



November 2025 Issue

Native November



In honor of Native American Heritage Month, the Biskinik is spotlighting a few Choctaw tribal members who are making a difference in their communities and representing the Choctaw Nation as they chase their goals and dreams. Do you know someone doing great things? Share their story with us at biskinik.com/biskinik-submission-guidelines/.

Native November: Celebrate Native American Heritage all month long with the Choctaw Nation

By Kendra Germany-Wall

November is National Native American Heritage Month, a time to celebrate Indigenous traditions, languages and stories. The Choctaw Nation invites tribal members and local communities to honor the month with events and activities showcasing Choctaw culture and traditions. Below are some of the many Native November events happening in the Choctaw Nation.

October 31

Choctaw Powwow at the Event Center
1 p.m. | Doors Open to the Public
2 p.m. | Gourd Dance Begins
5-6 p.m. | Gourd Dance Dinner Break
7 p.m. | Gourd Dance Ends
5-8 p.m. | Dancer Registration
5-8 p.m. | Drum Registration
8-10 p.m. | Grand Entry (Everyone Contest One Song)

Heritage Festival at the Cultural Center
10 a.m.-Doors Open
11 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Choctaw Hymn Singing
11 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Curator Talk – Artist Spotlight
12 p.m.-1 p.m. | Performance with Dr. Shadle
1-2 p.m. | Stickball Demonstration
1-3 p.m. | Traditional Games
1-3 p.m. | Demonstration Tables
2-2:30 p.m. | Tour of Temporary Gallery
2-2:30 p.m. | Choctaw Language Story-telling
3-4 p.m. | Social Dancing Demonstration
5 p.m.-Doors Close

November 1

2025 Choctaw Powwow at the Event Center
9 a.m. – 11 a.m. | Dancer Registration
9 a.m. – 11 a.m. | Drum Registration
10 a.m. Doors Open to the Public
10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Gourd Dance
12 p.m. Grand Entry (70+, 55-69, Junior/Teen Contest)
5-7 p.m. Dance Specials
7 p.m. Grand Entry (Junior/ Senior Contest)

Heritage Festival at the Cultural Center
9 a.m-5p.m. | Stickball Tournament
10 a.m. | Doors Open
11 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Curator Talk – Artist Spotlight
11:30 a.m.-12 p.m. | Social Dancing Demonstration
1 p.m.-1:30 p.m. | Tour of Temporary Gallery
2 p.m.-2:30 p.m. | Social Dancing Demonstration
2:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m. | Youth Exhibition Game (5-11)
2:45 p.m.-3 p.m. | Youth Exhibition Game (12-17)
3 p.m.-3:15 p.m. – Coed Exhibition Game (35+)
5 p.m. – Doors Close

November 2

2025 Choctaw Powwow at the Event Center
10 a.m. | Doors Open to the Public
10:30 a.m. | Choctaw Hymns
1 p.m. | Grand Entry (Everyone Contest)
5 p.m. | Sing Off/Closing

Heritage Festival at the Cultural Center
10 a.m. | Doors Open
11 a.m.-11:30 a.m. | Curator Talk – Artist Spotlight
11:30 a.m.-12 p.m. | Social Dancing Demonstration
1 p.m.-1:30 p.m. | Tour of Temporary Gallery
2 p.m.-2:30 p.m. | Social Dancing Demonstration
5 p.m. | Doors Close

November 4

Blood Drive
Join your tribe in making a life-saving difference by donating blood at the Talihina Health Care Center (8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.).

Native November Speaker Series at Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum
Capitol Museum curator Reno Crims will discuss the history of Choctaw Nation capitols.

November 5

Wear Your Regalia Day
Show your pride by wearing your tribal regalia in celebration of Native American Heritage Month and the rich traditions of Indigenous culture.

November 7

Living Village Experience
Discover Choctaw traditions at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Living Village, with dances, stickball and cultural demonstrations.

Choctaw Landing Live on the Lawn
Celebrate Choctaw culture at Choctaw Landing with social dancing, cultural booths, and a fancy dance by Michael Roberts.

November 8

Living Village Experience
Discover Choctaw traditions at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Living Village, with dances, stickball and cultural demonstrations.

Cinema at the Center
Join us at 1 p.m. at the Choctaw Cultural Center for Cinema at the Center, featuring this month's family-friendly film, Disney's Fox and the Hound.

Choctaw Landing Live on the Lawn
Join us at Choctaw Landing for a day of culture and community featuring social dancing, stickball demonstrations and cultural booths.

November 10

Roc Your Mocs
Wear your moccasins with pride to celebrate Native identity, culture, and tradition. Share photos and show your support.

November 11

Veterans Day Ceremony
Join us to honor veterans, enjoy a meal, and veterans will be entered into a drawing for a Choctaw Hunting Lodge trip.

Native November Speaker Series at Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum
Oklahoma Historical Society board member Kenny Sivard will discuss Solomon Hotema, a notable Choctaw from the late 1800s

Roc Your Mocs
Wear your moccasins with pride to celebrate Native identity, culture, and tradition. Share photos and show your support.

November 12 & November 13

Roc Your Mocs
Wear your moccasins with pride to celebrate Native identity, culture, and tradition. Share photos and show your support.

November 14

Living Village Experience
Discover Choctaw traditions at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Living Village, with dances, stickball and cultural demonstrations.

Roc Your Mocs
Wear your moccasins with pride to celebrate Native identity, culture, and tradition. Share photos and show your support.

Choctaw Landing Live on the Lawn
Join us at Choctaw Landing for some culture and community featuring social dancing.

November 15

Living Village Experience
Discover Choctaw traditions at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Living Village, with dances, stickball and cultural demonstrations.

Roc Your Mocs
Wear your moccasins with pride to celebrate Native identity, culture, and tradition. Share photos and show your support.

Choctaw Landing Live on the Lawn
Join us at Choctaw Landing for a day of culture and community with Choctaw language lessons, cultural booths and a live performance by Choctaw artist Southeast Remedy.

November 18

Native November Speaker Series at Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum
Join Choctaw Nation genealogy researcher Jessica Roddy as she discusses “Understanding the Dawes Roll” and its ongoing impact on tribal membership.

November 19

Wear Your Regalia Day
Show your pride by wearing your tribal regalia in celebration of Native American Heritage Month and our rich traditions.

Red Shawl Day
Join us in observing Red Shawl Day by wearing red to honor Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and to raise awareness about the ongoing crisis of violence in our communities.

November 21

Living Village Experience
Discover Choctaw traditions at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Living Village, with dances, stickball and cultural demonstrations.

Blood Drives
Join your tribe in making a life-saving difference by donating blood at the Idabel Health Clinic (10 a.m.–3 p.m.) or Stigler Health Clinic (11 a.m.–3 p.m.).

November 22

Living Village Experience
Discover Choctaw traditions at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Living Village, with dances, stickball and cultural demonstrations.

She Who Carries Fire Meet and Greet
Meet Crystal Tonihka, Choctaw Nation author of the No. 1 Amazon release She Who Carries Fire.

Choctaw Landing Live on the Lawn
Join us at Choctaw Landing for a day of culture and community with Choctaw language lessons, cultural booths.

November 25

Native November Speaker Series at Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum
Historic preservation associate T'ata Begay will highlight how music and dance sustain Choctaw traditions.

Blood Drive
Join your tribe in making a life-saving difference by donating blood at the Choctaw Casino Grant (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.).

November 26

Blood Drive
Join your tribe in making a life-saving difference by donating blood at the Choctaw Casino Pocola (7:15 a.m.–3:30 p.m.) or Ruben White Health Clinic in Poteau (9 a.m.–2 p.m.).

November 28 & November 29

Living Village Experience
Discover Choctaw traditions at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Living Village, with dances, stickball and cultural demonstrations.

Throughout the Month

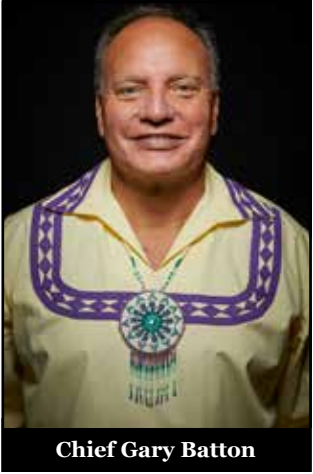
Social Media
Follow the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and Choctaw Cultural Center on social media for updates and special Native November posts..

All events are subject to change. See image below for more details and times.



Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

Choctaw Day and Flag Day

The Choctaw Nation had two events that not only celebrated our sovereignty but also shone a light on the accomplishments and fortitude of the Choctaw people and our culture. Here at the Choctaw Nation, we celebrated Chahta Nittak (Choctaw Day) on Indigenous Peoples Day, which occurred on the second Monday of October each year (this year’s date was Oct. 13), in place of Columbus Day. By highlighting the strength of our tribe on Choctaw Day, it also showed the resilience of our people who overcame the sorrow and horrors faced along the Trail of Tears. We celebrated along with all Native Americans in celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day. In 2021, the federal government issued the first-ever presidential proclamation of Indigenous Peoples Day. He said in a statement that the day was meant to “honor America’s first inhabitants and the

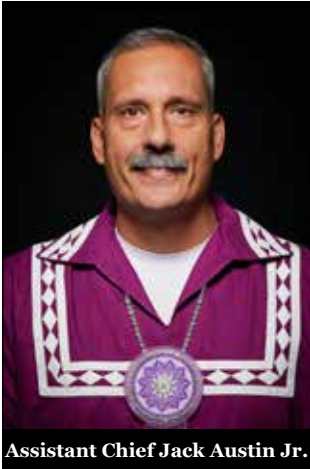
Tribal Nations that continue to thrive today.” All Choctaw Nation administrative offices were closed Monday, Oct. 13, in recognition of Chahta Nittak (Choctaw Day). I urged all tribal members to take time on that day and remember the trials, sacrifices and suffering experienced by our ancestors that occurred in past generations so that we could participate in this day as a strong, unified, sovereign nation. Also, on Oct. 16, our tribe celebrated the Choctaw Nation’s Flag Day in honor of the day our Great Seal was introduced as our symbol. The Choctaw Flag was purple and featured the Choctaw Nation’s Great Seal, an important image to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. A reminder of our history and traditions was on display in everything we did at the Choctaw Nation through our Great Seal. On Oct. 16, 1860, the Choctaw General Council, led by Chief George Hudson, passed an act at the regular annual session held at Doaksville that created the Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation. The Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation, which consisted of an unstrung bow symbolizing a peaceful Nation; encompassing three arrows honoring our three Chiefs Pushmataha, Mushulabbe and Apukshunabbe; and a smoking pipe-hatchet that represented the desire of the Choctaw people to establish beneficial alliances with neighbors, but also perhaps prowess. The seal had been used on all official papers of the Choctaw Nation since 1860. The seal was a guide for visitors to the Nation to see what we stood for — our traditions and culture. The Choctaw Nation celebrated its inaugural Flag Day in an official capacity on Oct. 16, 2021. Since then, tribal members have celebrated Choctaw Flag Day by representing the Choctaw Flag across the world. Tribal members proudly waved the flag of our sovereign nation in honor of this day.

A century of life ‘ full of God’s blessings’

By Judy Allen

At the active, youthful age of 100, Ruby McCurry of the Caney/Caddo area still keeps busy every day. She works daily at the home where she recently moved, keeping house, bringing in the moving boxes and unpacking them. “I have worked all my life. Even when I was a kid I worked — I stood on a stool and washed dishes. Work never hurt anybody!” She made the decision to stop driving a few months ago. Her son asks every day if she wants anything from town, so she doesn’t really miss driving. When asked about turning 100, McCurry said, “It didn’t depend on me! It depended upon the Good Lord!” She continued, “I love living! I thank God for every day that he gives me!” Born in Bray, Oklahoma, to Thomas Otto Hopkins and Dora Wade Hopkins, she and a twin, Jewel, had their early years on the farm. At the age of 4, their mother passed away, and soon afterward the twins and a younger sister, Rosie, were sent to Goodland Indian School near Hugo. “They treated us very well,” said McCurry. “The matron, Riddles, fixed up a room with three beds so we could all stay together. She said her years at Goodland began when she was in first or second grade. Before that, school was at Nix, east of Caney.” “I have been down (to Goodland) afterward. Me and my sister and my husband at the time. It looked like the campus had shrunk! I thought it was a big place when I was little.” She went to Goodland 11 years but didn’t quite finish the 12th grade. “I got married in May to Sampson McCracken. His mother was a high school girl matron and he went to school there, too.” She said there weren’t a lot of chores at home for her, but she had chores at school. “At Goodland sometimes we would wait on the tables in the big dining room, and sometimes help in the kitchen with cooking and wash-

ing dishes. Sometimes we would fold clothes in the laundry. They taught us well how to work and why we needed to work.” These life skills prepared the children for adulthood. “We had an hour each day of Bible study while we were in school.” For fun, the students could participate in football, basketball and tennis. She enjoyed playing basketball. The girls were allowed to go for walks on the campus. After supper, when the kitchen and dining area were clean, the high school girls and boys were allowed to go out and visit with each other. “That is how I met Sampson. He was on the football team.” She and Sampson had one son. She married Kenneth Young, and they raised seven children together. He passed in 1978. “I married at the age of 68 to Malcolm McCurry. We went to church together. He died about 15 years ago.” McCurry said while at Goodland growing up, “Seems like it was different to be Choctaw. We all knew which students were Choctaw. A few spoke Choctaw, but most of us didn’t. I learned songs and Bible verses in the Choctaw language from other students, but I have forgotten the language now.” McCurry said she made a lot of friends while at Goodland. When the sisters discovered some of the students stayed there year-round, the girls quit going home for holidays and remained at Goodland for summers and for holidays. “Christmas was celebrated like a family. The matron would get us in a big room and read us a story about the birth of Jesus. The school provided little gifts. When I was a child, I would get a little doll (about 4 to 6 inches tall) and I was tickled to death. We received an apple and an orange with the little gift. We would play with the little dolls. If you have nothing, then anything makes you happy.” She said Easter featured an egg hunt after church. “Halloween was a holiday but not like it is today. We went trick-



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

November is a Time to Reflect on Our Choctaw Heritage

Halito! We’ve made it to another November. The weather has changed, coats are out, the holiday season has begun, and it’s a time for all Chahta to reflect on our heritage and culture during Native November at the Choctaw Nation. The month kicks off with the 18th Annual Choctaw Powwow, the first event of Native American Heritage Month. Regarded as one of the largest and best powwows in the U.S., the event runs Oct. 31–Nov. 2 at the Choctaw Event Center, 3702 Choctaw Rd., in Durant. Admission is free all three days, and doors open at 10 a.m. daily. The event features cultural dance, singing and drumming demonstrations, and competitions with prizes awarded. More than 13,000 visitors are expected to attend, along with 600 dancers and dozens of drummers and singers. If you’ve never been to the Powwow, it’s an experience you won’t forget. And for those returning, we’re excited to welcome you back. The Powwow is a powerful reminder that the sovereign Choctaw Nation is here to stay—and we welcome all to experience our heritage. Throughout November, events across the reservation will honor our history, culture, and sovereignty. Visit choctawnation.com for the full calendar. As the holiday season begins, community and elder gatherings will be held at Community Centers across the reservation. These events offer food, fellowship and fun, with Thanksgiving meals and entertainment. The Chief and I look forward to visiting with tribal members in these family-friendly celebrations. It’s a joyful way to embrace the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture. Find details on our events page at choctawnation.com. On Nov. 11 at 10 a.m., the Choctaw Nation will observe our tribal holiday, Veterans Day, with a special ceremony at the Choctaw Capitol Grounds in Tvshka Homma. Administrative offices will be closed that day. Each year, we come together to honor the Choctaw men and women who have served and are currently serving in the U.S. military. This ceremony gives us the opportunity to say “Yakoke” for your service. Administrative offices will also be closed Nov. 27–28 in observance of Thanksgiving and American Indian Heritage Day. Please plan accordingly if you need services before the holiday closures. My hope is that everyone has a blessed November and takes part in the many opportunities to celebrate Native November and learn more about the great Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

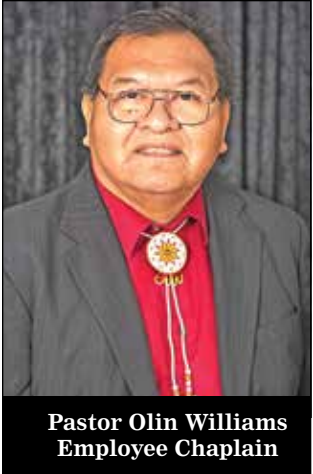


Choctaw Nation Photo

Ruby McCurry, 100, is visited by Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

or-treating from dorm to dorm.” Students kept busy at Goodland. “We learned to quilt and weave baskets. The boys fed the animals and raised a garden. Sometimes the high school girls helped in the garden, such as picking and snapping beans.” Goodland is Presbyterian. McCurry said she and several friends planned to go down and talk to the preacher and let him tell them how to be saved. “I don’t think I was saved then, because I didn’t feel I was changed. When I was 27, there was a two-week revival in Caney at a brush arbor. I went up the first or second night and was saved and knew it! I could feel the difference!” She said her husband was also saved at the revival later that same week. If she had to describe herself? “An old sinful woman who has been changed by God’s love!” McCurry said her son offers to get her a hamburger every day, but her favorite meal is still beans and cornbread — and an onion to go with it. “We have always raised a garden until this year. We didn’t because we were moving. I love cabbage from the garden,” she said. “When my kids were growing up, we canned in fruit jars. We put up 500 jars every spring! These were kept stored in the cellar with the potatoes (Irish and sweet potatoes) that we grew!” She remembers when growing up, her dad had a smokehouse to sugar-cure hogs for meat. Her father got his first car when she was about 10 or 12. “It was a Nash. I remember it was an ugly color — and it was a big, long car.” When asked about her siblings, McCurry said, “With me, there were five girls and three boys: Abel, Mary, Lena — nickname Dolly, Tom, me and Jewel, Rosie, and Sam. My oldest sister, Mary,

was 12 when our mother died and she took care of us.” McCurry had two siblings by her father’s second marriage, Lucille and Roy Paul. McCurry also raised a big family. She said, “My children were born at home except two, who were born at Talihina. I liked that hospital. They were good to me.” Her children are Leonard, Martha (deceased), Michael (deceased), Donna, Kenny, Robby and Tony. McCurry spent over 20 years sewing at a factory, and still loves to sew. She enjoyed sewing clothing for her children as they grew up. When asked to share some important lessons learned in life, McCurry said, “Really, it is from what is in the Bible. I have learned to treat people right. When you do right there is no wrong in it,” she said, “I know grandparents are a lot older than grandchildren. We have lived and learned a lot longer! How we teach and how we live our life kind of makes (the grandchildren) what they are. I would tell (the younger generations) to listen to your grandparents. They won’t tell you wrong.” McCurry has 23 grandchildren and many, many great and great-great-grandchildren. Asked what makes her happy to have lived this long, she said, “Because I have been blessed and still go and listen to the most beautiful sermons. It hits me just right whenever I hear a sermon preached because that is the Word of God.” She said, “God does miracles every day. My advice to others is to trust in the Lord with all your heart and he will fill your desires.” Lastly, McCurry had these words: “They say your life speaks volumes. I have tried to live a good life. Tried to please the Lord. When you are happy in God, you are joyful. Let the Spirit lead you!”



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Growth in grace

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.” (II Peter 3:18). True grace is progressive, of a spreading and growing nature. Grace is like light. First, there is daybreak. Then, it shines brighter to its full extension. Grace is also imparted to the believer. “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17) Grace is the “kindness and love of God, our Savior, toward man. Therefore, it is set in contrast to the law, under which God demands righteousness from man. Under grace, he gives righteousness to man. “But now the righteousness of God is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is

no difference.” (Romans 3:21,22). The righteousness of God is neither the attribute of God nor the changed character of the believer, but Christ himself. Christ met the full demand of the law in our place on the cross. And by the act of God called imputation, Christ was made unto us righteousness. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor. 1:30). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5). A Christian grows in the degree of grace. He goes from strength to strength, from one degree of grace to another. From faith to faith, a saint’s love of God matures. A true believer changes perception of self as grace abounds in his life. He is humbled by this transformation and sees himself as less. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30). It is to grow less in one’s own eyes. It is to grow out of conceit with oneself. A person may swell with knowledge yet may have no spiritual growth.

LET’S LEARN
SOME COMMON
CHAHTA
PHRASES

SCAN THE QR CODE TO
CHECK OUT THE NEW SITE!

‘Just another girl from Idabel’: Leandra LeForce’s journey to Miss Indigenous OU

By Christian Chaney-Sackett

For Choctaw Nation tribal member Leandra LeForce, embracing her culture has defined both her identity and her ambitions.

She was crowned Miss Indigenous OU April 6 and now represents Native students at the University of Oklahoma, sharing her love for her people and their traditions.

Before earning this title, she served as the Choctaw District 1 Princess, where she proudly represented her district and learned valuable lessons that continue to resonate with her long after her reign ended.

At OU, LeForce found a welcoming Native community that helped her rediscover her culture.

Encouraged by peers, she entered the Choctaw District Princess pageant.

What began as a hesitant step into cultural involvement evolved into a personal transformation that brought her peace and a sense of belonging.

“The more I engaged with the culture, the more I fell in love with it,” said LeForce. “I found a piece of myself that had always been missing, and that it was just always there for me to reach out and accept and embrace.”

Now in her final year of her master’s degree in regional and city planning,

LeForce’s academic path mirrors her passion for building stronger, more sustainable tribal communities.

Her goal is to become a tribal urban planner focused on improving infrastructure and environmental resilience in Indian Country.

Growing up in Idabel showed her the need for stronger infrastructure and environmental planning to protect tribal communities for future generations.

Winning the Miss Indigenous OU title earlier this year was a significant milestone in her journey, representing much more than just a crown.

For LeForce, it symbolized her growth from a hesitant contestant in the Choctaw District Princess pageant to a leader who represents Native students at one of Oklahoma’s largest universities.

She described the moment she won as emotional, representing years of practice, self-discovery and growth that culminated in one night.

“It just meant so much to me,” she said. “It was years in the making. Learning my culture, growing in confidence, finding my place.”

While LeForce now represents the university’s Native community, she credits her success to the support of family and mentors.

Her mother, whom she describes as her best friend, guided her through every step of the pageant process.

Former royalty also provided her with valuable guidance and encouragement.

LeForce believes that this mentorship embodies one of the greatest strengths of Native communities: the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next.

Her platform, Accessible Environmental Sustainability, connects her studies with her Choctaw values.

It focuses on helping college students and tribal citizens find easy, practical ways to care for the environment and their communities.

“My platform is about making sustainability accessible,” LeForce said. “But it’s also about cultural sustainability. Environmental sustainability is Choctaw. Language preservation is Choctaw. Futurity is Choctaw.”

She hopes to bring environmental education programs to Idabel and other Choctaw communities, showing how protecting the land also helps protect tribal culture.

“Sustainability is more than just the environment,” she said. “It’s more than just carbon emissions and renewable energy. It’s the sustainability of our tribes that also has to do with sustaining our cultures.”

Serving as Miss Indigenous OU has also helped her see what it truly means to represent her people.

“I used to think representation was just about showing up,” LeForce said. “But when you’re in this role, you realize you’re standing for more than yourself. You’re standing for your ancestors and everyone who might be helped by your voice.”

Hearing from elders has been one of her favorite parts



Photo Provided

Leandra LeForce is crowned Miss Indigenous OU.

of this journey.

“It’s so humbling when elders tell me their hopes for the next generation,” she said. “It makes you realize the importance of what you’re stewarding when you’re in this title.”

According to LeForce, being Choctaw means belonging to a people whose strength comes from perseverance, faith and community. That belief drives her commitment to sustainable development and to preserving the culture that gave her strength.

“My favorite thing about being Choctaw is the people,” she said. “It’s because of them that I want to fight for the future of our tribes, for the collective well-being of all these amazing people. I’m so grateful for my roots, where I grew up and everything that put me on this journey.”

As she prepares to complete her degree and continue her work, LeForce hopes her story will encourage other Choctaw youth to pursue their goals confidently and reconnect with their culture along the way.

“I hope younger tribal members who are our future, I hope that it can ease any anxieties that they have around achieving their particular goals, because I am, at the end of the day, just another girl from Idabel.”

‘Goose’ set to soar as she commits to OU Softball

By Christian Chaney-Sackett

Juliana “Goose” Hutchens, a standout softball player and Choctaw tribal member, is taking her talents to Norman.

The Wagoner High School star recently announced her commitment to The Univeristy of Oklahoma on Sept. 11, joining one of the most dominant programs in college softball.

For her, playing close to home under Hall of Fame coach Patty Gasso is a dream that’s now becoming reality.

In her social media announcement, she expressed gratitude and disbelief.

“This is one of the moments every little girl dreams of getting to experience,” she wrote, thanking the Oklahoma coaching staff for believing in her.

Head coach Patty Gasso posted a celebratory “GO BOOM-ER,” and the news spread quickly across sports media.

Hutchens, ranked the No. 1 prospect in Oklahoma and one of the top players in the nation for the class of 2027, is considered one of the best catchers in her age group.

Softball America ranks her as the No. 2 overall player in the 2027 class, while Extra Innings lists her as the No. 1 catcher in the country.

While she’s known as one of the best catchers in the country, she is a versatile player, also shining at third base and shortstop.

The numbers back up the hype.

During her sophomore year at Wagoner, Hutchens turned heads with impressive numbers at bat.

In 36 games, she scored 70 runs and had 45 RBIs while batting a .656 average.

She tied the state’s single-season home run record with 23,

showing off her power at the plate even as opponents often chose to walk her rather than risk giving her a pitch to hit.

Softball runs in the family.

Her father, Johnny Hutchens, is the head coach at Wagoner.

Her passion for the game has been clear from an early age, extending well beyond high school competition, and she has been playing on big stages for years.

She was a member of the Oklahoma team that won the 2021 Little League Softball World Series, the first team from the state to ever take home the title.

Hutchens also competes with the Iowa Premier 18U National team and was chosen this summer for USA Softball’s Under-18 team, where she will compete in the WBSC World Cup.

For the Sooners, Hutchens is another elite addition to their already stacked roster.

Oklahoma’s softball team has won eight Women’s College World Series championships and made history with a remarkable four-peat from 2021 to 2024, claiming four titles in a row and establishing Norman as the heart of college softball.

Coach Patty Gasso’s recent recruiting classes have been ranked No. 1 in the nation, and Hutchens helps set the tone for the class of 2027.

The Sooners have built one of the strongest dynasties in NCAA softball, consistently attracting top talent.

By adding a player like Hutchens early in the 2027 recruiting cycle, Oklahoma sends a clear message about its commitment to remaining at the top.

For Patty Gasso, signing an in-state star like Hutchens not only strengthens the roster but also maintains the program’s reputation as the preferred destination for elite athletes.



Photo Provided

Juliana “Goose” Hutchens announces her commitment to the University of Oklahoma’s softball team.

OU’s new home field, Love’s Field, a \$43 million facility, has also become a significant draw for players like Hutchens.

With state-of-the-art resources and a history of winning, the Sooners continue to attract the best talent in the nation, and Hutchens is a testament to that success.

While Hutchens still has two more high school seasons to play, her future looks bright.

With her strong batting and defensive skills, along with her leadership on the field, she is expected to make an immediate impact once she puts on a Sooners uniform.

For now, Hutchens will continue to build her impressive resume at Wagoner, with her community, family and the Choctaw Nation cheering her on.

Her commitment to OU is a significant personal achievement and inspires young Native American athletes across Oklahoma who dream of competing at the highest level.

Choctaw tribal member makes historic Sooner Schooner run

By Christian Chaney-Sackett

When the Sooner Schooner rushed onto Owen Field during the Oklahoma vs. Illinois State game, fans cheered as they always do for one of the most recognizable traditions in college football.

But this run was different.

Behind the reins was Brianna Howard, a junior at the University of Oklahoma, and the first Native American woman to drive the Schooner.

Howard has always been a passionate Sooner fan. She grew up taking photos by the Schooner, dreaming of one day being part of the tradition herself.

Now, that dream has become a part of history.

“It felt really great,” Howard said. “I was really happy to be able to represent my tribe and my family in that way. And I mean, it was a huge honor, and I’m really happy that I got to have the chance to do it.”

The road to becoming a Schooner driver is not easy.

Members of the RUF/NEKS and Lil’ Sis undergo a strict selection process, which begins with tryouts and continues through years of training and commitment.

Howard recalled the mix of nerves and focus she felt before making her first drive.

“I guess just like remembering all of my training and knowing, like reminding myself that I knew what I was doing and that even if I was nervous, all the training had prepared me for my muscle memory to take over,” she said.

For Howard, the preparation and long hours paid off in that moment.

While the crowd roared, she carried a quiet awareness that her moment in the driver’s box was also a moment of history.

“I knew as soon as I was selected to be a driver trainee that I would be the first native woman to do it,” said Howard.

Before her, there had only been six women to drive the Sooner Schooner.

Howard also carries her culture onto the field in a visible way.

She proudly wears the Choctaw Nation patch on her uniform, a small but powerful way of honoring her family and tribe.

“I feel like it means more now because not only does it make me more recognizable, but it makes the tribe



Photo Provided by Brianna Howard

Brianna Howard takes the reins of the Sooner Schooner at Owen Field, becoming the first Native American woman to drive the famous Schooner.

more recognizable to people,” she said.

The support of family, fellow students and her community has been overwhelming.

“The other Native people in my club were really proud of me, and just a lot of people from my mom’s hometown in Talihina,” said Howard.

With media attention following her achievement, Howard has had to adjust to being seen as a role model, though she finds it difficult to see herself that way.

Howard said people often approach her to thank her for the visibility she brings.

Howard, who is majoring in education and hopes to become a teacher, remains focused on both her academic and athletic goals.

“I hope to get a lot more drives in, just to keep going and keep pushing, even though things can get difficult,” Howard said. “I just want to keep showing other Native people, and just people in general, that you can do whatever you want, and they keep going. I really want to be that person that people can look to for inspiration. I also just want to graduate from college and pass my classes. I want to get good grades and make my family proud.”

Howard will graduate next year, but for now, she’s still enjoying every moment of being part of one of OU’s most iconic traditions.

From childhood dreams to a groundbreaking moment on Owen Field, Brianna Howard has carved her place in the history of OU traditions and in the hearts of the Choctaw Nation. Her story is one of preparation, dedication and cultural pride.

“I just hope it goes to show that even if it hasn’t been done before, you can be the first person to do it,” she said. “Even if it’s not that common, you can still do whatever you want, even if it’s not traditional.”

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District 6

Halito from District 6, the Heart of the Nation!
Fall is here and we are loving this beautiful weather. I have moved into my new legislative office downtown and invite you to stop by and visit. The new address is 113 W. Main St., Wilburton, Oklahoma.
We would like to congratulate the new District 6 Outstanding Elders, Joann Baker and Mark Underwood. They have truly been a blessing to our center, helping serve meals to the seniors and being available to help any way they can.
Also representing our district for 2025-26 are our Choctaw princesses, Junior Miss – Isabella Muncy and Little Miss – Lillyanne Muncy. We know that they will all represent District 6 in an outstanding way.

We host several community events at our center, one of which was the Cattleman Association dinner in October. We look forward to hosting other community events in the near future.

November is going to be a busy month with us starting off with our Heritage Lunch on Wednesday, Nov. 5, at 11 a.m., and with basket making at noon. We have our Veterans Lunch scheduled for Nov. 12 at 11 a.m., with the Choctaw veteran jackets being delivered. Our Thanksgiving Lunch is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 11 a.m.

Other upcoming events for December include our Children’s Christmas Party on Tuesday, Dec. 9, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. We will be hosting a Chahtapreneur Christmas Fest on Saturday, Dec. 6, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Our seniors singing group will be participating in the Christmas tree lighting ceremony on Saturday, Dec. 6. They will also be participating in the “Grinch-themed” Christmas parade on Saturday, Dec. 13, and I can’t wait to see the Grinch costumes they come up with. Our Christmas Lunch will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 17, at 11 a.m.

Some of the other activities that we encourage you to participate in are social dancing, which is held once a month; language class taught by Steven Parrish; chair volleyball; prayer on the first Friday of the month; attending powwows; and many more that help us recognize and remember our heritage.

Quinton Public School and Eastern Oklahoma State College have also hosted Heritage Days for the students and community. We have so many activities scheduled that we encourage you to come to the community center and get a calendar of events and menu for the month.

We would like to thank our Tribal Lighthorsemen. We appreciate all they do for District 6 and are aware of the sacrifices they make every day in order to keep us safe.

We also had a great prayer gathering at the Latimer County Courthouse on Oct. 14, Charlie Kirk Day, put on by Latimer County Sheriff Adam Woodruff and the sheriff’s department. It was great to see our community’s heart for prayer that was shown among the people who participated.

We encourage you to continue praying for all of our law enforcement officers in our communities, for their continued safety as they keep our community safe.

We are strong people together.
Love from the Heart of the Nation,
District 6



Left: Pictured are District 6 Councilmember Jennifer and Senator Warren Hamilton.
Top Right: Pictured, left to right, are Latimer County Sheriff Department’s own Patrick Sanders, Rowdy Smith, Blake Sturgeon, Amanda Sturgeon, Nathan Montgomery, Larry Milligan and Marcus Ward.
Bottom Right: Pictured are Choctaw Lighthouse Police officers who proudly serve and protect the people of the Choctaw Nation.

Cusher is October Veteran of the Month

Darrell Lee Cusher, District #1, is the Choctaw Nation’s Veteran of the Month.
He was born in Claremore, Okla., and grew up in Tulsa. There, he graduated from a private school and earned an academic achievement scholarship.
At age 17, Cusher enlisted in the U.S. Army with the consent of his Air Force veteran father. He completed Basic Training at Fort Dix, trained as a mechanic and was later attached to an infantry unit in Alaska.
Returning to Oklahoma, SFC Cusher continued serving as an Oklahoma Reservist in the National Guard. He was then deployed to Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In 2004, he served as part of the first Oklahoma National Guard unit to train the Afghan National Army. After more than 20 years of service, Cusher retired from the Oklahoma National Guard in 2008.



He recalls his favorite duty station as Alaska, where he enjoyed the natural beauty, open spaces, hunting and fishing. Returning to Tulsa, he worked in trucking and construction, then moved to Choctaw country 28 years later, where he continued in the same line of work.
Cusher met and married Kathey 16 years ago, and they have three children, John, Lauren, and Chance. They also have grandchildren, Shaylie, Faith, Jager, Cecelia, and Rayne.
The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma holds our Veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates their sacrifices and contributions to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.

Lajeunesse is October First language Speaker



Juanita Lorene Lajeunesse, who most know as Miss Lorene, is the District 1 First language speaker for 2025.
She’s full blooded Choctaw and will be 85 years young on February 2, 2026. Miss Lorene has ventured far from her childhood home in order to further her education and to begin her working career.
Her life after a high school was quite colorful for lady from McCurtain County, Okla. Miss Lorene attended Wheelock academy as a member of the 1957 graduating class. She received her Nurse Aide certification while living in Gainesville, Texas,
Miss Lorene worked as a matron at the Intermountain Indian School in Bigham City, Utah. She married while living in Bigham city and then moved to Minnesota where she worked as a nurses aide at a nursing and rehabilitation center for 23 years. While employed there she received special employee awards on two different occasions. Her supervisor said she was an outstanding worker and her patients adored her.
She took early retirement to come home and care of her mother. She worked at the Choctaw Nation Community Center in Idabel as a nutrition aide for eight years. She’s been a Sunday school teacher for pre-shool aged children. She volunteered with the Idabel center after retiring and has actively participated in the Idabel Choctaw community group.
She battled cancer four years ago and won. She enjoys attending and participating in Gospel singing. She was named outstanding elder for district one and was elected to serve as the Choctaw delegate to the National Indian Council on Aging Congress held in Tacoma, Washington.
Miss Lorene is a special lady. She’s sweet, she loves to teas and she always greets you with a smile. Simply put Lorene is a Choctaw treasurer.

COUNCIL MINUTES		
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION AGENDA		
September 23, 2025		
1. CALL TO ORDER		ing for Bond Financing for a Not-for-Profit Healthcare Facility
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTES		
3. ROLL CALL		5. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
4. NEW BUSINESS		6. OLD BUSINESS
a. Council Bill to Approve Funding for an Investment in a Financial Institution		7. ADJOURNMENT
b. Council Bill to Approve Funding for Bond Financing for a Not-for-Profit Healthcare Facility		8. CLOSING PRAYER
		All votes passed unanimously
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA		
October 10, 2025		
1. CALL TO ORDER		7. NEW BUSINESS
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTES		a. Approval to Dispose of Surplus Assets
3. ROLL CALL		b. Enact the Impeachment Rules of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES		c. Council Bill Amending the Legislative Committees Act
a. Regular Session September 13, 2025		d. Approve Funding for the Addition of Gaming and Expansion of the Facility Located in Garvin, Oklahoma
b. Special Session September 23, 2025		
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS		8. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
a. Veteran of the Month, District #1 – Daryl Cusher		9. OLD BUSINESS
b. Choctaw Language Speaker, District #1 – Lorene Lajeunesse		10. ADJOURNMENT
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None		11. CLOSING PRAYER
		All votes passed unanimously

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandel

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma provides quality, safe and affordable rental units to low-income tribal families, with preference given to Choctaw members. The Affordable Rental Housing Program offers family-oriented communities at rates within residents’ means.

The Housing Authority manages 24 sites with 583 units and 178 more in development. Each unit includes modern amenities such as a refrigerator, stove and central heating and air conditioning. Rental managers and maintenance technicians oversee daily operations and upkeep.

To qualify, applicants must have a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) card, meet income guidelines, pass a background check and provide two landlord or notarized nonfamily references. Applicants must also have income to cover rent and utilities.

Affordable Rental Housing is currently offered at the following locations:
• Antlers • Atoka • Bennington • Bokoshe • Broken Bow • Calera • Caney • Clayton • Coalgate • Crowder • Hugo • Idabel • Keota • McAlester • Poteau • Quinton • Red Oak • Savanna • Spiro • Stigler • Stuart • Talihina • Wilburton • Wright City

With continued growth and development, the Housing Authority remains dedicated to expanding access to affordable housing for Choctaw families and building strong, supportive communities across the reservation.

For more information or to apply, visit chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com or contact the Housing Authority at 580-326-7521.

Choctaw Nation

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Housing Authority

December 3, 2025 - Wednesday		
Battiest Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Battiest Community Center
December 10, 2025 - Wednesday		
Antlers Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Antlers Community Center
Atoka Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Atoka Community Center
Coalgate Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Coalgate Community Center
Idabel Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Idabel Community Center
Poteau Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Poteau Community Center
Spiro Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Spiro Community Center
December 17, 2025 - Wednesday		
Broken Bow Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Broken Bow Community Center
Crowder Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Crowder Community Center
Durant Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Durant Community Center
Hugo Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Hugo Community Center
McAlester Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	McAlester Community Center
Smithville Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Smithville Community Center
Stigler Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Stigler Community Center
Wilburton Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Wilburton Community Center
Wright City Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Wright City Community Center
December 18, 2025 - Thursday		
Talihina Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Talihina Community Center
Tuskahoma Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Tuskahoma Cafeteria/ Capital Grounds
December 19, 2025 - Friday		
Talihina Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Talihina Community Center

Upcoming Events

Car Seat Checks and Safety Information Event | Nov. 4 | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | Old Hugo Choctaw Community Center | 408 N Webb Street Hugo, OK | It's important to make sure car seats are properly installed. Join us at this event to ensure your car seats are safe for your precious cargo.

Cinema at the Center | Nov. 8 | 1 p.m. | Choctaw Cultural Center | 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 Disney's "Fox and the Hound." We'd love to see you there!

Warrior Wellness Run | Nov. 8 | 8 a.m. | Talihina Health Care Center | One Choctaw Way Talihina, OK 74571 | 1919 Hina Hanta Wy, Calera, OK 74730 | How do Choctaws celebrate fall? Come find out at the Choctaw Cultural Center's Fall Festival! There will be a corn-eating contest, cultural demonstrations, The 15k and 15k Relay start at 8:00 a.m., and the 5k and 1-mile start at 9:00 a.m. The 15k is a Certified Challenging Course. The 15k Relay is a 3-person Relay Team. All PACE member participants will register through PACE and run at no charge. Non-PACE members can participate for a fee.

Veterans Day | Nov. 11 | All Day | All CNO Offices | All Offices will be closed in observance of Veterans Day.

Veterans Day Ceremony | Nov. 11 | 10 a.m. | Tushkahoma | Council House Rd, Tuskahoma, OK 74574 | Join us as we honor the brave men and women who have served our country.

Voice of Valor Film Debut + Talking Code with RezyJam | Nov. 11 | 9–11:30 a.m. | Native Nations Event Center, OU Norman Campus | 860 Van Vleet Oval, Norman, OK 73019 | Join us for Voices of Valor, a free community event celebrating Native storytelling, comedy and culture. Experience the debut screening of Voices of Valor and a Zoom discussion with panelists Judy Allen, Robert Baker and Vincent Hazard, followed by Talkin' Code with RezyJam — a lively mix of humor and conversation. All ages are welcome.

For more Choctaw Nation events, visit www.choctawnation.com/events/ or <https://choctawculturalcenter.com/events/>.

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MEMBERS ONLY

OBITUARIES

Joe Hardy

Joe Hardy, 47, passed away July 29, 2025.

Joe was born Oct. 16, 1977, in Talihina, Okla., to Harvey Hardy Jr. and Lottie Flanary.

He was preceded in death by his father; grandparents Harvey Hardy Sr. and Mary Hardy; and his sister April Goines.



Joe is survived by wife Monica Hardy; his mother; children Jarrod Hardy, Jessica Mendez, Jarred Mendez, and Jourdan Mendez; sister Sarah Trusty; brother Justin James; grandchildren Ezra Urban and Kai Lyons; and a host of other family and friends.

Judy Kay Campbell

Judy Kay (Hunter) Campbell, 82, passed away August 22, 2025.

Judy was born March 11, 1943, to Pauline and Buck Hunter.

She was preceded in death by her husband J.A. Campbell; her parents; eight brothers; sister Patsy; son Buddy Campbell; and one grandson James Paul.



Judy Kay is survived by numerous children; grandchildren; great-grandchildren, great-great grandchildren; nephews; nieces; and close friends whom she considered family.

Rebecca Sue Good

Rev. Rebecca Sue Good, 71, passed away July 30, 2025.

Rebecca was born Oct. 7, 1953, in Talihina, Oklahoma.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and siblings Bill Peter, Timothy Peter, and Simon J. Peter.

Rebecca is survived by daughters Doshia Campbell and spouse Wayne, and Natasha Lowe and spouse Matt; son Nekoda Good; eight grandchildren; sisters Ann Thompson and Jacqueline Stout; brother Phillip Peter and spouse Carla; and many relatives and friends.



Alan Dale Roberson

Alan Dale Roberson, 69, passed away Sept. 19, 2025.

Alan was born July 19, 1956, in Talihina, Okla., to Louie Lee Roberson and Carrie Ruth (Phillips) Roberson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Harold Wayne "Weiner" Roberson; sister-in-law Glenda Roberson; and nephew Kevin Roberson.

Alan is survived by his wife Ella Roberson; children Brandi Murray and spouse Tom Ansley, Carrie Hartman and spouse Greg, Jessica Huffman and spouse Dewayne, and Rowdy and Savanna Roberson; grandchildren Paige Shults, Blake Shults, Tristen James and Daelyn, Garrett James and Alley, and Daisy Huffman and Ruthie Huffman; great-grandchildren Jayci, Jakus, Klancy, Klaycy, Kyler, Gunner, Lukus, Jaxon and Brynlee; brother Randall "Dink" Roberson and spouse Kay; sisters Carol Hunnicutt and Regina Roberson; and a host of other family member, friends and loved ones.



June Wiley Caughron

June Wiley-Caughron, 90, passed away August 23, 2025.

June was born April 6, 1935, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Glenn Wiley and Ruth Foster Wiley.

She is survived by her sons Jack Caughron (Lisa) and Jeffrey Caughron (Nancy); daughter Erin; grandchildren Nicole Quigley (Patrick), Cauren Macklin (Patrick), Jonathan Caughron (Natalie), and Ryan Caughron; and great-grandchildren Ian Quigley, Nikolas Quigley, Philomina Quigley, and Vincent Caughron



Bobby Shomo

Bobby Shomo, 63, passed away Sept. 10, 2025.

Bobby was born Oct. 24, 1961, in Talihina, Okla., to Timothy Sr. and Effie Lou Peters Shomo.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Channing Battiest; and sister Sandra Shomo.

Bobby is survived by his wife Cynthia Shomo; son Caleb Shomo; daughter Chasity Aaron; brothers Curtis Shomo, Billy Shomo, Timothy Shomo Jr., and Terry Shomo; sisters Debra Byassee, Lisa Weaver, and Bertha Grace; granddaughter Adelynn Mae Fichik Hadley; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other family, friends and loved ones.



NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Yakoke from Anakin Payne

"I want to sincerely thank the Choctaw Nation for supporting my 4-H livestock project this year. Your generosity has made it possible for me to raise and show my New Hampshire Bantam pullet at the Sebastian County Fair, where she received Grand Supreme Poultry honors! I also raised snowy call ducks for the first time and received Grand Champion Waterfowl. Raising poultry for show has been very fun and rewarding. I am looking forward to improving my flock and learning about other poultry breeds. I'm especially proud to represent my Choctaw heritage through my 4-H projects. Yakoke again for being part of my journey and for helping me reach my goals and supporting youth agriculture." - **Anakin Payne**



Yakoke from Everleigh Payne

"I want to sincerely thank the Choctaw Nation for supporting my 4-H livestock project this year. Your generosity has made it possible for me to raise and show my Partridge Wyandotte Bantam hen at the Sebastian County Fair, where she received Reserve Small Fry Poultry honors! I love working with my show birds, and look forward to learning more through my projects. I'm especially proud to represent my Choctaw heritage through my 4-H projects. Yakoke again for being part of my journey and for helping me reach my goals and supporting youth agriculture." - **Everleigh Payne**



Yakoke from Finn Payne

"I want to sincerely thank the Choctaw Nation for supporting my 4-H livestock project this year. Your generosity has made it possible for me to raise and show my New Hampshire Bantam pullet at the Sebastian County Fair, where she received Grand Supreme Poultry honors! I also raised snowy call ducks for the first time and received Grand Champion Waterfowl. Raising poultry for show has been very fun and rewarding. I am looking forward to improving my flock and learning about other poultry breeds. I'm especially proud to represent my Choctaw heritage through my 4-H projects. Yakoke again for being part of my journey and for helping me reach my goals and supporting youth agriculture." - **Finn Payne**



Stickball in the City: OK Chahta Children's Group Events

Join the OK Chahta Children's Language Group at Scissortail Park in OKC every Monday from now until Nov. 24, from 6 - 7 p.m. to learn, play and help keep the tradition alive. This event is for ages 8-17 and all skill levels are welcome. Bring your own sticks, extras will be available. Pizza and drinks will be provided.

Chahta Children's Language Group will host weekly events with stickball, arts and crafts, and beginner language lessons for Chahta youth. Join Jay Mule (Okla Hannali Stickball), Erica Rios, and Harold Marris, and follow our Facebook page for updates. Yakoke, and can't wait to see you there!

Stella Jane Heemer

Stella Jane (Plant) Heemer, 100, passed away May 30, 2025.

Stella was born July 18, 1924, in Waurika, Okla., to Norby and Mary Plant.

She was proceeded in death by her husband William Leonard Heemer Jr.; and son William Leonard Heemer III (Tracy).

Stella is survived by daughters Connie Thompson (Raymond), and Sheila Heemer; grandchildren Charlotte Redd (Ryan), Melanie Rosenbaum (Allen), Rock Thompson, Melissa Scavelli (Albert), Blake Mistich, and Jennifer Phillips (Thomas); nine great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren.



Mary Jane Maxwell

Mary Jane Maxwell, 81, passed away Aug. 29, 2025.

Jane was born Feb. 22, 1944, in Hugo, Okla., to Francis Edward Payne and Nannie Gertrude (Harris) Payne.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Phillip E. Payne; sister Beverly Peiser; twin sister Martha Jan Maxwell; and brother-in-law Paul Lyles.

Jane is survived by sons Robert Jason Maxwell and spouse Pam, and Michael Leon Maxwell; daughter Mary Beth Maxwell; grandchildren Courtney Sale, Justin Maxwell, Chase Maxwell, Chance Maxwell and Chelsey Maxwell; great-grandchildren Kelton Varner, Kamdon Maxwell, and Nautica Boykin; brothers R.D. Payne, Chris Payne and spouse Vickie; sisters Rebecca Smith and spouse Dennis, Linda Robertson and spouse Robbie, Karen Lyles, and Jill Sanneman and spouse Dudley; sister-in-law Sally Payne; brother-in-law Bill Peiser; and many nieces, nephews, friends and loved ones.



Michael Leon Smith

Michael Leon Smith, 69, passed away Sept. 4, 2025.

Michael was born May 23, 1956, in Midland, Tex., to Cecil (Sonny) Smith and Melba (Pal) Smith.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents; parents; and brother Cecil L. Smith.

Michael is survived by wife Jane Ann; daughter Elizabeth Ellerbe; sons Ryan (Kyra), and Ethan (Paul); grandchildren Ayana Smith, Reyna Smith, Holt Smith, Fayth Ellerbe and Rowan Smith; brother David Smith (Kelly); and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and in-laws.



Odessa Faye St. John

Odessa Faye St. John, 89, passed away Sept. 11, 2025.

Odessa was born Feb. 1, 1936, in Bokchito, Okla., to Debs Grace Payne and Flaudelle Frazier Payne.

She was preceded in death by her husband Eudis St. John.

Odessa is survived by daughter Gretchen Tolbert and spouse Steve Tolbert; granddaughters Haley, Kylie, and Courtney Tolbert; and half-sisters Brenda Horner and Dianne Clark.



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.

Durant senior challenges school policy restricting tribal regalia

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Durant High School senior and Choctaw tribal member Jordan Davenport was forced to retake his yearbook photo after school officials determined the beaded collar he wore to honor his heritage violated school policy.

Davenport initially posed for senior pictures in July. In September, he was informed that the collar was not permitted and would need to be removed for a retake.

The decision drew concern from Davenport’s family, who said they were not contacted before the policy was enforced.

Davenport informed his Tribal Councilmember, James Dry, of the issue, who encouraged him to speak before the school board.

With support from family, friends and his tribal leaders, Davenport attended the Oct. 6 school board meeting to advocate for allowing tribal regalia in yearbook photos.

Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. attended the meeting.

“Jordan did an outstanding job and I want to congratulate him for speaking so well about the issue. He is a fine example of the Chahta spirit that will define our tribe for generations to come,” Austin said in a social media post.

“He (Davenport) voiced his opinion firmly and gave facts of why it should be allowed while at the same time being diplomatic and respectful,” Batton said. “Yakoke, Jordan, for being a true Tushka!”

Despite praise from board members, Davenport’s request was initially denied, and the school board upheld its decision.

“To be fair and consistent to all students, the school chose many years ago for students to wear only the cap and gown for the yearbook picture that was provided by the district,

and that’s what the policy addresses,” said Durant Superintendent Mark Moring.

“I think you presented yourself very well. And of course, I can assure you that you can wear full regalia at the graduation,” School Board President Paul Buntz said. “We certainly are proud of our Choctaw heritage here in Durant. So, yeah, I think if there could be an exception made, I think we need to look into it.”

The Davenport family and their supporters were disappointed with the decision. Many organizations and tribal members posted their opinions in support of Davenport.

The MMIP Central Oklahoma Chapter released a statement Oct. 7 condemning the school’s decision and urging the district to uphold Oklahoma Senate Bill 429, which protects Native students’ rights to wear tribal regalia at school events.

For the full statement, visit facebook.com/MMIP.COC.

MMIW-Chahta also voiced support, calling Davenport’s actions “a courageous assertion of his Choctaw identity.”

The group thanked him for his “voice, strength and commitment to our culture.”

The complete statement from MMIW-Chahta can be found at facebook.com/NotInvisibleMMIWChahta.

Though he initially complied and retook the photo without his beaded collar, Davenport stated he would not have his face displayed in the yearbook until further dialogue with the district, emphasizing the goal of representing all students’ cultural identities.

After outcry from the community, the Durant Independent School District announced Oct. 9 that it would allow Davenport’s original photo and review district policies to ensure cultural respect.

Superintendent Moring said, "We value partnership with



Choctaw Nation Photo
Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., Chief Gary Batton, Jordan Davenport and Councilmember James Dry at the Oct. 6 Durant school board meeting.

the Choctaw Nation and their willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue. Jordan's courage in sharing the importance of his cultural heritage with the Board of Education was inspiring, and we appreciate all feedback from stakeholders on issues of importance to our students."

The district stated that it is committed to continuing its partnership to promote understanding, celebrate cultural diversity and create welcoming learning environments for all students and their families.

Visit www.facebook.com/DurantISD72 for the full release.

Leaders of the Choctaw Nation expressed thanks to the district for its decision.

"We commend the district for working with us to support Native American students," said Chief Batton.

"Yakoke Durant Schools," said District 9 Councilmember Dry. "We are proud of you, Jordan Davenport, for advocating for our Culture."

After standing up for himself and his community, Davenport will now be featured in the yearbook, proudly wearing his regalia.

Wells powers her way to national championship wins with Baylor

By Christian Toews

Meredith Wells has been drawn to aerobatics and tumbling since the first time she saw it.

"I was always the really strong gymnast, not always the most graceful and flexible. Acrobatics and tumbling is all about being super strong and powerful, and combining all these skills from different sports into something else," said Wells.

“When I saw it and saw what these girls were doing, I knew immediately that's what I wanted to do."

With National Championship wins from 2022 to 2024 at Baylor University, pursuing this path proved to be a good decision.

Growing up in Highland Village, Texas, Wells was involved in gymnastics from a very young age.

"My mom was a gymnastics coach, so I was kind of in the gym immediately," said Wells.

At age 11, Wells tried almost every sport out there, falling in love with basketball and diving.

However, her love of gymnastics never faded, and by eighth grade she returned to the sport.

According to Wells, her childhood dream was to compete in the Olympics.

In high school, she focused on gymnastics and set her sights on becoming a college athlete.

Wells competed in cheer and gymnastics in high school which led her to "stunting," a type of acrobatics, and to attending summer camps where she was introduced to the sport of acrobatics and tumbling.

After being recruited by Baylor University, Wells committed in 2022. She enters her senior year as a base/tumbler on the acrobatics and tumbling team.

Baylor has a proud history in acrobatics and tumbling. With 10 national championships, the program is the most decorated in the country.

Wells has been part of the national championship team for three years and hopes to earn a fourth during her senior season.

She also has been named to the Academic All-Big 12 At-Large First Team, a Baylor Athletics Academic Champion, and has appeared on the dean’s list.

When she is not competing, Wells enjoys flying. She holds a private pilot’s license and learned to fly with her father, who introduced her to aviation in high school.

Wells said support from her family has been foundational to her success as an athlete. She credits the close connection in her family to her father’s Choctaw roots.



Photos provided
Top: Meredith Wells proudly shows off her two NCAA national championship rings.
Bottom Left: Wells with the 2024 national championship trophy.
Bottom Right: Wells was drawn to the power and strength required for acrobatics and tumbling.

"I know that family is something super important to the Choctaw culture and that's something that my dad has instilled within our family," she said.

After her collegiate career, Wells hopes to coach at a university and help grow the sport of acrobatics and tumbling. She also plans to attend graduate school for a master’s in sports psychology.



Sawyer plays with Team Native America

Choctaw Nation tribal member, Madden Sawyer, a Junior from Coleman High School, recently played on the Native American baseball team in the DFW Youth World Baseball Classic in Waxahachie, Texas, Aug. 1-4.

The Native American team battled hard through pool play at the World Baseball

Classic, finishing with two wins and two losses to earn a coveted spot in bracket play.

The squad picked up decisive victories over Team Tejas (7-3) and Team Asia (8-3), showing strong offense and steady defense. However, they came up just short in two tight matchups, falling to Team Puerto Rico (1-3) and Team Venezuela (0-2).

With 11 teams competing in pool play and only the top eight advancing, every game counted. The Native American team’s performance was strong enough to secure them the No. 6 seed heading into bracket play on Monday.

Their first opponent in the elimination round was powerhouse Team USA. Despite a determined effort, the Native American team fell, ending their tournament run.

While the journey concluded earlier than hoped, the team’s advancement into the top eight highlighted their talent, resilience and ability to compete on the international stage.

Madden played starting shortstop and committed zero errors during the tournament.

Rolen turns 21

"Happy 21st Birthday Julissa! We love you so much and couldn't be more proud of you and all that you have accomplished! You are a very good Mommy to Milani too! You deserve the world!" - Christina Yount



Hazel turns 5

Hazel Germany turned five this August. She celebrated her big day with her friends and family, who love her so much.

“Happy birthday sweet girl!” - Mom and Dad



WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Matt Gamble

Our office has been fielding many calls about the statement put forth by the state of Oklahoma concerning tribal fishing and hunting licenses. Many questions, rumors and confusion have spawned from the statement. We want it to be clear that nothing has changed for Choctaw tribal members. Your proof of tribal membership serves as your fishing and hunting licenses and tags. This works within the entirety of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), Cherokee and Seminole nations (Five Tribes Wildlife Management Reciprocity Agreement). All game harvested by Choctaw tribal members within the Five Tribes boundaries is to be checked in through the Chahta Achvffa membership portal. Tribal members are responsible for any entrance fees or permits to gain access to state public lands.

Tribal leadership remains steadfast in their protection and support of tribal members legally fishing and hunting under tribal code. Should you receive a citation from a state game warden for legally fishing and hunting under tribal code, contact the Choctaw Nation Public Defender’s Office at 580-634-0678. This includes receiving a citation while hunting or fishing within the Five Tribes boundaries for not having a state hunting or fishing license. You can also call our office at 580-642-4102, and we will get you in touch with the Choctaw Nation legal team.

Chief Batton said in a recent interview, “From our tribe, we would say function as normal. We will assist you if anybody tries to affect your right to hunt and fish.”

From the CNO Wildlife Department’s perspective, we will continue our programs, protect our God-given natural resources and promote hunting and fishing for tribal members to our fullest capabilities. With all that being said, now is the time to get out there and enjoy the wonderful outdoors with friends, family and loved ones. Deer season is underway, and it is shaping up to be a great one. We have already seen some nice bucks hit the ground, and the does are fat and healthy. As I write, youth season is approaching, and my two boys can't wait to get out this weekend. They are already planning for venison heart tacos.

Please send us your harvest photos! We want to see what is being harvested and the smiling faces of tribal members after a successful time in the field. Remember, success doesn't mean a harvested animal; many times it's memories made with loved ones.

Choctaw Nation

Wildlife Conservation

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna Nofimba Language Lesson	
Words and Phrases to Know this Thanksgiving	
Here are some Choctaw words and phrases to share with friends and family this Thanksgiving. Gather around the table and show off your Chahta anumpa skills!	
i yakoke (v)	to give thanks to (someone)
nittak hullo (n)	holiday
Na Hvlbina Aiokpvchi Na Yukpa	Happy Thanksgiving
chukka achvffa (n)	family, household
akak chaha (n)	Turkey (a euphemism, literally ‘tall chicken’)
impa chito (n)	party, feast, banquet
tanchi (n)	corn
abani	to cook over fire, barbecue, smoke (food), cure, dry (a ham, etc.)
na champuli (n)	sweets, dessert, candy
bvshli (v)	to cut, slash, slice
hoponi (v)	to cook (general term)
nunachi (v)	to cook, bake (something)
honi (v)	to boil (potatoes, meat, etc.), stew, cook, brew
www.choctawschool.com	

Broken Bow's Ambree Shelton begins law career in Texas

By Kendra Germany-Wall

In 2022, we shared the story of Ambree Shelton, a tribal member from Broken Bow at the University of Oklahoma. Now, at 25, she has graduated, passed the bar exam and begun her career as a lawyer.

Shelton's journey was shaped by resilience. Around age 4, her family experienced homelessness until a Choctaw Nation social worker connected them with resources. Today, her mother, Susan Mitchell, works in the Choctaw Nation Information Technology Department.

Shelton has always been a hard worker. At 16, she began tutoring and completed roughly 1,000 hours of volunteer work, not only to build her résumé, but to help her community.

She was determined to break the stereotype of "never getting out of Broken Bow."

Her dreams took shape once she was accepted at OU, where she decided that practicing law was her calling.

At OU, Shelton was active in the Native American Law Students Association, the First-Generation Law Student Society and Moot Court (a simulated appellate hearing that allows practicing real-world legal skills), where she earned recognition for her oral advocacy skills.

"Moot Court was one of the most challenging yet rewarding parts of law school," Shelton said. "It really pushed me to develop my research, writing and oral advocacy skills."

In 2021, she became the sole intern for the Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch, gaining firsthand experience in tribal court shortly after the landmark *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision expanded tribal jurisdiction.

"Much of my time was spent observing proceedings in tribal court, which was fascinating because it was right after the *McGirt* decision," Shelton said. "I also had opportunities to sit in on meetings where they discussed how they were going to implement changes resulting from the increased caseload that came with the decision."

She later interned at a personal injury law firm in Dallas, gaining hands-on experience reviewing medical records, attending depositions and analyzing body camera footage, which gave her practical skills and a deeper understanding of civil law.

According to Shelton, earning a law degree and being a first-generation lawyer mean everything to her.

"I hope that when I have my own family, I can continue to show that it is possible to build a different future, no matter where you start," she said.

Shelton credits her mother's resilience and hard work for inspiring her own determination to succeed.

"Ultimately, my mother worked incredibly hard to give us stability," Shelton said. "Her determination and sacrifices are the reason I'm here today, preparing to become an attorney. For me, it's not just an accomplishment but a symbol of how far we have come as a family."

Shelton emphasized the importance of not letting your past circumstances determine your future. She is proud of what her degree represents.

"It is an example of how far you can come, how much can change in your generation," she said. "I think it represents resilience, hope and belief that our beginnings — whatever they may be — don't always have to define our futures."



Photo Provided

Choctaw Nation tribal member, Ambree Shelton starts law career in Texas after graduating from The University of Oklahoma College of Law.

Shelton recently began her career with the Dallas firm Walters, Balido, and Crain and will be sworn in as an attorney Nov. 3 in Austin.

One of Shelton's primary goals is to help her community. "I want to advocate for those who feel unseen and create a path for individuals from similar backgrounds," she said. "I am deeply grateful to everyone who has helped me reach this point, and I hope to honor their support by using my degree to make a meaningful difference in any way I can."

Shelton also expressed a desire to return to the Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch to give back to the Nation that supported her throughout her journey.

"The Choctaw Nation has greatly assisted me during high school, college and law school," Shelton said. "I want to come back and help the Nation myself."

Robinson continues D-I career with Razorbacks

By Christian Toews

Emily Robinson recently transferred to the University of Arkansas to play basketball.

She was a starter at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa for the two seasons before the transfer, making this her second Division I school during her college career.

While she is a long way from the Bokchito, Oklahoma, dairy farm where she grew up, Robinson said she always dreamed of taking her sports beyond high school.

"I think just the way I grew up, my parents taught me and also showed me what a good work ethic looks like," said Robinson. "When you get something in your mind that you want to achieve, you work hard at it and always believe in yourself."

Her work ethic showed early in her sports career. She was a standout in both basketball and softball at Caddo High School, pitching a no-hitter in the state championship to win the first girls' state title in school history.

She also scored over 2,200 career points in basketball, ranking her in the top 30 among Oklahoma girls in high school.

According to Robinson, she was recruited from a basketball camp her senior year of high school, but she still tried to stay grounded about her abilities.

"My freshman year of college, I didn't really want to set a lot of expectations for myself. Honestly, I didn't know if I would even play," said Robinson. "So, the fact that I was able to start every game, play good minutes and give ORU some solid averages is amazing. In the back of my head, I always wanted to achieve freshman of the year, but I didn't know if that was possible."

Not only was she named the Summit League Freshman of the Year, Robinson also led all Summit League freshmen in scoring and was the only player averaging double figures, with 10.3 points per game.

Robinson attributes this success to the



Photo Provided

Choctaw tribal member Emily Robinson continues her Division I basketball career at University of Arkansas.

coaching she received.

"I've had amazing coaches pour into me and believe in me. And that really is the main factor, having good coaches that trust you to just play well," said Robinson. "When you're down, they fill you with confidence instead of tearing you down. I've had that in high school and had that in college, I've been lucky to play for some amazing coaches."

According to Robinson, transferring to Arkansas was one of the most difficult decisions she has had to make. Moving to a bigger school in a different area, further away from home, was intimidating, but her faith kept her grounded.

"In the moment when I was nervous to get into the transfer portal because I didn't know what that would look like," Robinson said. "I just had to rely on knowing that God is going to place me wherever I'm called to be."

Robinson is excited to see what her time at Arkansas holds while putting her faith in the Lord for the future.

"Seeing where I am now and seeing all that he (God) has fulfilled and seeing that there is going to be way more down the line," Robinson said. "I still have two full seasons to play, so hopefully those go well. But I think just relying on him and allowing him to guide you has been a big thing for me."

You can keep up with Robinson and the Razorbacks Women's Basketball team at arkansasrazorbacks.com/sport/w-baskbl/.

Gregory achieves success as teen golfer

By Shelia Kirven

Fifteen-year-old Harlow Gregory's golfing resume reads like that of a much older athlete.

The high school sophomore daughter of Aaron and Brooklyn Gregory of Norman, Oklahoma, began golfing at age 3, taught by her father. By age 4, she was working with an instructor.

Harlow has accomplished significant golf championships in her lifetime that not many people her age has been able to do, and her wins have received multiple media coverages.

In 2023, she finished seventh out of 32 of the top girl golfers in the world in her division at the Notah Begay III National Championship, which aired on the Golf Channel. She also reached the finals of the Drive, Chip, and Putt held at Augusta National on the Sunday before the Masters Golf tournament.

As a freshman, in 2024, she won the state 6A State golf championship and was ranked 51st (now 44th) in the world in her age group.

She won three straight Native Youth Golf Championships in Santa Ana, New Mexico and became the only Junior Golf Ambassador for the John Daly Heart of a Lion Foundation.

Harlow qualified for the USGA National Women's Four-Ball Championship, was named player of the year on the Oklahoma Junior Golf Tour and was voted Player of the Year by The Oklahoman.



Photo Courtesy of Oklahoma Golf Association

Harlow Gregory after her win in September at Lake Hefner North Golf Course.

She qualified for the Girls Junior PGA Championship held July 29-Aug. 1 of this year in Louisiana. She finished 61st of 155 girls, against opponents up to college age.

This September, she won her sixth straight Oklahoma Junior Golf Tour Tournament. She shot eight under par for the two-day tournament, winning on the first hole of a sudden-death playoff.

Harlow said of her love of golf, "I love meeting new people and making new friends. I love the mental aspect of how it tests your patience. I love how much I learn from my mistakes and how to take that learning to do better on the course and in my everyday life."

She plans to attend college after high school and play Division I golf, and when the time is right, to play professionally on the LPGA tour.

Gaines shares his culture

Joe Gaines is a traditional Indigenous drummer, singer, educator, actor and social justice advocate. A native of the Choctaw Nation in southeastern Oklahoma, he earned a bachelor's degree in liberal studies with a concentration in Native American and Indigenous studies from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Gaines now lives in Virginia, with his wife, T. Carter, where they run their business, History Outside the Box.



Briseno turns 18

Trevor Briseno celebrated his 18th birthday in October 2024. He graduated with high honors from West Hills High School in Santee, Calif., earning a spot on the principal's honor roll with an exceptional GPA above 4.0.

His commitment to athletics matched his dedication to academics. Throughout his high school career, Trevor was a proud multi-sport athlete, participating in football, soccer, track and wrestling — a true example of perseverance, teamwork and school spirit.

Next up for Trevor is college and serving our country in the U.S. Air Force.

"We couldn't be more proud of his achievements and the bright future ahead of him. Way to go, Trevor — your hard work and leadership inspire us all!" - The Birseno Family



Bowers retires

Choctaw District 5 member, Loretta Bowers, retired from teaching on June 30, 2025, after a 38-year career.

Loretta graduated from Kinta School in 1980. After receiving her degree in elementary education in 1984 from ECU in Ada, she returned to Kinta to begin her teaching career there. Loretta taught at Kinta longer than any other teacher in the school's history.

Since retiring, she has enjoyed attending the senior luncheons at the District 5 center and is looking forward to becoming more involved with it.

Loretta is the daughter of the late Willie and Marie Harris Bowers and the granddaughter of original Choctaw enrollee Susan Riddle Harris.



Sanders graduates

The family of MaKalynn Sanders is proud to announce her graduation from Parker University in Dallas, Texas. MaKalynn recently earned her Doctorate in Chiropractic and graduated with honors.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Health from Texas A&M University, which laid the foundation for her continued studies in chiropractic care.

She has returned to her hometown of Waco, Texas, where she is now practicing at Allied Wellness Centers.

MaKalynn extends her heartfelt gratitude to the Choctaw Nation Higher Education programs for their invaluable support throughout her academic journey. Their encouragement and assistance played a vital role in helping her achieve her educational and professional goals.



Hill graduates

Adrianna Elizabeth Hill graduated from Edgewood College in Madison, Wis., on May 17, 2025, with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology.



2025 TOY DRIVE

NOVEMBER 3 - 21

Donate new, in-package toys (minimum \$5 value) and earn entries into a prize drawing! Every toy donated gives you an extra chance to win.

Suggested items include:

- Developmental toys
- Sports gear
- Lego blocks
- Baby dolls
- Gift cards for older kids

Drop off at your local Wellness Center. Prizes vary by location. Help make the holidays brighter for children in need!

Choctaw Nation Wellness Center

2025 WINTER APPAREL DRIVE

HELP KEEP OUR COMMUNITY WARM

The Choctaw Nation is hosting its annual Winter Apparel Drive from November 3 to 21, 2025. The drive is an opportunity for community members to contribute to those in need by donating new winter items, including jackets, blankets, socks, gloves, beanies and scarves.

All donations must be new and can be dropped off at any Choctaw Nation Wellness Center.

For more information, please visit your local Wellness Center.

Choctaw Nation Wellness Center

INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL: 580.642.7898 OR 580.642.7921
CAREERS.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

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NOVEMBER 8, 2025
CNO HEADQUARTERS

Scan to register for this event

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Oklahoma tribes stand firm after wildlife agency challenges sovereignty rights

By Kendra Germany-Wall

The State of Oklahoma has once again raised questions about the limits of tribal sovereignty.

In an Oct. 8 news release, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) said “all hunters and anglers that state fish and wildlife laws apply to everyone in Oklahoma regardless of race, heritage, or background.”

In the press release, ODWC states, “The release also said, “ODWC game wardens will continue to enforce the law and will issue citations to anyone in violation of the state’s fish and game laws, regardless of tribal citizenship. Our responsibility is to ensure consistent wildlife management and fair application of the law to protect Oklahoma’s natural resources for all citizens.”

ODWC claims the July 1, 2025, Strobe v. Oklahoma Tax Commission decision by the Oklahoma Supreme Court “has provided clear legal confirmation that McGirt is limited to prosecuting crimes under the federal Major Crimes Act only.”

For the full release, visit wildlifedepartment.com/outdoor-news.

The 6-3 Strobe v. Oklahoma Tax Commission decision found that Muscogee (Creek) Nation citizen Alicia Strobe is subject to state income tax, declining to extend the McGirt v. Oklahoma ruling to civil matters such as taxes and regulations.

While the decision addressed taxation, it did not mention tribal land rights or hunting and fishing rights.

Tribal leaders across the state quickly responded, reaffirming the sovereign rights of tribal citizens to hunt and fish on tribal land.

Below is Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton’s full statement:

“As part of a sovereign nation, tribal members have the inherent right to hunt and fish on our reservation. Since 2022, Choctaw tribal members have been able to use their membership card as their hunting and fishing license on the reservation. In 2024, the Five Tribes Wildlife Management Reciprocity Agreement enabled Choctaw tribal members to also hunt and fish on the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw and Seminole reservations.

Tribal Nations have exercised the right to hunt, fish, and gather on their traditional lands and waters since the Choctaw people first walked on this earth. The right to hunt and fish is inherent, rooted in the sovereignty and traditions of tribal nations long before the founding of the United States. These rights were not granted by the federal government but were retained by tribes and later acknowledged and affirmed through treaties, federal law, and court decisions. We have been stewards of the natural resources in a productive and responsible manner ever since.

The Choctaw Nation will defend the rights of our tribal



Photo Provided

Leaders of the Five Tribes met during the October Inter-Tribal Council Meeting, reaffirming their unity in protecting sovereign hunting and fishing rights.

members and our Nation against intimidation and harassment in violation of tribal and federal law.

Any tribal member who receives a citation or has personal items confiscated by an Oklahoma game warden while fishing or hunting within the boundaries of one of the Five Tribes’ reservations should contact the Choctaw Nation Tribal Public Defender’s Office at 580-634-0678.”

The Choctaw Nation will keep tribal members informed as more details emerge.

Follow the Nation on social media or visit choctawnation.com and biskinik.com for updates.

For more information about hunting and fishing rights, visit choctawnation.com/services/hunting-fishing/.

Gilbert ‘Choc’ Charleston, WWII Veteran

By Kellie Matherly

Gilbert “Choc” Charleston, a proud World War II veteran and citizen of the Choctaw Nation, has lived an extraordinary life marked by resilience, discipline, and deep commitment to his family, community, and country. Born in rural Oklahoma in the 1920’s, Choc grew up in a “house full of kids” that faced many hardships but was always full of love. After a tragic family loss, his parents took in his aunt’s children before going on to have six kids of their own, including Choc.

Despite his father’s ability to provide for the family, Choc’s childhood was humble. The younger children usually slept on the floor. Choc was born on the Payne Ranch, one of the largest in the county, where his father worked with cattle and horses.

From a young age, he learned to swim, ride horses, and embrace a rural lifestyle.

Choc began in 1929 in a one-room schoolhouse with only twenty-five students.

Students were often punished if they spoke Choctaw, though many had only ever spoken that language.

“If we spoke one word in Choctaw, we got beat with a rubber hose,” remembered Choc. “So, we didn’t try to speak our language, even though that’s what we had learned at home.”

Later, his family moved to Duncan, Oklahoma, where Choc experienced amenities such as sleeping in a bed, electricity, indoor plumbing, and a Christmas tree for the first time.

While these comforts excited his sisters, Choc struggled with the prejudice he faced from white classmates. “They treated me badly. They called me terrible names, and I’d come home crying every day after school,” said Choc.

He endured many difficult days until his uncle taught him to stand up for himself. After winning his first schoolyard fight, he earned the respect of his peers and began to find his footing in a new environment. He even grew to like school.

Choc said, “From that day on, the little boys were all good friends with me, and I never had a moment’s trouble after that.”

As a boy, Choc helped in his mother’s dry-cleaning shop. Because there was little time for doing laundry at home, his mother insisted he wear clothes that required dry-cleaning, earning him the reputation of “best dressed” at school. His experience working for his mother’s business introduced Choc to the business world, and he caught on quickly.

At just seventeen, he was elected president of the Stephens County Dry Cleaners Association, an early sign of his leadership abilities. Always enterprising, he sold candy to local workers and even picked turkeys during the holidays for extra income and a juicy bird for the family table.

Like many young men in the 1940’s, Choc’s path soon led him to serve in the military. He went to California to work in shipyards, welding Liberty ships as America prepared for war. In 1943, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, joining the 739th Tank Battalion. Trained as a Sherman tank driver, Chod thrived in the role, mastering the difficult controls of the massive machine. He took pride in the responsibility, knowing few could handle the challenges of combat driving.

“If I had to do it all over again, I’d want to do the same thing,” he said. “It’s cold in a tank, but at least your feet are dry.”

During the war, Choc traveled farther than he had ever imagined, sailing from New York to Liverpool in a dangerous zigzag journey designed to evade German submarines. From there, he and his battalion received their tanks in Wales before moving into France, Belgium, and Germany.

He experienced the devastation of war firsthand, from the rubble of bombed-out towns to fierce combat at Aachen, one of the largest battles of the war.

“I’ve never seen so much death and destruction in my life,” Choc remembered.

Through it all, Choc bonded deeply with his fellow soldiers. Tank crews of five men formed tight-knit relationships, though assignments often shifted. These bonds endured long after the war through reunions where the camaraderie of shared sacrifice lived on. His experiences in Europe, including sleeping in mud, fighting in brutal winter conditions, and narrowly avoiding disaster,



Choctaw Nation Photo

Gilbert “Choc” Charleston, a World War II veteran and Choctaw Nation member, has led a life of resilience, discipline and service to family, community and country.

shaped both his resilience and his gratitude for life.

Choc remembers coming up on a concentration camp toward the end of the war and helping release the people imprisoned there.

“I didn’t get out of the tank, but I could see the poor people. All races—French, German, Jewish—everybody they could put in there. Terrible. But at least we got them to where they could walk out and feel free, you know,” he said.

After the war, Choc carried forward the lessons of discipline, perseverance, and community and passed them down to his own children. He remains proud of his service and of the Choctaw values instilled in him from childhood. His story reflects not only the resilience of a generation but also the enduring strength of Native identity through hardship, prejudice, and change.

At nearly 102 years old, Choc looks back on his life with gratitude, humility, and pride. From a boy sleeping on ranch floors to a tank driver rolling through Europe, he has embodied more than a century of American history—one lived with courage, faith, and dignity.

If Choc could give a piece of advice to young people, it would be this:

“Just lift people up a little instead of just passing by and not even looking at them. The world would be a little better if we would love our neighbors a little more than we do now.”

See more of Choc’s story at togetherweremore.com.

Diving deep into history: Ada native explores underwater archaeology in Israel

By Chris Jennings

Karsyn Johnson, from Ada, Oklahoma, is taking her education to new depths.

Johnson graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 2021 with a major in archaeology and a minor in Judaic studies. She received the Schusterman Scholarship in 2020, which would have allowed her to study in Israel for a summer session, but it was delayed until 2021 because of COVID-19.

She completed her master’s in maritime civilizations at the University of Haifa in 2025, receiving an honorary "Dean's Distinguished Graduate Studies Scholar" award. That year, she also published her first academic article in the Antiquity Journal.

Johnson said the adventure of not knowing what would happen, but having faith that she was there for a reason, has been one of her favorite parts.

"In the beginning, I was so new, and buying a one-way ticket was unheard of, for me at least. But now, I have friends and colleagues from all over the world, and I am so happy that I decided to take a leap of faith and study in Israel," she said.

She credited her friends, family, her local dive shop Sharky’s Scuba, and scientific guidance from fellow diver



Photos Provided

Karsyn Johnson takes part in a underwater excavation in May 2025 in Israel.

Kevin Blackwood with helping her prepare for the Maritime Civilization program in Israel.

The University of Haifa’s Department of Maritime Civilizations also played an important role.

"Without them I would not know the beautiful and curious nature of underwater archaeology or how to approach research as an archaeologist," she said.

Johnson’s time in Israel was not without challenges. On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing 1,195 Israelis and foreign nationals, including 815 civilians. Johnson said being in the middle of a war was not something she expected.

"Living in a war-torn country was not ideal or in the plan, it instilled a resilience in me that I wouldn't have learned otherwise, and I am so grateful for that," she said.

She plans to publish another article this summer on ancient wooden composite ship anchors.

Johnson said she's not done with her education.

"I plan to start my PhD in the near future, in the hopes of a binational collaboration with Ruhr University Bochum in Germany and the University of Haifa in Israel."

In the meantime, she will continue researching experimental archaeological methods to understand ancient maritime construction techniques of the Phoenician and Greek cultures in the Mediterranean.

After her PhD, Johnson hopes to become a professor and teach maritime and experimental archaeology.



Karsyn Johnson shows off her Choctaw Nation graduation stole after earning her master’s from the University of Haifa.

CALL FOR ARTISTS

HVSHI
GIFT STORE

The Choctaw Cultural Center is looking for handcrafted items from Choctaw Artists to sell at Hvshi Gift Store. Items chosen for sale will be available in store and online.

CHOCTAW NATION
VETERANS DAY
CEREMONY

November 11 | 10 AM
Choctaw Capitol Grounds (Arts & Crafts Building)
Council House Rd. | Tusahoma, OK 74574

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

SEE AND SHARE OUR STORIES AT
TogetherWereMore.com

Choctaw Nation

ITI FABVSSA

The History of Choctaws in Texas

By Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation

TTThis month, Iti Fabvssa will focus on the history of Choctaw presence in East Texas from 1790 to 1840. Most of the written information about this part of Choctaw history is from Spanish, Mexican, Texan, and American reports. Many Choctaw people who moved to East Texas during this tumultuous era were looking for a peaceful way of life where they could continue to live freely, without the pressures of colonization. However, the first Choctaw encounters in this time and place were not marked by peace, but by violence.

During the French Period, 1699 – 1763, most of the Choctaw Nation had established a strong alliance with France. Choctaw hunters began participating in the French fur trade, where they would bring hides and materials to French traders in exchange for European-manufactured goods. As the French were forced to give up their claims on the region, Choctaws continued this trade with Great Britain and Spain. By the 1770s, deer and other wild game were becoming scarce in our homelands because of overhunting and drought (Caldwell 2020: 6). This caused Choctaw hunters to travel farther west, across the Mississippi River, to hunt in lands that belonged to other tribes. As large Choctaw hunting parties began trespassing onto Caddo hunting lands, conflicts arose. The Caddo, weakened by disease, could not block Choctaw hunters from invading their lands and raiding their settlements (Caldwell 2020: 8). By 1790, Choctaw hunting parties ranged deeper into Caddo territory, crossing into East Texas and raiding Caddo and Tonkawa villages for horses and cattle to bring back to American traders (Smith 2005: 60; Kinnaird 1980: 351). Conflict would continue between the Choctaw and Caddo throughout the 1790s in Louisiana and East Texas.

Choctaws were also under various pressures: land loss, pressure from the east and south from Euro-American settlers, and internal tribal politics. Texas offered a chance for Choctaws to live in smaller, independent communities alongside other tribal groups who were also resisting US control. The Haiyowvni, or “cutworm” in the Choctaw language, was a group of Choctaw people who came from the southern district of the Choctaw Nation. Their home settlement, of the same name, was the closest village to French Mobile, and in the 1720s, they had a Jesuit Missionary living in the village as well as a French trading post. We do not know why, but in 1763, a large group of Haiyowvni left Mississippi and traveled to the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain in Louisiana, where they lived alongside emigrating bands of Biloxi and Alabama peoples (Smith 2005: 20). Soon after, they moved west to Bayou Bouef, southwest of what is now Natchitoches, LA. It is possible that they moved due to the 1765 Treaty of Mobile, where Great Britain tricked the Choctaw Nation into ceding its lands stretching along the Gulf Coast from Mobile, across the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain to the Mississippi River. On Bayou Bouef, the Haiyowvni planted crops and raised livestock for roughly three decades (Smith 2005: 20).

In 1797, the pressure from American settlers would force the Haiyowvni on Bayou Bouef to sell 2,600 acres of land on both sides of the bayou for \$200 in goods (Smith 2005:64). Meanwhile, the Fulton and Miller trading company opened its doors to the Native people living on Bayou Bouef. Over the next few years, the Haiyowvni and others began to incur debts. In 1802, the Fulton and Miller Company forced the Haiyowvni to sell the remainder of their lands, totaling 41,284 acres, for \$3,724 (Smith 2005: 64-65). Now forced to leave their homes, they traveled westward toward a prairie where they reestablished their village, planted fields, built fences, and began raising livestock again (Smith 2005: 65). In 1803, the United States gained control of Louisiana. Groups of Apalaches, Taensas, Alabamas, Coushattas, Haiyowvni Choctaws, Pascagoulas, and Biloxis began to immigrate to East Texas to keep out of reach of the American settlers (Smith 2005: 67).

In 1804, a group of 200 Haiyowvni Choctaws established two to three small villages between the Trinity and Neches Rivers (Smith 2005: 69). Soon after, the Spanish granted the Choctaws and other emigrating groups permission to continue to live in their new villages. As more Choctaws moved to Louisiana, additional villages were settled along the Neches, Angelina, and Attoyac Rivers in East



Haiyowvni Choctaw living among the Caddo in East Texas, courtesy of the Gilcrease Museum.

Texas. By 1820, large groups of Cherokee, Choctaw, Shawnee, Delaware, Kickapoo, Quapaw, Biloxi, Iowa, Tohookatokie, Alabama and Coushatta had settled about forty miles north of Nacogdoches, Texas (Hale 1987: 9). In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain and sought to build relationships with the Tribes in East Texas. After meeting the Choctaw people, Mexican Diplomat Juan N. Almont was impressed and wrote a letter stating that the Choctaw would be desirable citizens of Mexico (Caldwell 2020: 17).

Back in Mississippi and Alabama, the Choctaw Nation was forced to sign the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830. One year later, the Choctaw removal from our homelands would begin. More than 700 Choctaw people migrated to Texas instead of coming to Indian Territory.

They would join ten to fifteen other Choctaw families who had previously migrated before 1830 (Carlisle 2021). These groups would settle in large communities near the modern Texas towns of Patroon, Center and Enterprise.

In 1835, Sam Houston helped negotiate a treaty with the East Texas tribes, including the Choctaw, to ensure their neutrality during the Texas Revolution. The Choctaw were signatories of the 1836 Treaty of Bowles Village with the Republic of Texas. However, the next year, the newly created Republic of Texas did not ratify the Treaty. Despite President Sam Houston's work to create peace with the East Texas tribes, issues between the tribes and Texas settlers caused tension. In 1838, the second President of the Republic of Texas, Mirabeau Lamar, considered the tribes of East Texas to be intruders and wished to remove them to reservations in Texas or force them out of Texas into Indian Territory. The next year, he sent a regiment of 500 Texan troops to negotiate the removal of the East Texas tribes. After two days of negotiations, the Texan commissioners informed the tribal delegates that the Republic of Texas would not wait any longer and that they would begin marching on the Cherokee Village where the negotiations were taking place. The Cherokee and the tribal delegation retreated north to a Delaware village, hoping to continue negotiations with the Texans; however, the next day, the Delaware village was attacked. Over 400 Cherokee, Shawnee, Delaware, and an unknown number of Choctaw and other tribal warriors fought for two hours. They sacrificed themselves so their families could gain a head start retreating toward the Red River, with the hopes of crossing into the Choctaw Nation. After two hours of fighting, over 100 tribal warriors had died. The Cherokee Chief Duwali was the last warrior standing on the battlefield (Smith 2005:172). He died on the battlefield holding his sword, a gift from Sam Houston, the first President of the Republic of Texas. This massacre would be known as the Battle of the Neches. Many Choctaws and Haiyowvni Choctaws settled in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations after their retreat from Texas. Other Haiyowvni Choctaws moved with the Caddo to the Brazos Reserve in 1854. In 1859, they would move with the Caddo again to Indian Territory and become part of the Caddo Nation. Other Haiyowvni Choctaw joined the Alabama and Coushatta in East Texas and are now part of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas.

The legacy of these events continues to echo through the oral stories of Choctaw families today.

“My grandfather was given the middle name Lamar after his birth in Paris, Texas. My father was also given the middle name Lamar when he was born, and when I was born, the name was also given to me. I have always cherished this gift, but the irony of the name Lamar is not lost to me. My grandfather was possibly given the name because he was born in Lamar County, Texas, a county named after President Lamar, who ordered the expulsion of my Haiyowavni Choctaw family from Texas, resulting in the death of my fifth great-grandfather, Chief Atahobia, at the Battle of the Neches (personal communication, Ryan Lamar Spring, 2025).

Remembering familial stories such as this reflects the enduring influence of Texas's early history on the generations that followed. These Texas Choctaw Communities' experiences are an example of the strategies that Native communities used to navigate and resist colonial expansion and stand as a testament to the strength and identities of Choctaw people today.

For works cited, visit biskinik.com.

Chief Batton reads McAlester land acknowledgment

McALESTER, Okla. (September 24, 2025) — A historic moment took place as Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton delivered the first official land acknowledgment by the City of McAlester during its City Council meeting on Sept. 23.

The acknowledgment, authored and adopted by the city, honors the Indigenous people connected to the land on which the city stands. McAlester Mayor Justin Few invited Batton to give the first reading, signifying respect for the Choctaw Nation and other Tribal Nations.

“The Choctaw Nation cherishes positive, collaborative relationships with our neighbors and other governments in southeastern Oklahoma,” Batton said. “This acknowledgment illustrates our bond is stronger than ever, and it serves as an important recognition of tribal sovereignty.”

Mayor Few emphasized the importance of the moment.

Choctaw helps residents monitor outdoor Air Quality

DURANT, Okla. (October 8, 2025) — Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Service (CNO EPS) is installing air quality indication flags at all Choctaw Nation Head Start locations across the reservation.

The color-coded flag system is based on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Air Quality Index (AQI) and is designed to help educators, parents, and community members easily understand daily air pollution levels. Each morning, staff will raise a flag—green, yellow, orange, red, or purple—indicating the day’s air quality and any necessary precautions.

“This program is about more than just flags—it’s about teaching our children and communities to be aware of the environ-



Choctaw Nation Photo
Chief Batton and Mayor Few stand in front of the newly posted Choctaw Flag.

“This acknowledgment is a reminder that the land we call McAlester is rooted in Choctaw history and culture. We are honored to walk alongside the Choctaw people today as neighbors, partners and friends,” he said.

As part of the ceremony, Batton also presented a Choctaw Nation flag which will be displayed in the council chambers alongside the U.S. and Oklahoma flags.

McAlester plans to begin future council meetings with the land acknowledgment.



Choctaw Nation Photo
Air quality flags are being installed at Choctaw Nation Head Starts to help staff and families monitor daily pollution levels.

ment around them,” said James Patson, environmental specialist for the CNO EPS Air Quality Division. “The Air Quality Flag Program reflects our broader commitment to environmental stewardship and public health,” said Parsons.

For more information, visit www.airnow.gov/air-quality-flag-program/.

BUSINESS

CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHIT ♦ CHAT

Marketing for the Holidays

By Brad Erwin

The holiday season is one of the most powerful times of the year for small businesses. It’s a chance to share your story, connect with your community and strengthen relationships with your customers. Whether you run a storefront, food business or service company, the holidays offer more than just sales opportunities; they create moments to inspire loyalty and build growth.

Here are some practical ways to make your holiday marketing meaningful and effective this season.

Start Early and Plan with Purpose

You always hear me say start early and plan; this is especially crucial during the holidays. Businesses that prepare early see smoother campaigns, better engagement and less stress.

Take time to outline your goals, key dates and ideas. Think about when to post, what messages to share and how to tie everything together across your social media, website and displays.

Even a simple roadmap of product, price, placement and promotion can keep you organized and consistent. When your message is clear and concise, it keeps your audience engaged throughout the season.

Celebrate Local

One of the biggest advantages small businesses have is personal connection. During the holidays, people look for meaningful ways to give and support their communities. Share your story, how your business started, who you serve and your unique selling point.

Show the people behind the scenes of your business. Audiences naturally connect with authenticity and personal stories. Share photos or short videos of your team decorating for the holidays, packaging orders or volunteering in the community. These moments help customers see “why” they support your business; they’re also supporting their neighbors and community.

Create Offers

The holidays are the perfect time to offer something unique. Think about creating a product, service or package that’s only available through the end of the year. Limited offers inspire customers to take action and give them something memorable to share, like that unbeatable deal they can’t wait to tell their family about.

You can also build experiences around your business. People love events: host a

small open house, partner with another local business for a pop-up event, or do a simple giveaway on social media.

These activities create buzz, draw people in and show that your business is active in the community.

Use Social Media Purposefully

Social media is one of your strongest tools this time of year. Shoppers are looking for ideas, inspiration and connections. Make your posts a mix of both promotion and personality.

Share gift ideas featuring your products or services. Highlight your loyal customers or team members. Post photos of your space decorated for the holidays. Show how your business gives back or supports local causes. Keep your visuals bright and inviting, and remember to include hashtags such as #ShopLocal, #Chahtapreneur or #SmallBusiness to help more people discover you.

Appreciate Your Existing Customers

Your returning customers are the heart of your business. Show them that you value their support by offering gestures. This could be a handwritten card, a discount for repeat purchases or early access to a sale. Gratitude goes a long way, and customers who feel special are more likely to tell others about your business.

Carry the Momentum into the New Year

When the holidays are over, your marketing shouldn’t stop. Use January to thank your customers, share your business goals for the new year and keep the conversation going. Review what worked during your holiday campaign and build on those successes. Consistency after the holidays helps turn one-time shoppers into lifelong supporters.

Marketing for the holidays is more than just selling; it’s about building connection, trust and community. By planning ahead, sharing your story and keeping your message personal, you can turn the spirit of the season into growth for your business.

This holiday season, take your business to the next level by exploring our upcoming trainings on marketing and other business topics at www.choctawsmall-business.com. Stay connected and get the latest updates by following us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ChoctawSmallBusiness.

We’d love to hear from you. Please share your thoughts on this article or what topics you’d like us to cover next.

Yakohe, and chi pisa la chike!

STAY CONNECTED | CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM

Choctaw Nation releases 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

DURANT, Okla. (September 29, 2025) — The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has released its strategic plan for 2026 through 2030, unveiling a plan that drives transformational change.

Choctaw Nation commits to preserving culture and sovereignty, delivering best in class service, empowering people through opportunity, and ensuring strong financial stewardship, all to create a thriving, self-determined future.

These strategic goals include:

CULTURE AND SOVEREIGNTY

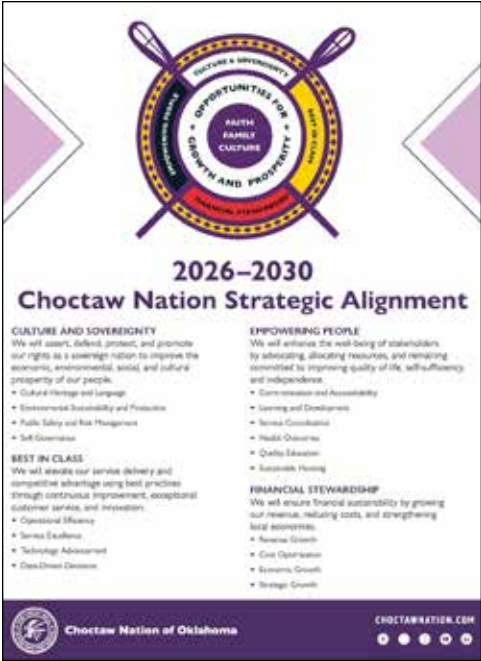
Assert, defend, protect, and promote our rights as a sovereign nation to improve the economic, environmental, social, and cultural prosperity of our people through cultural heritage and language, environmental sustainability and protection, public safety and risk management, and self-governance.

BEST IN CLASS

Elevate our service delivery and competitive advantage using best practices through continuous improvement, exceptional customer service, and innovation through operational efficiency, service excellence, technology advancement, and data-driven decisions.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE

Enhance the well-being of stakeholders by advocating, allocating resources, and remaining committed to improving quality



Choctaw Nation Photo

The Choctaw Nation has released its strategic plan for FY 2026 through 2030.

of life, self-sufficiency, and independence through communication and accountability, learning and development, service coordination, health outcomes, quality education, and sustainable housing.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Ensure financial sustainability by growing our revenue, reducing costs, and strengthening local economies through revenue growth, cost optimization, economic growth, and strategic growth.



Choctaw Nation Photo

Chief, Assistant Chief, Councilmember Anthony Dillard, OBI reps and Choctaw Nation staff display awards thanking blood donors.

across our communities.”

Overall, the 2024 Tribal Blood Drive Challenge saw a total of 4,450 donations, a 21% increase over the previous year.

Both the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina and the Choctaw Nation McAlester Health Clinic went above and beyond to get the donations over the challenge period and earned the Star Award from OBI for their efforts.

August 1 launched the 2025-2026 Blood Drive Challenge.

The schedule for the Choctaw Nation blood drives is listed online at choctawnation.com/events/ and will continue to be updated throughout the challenge.

Triplett graduates from OU

The Triplett family are proud to announce the graduation of Savanah Caroline Triplett, who has earned the distinction of graduating summa cum laude from the University of Oklahoma’s David L. Boren College of International Studies.

Savanah received her Bachelor of Arts in international security studies as part of the Class of 2025.

This fall, Savanah will begin her master’s degree studies at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Savanah would like to express her gratitude to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and its Higher Education Program for the encouragement, support and financial assistance she has received.

Savanah is the daughter of Craig Alan and Kay Lynn Triplett; the granddaughter of Betty Jean Hansen and the late Carroll Ray and Phyllis Beatrice Nichols; the great-granddaughter of the late James “Jim” and Wilma Dora Woods Loveless; and the great-great-granddaughter of Addie McClain, a Dawes Original enrollee.



Tonihka Inspires Cultural Pride and Healing

Indigenous author and advocate Crystal Tonihka, enrolled member of The Choctaw Nation, and descendant of The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians has captured national attention with her debut poetry collection, *She Who Carries Fire*, which has reached #1 New Release status on Amazon in both the Native American and Native American Religion categories.

Part love letter, part call to action, the collection blends poetry, prayer, and matriarchal reflection to honor cultural resilience and inspire readers to reclaim their stories. “Carrying fire means protecting the warmth and the light, even when the world tries to put it out,” Tonihka says. “This book is for my people and for anyone reclaiming their truth.”



Mangrum on Board of Directors

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – Members of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists have elected Marissa Mangrum, M.S.R.S., R.T.(T), of Choctaw, Oklahoma, to serve on the ASRT Board of Directors as president-elect for the 2025-2026 term. She was officially installed during the ASRT Annual Governance and House of Delegates Meeting in June.

Mangrum previously served as Board vice president, secretary and treasurer. Her history of ASRT volunteer service includes serving as a member of the ASRT Commission and chair and delegate of the Radiation Therapy Chapter. She also served as a radiation therapy representative for the Oklahoma Society of Radiologic Technologists.

Mangrum is a program director and associate professor for the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City. She has been a registered radiation therapist for 22 years.

Established in 1920, ASRT represents health care professionals who perform medical imaging procedures or plan and deliver radiation therapy treatments. For more information visit asrt.org. Visit the ASRT News Room for up-to-date news about the Society.



Yergensen graduates with masters

Melissa Yergensen graduated from Western Governors University with a master’s degree in human resource management in August, 2025. She also finished her bachelor’s degree last year at WGU.

After raising a family, I realized it was important to set a good example for my children, who are just starting their undergraduate education, by finishing my own degree.

This achievement represents countless hours of dedication, growth, and a deep commitment to understanding the strategic and human-centered side of HR. I am proud to mention I earned a total of six Excellence Awards, including the Recruiting and Retention Capstone Excellence Award and the Inclusive Workplace Culture Capstone Excellence Award.

I’m especially grateful for the support of my family and mentors who encouraged me along the way. Especially my husband, Scott, who gave me the confidence i needed to succeed. Thank you to the Choctaw Nation for their financial support. I wore the graduation stole with pride



Choctaw Nation hits major environmental milestone

DURANT, Okla. (October 8, 2025) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) Recycling Department has announced CNO recycling centers have processed over 50 million pounds of materials. These efforts reflect the Nation’s long-term dedication to sustainability, waste reduction, and protecting natural resources.

“This achievement is a testament to our values and reflects our responsibility to care for the land,” said Tracy Horst, CNO Director of Environmental Compliance. “Our recycling efforts are rooted in our Chahta spirit of respect for the environment and our communities.”

Established in 2007, The Choctaw Nation’s recycling initiative was developed to reduce landfill waste and encourage tribal members and employees to practice environmentally sustainable habits.

The CNO Environmental Protection Service (EPS) division oversees the Nation’s environmental programs and credits much of the success to community involvement and tribal leadership support.

“This accomplishment wouldn’t be possible without the participation of our Choctaw community, partners, and dedicated team members,” said Tye Baker, Senior Director of Environmental Protection Service.

Looking ahead, the Choctaw Nation plans to further expand



Choctaw Nation Photo

Choctaw Nation recycling centers have processed over 50 million pounds of materials, reflecting a strong commitment to sustainability.

its green initiatives including reducing energy consumption, limiting single use plastics, and increased educational outreach to promote sustainability throughout southeastern Oklahoma.

For more information on the Choctaw Nation’s environmental programs or to find a recycling center near you, visit the Recycling Centers service page.

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION
MARKET HOURS Open 8:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday Thursday: 9:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. <i>Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.</i>
November 2025 All markets open weekdays, November 3-224 Closed: November 11, & 25-28 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 NOVEMBER 5
BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842 FOOD DEMO NOVEMBER 18
DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773 FOOD DEMO NOVEMBER 12
MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716 FOOD DEMO NOVEMBER 10
POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431 FOOD DEMO NOVEMBER 19 <i>This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</i>

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation
November 4 Broken Bow 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
November 5 Talihina 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
November 6 Antler 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 7 Atoka 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
November 7 Coalgate 12:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
November 10 Crowder By Appointment
November 12 Poteau 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 13 Stigler By Appointment
November 14 Wright City 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 18 Idabel 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 19 McAlester 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
November 21 Wilburton 10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday Call 580-640-6007 for an Appointment

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS		
LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 539.316.5089	Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Atoka 539.316.2050	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Battiest 580.920.7061	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	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Poteau 539.316.4606	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Smithville 580.920.7063	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 580.745.4330	1st Tuesday – Boswell 3rd Tuesday – Coalgate 4th Tuesday - Clayton	9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Scan to learn more about the program.		
Choctaw Nation Health Services		

Choctaw faith and beliefs: A discussion with Olin Williams and Les Williston

Part 1

By Chis Jennings and Shelia Kirven

Faith in the Choctaw Nation

Today, many Choctaws embrace Christianity, attending and serving in Christian churches throughout the Choctaw Nation and the world.

Yet, there are still some who still practice a traditional belief system that existed long before Christianity was introduced to their ancestors.

The Biskinik recently had the chance to sit down with Choctaw Nation chaplain and minister Olin Williams and cultural educator Les Williston to learn more. They took us through how Christianity was introduced to Indigenous communities and highlighted traditional beliefs of yesterday and today.

Early Observations of the Sky

People have always looked to the sky with curiosity and wonder. Long ago, early humans didn’t just see stars as lights in the sky, they believed the sun, moon and stars were powerful and sacred.

Researchers have found markings on bones and cave walls that show people were studying the stars as far back as 30,000 years ago.

They watched how the sun, moon and planets moved before civilizations like the Babylonians and Mesopotamians existed.

About 5,000 to 7,000 years ago, people began building temples that lined up with certain stars. For the Choctaw people, the sun was especially important and honored as a powerful spirit.

The Sun and Deities

Olin Williams, employee chaplain for the Choctaw Nation, said a deity is something people admire and worship, something they don’t completely understand but still look up to. Early Choctaws saw the sun as one of those deities, along with the earth and the seasons.

“The sun was something that the Choctaws saw that provided light; it provided necessary things for the plants to grow,” Williams said in his interview.

Early Choctaws didn’t have the scientific knowledge we have today, only what they could observe from nature.

The sun was powerful and respected, as were thunder and other mysterious parts of life, such as childbirth, which was seen as a miracle.

It’s difficult to know exactly what ancient cultures believed. Even within the same tribe, one family’s beliefs could be very different from another’s.

Choctaw Nation cultural educator Les Williston said it made sense for early Choctaws to see the sun as powerful.

“A lot of the traditional Native culture is logical,” he said. The sun makes the grass grow. The animals eat the grass and plants, and people eat the animals. “It’s a circle of life. That’s what it all boils down to. It’s all circles.”

According to Williston, the sun, stars, moon and seasons helped people know when to plant and harvest. Ceremonies and traditions developed around those times, forming calendars, stories and beliefs that were passed down through generations. Many of those original beliefs are still practiced today.

“They used to call us sun worshippers,” said Williston. “When we pray, we turn around and we face the East as the sun’s coming up, as that’s a symbol of the Creator, a piece of God’s eye.”

It’s generally accepted that early Choctaws believed in one single superior being. Because of the differences in family and community beliefs, that being is known by different names to different Choctaw people, like Nanapesa (Spiritual Law-Giver), Nanishtahullo Chito (Something Highly Revered) and Hvshtvhli (probably from hashi-hvt atahli, meaning “the sun’s established order”).

When Williston prays, he often prays to Hvshtvhli.

Williams said that many of the things we understand the why and how of now would be seen as something to deify to early Choctaws.

Something like thunder would have been seen as mysterious. Childbirth was likely another great mystery.

“Childbirth was a miracle to them because they didn’t understand how a human being could pop out of another human being,” said Williams.

Creation Stories

The Nvnih Waiyah Mound or Mother Mound (also known as Nan Awaya or Nanih Waiyah) plays a vital role in the Choctaw origin story. It connects closely to the idea of creation and new life.

Two versions of this creation story were shared in the April 2024 Iti Fabvssa, which can be found at choctawnation.com/news/iti-fabvssa/nvnih-waiya-mother-of-the-choctaw-people/.

The Nvnih Waiya site can be visited only through the permission of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Government. To schedule a visit, please contact the MBCI Office of Public Information at 601-663-7532.

One version says that Hvshtvhli, the Creator, gathered clay from the nearby Nvnih Waiyah Creek and used it to form people underground.

An opening from the cave beneath the mound was created, and people came out in groups. Each group traveled in different directions, becoming the Southeastern tribes. The Choctaw people were the last to emerge from the mound and decided to stay at their place of creation.

Another version says four tribes came out of the mound and rested in the sun to dry before moving on. The Muscogee were the first to leave and went east. The Cherokee followed but lost the Muscogee trail and ended up in the north. The Chickasaw came next and settled nearby. The Choctaw were the last to emerge and chose to remain where they were created.

These stories helped early Choctaws understand their place in the world and their connection to other tribes, including the Muscogee, Cherokee, and Chickasaw.

Williston said the resemblance between the Nvnih Waiyah story and childbirth is not a coincidence. The Choctaw people have long honored women as givers of life, the ones who grow families and strengthen the tribe.

“That’s a sacred thing when that woman gives birth,” he said.

Williams said the tribe’s matrilineal society likely developed from its deep respect for women and mothers.

Arrival of Christianity

When Christians began arriving between 1400 and 1500 A.D., they noticed that the Choctaws already had a belief system that honored a mother-and-son connection.

Williams explained that Roman Catholicism was the first form of Christianity introduced to Indigenous people by the Spanish. It brought a new idea of a single deity, one God, that was different from what the Choctaws had known.

According to Williams, Christianity, being a monotheistic religion that focuses on one God, and Catholicism, which honors the relationship between Mary and Jesus, resonated with the Choctaws’ existing beliefs about family and creation.

However, even though the Spanish shared their religion, their main goal was to take land and resources.

This led to distrust, and many Choctaws held on to their traditional beliefs.

Integration of Christianity with Traditional Beliefs

Over time, it became easier for some Choctaws to connect with Christianity. Many already believed in one superior being who watched over the world. They saw the sun as the place where that being looked down on the Earth through a hole in the sky.

Not every Choctaw became a Christian. Williston said many still follow traditional beliefs today.

He explained that fellowship, spending time together in faith and community, has always been part of Choctaw spirituality, whether in church or at traditional dances such as the stomp dance.

According to Williston, there are traditional dance grounds across Oklahoma where people gather to dance, pray and celebrate. Many Indigenous churches support these events and encourage people to continue these practices.

Ceremonies such as the Green Corn Ceremony and the Stomp Dance are still held today, keeping traditional beliefs alive. Williston encourages anyone interested in learning more to talk with elders, visit community centers and, most of all, show respect and openness to learning.

Looking Ahead

Next month, we’ll dive deeper into the subject of faith, how Christianity has shaped the tribe and ask who came first, Christianity’s Noah and the Ark or the Choctaw story of Oklatabashih and his large boat?



Photo by Chris Jennings

This photo of a video explaining the Nvnia Waiyah cave at the Choctaw Cultural Center uses a tree to represent the cave out of respect for the sacred site.



Photos by Christian Toews

Les Williston, left, and Olin Williams share their knowledge of early Choctaw spiritual beliefs.



Photo by Christian Toews

Before modern astronomy, ancient civilizations, including the Choctaws, looked to the stars for spiritual inspiration.



Photo by Rodolphe Foucher

The sun, seen in early Choctaw beliefs as a hole in the sky where the Creator watched the Earth, remains a common symbol in modern Choctaw culture and traditions.

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NATURE AND HERITAGE: THE ART OF CANDACE SHANHOLTZER

OCTOBER 28, 2025 - APRIL 25, 2026

Indigenous women make history on the ice

By Christian Chaney-Sackett

When the puck dropped at the LATAM Cup, a first-of-its-kind women’s hockey team made history. The First Nations Hockey Team, representing tribes across the U.S. and Canada, came together not only to compete but to carry their cultures into a space where Indigenous women have rarely been seen. The team included two Choctaw Nation members: Jennifer Anderson, a veteran player and educator from Oregon, and Olivia Fern Tucker, an 18-year-old collegiate athlete. Though at different stages in life, both shared the same pride in representing their people. Before their first game in Coral Springs, Florida, the women gathered for a smudging ceremony with ribbon skirts tied around their waists. Each skirt was handmade and donated by an Indigenous artist, tailored for each player and stitched with their names. These skirts served as powerful symbols of identity, a reminder of the nations and families each woman carried into the rink.

With only one practice together, they would soon face established teams who had played alongside each other for years. First Nations Hockey was created to do more than field a team. Its mission is to unite tribes from the U.S. and Canada, celebrate Indigenous culture and build a sisterhood across generations. That vision became reality in August 2025 when the First Nations Women’s Hockey Team made its debut at the Amerigol LATAM Cup.

Sponsored by the Florida Panthers, NHL and NHLPA, the international tournament marked the first time an all-Indigenous women’s hockey team competed at this level.

The roster represented ten tribes, Batchewa, Mohawk, Chipewewa, Kainai, Obijway, Simpcw, Suislaw, Choctaw, Cayuga and Cree, with players ranging in age from 18 to 65.

The team was founded and managed by Karen Ota-O’Brien, a member of the Simpcw people of the Secwepemc Nation, whose decades of leadership in women’s and Indigenous hockey made this moment possible.

She chose players who would carry the pride of their communities into every shift. Anderson brought decades of experience and the weight of family legacy.

Though she grew up in Oregon, summers in Oklahoma and Choctaw Nation Labor Day family reunions kept her connected to her heritage.

She credits her grandparent, Norman and Opal Ludlow of Smithville, Oklahoma, with instilling a love for her culture. That connection has guided her personally and professionally.

Today, she serves as a Native education and development teacher on special assignment in one of Oregon’s largest districts, supporting more than 70 tribes among local students.

Her path to the LATAM Cup was unexpected. “It was actually just really random and luck,” said Andeson. “I had someone reach out to me that knew that I played hockey and said, ‘Hey, you know, we heard that you’re native, right? You’re a member of a tribe.’ I said, I am of the Choctaw Nation, Oklahoma. And they said, Oh, okay. Well, here’s an opportunity if you wanna reach out.”



The First Nations Women’s Hockey Team celebrates after their semifinal win at the 2025 Amerigol LATAM Cup in Coral Springs, Fla., marking a milestone for Indigenous women in the sport.

The connection led her to Ota-O’Brien, and eventually to the ice alongside Indigenous women from across the continent. For Anderson, hockey had always been more than a game. “The opportunity to connect my Choctaw culture while playing a sport that was my community while I journeyed to my identity as a Choctaw now... was huge,” she said. Tucker’s journey came from another angle. Growing up in Portland, Oregon, where hockey opportunities for girls were relatively scarce, she primarily played on boys teams before transitioning to academy hockey across the U.S. and Canada. That path eventually led her to Rivier University in New Hampshire, where she now plays Division III hockey while also training in the Air Force ROTC. “I started when I was 10,” said Tucker. “It was so, so much work driving everywhere, and like a lot of time on the road, and I wouldn’t trade it for anything. I spent so much time with my parents, and I’m an only child, so it was just me.” Though separated by two decades in age, Andeson and Tucker’s paths intersected in a moment of chance. Anderson once coached Tucker as a child, and years later, they ran into each other in an airport. There, Anderson encouraged Tucker to join the First Nations roster. That meeting brought together one of the team’s oldest players with its youngest, bound by heritage and a shared love of hockey. “It was such a great experience, just meeting all these like powerful, strong women from all over the...not even the country, all over the continent,” said Tucker. “We had so many Canadian girls, and it was just cool to hear everybody’s stories, and like the differences between everybody’s tribes, and kind of their like backgrounds and stuff.” Tucker noted that in Canada, Indigenous hockey is far more visible. In the U.S., Indigenous players are less represented.

“Especially being in America, it was really cool for other people to see that,” she said. The team carried their culture with them throughout the tournament and despite vastly differences in age and skill level, they quickly formed a team strong enough to defeat established teams. Against the odds, they advanced to a hard-fought championship game against the Caribbean team. “We got second place. We lost in the championship round, but it was really exciting. I’m so proud of how well our team did,” Tucker said. The loss may have stung, but the achievement went deeper than the scoreboard. Both players see this as the beginning of something larger. Anderson hopes it will spark greater access to hockey for Indigenous youth. “It is incredibly expensive. So, creating programs or opportunities for kiddos who might not necessarily have that... and representation with coaching as well. Growing up, I didn’t have a coach who looked like me. I want kids to know they’re not just welcome in this space but celebrated for being there.” Tucker hopes that her story proves opportunity exists, regardless of background. “I don’t come from a hockey family, or from a state that’s hockey-focused,” she said. “But I hope people realize they can make it no matter their background. Communities will support them, and there will be opportunities.” Though the scoreboard in Florida showed a second-place finish, the First Nations Women’s Hockey Team achieved something far greater. The team proved that Indigenous women belong on the ice, in the spotlight and in the history of the game. For more on the First Nation’s Women’s Hocky team, visit www.firstnationshockey.org/.



Olivia Fern Tucker and Jennifer Anderson pose in their team jerseys in front of one of the ice rinks in the Panthers Den.



Jennifer Anderson lines up to take a shot during First Nation’s opening game of the LATAM Cup.



The First Nations team sport their custom ribbon skirts before the Amerigol LATAM Cup.

THE TIME HAS COME TO GATHER, CELEBRATE AND GIVE THANKS. PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL THANKSGIVING MEALS FOR OUR ELDERS

November 5, 2025		
Battiest Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Battiest Community Center
Coalgate Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Coalgate Community Center
November 6, 2025		
Durant Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Durant Event Center
November 10, 2025		
Battiest Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Battiest Community Center
November 12, 2025		
Atoka Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Atoka Community Center
Crowder Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Crowder Community Center
McAlester Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	McAlester Community Center
Stigler Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Stigler Community Center
Poteau Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Poteau Community Center
Wright City Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Wright City Community Center
November 13, 2025		
Antlers Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Antlers Community Center
Broken Bow Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Broken Bow Community Center
Talihina Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Talihina Community Center
November 14, 2025		
Tuskahoma Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Tuskahoma Cafeteria/Capitol Grounds
November 19, 2025		
Wilburton Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Wilburton Community Center
Spiro Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Spiro Community Center
Hugo Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Hugo Community Center
November 20, 2025		
Idabel Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Idabel Community Center
McAlester Community Dinner	6:00 PM	McAlester Community Center
Smithville Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Smithville Community Center
November 25, 2025		
Talihina Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Talihina Community Center

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

November (Nofimba) 2025

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Mission Statement:

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

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