each year, the 12 districts that make up the Choctaw Nation present candidates for the Princess Pageant Competition. Contestants vie to be winners of each district's division with a 1st and 2nd place runner-up:

- Miss Choctaw Nation District Princess (ages 18-22)
- Junior Miss Choctaw Nation District Princess (ages 13-17)
- Little Miss Choctaw Nation District Princess (ages 8-12)

Each district winner will receive \$450. In the event your application entry is the only one received by the District Princess Pageant Coordinator prior to the district pageant date, you shall be declared the winner of that district division and would also in this scenario be eligible to compete in the Choctaw Nation Royalty Pageant held at Tvshka Homma. There are more eligibility requirements available for review. All who are interested in competing in a future pageant should look at the eligibility requirements on choctawnation.com/services/princess-and-royalty for more information (or have their parents or grandparents review these rules).

Good luck and congratulations to all the princess pageants contestants and winners. It is a lot of hard work and dedication to compete and represent the Choctaw Nation's heritage. Chief Batton, and the Tribal Council and I are always so appreciative of the outstanding job that our Princesses do on behalf of the Choctaw Nation. Yakoke!

Also coming this month is the Annual Choctaw Nation Memorial Day event at the Choctaw Nation Capitol in Tvshka Homma from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 23. All tribal administrative offices will be closed to remember Memorial Day on Monday, May 26.

Each year we commemorate Memorial Day at the Choctaw Capitol to remember the brave men and women of our military who paid the ultimate price for freedom. The Choctaw Nation is a sovereign nation in a free country because of the countless sacrifices our soldiers pay to ensure we are the land of the free and the home of the brave.

I encourage you to come out to the Choctaw Nation's Capitol and witness this remembrance event where we honor all the branches of the military, have a 21-gun salute and place a wreath for the fallen soldiers. It is a solemn day of remembrance and expression from a grateful nation for the sacrifices of our military servicemen and women.

CNO provides clean drinking water units to U.S. Military

By Christian Toews

Choctaw Defense Manufacturing (CDMG) and ELW Global unveiled two Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units (ROWPU) in McAlester, Oklahoma, on March 26.

The ELW ROWPU is a portable, trailer-mounted unit that can easily be moved to different locations. It converts undrinkable water into drinkable water in minutes. The system removes particles from potentially hazardous water sources and purifies the water to World Health Organization (WHO) standards. "The reverse osmosis system, this is how it works. If you give me a cup of coffee with malted sugar in it, I will give you the water back." Said Darren Hume, an engineer with ELW Global who helped design the ROWPU.



Photos by Christian Toews

Darren Hume shows a glass of lake water and a glass drinkable water, filtered by the Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit.

Choctaw Defense Manufacturing is an arm of the tribally owned Choctaw Global. This Manufacturing business grew from the roots of the Choctaw Manufacturing and Development Corporation, a supplier of laser-guided bomb components for Texas Instruments.

According to Jeff Rodriguez, Vice President of Services Operations of Choctaw Global, the parent company of Choctaw Defense Manufacturing, around 80 people, including manufacturing engineers, machinists, welders, painters, assembly staff, and support staff, work at CDMG.

Rodriguez said that the two completed ROWPU are setting them up for success in the future. "This is our first test run. I think it's a success...and now that we've got that battle rhythm, we're figuring out ways to make the production runs a lot more efficient, so we could crank these out at a faster pace," he said.

The two units are being sent to Japan's United States Misawa Air Base. The ROWPU will filter the surface and underground water stores to purify the water for the U.S. military personnel working there.

The military application is just the beginning of what CDMG hopes to use these water filtration units for.

"It's used right now for the military, but it could also be used at the state and local levels. Think about the rail derailment in Ohio that occurred last year, where a bunch of chemicals were spilled in their water source. This will purify it. They won't do petroleum, but they'll handle chemicals. So, like I said, the possibilities are endless," said Rodriguez.

The ROWPU can filter up to 508 gallons of clean drinking water from contaminated sources per hour, making it one of the market's largest single-axle water treatment trailers.

Through a partnership with ELW Global, Choctaw Defense Manufacturing can market the ELW ROWPU to other Native American Tribes, cities, states and disaster response organizations. Alongside the trailer-mounted ROWPU, prototypes to build the ELW Global Diesel Field Kitchen and Trailer-Mounted Desalination units have already begun.

"We're excited to see the ROWPU systems we built to create better living conditions for people around the world," said Janie Dillard, CEO of Choctaw Global. "There are so many places around the world, including Native American tribes in the U.S., that do not have access to clean, safe drinking and cooking water. This system can make a difference in how those individuals live and improve their lives dramatically."

To learn more about Choctaw Defense Manufacturing, visit <https://www.choctawdefense.com>.



Chief Gary Batton and Darren Hume enjoy a glass of freshly filtered lake water.

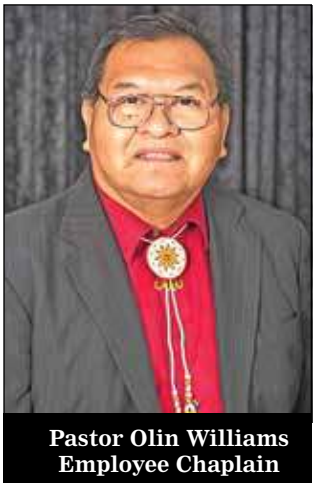


The ROWPU can convert 508 gallons of water to drinkable water per hour.



MMIP Resources:

- Choctaw Lighthouse | Emergency – 580-920-7000 | Non-Emergency – 580-920-1517
- Choctaw Tribal Victim Assistance | 877-285-6893
- MMIW-Chahta | Facebook | Missing Murdered Indigenous Women-Chahta
- NamUs | <https://www.namus.gov/dashboard>
- StrongHearts Native Helpline | 844-7NATIVE (762-8483) | <https://strongheartshelpline.org/>



Pastor Olin Williams Employee Chaplain

Filthy Rags

The prophet Isaiah was praying for the afflictions of the people of God. Jerusalem was being destroyed by the Chaldeans. The sin of Israel had brought this divine judgment upon them. They were pleading for the mercy of God for their afflictions. In Isaiah 64:6, the prophet pleads, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." In this prayer, Isaiah confesses that we are sinners by nature and that our own righteousness does not suffice for acceptance by a holy God. Self-righteousness refers to an attitude or mindset where someone believes they are morally superior or convinced of their own worth or virtues. It is an idea that mankind can be acceptable to God on his own good merits. However, Isaiah is comparing man's righteousness to filthy rags. The imagery

of "filthy rags" emphasizes the idea that no amount of good works or adherence to moral laws can meet God's requirement for salvation. What is "filthy rags"? First, we investigate the background of the use of the rag. We find in Leviticus chapter 13 that the disease of leprosy was common. Leprosy was a disease that affected the skin and worked inward. It would affect the nerves and joints, and sometimes skin boils would cause the fingers and toes to fall off. Leprosy was one of the few abnormal conditions of the body which the Levitical law declared unclean. When a person was afflicted with this disease, they would approach the priest and be examined.

Leviticus 13:25, "Then the priest shall look upon it: and behold, if the hair in the bright spot be turned white, and it be in sight deeper than the skin; it is leprosy broken out of the burning; wherefore the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is the plague of leprosy."

When a person has leprosy, there were laws governing this process. The disease is so contagious that this leper must live in a colony outside the city. If the lepers were to come into town for some reason, they were required to cover their lips and cry, "unclean, unclean" to warn the healthy people to avoid them.

Leviticus 13:45, 46 reads, "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be."

In the city square, lepers were provided a rag to wipe the dripping pus draining from their limbs and sores while in town. All lepers used the same rag, and over a period of time, it was saturated with the contagious disease of leprosy.

Isaiah is referring to this filthy rag as a metaphorical illustration of the inadequacy of human efforts to reach moral purity. The Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:6 reads, "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

DIABETES MEDICATION USES

You could be eligible to participate in a research study being done in partnership with the University of Florida if you are at least 18 years old, diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and receiving medications from CNHSA.

HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED MORE DETAILS?
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Chanler Podany 580.898.9239
Jancy Ross 580.740.8479

Scan for application.

Choctaw Nation Department of Public Health

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.

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Choctaw Code talkers honored at Hooker's Grill in Fort Worth

By Christian Toews

The Military Museum of Fort Worth honored the Choctaw code talkers by placing an informational display at the Choctaw-owned Hooker's Grill in Fort Worth, Texas, on April 10.

The newly installed display holds special meaning to Kathryn Hooker and her daughter Ruth who opened Hooker's Grill in 2017. Kathryn's grandfather and Ruth's great-grandfather, George Davenport and her uncle, Ruth's great-uncle, Joseph Davenport, were two of the original code talkers. As part of the 36th Infantry Division from Fort Worth's Camp Bowie, George and Joseph Davenport helped change the course of history during World War I.

Code Talkers played a crucial role in the victories of both WWI and WWII. By using their native language, these code talkers helped to send secure communications on the battlefield. Enemy forces could not intercept these communications, and that allowed maneuvers that would ultimately win the war.

You might have seen popular depictions of code talkers from World War II in films such as "Wind Talkers," starring Nicolas Cage. While the Navajo indeed helped win WWII, they built on the foundation laid by the Choctaw code talkers of the 36th

Infantry Division from Fort Worth.

Tyler Alberts, who works with The Military Museum of Fort Worth and placed the code talker display in Hooker's Grill.

"At that time, with it being a static war of trench warfare, there were wires and cables running everywhere," said Alberts. "Imagine your biggest nightmare mess of wire cable just strewn everywhere, and so people would tap into it and listen for communications so there was really no secret communication."

Alberts said that the US military command in Fort Worth recognized that the Choctaw Language could be utilized as a language the enemy couldn't translate. They decided to attempt to use it in battle.

On October 8, 1918, the 36th Division was engaged in its first major battle at St. Etienne, France. Three Choctaws were positioned at headquarters and three on the firing line, and messages transmitted in Choctaw were said to be very effective and never deciphered by the German Army. This code allowed for a decisive victory and further utilization of code talkers in WWI and WWII.

William Leaf is the Special Projects Director for the Military Museum of Fort Worth and a retired Major in the US Army. His wife, Jackie, is a Choctaw tribal member, and William said he remem-



Photos by Christian Toews

Kathryn Hooker, Ruth Hooker and Tyler Alberts show the new display honoring George and Joseph Davenport.

bers learning about the code talkers from visits to the Choctaw Nation Headquarters in Durant, Oklahoma.

"I have a bit of a passion for my brothers-in-arms being recognized," said Leaf.

That passion is what has inspired him to delve into the history of the Choctaw code talkers and help to educate visitors to The Military Museum of Fort Worth as well as creating displays like the one that was installed at Hooker's.

Choking back tears, Leaf explained why the project is so important.

"Too many folks nowadays don't know anything about what the service members

have done to give them the life they've got now," he said.

Leaf is working on expanding the museum's display to honor the Choctaw code talkers. He hopes to have a larger, more interactive display to help people understand the critical role of the code talkers.

The informational display that The Military Museum of Fort Worth provided will hang proudly in the dining area of Hooker's Grill. Ruth Hooker said that they are honored to take the time to recognize their family.

"We are so proud of the Choctaw code talkers, and we try to educate people on it ourselves," said Hooker. "Everybody thinks we just have a little hamburger joint, but I always say the least important thing we do is sell hamburgers. Food is the gateway to education and conversation. We do that through our Indian tacos, and now we'll have something visual with the Choctaw code talkers."

Hooker's Grill is open Wednesday through Sunday and is located at 213 W Exchange Ave, Fort Worth, TX 76164.

For more information about The Military Museum of Fort Worth, visit <https://www.militarymuseumfortworth.org>.



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CNO's Affordable Housing Program helps families find homes

By Kendra Germany-Wall

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma offers affordable housing options for lower-income households earning no more than 80% of the national median income.

One of those options is Affordable Rental Housing.

The Affordable Rental Housing program enables residents to participate in a family-oriented housing community at a rent rate within the family's means.

There are currently 568 Affordable Rental Housing units within the Choctaw Nation Reservation.

Each unit has a refrigerator, stove, and central heating and air conditioning.

Every site is overseen by a rental manager and maintenance technician responsible for the overall operations and physical integrity of each unit and property.

These units are in the following locations: Antlers, Atoka, Bennington, Bokoshe, Broken Bow, Caney, Calera, Clayton, Coalgate, Crowder, Hugo, Idabel, Keota, McAlester, Poteau, Quinton, Red Oak, Savanna, Spiro, Stigler, Stuart, Talihina, Wilburton and Wright City.

Construction and expansion plans are already underway in many of the listed towns, as well as Alderson/Hartshorne, Bethel/Battiest, Hartshorne, Pocola, Smithville and Valliant.

The Affordable Rental Housing program relieves the housing stress many people in these areas face.

In District 1, for example, a couple had been living in a mobile home for years with little to no heat. They had to run multiple heaters to stay warm, which was dangerous and expensive. Now, they can live comfortably and safely in their Affordable Rental Unit.

Also, in Idabel, a mother had been living with her son before going to a nursing home for rehabilitation for her vision and assistance after becoming an amputee. Instead of having to move back in with her son, she was able to move into an Affordable Rental Unit where she can now live independently. She is also working on getting a service animal to help her journey toward independence.

In Spiro, a single mother of two had been essentially homeless for several months after losing her home. Before moving into her Affordable Rental Unit, she was looking for work while staying between places with family and friends. Now, she has a new job and home for her family to live in safely.

In District 9, a mother was forced to leave her home for the safety of herself and her children and Children and Family Services became involved. Social workers and Tribal Council worked together to help the mother find temporary housing. During that time, she applied for Affordable Rental Housing



Choctaw Nation Photo

Choctaw Nation's Affordable Rental Housing program enables tribal households earning no more than 80% of the national median income to afford housing at a rate within their means.

and, just a few months later, moved into her new home. Now, the family is back together in a safe and clean environment where they can thrive.

The list of success stories is endless, thanks to the Affordable Rental Housing program.

The eligibility requirements for Affordable Rental Housing are as follows:

- Must have a CDIB Card
- Must have income and meet income guidelines
- Must be able to pay 15-20% of their adjusted income towards rent
- Household members aged 18 and over must pass a background check
- Copy of SSN card and photo identification for all household occupants
- Must provide two previous landlord references, including telephone numbers and addresses or two references from third-party individuals

Completed applications can be submitted by mail, fax, email or through the Chahta Chahta Achvffa Portal. Application forms and more information can be found at <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/affordable-rental-housing/>.

Those who are interested but may not have access to the internet can call the CNO Housing Authority at 800-235-3087.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Choctaw Nation

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Jennifer Woods

District 6

Halito from District 6, The Heart of the Nation. The month of April was busy with our District 6 Community Dinner to honor our Chiefs and also all of our Easter events. The District 6 Princess Pageant was originally scheduled for April 10, but due to scheduling conflicts, we have had to reschedule the Pageant for Tuesday, June 17, at 5:30 p.m. Please mark your calendars to come out and support our girls.

April is Child Abuse Awareness Month, and we are proud that the Choctaw Tribal Council has signed a resolution recognizing April as Child Abuse Awareness Month for the Tribe. The Indian Child Welfare (ICW) workers help our children and families by providing many services to prevent child abuse and to strengthen families.

The month of May brings many events that you will want to put on your calendar. First, May brings our high school senior graduations. We are so proud of their accomplishments. We are blessed that the Choctaw Nation has so many programs to assist our young people in the transition from high school to college.

Summer camps will be in full swing from May until July giving so many opportunities to our youth. Please keep all our kids and camp workers in your prayers.

We will be holding our National Day of Prayer Gathering on Thursday, May 1, at 8:00 a.m., with breakfast following. This is a community-wide prayer gathering, and we encourage all who want to come pray to join us.

On May 14, the seniors from across the reservation will participate in Elder Appreciation Day in Durant. Our seniors represent who we are, and we must learn from them. Don't ever forget the stories they have told us, some that have been passed down from many generations. It's important to remember where we came from.

We encourage everyone to attend our Memorial Day Ceremony on May 23rd at Tuskahoma, where we will honor the men and women who died in military service to our Nation.

On Saturday, May 24, we will be hosting the "20 Women Who Cook" event at the Jennifer Woods Community Center. We encourage you to come out and support this event and the ladies of District 6 who will be participating.

We are still looking for applications for LEAP, Independent Elders and Affordable Rental housing. We encourage you to apply, and please don't prejudge your qualifications. Let us assist you with your housing needs.

Our community partnerships are important to growing District 6. We are looking for more job development and providing a workforce for companies interested in our area. It takes teamwork to develop and strengthen our resources.

The Tribe provides many resources for those in need of housing and jobs, and we have representatives from these departments housed at the Jennifer Woods Community Center. Our Choctaw housing representative, Ashley Pate, can assist you with your tribal housing applications. If you are in need of employment, Kimberly Hill with Job For The Day, Tyler Akins with 477 Employment Training Services, and Shonnie Hall with the Summer Youth Work Program are available to assist you. Community-Based Social Workers Heather Pugh and Jessica McCutcheon are here to assist families, and our CHRs, Lori Pugh and Priscilla Ward are here to assist our elders and make sure that they are taken care of. We also have ICW, Children and Family Services, Behavioral Health and Domestic Violence representatives, and a computer lab tech, all housed in the Jennifer Woods Community Center, to better assist you. Choctaw Nation is working to become more centralized so that you don't have to drive to Headquarters in Durant for assistance. Please come by or call 918-465-2389 to get the assistance you need. Our associates are available to assist you.

As always, it is truly my privilege to serve you and I enjoy visiting with all, both young and old. I am thankful to be your Tribal Council Person.

Yakoke!



Ludlow December 2024 First Language Speaker

Clifford Ludlow, son of Randal and Minnie Ludlow, was raised in the Ludlow Community. He now lives in Homer with his wife, Kathy. Together, the couple have five children.

Ludlow is a proud, full-blood Choctaw and fluent Choctaw speaker. He didn't speak English until he started school at age six.

Ludlow went on to attend welding school and became a certified welder. He has had three jobs in his lifetime: a heavy equipment operator and a custom trailer builder in Paris, Texas, and is currently a language teacher with Choctaw Nation. He has been with the nation for almost 29 years and has no plans of retiring any time soon.

In 1995, Ludlow began working alongside other first-language speakers from Oklahoma and Mississippi to translate the Choctaw Parallel Bible, with the first edition printed in 2009. He has also worked on translating Choctaw hymns, which were added to the Choctaw Hymn Book.

He is currently the superintendent and Sunday school teacher at his church and has served for over 20 years as president of the Fifth Sunday Choctaw Singing.

Ludlow has devoted his life to preserving the Choctaw Language. Ludlow is a language teacher in his community and at Carl Albert State College. Ludlow and fellow language teacher Raymond Johnson created a Christmas play that was performed entirely in Choctaw.



Tom named April 2025 First Language Speaker

Lora Tom from District 7 was recognized as the First Choctaw Language Speaker of the Month.

Lora Thomas Tom, a full-blood Choctaw from Sobol, Oklahoma, was raised by her mother and grandmother. She attends the Good Water United Methodist Church. She loves to read her Choctaw Bible, pray in the Choctaw language and sing Choctaw hymns.

She didn't know how to speak English until she started elementary school, and she never forgot her Choctaw language. She loves going to church and serving God, who gives her the knowledge and wisdom to carry on her heritage.

She worked in the poetry business and health field for several years until becoming a stay-at-home mom. Tom has three children, two sisters and one brother. She has 32 great-grandchildren. She loves to pick wild onions in the springtime. Her favorite time at home is sharing the gospel with her family.



COUNCIL MINUTES

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

April 12, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTES
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session March 8, 2025
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #7 – Billy Ray Dunlap b) First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #7 – Laura Tom
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - NONE
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Presentation of Tribal Certification for Language Teachers: Annette Gem-Kramer, Eric Pittman, and Kymberlin Frazier
 - b. Approve the Donation of Head Start and Community Center Buildings in Bethel, Oklahoma to the Board of County Commissioners of McCurtain County
 - c. Approve Application for the 2025 Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) Grant Program
 - d. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
- e. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
- f. Approve Business Lease No. (G09-3005) on Choctaw Tribal Fee Land in McCurtain County, Oklahoma with McCurtain County Solid Waste Management Authority
- g. Amend CB-41-25
- h. Amend the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Criminal Procedure Code
- i. Approve a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in Favor of Tutor Perini Building Corp.
- j. Approve a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in Favor of UKG Kronos Systems LLC
- k. Approve Additional Equity Investment in Three Rivers Meat Company, LLC
- l. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Todd Hallmark to Serve on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) as the Oklahoma Area Alternate
- m. Joint Resolution Acknowledging April as Child Abuse Prevention Month

9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

10. OLD BUSINESS

11. ADJOURNMENT

12. CLOSING PRAYER

All votes passed unanimously

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Devin Lindley

Choctaw Nation Department of Wildlife Conservation (CNDWC) is happy to announce that we received the Tribal Youth Initiative Program Grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). With this grant we have acquired archery equipment to create the Choctaw Nation Youth Archery Program. With the development of this program, our goals are to teach tribal youth the sport of archery, make the connection of the sport to cultural heritage, and educate them about the importance of wildlife and natural resource management to ensure that these traditions are carried on for generations to come. We also hope that by learning archery, the students will find a sport that they can participate in for life and that it can be used to put meat on their table through hunting and establish food sovereignty within their communities.

Each event will start with a classroom-style setting for the attendees to learn about the history of archery and how it was important to early Choctaw people, followed by an instructional portion to focus on the importance of properly handling and shooting a bow. By going over the fundamentals of how to draw a bow back, aim, and release an arrow we will instill the importance of safety while hunting. We will also give an overview of CNDWC as a department and what we are doing within the Choctaw Nation Reservation to manage and ensure the sustainability of the wildlife for many years to come and to show that there are career paths in the outdoors that they could pursue.

CNDWC is in the process of developing this curriculum and is hopeful to have these events later in 2025 to early 2026. Once we get everything together, we will begin planning these events around the reservation; we will share our events through our Facebook page, so make sure you are following the Choctaw Nation Department of Wildlife Conservation – CNDWC to get updates and to see what we are up to. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the archery program email us at wildlife@choctawnation.com. Remember to get out and enjoy all that Choctaw Nation outdoors has to offer.

Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation



HONOR GUARD

— POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

APPLY BY CONTACTING: 580-642-8451

Upcoming Events

MMIW 5K/1 Mile Run | May 10 | 8 a.m. | Antlers Community Center 302 SW 2nd St Antlers, OK 74523 | Please help us bring awareness to and honor Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through this community event. There will be vendor and program booths and door prizes for those who compete in the 5K and 1M.

Cinema at the Center | May 10 | 1 p.m. | 1919 Hina Hanta Wy, Calera, OK 74730 | This monthly series features a wide range of films designed around a fun, family-friendly theme. This month, check out "A Bug's Life." We'd love to see you there!

TOT Memorial Walk | May 17 | 10 a.m. | Tuskahoma Capitol Grounds Council House Rd Tuskahoma, OK 74574 | Please join us for the 2025 Choctaw Trail of Tears Memorial Walk at Tvshka Homma. We hope to see you there! Cultural demonstrations, live village and vendor booths open at 9:00 a.m. Ceremony begins at 10 a.m.

WWI Code Talker Sculpture Unveiling | May 22 | 9 a.m. | Choctaw Cultural Center | 1919 Hina Hanta Wy, Calera, OK 74730 | The Choctaw Code Talker Association invites the public to attend the unveiling of the new WWI Code Talker Sculpture at the Choctaw Cultural Center.

Memorial Day Ceremony | May 23 | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. | Tuskahoma Capitol Grounds Council House Rd Tuskahoma, OK 74574 | Please help us honor those no longer with us and remember their sacrifices that made us free. This year's event will include a 21-gun salute and placing of the wreath.

Memorial Day Tribal Holiday | May 23 | All Day | All CNO offices will be closed for a tribal holiday to celebrate Memorial Day.

Community Cultural Meeting— Tucson | May 29 | 6 p.m. | Tucson Marriott University Park 880 E 2nd Street Tucson, AZ 85719-4838 | Come join Choctaw Nation and Chief Gary Batton for a fun, educational, and cultural event in the Tucson area that offers insight into the programs available to tribal members. Update your tribal membership card, ask questions about the Choctaw Nation, and share in the fellowship.

Community Cultural Meeting— Albuquerque | May 29 | 2 p.m. | Marriott Albuquerque 2101 Louisiana Boulevard NE Albuquerque, NM 87110-5401 | Come join Choctaw Nation and Chief Gary Batton for a fun, educational, and cultural event in the Albuquerque area that offers insight into the programs available to tribal members. Update your tribal membership card, ask questions about the Choctaw Nation, and share in the fellowship.

Car Seat Checks and Safety Information Event | May 30 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | McAlester Community Center | 3274 Afullota Hina, McAlester, OK 74501 | 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 Inshvka, Choctaw Nation Housing-Envision Program, TIPCAP, Children Matter, and other programs.

District 6 Pageant Rescheduled | June 17 | 5:30 p.m. | Wilburton Choctaw Community Center | The District 6 Princess Pageant, originally scheduled for April, will now take place on June 17.

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 Achvfa 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 9 on May 15, District 8 on May 20, District 10 on May 22, District 11 on June 3 and District 7 on June 5. For more details on upcoming pageants and more dates, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/princess-and-royalty/>.

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

OK Chahta Tribal Alliance Wild Onion Dinner

Saturday, May 31 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the American Legion 73/VFW Post 9969 5000 SE 24th St Del City, OK 73115

Wild onion dinners are \$15 and include: wild onions and eggs, choice of fried chicken or salt pork, tanchi labona, banana, beans, fried potatoes, frybread, grape dumplings and tea, water or coffee. A La Cart Items: tanchi labona or beans \$4, fried potatoes \$4 Frybread \$3 Grape Dumplings \$4. Cash Only. ATM is available on site. OK Chahta Children's Language Class will be selling desserts and soda.

BERTRAM BOBB BIBLE CAMP

KIDS AND TEEN SUMMER CAMPS

NEW ACTIVITY FOR 2025 LAZER TAG

SCAN FOR WEBSITE



Camper fee of \$60 donated if living in area. Camper pays \$20 reg. fee

VISIT WEBSITE TO REGISTER OR
DOWNLOAD OUR APP

<https://bbbcamp.org> Email jerry@bbbcamp.org

SCAN FOR APP



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CDIB AND A TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP?
SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE INFO.

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.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

Broken Bow Community Center
May 28, 2025
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.



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

APPLICATION NOW OPEN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Higher Education Program application for Summer is now open.
Apply now through June 15.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna Me Language Lesson

Happy Mother's Day
Ishke i Nittak Na Yukpa

Our children are the reason, \this we can say	Pim vlla vhleha atuk mako, illvpako il achi
Mothers are precious, caring and strong	Hvshki vt hlampko, ikaiyana micha holittopa
And always think the children can do no wrong	Vlla yvt nan ik aivlhpeso yohma hekiyo ahni
That's how much the children are loved and cared for	Vlla vhleha ya i hullot holitoblit ishi
The Bible says Jesus loves us all like this and more	Holisso Holittopat achi pa chiyohmi hosh Chisvs vt pi hullo
Raising children is not an easy thing	Vlla hofantichi kvv kvllo kiyo
But with God's help what goodness He will bring	Ihkia Chihowa akosh pi pilekma nan achukma isht vla
Children are God's blessing from above	Vlla vhleha ya Chihowa i nan isht aiyukpa vba minti
The Bible says train them in the way they should go out of love	Holisso Holittopat achi i hullo hosh hina vlpesa im abachi
Mothers are included in God's plan	Hvshki yvt Chihowa im aiahni
Jesus is your number one fan	Chisvs vt chim atokoli fan
#7-May all mothers be blessed today	Hvshki moma kvv nittak yukpali isha chike
#7-We thank the Lord for being with us every step of the way-	Chihowa il i yakoke pi isht aya tuk bilia.

Written by Mary Aaron

www.choctawschool.com

Hiberd graduates from OSU

Mackenzie Alexanderia Hiberd graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in Natural Resource, Ecology and Management with an emphasis in Fisheries and Aquatic Ecology. She has been accepted into grad school for the Fall at Oklahoma State University studying Rangeland, Ecology and Management.



Malekai Semaj Miller

Malekai Semaj Miller was born on February 27, 2025 to MiKayla Miller.



Easly graduates from OUHSC

Caitlyn (Carl) Easly graduated from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC) in May 2024 with a Master of Arts degree in Speech-Language Pathology. She recently completed her Clinical Fellowship Year and works as a fully licensed SLP at a rural regional hospital in Southwest Oklahoma. She would like to thank the Choctaw Nations Higher Education and Career Development programs for the assistance she received, without which she would not be where she is today. Specifically, she would like to thank her career counselor, Jill Reyna, who was always a wonderful help and a big supporter of her goals. She would also like to give a big thank you to her spouse, Alex Easly. Caitlyn is the daughter of Richard and Sandy Carl, granddaughter of the late LTC Richard Carl and Betty and great-granddaughter of Jack Benjamin and Jewell Alexander.



Choctaw Nation to hold special election to fill vacancy in District 5

DURANT, OKLA. (April 7, 2025) — Choctaw Nation will hold a special election to fill the vacancy for the Tribal Council seat representing District 5. The winner of the election will serve the remaining two years of the term. The election will take place on Saturday, July 12, 2025. The timing of the election will align with the previously scheduled general election. Ron Perry resigned the District 5 seat on April 1. The position will remain open until the election. According to the amended Election Calendar 2025, prospective candidates

may file in person from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. on April 21, 22, and 23 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters, Ibaichvffa (Membership) Room #1251, 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701. More information about tribal elections, including the full election calendar, can be found at <https://www.choctawnation.com/elections> or by contacting the Election Board at electionboard@choctawnation.com. To register to vote or learn how to update your voter registration, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/vote>.



Choctaw Nation Photo
A special election will be held to fill the vacancy for the Tribal Council seat representing District 5. The winner of the election will serve the remaining two years of the term.

Choctaw Nation launches MyChart to enhance patient experience

DURANT, Okla. (April 8, 2025) – The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) has announced the transition to the Epic electronic health records system and a new patient portal – the MyChart app. MyChart, a secure online platform and app, offers a range of features which empowers patients to take an active role in their healthcare journey. With MyChart, CNHSA patients will be able to view test results, access medical records, request prescription refills, and communicate directly with their care team – from wherever is convenient for the patient. “We are thrilled to offer MyChart to our patients,” said Gary Batton,

Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. “This digital health tool is a game-changer, making healthcare more accessible and efficient, particularly for those in rural and remote areas. By embracing this technology, we are empowering our people to take control of their health and improve their overall healthcare experience.” The transition to MyChart is part of a broader effort by the Choctaw Nation to modernize healthcare services and provide the best possible care and experience for its patients. “It reflects the Nation’s commitment to leveraging innovative solutions to enhance the health and well-being of its community,” said Chief Batton.



Patients can easily sign up for MyChart during their next visit to a Choctaw Nation Clinic or by calling the MyChart Helpline at 918-567-7034.

Choctaw Nation Easter Celebration



A large group of children make the dash across the field in search of eggs during the annual Choctaw Nation Easter Celebration on April 12.



Photos by Christian Toews
Minnie Lou Shelton gets into the Easter spirit.



Chief Gary Batton gives a high five to an egg hunting cutie.



A helicopter drops eggs on the Tvshka Homma softball field during the annual Choctaw Nation Easter Celebration on April 12.



A young egg hunter excitedly shows off their basket full of eggs.



Talon Brandy and Geron Kennon smile for the camera before hitting the egg hunting grounds.



Choctaw Chaplin Olin Williams delivers an Easter message to the crowd.



Members of the Chiksha Bak Bak stickball team looking cool in their new glasses.



A group of Choctaw elders strategize before their egg hunt.



A basket of baby chicks get ready for their photoshoot.



Gavin Mabray from Ashland, Oklahoma enjoys the beautiful weather at the Easter Celebration with her daughter, Hensley.

Choctaw Cultural Center Easter Eggstravaganza



Stormy weather didn't stop visitors from enjoying the Annual Choctaw Cultural Center Eggstavanza event.



LAND & TITLE

Providing services and assistance in the following areas:

- Realty Services
- Trust Property
- Real Property Management
- Land and Title Records
- Mandatory Trust Acquisitions
- Restricted Property

NEW PHONE NUMBER:
580.642.LAND (5263)

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/REAL-PROPERTY-MANAGEMENT/
Scan QR code for more information.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Stewart Wayne Wilson

Stewart Wayne Wilson, 57, passed away July 2, 2024. Stewart was born Jan. 26, 1967, in San Antonio, Tex., to James Wilson and Carol Ann Erhardt. He was preceded in death by his parents; grandfather Ava Ray Wilson; and sister Lizer Amaral. Stewart is survived by his wife Lamia; sister Donna Matson; and brothers Robert Amaral and James Wilson.

**Thomas Dewayne Cooper**

Thomas Dewayne Cooper, 85, passed away March 6, 2025. Thomas was born Jan. 10, 1940, in Stigler, Okla., to Douglas and Ruth (Gray) Cooper. He was preceded in death by his wife Wanda (Redden) Cooper; son Jamie Antley; granddaughter Bailey Cooper; his parents; son-in-law Jim Holley; and special cousin Linda Colwell. Thomas is survived by his son DeWayne Cooper; daughters Alicia Holley, and Susie Reynolds and spouse Ron; grandchildren Keith Antley, Angie Peden, Brian and Stephanie Reynolds, Robyn Haubold, Jarrod and Crystin Holley, Brooklynn Cooper, and Brittany Cooper; great-grandchildren Claire, Declan, Harlow, Tuff, Brayden, Carmen, Greyson, Brooke, and CiCi; numerous nieces, nephews, and relatives; and his good friend Darryl Colwell.

**Willie Virginia Mann**

Willie Virginia Mann, 98, passed away March 1, 2025. Virginia was born July 7, 1926, in Bailey, Okla., to Clinton and Willie (Henderson) Whitehead. She was preceded in death by her husband Joe Mann; her parents; sister Cleo Henry; brothers Charley, Nob, Carl, Elton, Jack, and Kin Whitehead; and grandson Jerad Going. Virginia is survived by her son Ronald Mann, daughters Arleta Freeman and spouse Michael, and Laneta Going; grandson Jason Going; great-grandson Thomas Going; and many nieces and nephews.

**Sandra Sue LeJeune**

Sandra Sue LeJeune, 77, passed away Feb. 23, 2025, in McAlester. Sandra was born April 8, 1947, in Exeter, Calif., to Jay and Gertrude (Tinker) Colbert. She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Don Colbert; and granddaughter Erica Fausel. Survivors include her daughter Antoinette Schultz; son Eric Fausel; sister Cynthia Colbert; brother Ron Colbert; grandchildren Brandon Castagnetta, Brenden Castagnetta, Henry Castagnetta and Jimmy Fausel; great-grandchildren Liam Castagnetta and Ally Castagnetta; and multiple nieces and nephews.

**Preston Junior Scott**

Preston Junior Scott, 81, passed away March 14, 2025. Preston was born Aug. 12, 1943, in Talihina, Okla., to Jasper J. Scott and Virta Elma (Billy) Fobb. He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Gayla Scott; son Gary Junior Scott; and siblings Margaret Scott Gibson, Sampson Scott, Johnny Scott, Janice Wolfe, Linda Wolfe, Patricia Cooper, Ronnie Fobb, and Alfreda Wolfe. Preston is survived by daughters Debra Unap, Monica Jackson, and Sonya Scott Frazier and spouse George; son Jason Scott and spouse Vanessa; brothers Ron Scott and spouse Marilyn, Roger Scott and spouse Rhoda, Nathan Scott and spouse Linda, Jimmie Scott and spouse Anna, Martin Scott, and Anthony Fobb; sister Stella Scott; numerous nieces, nephews, and lots of relatives in the four directions.

**Anthony Gentry Jenkins**

Anthony Gentry Jenkins, 37, passed away March 18, 2025. Anthony was born Feb. 1, 1988, in Tahlequah, Okla., to Earl Karlton Jenkins and Francile Jacob. He was preceded in death by his grandparents Daniel and Emmiline Jacob; uncles Daniel Jacob, and Gabriel Jacob. Anthony is survived by daughters Lily Jenkins and Alexia Swelling; son Adyn Jenkins; his mother and her spouse Quaid; sister Mary Billy; aunts Delores Jacob, Elsie Moreland, Linda Jacob, Cheryl Bittick and Anna Ainsworth; uncles David Jacob and spouse Susan, Jimmy Jacob and spouse Deleana; numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives, and many dear and loved friends.

**Charlotte Lee Smith**

Charlotte Lee Smith, 72, passed away Feb. 13, 2025. Charlotte was born Aug. 25, 1952, to Leroy and Dortha Mae Nickels. She was preceded in death by her parents. Charlotte is survived by her husband Gale; son Jason Smith and spouse Jewelie; daughter Charisa Bryant and spouse Justin; grandchildren Madison Bryant, Jayton Smith and spouse Jessie, Jacey Satterwhite and spouse Kade, Xavier Stockard, Jaron Smith and girlfriend Chloe Baer, Christian Bryant, and McKenzie Bryant; great-grandchildren Blairst Hand, Lucas Hand, Ada Jane Smith, and Millie Satterwhite; and sisters Linell Carter and Freda Shannon.

**Janice Crawford-McGee**

Janice Crawford McGee, 69, passed away March 20, 2025. Janice was born Sept. 17, 1955, in Atoka, Okla., to Floyd John and Helen Alberta (Robinson) Shields. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Wallace McGee; son Donald Ray Collins Jr.; siblings Clifford Madden, Ruby (Betts) Walter, Floyd Shields Jr., Darrell Shields, Lucky Shields, Gloria Doris, and Jimmy Leroy. Janice is survived by her son Cameron Crawford Sr. and spouse Bobbi; grandchildren Infinity Crawford and fiancé Ty Smith, Cameron Crawford Jr. and spouse Maya of Sallisaw, OK, Trevor Crawford of Sallisaw, OK; great-grandchildren Zaria Smith, Elias Smith; siblings Vernola Mosley, Shirley Arnold, Faye Burdick, Steve Shields, Sherry Brown, Kim Washington and spouse Crandell, Sonya Matthews and spouse Lorenzo, Vanoy Shields, Crandall Shields and spouse Gloria; along with nieces, nephews, and other loved family members.

**David Wayne Fromme Sr.**

David Wayne Fromme, Sr., 82, passed away May 29, 2025. David was born May 15, 1942, to William "Bill" and Viola Fromme. He was preceded in death by his parents; brother William Lynn Fromme; and grandson Brandon Fromme. David is survived by his wife Peggy; sons David Wayne Fromme, Jr., Mark Fromme, and Michael Fromme and spouse Melissa; grandchildren Melissa Ann Johnston and spouse Nick, Justin Fromme and spouse Charley, Gregory Fromme and Casey, Jeffrey Fromme and spouse Marissa, Jeremy Fromme, David Blake Fromme, Wayne Fromme, Victoria Doctors and spouse Chuck, Clay Fromme, Ashley Taylor and spouse Ryan, Corinne Fromme, Chase Fromme, Dakota Fromme and Elaine Lester, and Mason Fromme; numerous great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; siblings Agnes Wall, Catherine "Kay" Breshears and spouse Dan, and Judy Price and spouse Roger.

**Lester Earl Fields**

Lester Earl "Les" Fields, 69, passed away March 25, 2025. Les was born Mar 2, 1956, at Idabel, Okla. to Clifton Dale and Martha Louise Harris Fields. He was preceded in death by his parents Dale and Lou Fields and grandparents S. C. and Homa Fields, and Claude & Lottie Harris. Les is survived by sisters Cindy Stephens and Ginny Neussendorfer; and brothers Curt, Mike and Cliff.

**David Conrad Wheeler**

David Conrad Wheeler, 59, passed away March 27, 2025. David was born Sept. 30, 1965, in Mesquite, Tex., to Noah Bolin and Linda Bernice Underwood Wheeler. He was preceded in death by his father. David is survived by his mother; wife Kimberly Wheeler; brother Bruce Wheeler; nephew Robert Wheeler; niece Nicole Wheeler; great-nephew Noah Lozano; special aunt Ruby Cochran; special cousin Jerry Caldwell; and a host of other relatives and friends.

**Billie Carl Rogers**

Billie "Bill" Carl Rogers, 79, passed away March 19, 2025. Bill was born Jan. 8, 1946, in Stuart, Okla. to William Jesse Rogers and Margaret Shirley. He was preceded in death by his first wife Clare Yvonne Courville; and second wife Mary Jean Burland. Bill is survived by his children Mary Rogers, Jason Rogers, Wes Miljies, Jolene Burland, Wayne Burland, Will Burland, and Wade Burland; brothers Thomas Rogers and Hugh Rogers; sister Shirley Sumner; nieces Jessica Rodriguez, Mary Sumner, and Rebecca Aryal; and numerous cousins, nephews, and extended family.

**Dwayne Earl Zellner**

Dwayne Earl Zellner, 62, passed away Oct. 13, 2024. Dwayne was born Feb. 19, 1962, in Flagstaff, Ariz., to Donald Wayne Zellner and Glenda Dale Hargett. He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Douglas and Darrell. Dwayne is survived by his brother Dennis; and sisters Donna and Dianna.

**Ronald Glenn Harrison Jr.**

Ronald Glenn Harrison, Jr., 36, passed away Nov. 3, 2024. Ronald was born Dec. 4, 1987, in Antlers, Okla. to Ronald Glenn Harrison, Sr. and Cynthia (Swinney) Harrison. He was preceded in death by his grandmother Ruby McAlister; and sister Rona Harrison. Ronald is survived by his parents; stepfather Stanley; brothers Michael Bigelow, Tyson Carnes, and Teagan Carnes; sisters Ashley Collin, Roda Carnes, and Taeleigh McCrary.

**Billy Ray Cochnauer**

Billy "Bill" Ray Cochnauer, 74, passed away April 4, 2025. Bill was born June 26, 1950, in Talihina, Okla., to Nicholas Alexander Cochnauer and Nora Anderson Cochnauer. He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Betty Arlene Bowden and Vickey Marie Felter; brothers Lee Cochnauer, Stanley Cochnauer, Marion Cochnauer, Bobby Cochnauer, and Dixon Cochnauer; sister-in-law Barbara Eiland Cochnauer; and the love of his life Linda Eiland Cochnauer. Bill is survived by his daughter Lenora Ruth Ankit and spouse Ankit; son Billy Cochnauer; granddaughter Adriyanna Cochnauer; grandsons Luther Mangrum and Coltan Mangrum; brother N.H. Cochnauer; brother-in-law Douglas Felter; and many nieces, nephews, family, and friends.

**Mitchell Leon Broughton**

Mitchell Leon Broughton, 65, passed away Feb. 15, 2025. Mitchell was born July 4, 1959, in Ardmore, Okla., to Lee Roy and Shirley Earlene Fryer Broughton. He was preceded in death by his father. Mitchell is survived by his wife Carol; son Billy Lee Broughton and spouse Jessica; stepdaughter Kari Davis; stepson David Campbell and spouse Nina; grandchildren Baylee and Brianna Broughton, Emma, Charli, and Asher Davis, and Shepherd and Endure Campbell; his mother; and sisters Frankie Wheeler, Vicki Martin and Teresa Cussner.

**Betty Merle Dean**

Betty Merle Dean, 98, passed away March 3, 2025. Betty was born Oct. 14, 1926, in Boswell, Okla., to William and Oma Goode. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Wayne Dean; grandson Christopher Dean; and granddaughter, Rachelle Dean. Betty is survived by her children and their spouses Roger and Karen Dean, David Dean, Paul and Kelsie Dean, Hilliary and Diane Dean, and Kimberly and Terry Frost; sister Lillian (Tootie); grandchildren Jennifer Dean, Randy Dean, Steven Dean, Courtney Dean, Casey Merchan, Conner White, Shayne White, Shannon Dean, Jeremy Brandon, and Kristen Ratzlaff; 26 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces and nephews.

**Bobby Ray Brown**

Bobby Ray Brown, 84, passed away March 29, 2025. Bobby was born Sept. 12, 1940, in Calvin, Okla. to Elmer Brown and Una (Simpson) Brown. He was preceded in death by his wife Shirley (Loggins) Brown; his parents; granddaughters Ape-la Bowers and Luksi Bowers; and mother-in-law Jewel Loggins. Bobby is survived by sons Bobby Brown Jr. and partner Melvin Good, Elmer Brown and spouse Damaris Haney, and Elijah Brown; daughters Una Brown and Hope Lee; grandsons Nashoba Brown Nita Brown, Noah Lee, and Matthew Brown; granddaughters Dakota Brown, Emily Brown, Jessica Wunsch and spouse Daniel Wunsch, Caitlin Brown, Masheli Bowers, and Georgia Harjo; and great-grandchildren Kamden, Lowakiskiniti, Bentlee, Willow, Harlow, Ollie, Sammie, Zamora, and Xavier.

**Mary Alcantara**

Mary Alcantara, 83, passed away March 22, 2025. Mary was born Sept. 17, 1941, in Ada, Okla., to Eugene and Dacie Mc Gee. She was preceded in death by her husband Willie; daughter Sandy Breazeale; and sister Elaine Winnow. Mary is survived by her sister KC Fox; partner Markus Wilson; sons Keith [Dayna] Breazeale and Kevin Breazeale; daughter Kellie [Richard] Pullen; stepdaughter Tiffany Alcantara Cochran; several grandchildren and great-grandchildren; many relatives and friends; and her beloved fur baby, Zorro.



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

Don't let your fun in the sun cloud your summer safety plan

By Chris Jennings

According to the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA), there were 21,518 heat-related deaths between 1999 and 2023, a 117% increase. Heat stress is the leading cause of weather-related deaths and can be particularly dangerous for those with underlying illnesses like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, mental health and asthma. Heatstroke is a dangerous medical emergency with a high fatality rate.

The www.weather.com prediction is that the Southern Plains and Southwest, particularly the southern Rockies, are expected to have a hotter-than-usual spring and early summer in 2025. Along with these warmer temperatures, the National Weather Service's (NWS) long-range forecast predicts lower-than-average rainfall for much of the southwest part of the country, including Texas and Oklahoma.

As warmer temps begin encroaching upon the country, and potentially fewer rainy days prevent people from getting outside, it's time to start thinking about your summer safety strategy.

The CDC offers the following tips to stay safe during periods of high heat.

- Stay in air-conditioned buildings as much as possible.
- Don't rely on a fan as your main cooling source when it's hot outside.
- Drink more water than usual, and don't wait until you're thirsty.
- If your doctor limits the amount of fluids you drink or has you on water pills, ask them how much you should drink during hot weather.
- Limit the use of the stove or oven to cook—it will make you and your house hotter.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Take cool showers or baths to cool down.
- Do not engage in very strenuous activities, and get plenty of rest.
- Check on a friend or neighbor and have someone do the same for you.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines extreme heat as summertime temperatures that are much hotter and/or humid than average. Because some places get warmer than others, this depends on what's considered average for a particular location at that time of year. Humid and muggy conditions can make it seem hotter than it really is.

An Excessive Heat Warning is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this warning is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 105° or higher for at least two days, and nighttime air temperatures will not drop below 75 degrees. However, these criteria vary across the country, especially for areas not used to extreme heat conditions. If you don't take precautions immediately when conditions are extreme, you may become seriously ill or even die.

If you frequently work outdoors or are an athlete getting your workout in after work or school, there are some things to watch for to help identify heat-related illnesses (HRI). The three main types of HRI are heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke. They can occur when individuals are exposed to extreme heat.

The CDC says signs of overexposure to excessive heat conditions can begin with heat cramps. If you experience heavy sweating with muscle cramps during intense exercise, you should stop and move to a cool place, drink water or a sports drink and wait for the cramps to go away.

Signs of heat exhaustion are heavy sweating, cold, pale, clammy skin, fast, weak pulse, nausea or vomiting, muscle cramps, tiredness or weakness, dizziness, headache and fainting. If you or someone around you experiences these symptoms, you should move to a cool place, loosen your clothes and put a cool, wet cloth on the body.

Signs of heat stroke are a body temperature that's 103°F or higher, hot, red, dry, or damp skin, fast, strong pulse, headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, and losing consciousness or passing out. If you see someone with these symptoms, call 911 immediately, as heat stroke is a medical emergency. After that, move the

person to a cooler place and help lower their temperature with a cool cloth.

During the late spring and early parts of the summer, when temperatures haven't reached an excessive or extreme status, it's important not to leave children or pets inside a car. Even if you leave a window open, cars can quickly heat up to dangerous temperatures. While anyone left in a parked car is at risk, children are especially at risk of getting heat stroke or dying.

It's also important to protect your skin, particularly during the summer when you're more likely to be outside. According to JAMA, Native Americans had the second highest skin cancer rates behind white Americans.

The most common type of cancer is skin cancer, mainly squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and melanoma. While melanoma is much less common than the other types, it's much more likely to invade nearby tissue and spread to different parts of the body. Most deaths from skin cancer are caused by melanoma.

For melanoma specifically, a simple way to remember the warning signs is to remember the A-B-C-D-Es:

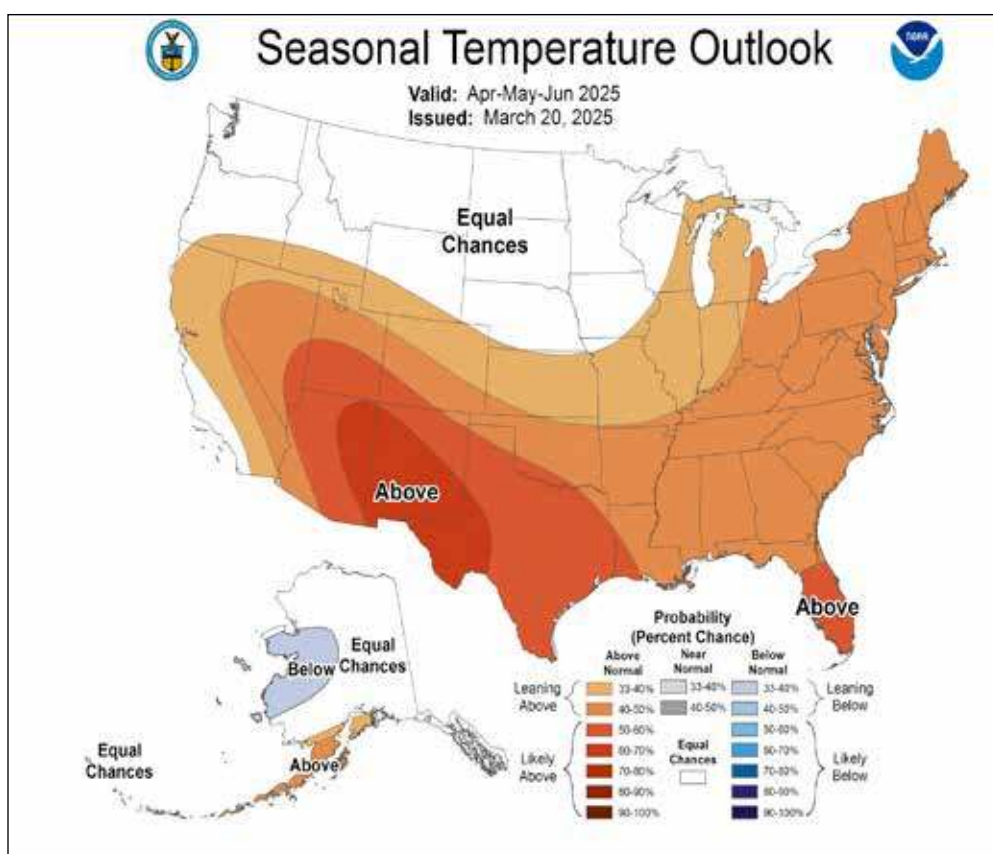
- A. Asymmetrical:** Does the mole or spot have an irregular shape with two parts that look very different?
- B. Border:** Is the border irregular or jagged?
- C. Color:** Is the color uneven?
- D. Diameter:** Is the mole or spot larger than the size of a pea?
- E. Evolving:** Has the mole or spot changed during the past few weeks or months?

Prevention isn't hard. Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. The most common way people are exposed to UV rays is from the sun, tanning beds, and sunlamps.

The best way to protect your skin from UV rays is to use sunscreen or sunblock. Mineral sunblock contains zinc oxide or titanium oxide as their active ingredients. These create a physical barrier between your skin and the UV rays.

Chemical sunscreens contain one or more of the following active ingredients: oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate or octinoxate. They work by capturing UV light and converting it to heat.

Mineral sunscreens can be better for sensitive skin and work immediately, but they take longer to put on and can leave a white residue on the skin since they're opaque. Chemical sunscreens are easier to put on and are transparent. However, they may cause allergic reactions, aren't immediately effective, and the chemicals in the sunscreen must be absorbed into the skin to



National Weather Service Graphic

The long-range three-month forecast from the National Weather Service shows parts temps in parts of the country in the above-normal range.

work, a cause of concern for some.

Regardless of which type of sunscreen you use, it should be at least 30 SPF and applied 30 minutes before outdoor activity.

Checking your skin regularly is key to catching any potential spots of concern. If you do find a spot you're unsure about, talk to your primary care provider about what to do.



Photo by National Cancer Institute (NCI); www.cancer.gov

A close view of a patient's right ear shows a circular, ulcerative, red lesion with a white, pearly border, characteristic of what was determined to be a case of skin cancer known as the ulcerative form of basal cell carcinoma.

PROTECT ALL THE SKIN YOU'RE IN
Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays—from the sun or from artificial sources like tanning beds—is the most common cause of skin cancer.
Anyone, no matter their skin tone, can get skin cancer.
CDC

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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.

May 2025
All markets open weekdays, May 3-27
Closed: May 26, 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 MAY 6
- BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
FOOD DEMO MAY 13
- DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
FOOD DEMO MAY 20
- MCALESTER** 3244 Afulhota Hina, 918-420-5716
FOOD DEMO MAY 8
- POTEAU** 106 B St., 918-649-0431
FOOD DEMO MAY 15

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

May 2	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
May 6	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
May 7	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
May 9	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
May 9	Coalgate	12:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
May 13	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
May 14	Idabel	10:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
May 16	Crowder	By Appointment
May 20	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
May 23	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
May 27	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
May 28	Stigler	By Appointment

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

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

ITI FABVSSA

Labor Day Festival and Annual Iksa Meeting, Part II

By Guest Writer, Reno Crims

Iti Fabvssa is currently running a series on the 1938 reconstruction of the Choctaw Capitol Building and the yearly celebration connected to it called the “Annual Iksa Meeting.” This series examines the detailed and complex history of the Annual Iksa Meeting and its relation to today’s Labor Day Festival. This month, we will cover how the Capitol Building’s rededication was turned into the Annual Iksa Meeting, as well as some of the exciting events for the 1939 and 1940 meetings.

After the rededication event in 1938, newspapers published that some members of the Nation hoped to make the celebration an annual occasion. These members of the Nation were part of the Choctaw Advisory Council, which had determined that the event and the area surrounding the Capitol should be developed and utilized for economic growth opportunities. In July of that year, several papers announced plans to further develop the grounds and a Museum Department of the Council House. Plans included the creation of worker houses along with a farm and livestock occupancy to make the site self-sustaining. There were also plans for a canning factory, public park, and water features. These plans were part of the economic development initiatives that the Choctaw Advisory Council prioritized to help with the growing poverty and inequity that was seen within the Choctaw Nation.

Tragedy would strike only four months after the rededication. Choctaw elder Peter Hudson, the Capitol Museum’s first curator and an important member of the Advisory Council, was laid to rest. Nevertheless, plans to make the event annual had already been put into action, and they continued to evolve. The meeting became known as the “Annual Iksa Meeting” or “Choctaw Educational Iksa.” Variations of both names can be found in local papers. The event was supported by the Choctaw Advisory Council and the newly formed “Iksa Organization,” a sub-committee dedicated to planning and organizing the annual meeting. ‘Iksa’ is the Choctaw word for clan, which is also attributed to society or organization. In more recent time periods, Iksa has also been referred to as church communities.

Officers of the Iksa Organization in 1939 included James Culberson (chairman), Edgar Moore (member), and Thomas Hunter (member and manager). All were former members of the pre-statehood Choctaw government. The 1939 meeting was held on May 20th and also featured speeches on Choctaw history, music, and plays performed by students from Goodland and Wheelock Academies. Choctaw Advisory Council member Muriel H. Wright organized and introduced an Ishtaboli (stickball) exhibition played by fourteen players from Jones Academy to the annual meeting. It was recognized as their second season of the game.

While the 1938 meeting alluded to Choctaw language singing, the 1939 meeting specifically advertised it. In his special address delivered under the brush arbor, Chief Durant spoke on the efforts toward more work-relief projects. The Ohoyo Humma Club of McAlester presented a “Pageant of Human Interests.”

Thomas Hunter characterized the purpose of the annual meeting as “educational, social and recreational.” He further said that:

“We are trying to educate our young people on modern requirements. Even health and domestic affairs are not to be overlooked. We will attempt to teach them in detail what the government is doing for the young people, such as the work of the CCC and NYA.” (The Civilian Conservation Corps and National Youth Association were both Great Depression initiatives that helped create millions of jobs and vocational opportunities for people across America.)



Photograph 2012.201.b1301.0608 (1939 Photo of the Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum), Oklahoma Historical Society.

In 1940, the third annual meeting began on May 31. Durant sent out a special invitation stating: “All Choctaw Indians especially invited to attend; and all others in sympathy with their efforts to advance themselves educationally, and in creating a spirit of loyalty, of tolerance and brotherly love among them and thereby make them better citizens of this state and the nation, are invited to attend. The Oklahoma United States Senators and the Members of Congress and government officials in the Indian Service are invited and some of them will be on the program.”

The third annual meeting held the same events and customs as the earlier celebrations and hosted the 1940 winner of the Mrs. Oklahoma Pageant, Martyne Woods. Woods was the first Choctaw to attain a degree in nursing (Johns Hopkins University) and the first Choctaw to enter the Mrs. Oklahoma Pageant – which she won that same year. Sixty-seven years later, Chief Gregory Pyle recognized her lifetime of work and awarded her special honors (Biskinik, Dec 2007). Woods was also instrumental in the 1970s restoration of the Capitol Building and the formation of the present version of the Capitol Museum. During the 1970s, she served as the Secretary of the Choctaw Historical Society and assisted with a large portion of the decision-making process for reviving the Capitol again.

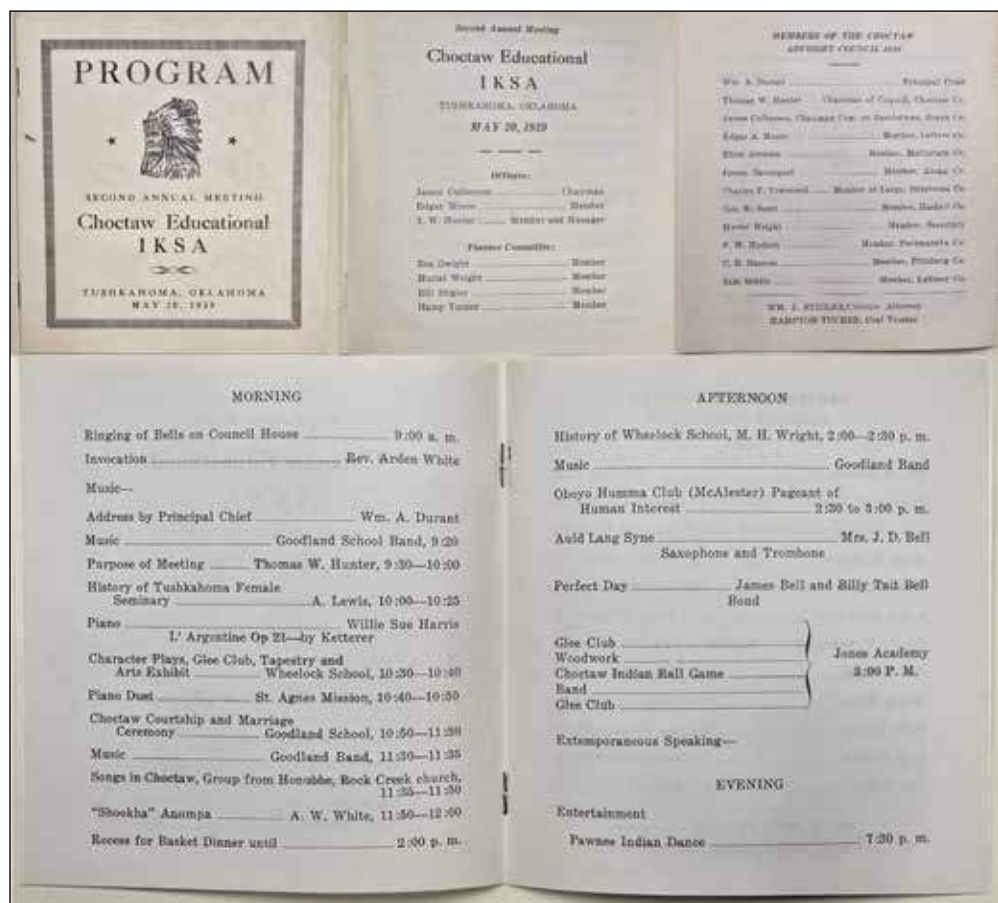
This meeting coincided with a Choctaw Advisory Council special resolution requesting the sale of unused lands so money could be freed to further efforts for the Nation. The 1940 meeting introduced the official advertisement of a program titled “Value of the Hospital to the Choctaws” which introduced health-service exhibitions being connected to the event.

Other events included a display of the Choctaw Tick Dance by Yvonne Lyons and a “memory hour,” a block of the programming dedicated to elders in attendance to share their stories in the Choctaw language. The officers of the Iksa Organization that year were reported to be James Culberson (Chairman), Thomas Hunter (Member and Manager), and members Edgar Moore, Ben Dwight, Muriel Wright, and Hampton Tucker.

Next month, we will conclude this series with Part III, which will cover the 1941 and 1942 Annual Iksa Meetings and discuss the transition to today’s Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival.

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- Jun 06, 1940, page 4 - The Antlers American at Newspapers.com (1940 Meeting, Mrs. Oklahoma; Names of culinary dept.)
- Article From May 26, 1940, page 2 - The Paris News at Newspapers.com (Further details of the 1940 meeting including “memory hour” and tick dance etc.
- Dec 2007, page 1 – Bishinik (Special presentation made to Ada Martyne Caudell)



1939 Choctaw Educational Iksa Program, Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum Collection.

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma offers our tribal elders the ability to live in a residential independent living community that is age-restricted with residents who are able to live on their own. In this type of community, seniors maintain independence for as long as is desired or possible.

Independent Elder Housing is comprised of units designed for one person or one person and their spouse. Each unit is equipped with energy star appliances: refrigerator, stove, central heat and air, washing machine and dryer. Some site locations offer a community building, available exclusively to residents and their guests. Each site is overseen by a rental manager and maintenance technician who are responsible for the overall operations and physical integrity of each unit and the property.

Eligibility requirements for the Independent Elder Housing program are as follows:

- Applicant must have a CDIB Card
 - Applicant household must meet income guidelines
 - Applicants must be elderly or near elderly (age 55 or older)
 - Household members must pass nationwide background check
- Tenant rent in the Independent Elder Program is based on 15% of the gross adjusted income for the household.

Independent Elder Housing is currently offered at the following locations:

- Antlers
- Atoka
- Broken Bow
- Calera
- Coalgate
- Hartshorne
- Hugo
- Idabel
- Poteau
- Savanna
- Smithville
- Stigler
- Talihina
- Wilburton

BUSINESS
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Five Common Mistakes New Entrepreneurs Make—And How to Avoid Them

By Brad Erwin

Launching your own business is one of life’s boldest and most fulfilling ventures. But it doesn’t come without challenges. Whether you’re growing a side hustle or diving into entrepreneurship full-time, there’s a learning curve that can hit hard if you’re not prepared. Here are five pitfalls many new business owners face—and how you can avoid them from the start.

1. Diving in Without a Plan
It’s tempting to jump right in when motivation is high; starting a business is exciting, but starting without a roadmap can create serious obstacles later. Many new entrepreneurs overlook the fundamentals—like defining their business model, customer base, or pricing structure.
How to avoid it:
Carve out time to build a well-thought-out business plan. It doesn’t need to be complicated—just a focused document that outlines your mission, target audience, pricing, and marketing approach. Having a clear “why” and “who” sets the direction for everything you do.

2. Wearing Every Hat
New business owners often take on many roles—sales, marketing, accounting, operations—you name it. While this can be necessary initially, trying to handle everything alone can lead to quick burnout.
How to avoid it:
Start delegating early. Outsource where possible—hire freelancers for design work, admin help, or marketing. Use tools that automate tasks like invoicing or social media posting. Most importantly, don’t be afraid to lean on business advisors or connect with other business owners. Entrepreneurship doesn’t have to be a solo journey; teamwork makes the dream work!

3. Overlooking the Financial Details
It’s easy to focus on building your brand or product and delay dealing with the numbers—but ignoring finances is one of the top reasons businesses fail. Mismanaging cash flow or forgetting tax obligations can be costly.
How to avoid it:
Open a separate business bank account, track your income and expenses, and KEEP

YOUR RECEIPTS! Use accounting software, even if it’s basic, or bring in a part-time bookkeeper. Learn your break-even point—the minimum you need to cover costs—and review your numbers regularly to stay ahead of any surprises.

4. Trying to Sell to Everyone
One of the most common red flags is believing that everyone is a potential customer. But when you try to appeal to everyone, your message often ends up too broad to connect with anyone.
How to avoid it:
Get specific about who you’re serving. Build a profile of your ideal customer: their age, lifestyle, values, and what motivates them to buy. Once you know who they are, tailor your messaging to speak directly to them—online, in person, and in any advertising. Customers want to feel seen and understood.

5. Expecting Quick Wins and Quitting Too Soon
Many entrepreneurs enter the game with high hopes and big goals—but when growth doesn’t happen fast enough, it’s easy to feel discouraged. Success rarely happens overnight, and persistence is key.
How to avoid it:
Set realistic goals that are timebound. Expect some trial and error; and don’t panic during slower periods. Track your wins, no matter how small, and use them to stay motivated. Keep your long-term vision in focus. Consistency and resilience will carry you much further than overnight success ever could.

In Closing
Starting a business isn’t for the faint of heart, but it can be incredibly rewarding with the right mindset and strategy. Avoiding these common mistakes gives you a solid foundation to grow something meaningful. Make a plan, seek support, know your numbers, market with purpose, and stay the course.
The challenges are real—but so are the victories. Choctaw Nation Small Business Development is here with you every step of the way to help you navigate through the challenges and celebrate your wins. Be sure to follow us on Facebook at ChoctawSmallBusiness and let us know any subjects YOU would like to see covered.
Yakoke!

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Simeon Gipson, Senior Games Cyclist

By Kellie Matherly

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”

— Christopher Reeve

Simeon Gipson, a passionate cyclist and participant in both the National Senior Games and World Games, has defied the odds through both personal and physical challenges. With a life story marked by both triumph and adversity, his journey to success in cycling is as much about overcoming personal battles as it is about sporting achievement. From childhood struggles to becoming an advocate for health and fitness, his story is one of resilience, self-discovery, and the power of perseverance.

Simeon recalls that much of his childhood was shrouded in confusion and emotional pain. Although he was somewhat aware of his Cherokee and Choctaw heritage, celebrating Native culture during that point in history was not always socially acceptable. As an adult Simeon has struggled to reconcile his ancestral culture with the white culture he was surrounded by growing up.

He was diagnosed with polio around the age of seven. This debilitating condition left him unable to walk. He has little memory of this period in his life, perhaps a result of his mind protecting him from the trauma of those early years. His struggles were compounded by the lack of cultural connection to his Native American roots. With Choctaw and Cherokee heritage, Simeon felt disconnected from his culture, having not been taught about it in his youth. This gap in his cultural education remains a significant part of his life, and as an adult, he strives to reconnect with his heritage, despite the challenges.

“I was probably in high school before I received any kind of education towards my culture. It is very important to me

to reach out to my culture and try to recover it, or at least know what it is,” said Simeon.

Simeon’s early introduction to cycling came much later in life because of challenges with obesity and health issues. After serving in the military and moving to Muskogee, he shopped at yard sales in search of items he could use. One day, he found a bike at a yard sale for just a few dollars. He bought it and thus began his love for cycling.

He recalls that his first bike was a simple, low-cost model, but that didn’t deter his passion. In fact, it was the beginning of a life-changing journey.

Simeon’s health had taken a toll by this point. Diagnosed with diabetes and weighing nearly 250 pounds, he was at a breaking point.

His knees hurt so badly that walking became a challenge. Simeon realized that something had to change. He decided to start cycling. The word “exercise” didn’t appeal to him, but cycling did.

“I hesitate to use the word ‘exercise’ because we all know how we feel about it. We won’t do it. If it’s something you really enjoy, like me and cycling, you do it regularly,” said Simeon.

The bike became a form of medication for him, helping to overcome the impact of diabetes and losing weight. Through daily rides, he shed an incredible 130 pounds, reaching a healthier weight of 180 pounds. Cycling wasn’t just a hobby—it was the key to his survival.

He credits his son with playing an essential role in his cycling journey. It was his son who bought him his first high-quality bike, a Klein, after Simeon expressed his desire to take up cycling seriously. The gift was transformative, and soon after, his son upgraded him to a Specialized bike, further fueling his commitment to the sport. Cycling became an essential part of his life, and his bike became his primary mode of transportation. He rode it everywhere, even in the winter.



Photos by Christian Toews

Simeon Gipson, a passionate cyclist and participant in both the National Senior Games and World Games, has defied the odds through both personal and physical challenges.

“I gave up my car. I haven’t owned a car in 10 years, and I don’t miss it,” Simeon said.

As Simeon’s cycling journey continued, he began to gain recognition for his achievements. Through the support of friends, including Alicia Baker, who introduced him to the Oklahoma Senior Games, he began competing in major events. He had initially hesitated to participate, unsure of what these games were, but quickly became a fixture in the senior cycling community. Over the years, the Oklahoma Senior Games grew into one of the nation’s premier events, and Simeon’s involvement helped raise awareness of the importance of fitness and health for older individuals.

His journey took him beyond local competitions, as he was invited to participate in national and international games. Simeon credits the support of his three major backers—his son, Alicia, and Brian Warner, the deputy chief for the Cherokee Nation—for making it possible for him to participate in these high-level competitions. Despite his fixed income as a retired individual, these supporters helped him with the costs of traveling and participating in the events, without which he would not have been able to compete at such a level.

One of the most profound experiences of Simeon’s cycling career came when he was asked to participate in the torch lighting ceremony at the National Senior Games in Pittsburgh. After completing a long ride from Oklahoma to Pittsburgh, Simeon was initially disheartened that the ride didn’t feel as monumental as he had imagined. However, the real significance of his journey was revealed when he spoke in front of an audience of thousands. During his speech, many people, particularly diabetics, approached him, expressing how his story had inspired them to take control of their own health and fight their conditions.

“I told them that my doctor and other people are telling me that diabetes is pretty much a stop sign. But to me, diabetes was not a stop sign. To me, it was a go sign,” he said.

This moment was transformative for Simeon. He realized that his story wasn’t just about proving something to himself but about motivating others.

The acknowledgment from others, particularly diabetics who saw his journey as an inspiration, showed him the true value of his efforts.

From that moment, he understood that his rides had a deeper meaning—he was helping others to overcome obstacles in their own lives.

“That meant the world to me, to hear people say thank you,” said Simeon. “I’ll continue doing rides like that if I get the opportunity if it means so much and helped at least one person.”

Simeon’s dedication to cycling has allowed him to live a healthier, more fulfilling life.

Even at an age where most people might slow down, Simeon has embraced the power of cycling and physical activity to not only improve his own well-being but also inspire others to take charge of their health.

Today, Simeon continues to cycle with passion, grateful for the opportunities and support that have helped him achieve so much.

He reflects on the importance of sharing his journey with others and the value of community support. Cycling, for him, is not just about the ride—it’s about the relationships, the culture, and the people who have been there to support him along the way.

Through his determination, Simeon Gipson has turned his challenges into triumphs, using his story to inspire others to live their best lives.

See more of Gipson’s story at <https://togetherweremore.com/>.



For Simeon Gipson, cycling is not just about the ride—it’s about the relationships, the culture, and the people who have been there to support him along the way.

Smallwood-Cocke inducted into Wilburton Hall of Fame

Choctaw Nation associates are making waves in their communities!

Sara Jane Smallwood-Cocke, Senior Government Affairs Strategist, was inducted into the Wilburton Area Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame at the Wilburton Chamber Banquet.

When announcing Sara Jane’s induction to the Hall of Fame, the Wilburton Area Chamber of Commerce said, “Sara Jane is a dedicated advocate for civic engagement with a deep passion for motivating others to exercise their right to vote and actively participate in their communities.

Beyond her advocacy work, Sara Jane is a pillar of her own community, taking on leadership roles that foster growth and positive impact. Her commitment to service and leadership continues to inspire those around her, making her an invaluable asset to both her community and beyond.”

During her speech, Sara Jane stated, “My whole family has instilled the importance of servant leadership and a lifelong commitment to serving God through service to our communities. I love working with people to help them fully realize their ability to serve one of their highest purposes of community engagement.”



Photo by Tabatha Ketton

Choctaw tribal member and associate Sara Jane Smallwood-Cocke was inducted into the Wilburton Area Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame on March 14, highlighting her passion for motivating others to exercise their right to vote.

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

MMIW COMMUNITY EVENT 5K AND 1 MILE AWARENESS WALK

MAY 10, 2025 | ANTLERS, OK

- 5k | \$25 (must register to receive t-shirt)
- 1 Mile Walk | \$15 (must register to receive t-shirt)
- Open to PACE and Non-PACE members
- Rain or Shine Event
- Event Begins at 8:00 AM



To register, scan QR code or visit choctaw.ws/mmiw-run

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

PEH TOLI YOUTH STICKBALL TOURNAMENT

JUNE 7, 2025
3:00 PM - 7:00 PM

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER



Scan for additional details

CHOCTAW VETERAN ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Are You a Choctaw Veteran?

Let us help guide you to the benefits and services that you have earned.

580-642-8451 | [BIT.LY/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY](https://bit.ly/cno-veterans-advocacy)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

Keep safety a priority during warmer months

Shelia Kirven

Summer months will soon arrive, and so will the chances of accidents and injuries, particularly those occurring outside.

Being familiar with safety measures is necessary to prevent emergencies.

Tractor Safety

Several years ago, Chief Gary Batton sustained a serious injury to his hand while using operating a brush hog.

“It took me two years before I could even have the use of my hand,” said Batton. “My thumb still does not have any feeling in it and caused me limited use of my hand.”

Chief Batton said he cautions against using a brush hog on an incline, encourages the use of seat belts and having row bars all the way up.

“Those two things would have kept me from having a major hand accident because the row bar that was not up crushed my hand and almost cut my thumb off,” Batton said. “I would encourage everyone to use proper safety wear and use all safety measures when using equipment.”

By understanding the basic principles of tractor safety, operators can help prevent accidents and ensure everyone stays safe while using this powerful machine.

- Always wear proper protective gear such as helmets, gloves, and eye protection when operating a tractor.
- Fasten your seatbelt before starting the tractor and never stand or sit on the platform of a moving tractor.
- Do not try to repair a tractor while it is running and keep your hands and feet away from moving parts.
- Be careful when attaching or detaching implements.
- Do not overload the tractor or its implements.
- Do not drive the tractor over unstable ground.
- Avoid driving during bad weather conditions, which can cause serious accidents.
- Make sure to operate with proper lighting or in broad daylight.
- Take breaks to avoid over-exhaustion, especially during hot temperatures.
- Use safety messages and proper warning signs for workers.
- Clear the area of bystanders before starting the engine, engaging power, or moving the tractor and ensure you are adequately trained before operating a tractor.
- Before starting the engine, perform a pre-operation check to confirm the tractor is in good working condition. Check the tires for proper inflation, inspect the brakes, lights, and signals, and look for any signs of leaks or damage. Address any issues promptly to prevent accidents or breakdowns during operation.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for entering and starting the tractor.
- Use the “three-point technique” when entering the tractor (climb the steps facing the tractor with both hands on the grab bars).
- Before starting, ensure the parking brake is engaged, the transmission is in neutral, and all controls are locked.

Remember, utility tractors have a high center of gravity, making them prone to rollovers, especially when navigating uneven terrain or steep slopes.

Moving parts such as PTO shafts, belts, and hydraulic lines pose entanglement hazards, mainly when operating attachments or implements.

Collisions with stationary objects, other vehicles, or pedestrians can occur if operators fail to maintain control of the tractor or are unaware of their surroundings.

Operators may fall from the tractor while mounting or dismounting, particularly if they fail to use proper steps or handholds. Operators need to be aware of these hazards and take appropriate safety precautions to mitigate risks while operating utility tractors.



Photo by Krislan Garside

With warmer weather comes more safety hazards. Stay safe this summer with these safety tips from the Choctaw Nation Occupational Safety and Health Department.

Barbeque and Grilling Safety

Summer is the most popular time of year to enjoy cooking outside. Nothing tastes better than a steak or hot dog straight off the grill. Keep these tips in mind.

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- Place grill away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep the grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from grills and trays below the grill.
- Never leave grill unattended.
- Make sure gas grill lid is open before lighting.
- Use long-handled grilling tools for plenty of clearance from heat and flames.

Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start charcoal using newspaper as fuel. When using starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to fire. Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources. There are electric charcoal starters which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use. When finished, let coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

For Propane, check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it the first time each year. If you smell gas while cooking, leave the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill. If the flame goes out, turn the grill and gas off and wait at least five minutes before re-lighting.

Fireworks Safety

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, In 2023, 9,700 people were treated in the emergency room and 8 people died due to injuries sustained by fireworks. Out of all fireworks injuries in that year, 66% happened in the weeks before and after the 4th of July.

When setting off fireworks, keep in mind these safety tips.

- Make sure personnel are trained and competent.
- Obtain any required licenses, permits and inspections.
- Maintain display site security and communications.
- Wear protective gear and proper clothing.
- Prohibit accidental ignition sources.
- Properly install mortar boxes, racks, and drums.
- Keep fireworks cartons closed.
- Keep fireworks dry and in good condition.
- Always handle fireworks carefully and stay away from loaded mortars.

The safety tips in this story were contributed by the Choctaw Nation Occupational Safety and Health Department (CNOSH).

Crystal Battles, director of the program said, “By fostering a culture of safety and offering resources, we continue to ensure a healthier work environment, by preventing accidents and promoting well-being throughout the entire Nation.”


Be sure to share the safety tips you know with others. It could save a life!

If you need more information on safety issues, please contact the CNOSH Department by calling (580) 642-6777.




Choctaw Nation Photos

Several years ago, Chief Gary Batton sustained serious hand injuries in a tractor accident, nearly losing his thumb and requiring extensive physical therapy. He believes that if he had followed proper safety precautions, the severity of his injuries could have been prevented.



INFORMATION UPDATES

For more information, visit laborday.choctawnation.com.
To stay update to on all Labor Day information, text **LABORDAY** to 888777.



Labor Day Food Vendor Applications - Sign up now to become a food vendor at the 2025 Choctaw Labor Day Festival. The deadline to apply is May 31, 2025. For questions, please call 580-579-2993 or email kturmer@choctawnation.com.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ◆ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ◆

May (Me) 2025

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Learn more about storm safety.



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Hooker's Grill partners with Ft. Worth's Military Museum to honor WWI Code Talkers.



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See photos from the Choctaw Nation Easter Celebration and Cultural Center Eggstravaganza.

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.



BOOM

IN THE VALLEY

CELEBRATION

GATES OPEN AT 6:30 PM
FIREWORKS BEGIN AT DARK

JULY 3, 2025

TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Stay Connected to the Nation

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

