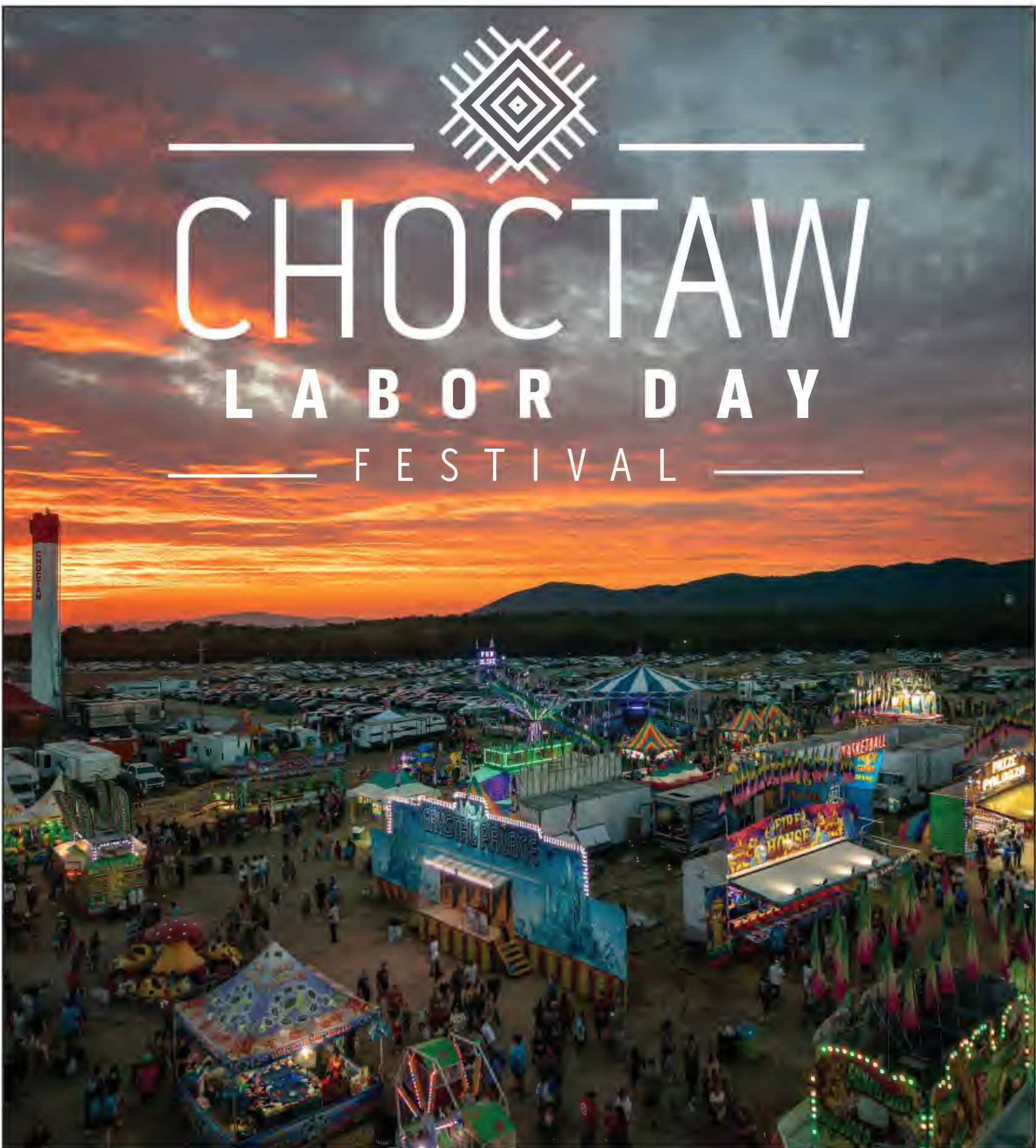




August 2026 Issue



What to expect at the 2026 Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival

By Shelia Kirven and Kendra Germany-Wall

Thousands of people from across the country are expected to gather in Tvshkahomma, the Choctaw Nation Capitol, Sept. 4-6 for the Choctaw Labor Day Festival, an annual event rooted in family, culture and tradition.

This year, the festival will feature new and fan-favorite events, guaranteeing a fun-filled weekend for everyone to enjoy.

Competition

Festivalgoers can participate in or watch competitions throughout the weekend, including stickball, corn-hole, fast-pitch, co-ed volleyball, bow shoot, elder chair volleyball, horseshoes, war hoops, the Fittest Warrior contest, the Tough Tough contest and more.

Culture

While the festival features modern conveniences such as food trucks and air-conditioned spaces, one constant remains—sharing Choctaw culture.

Throughout the weekend, festivalgoers can visit the Choctaw Village for traditional history, crafts and culture through live demonstrations, social dancing and hands-on activities.

Traditions are showcased throughout the festival, including the 2026-27 Princess Pageant, stickball tournament and exhibition games, social and gourd dancing, and more.

Fellowship

Beyond the festivities, the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival offers opportunities for fellowship and community connection. Families gather in Tvshkahomma to reconnect, making the festival a reunion for many. Attendees can visit with family and friends, update their membership cards and voter registration, stop by member service booths, purchase artwork by registered Choctaw artists, receive health screenings, attend worship services and gospel singing, and end the day with a sporting event or live music.

More Info

For a full list of events, see Page 12. As a reminder, all events are subject to change. Festivalgoers are encouraged to check online for the latest information before arriving at the festival. Additional Labor Day stories are featured throughout this issue of the Biskinik.

To stay updated on festival events, text “Labor Day” to 888777 to sign up for Labor Day Festival text alerts.

Updates will also be posted on official Choctaw Nation social media pages, including the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival Facebook, biskinik.com and choc-tawnation.com.

For more information, including a festival map and interactive schedule, visit laborday.choctawnation.com.



A celebration through the decades: Exploring the history of the Labor Day Festival



By Shelia Kirven and Kendra Germany-Wall

For generations, the festival has been held on the grounds of the Choctaw Capitol, drawing Choctaws home each year for reunions, fellowship, competition, entertainment and delicious food.

The origins of the festival date back to 1938, when the Choctaw Capitol Building, originally built in 1883, was reconstructed. Annual celebrations tied to the building came to be known as the “Annual Iksa Meeting,” a gathering that gradually evolved into today’s festival.

In 1948, Chief Harry Belvin renamed the gathering the “Choctaw Chickasaw Labor Day Meet” and expanded it into a full weekend event.

The name was later shortened to reference only the Choctaw Nation, after the Chickasaw Nation established its own festival at Tishomingo in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The Choctaw Capitol Building underwent another renovation in the 1970s, and the surrounding grounds have been expanded significantly in the decades since. The original brush arbor became a tabernacle, then an amphitheater. Sporting areas, a new cafeteria, arts

and crafts building, and RV spaces have all been added or expanded to accommodate growing crowds.

The Capitol building is now home to the Tvshkahomma Capitol Museum, which is open to the public not only during the festival, but year round.

Learn more about the museum at choctawnation.com/about/culture/tvshkahomma-capitol-museum/.

Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation’s Iti Fabvssa articles are also a great resource for information on the festival’s history.

To view past Iti Fabvssa articles, visit choctawnation.com/news/iti-fabvssa/ or laborday.choctawnation.com/history/.

If you are interested in learning more about the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival, the newest exhibit at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant is a great way to continue exploring.

Look for more information and announcements about the Where We Gather: The Choctaw Labor Day Festival exhibit on the Choctaw Cultural Center’s social media pages and at ChoctawCulturalCenter.com/exhibitions/.

Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

Summer Fun Should Not Include Hunger

Summer should be a time of fun, family, and opportunity for our children. But for many families, the end of the school year also means the loss of reliable access to school meals. At the Choctaw Nation, we believe no child should have to worry about where their next meal will come from. As a sovereign, self-reliant nation, it is our duty that the children within our reservation are given a great start at life beginning with nutrition. That is why we are proud to offer two important summer nutrition programs designed to support children and families throughout southeastern Oklahoma. These programs help ensure that our young people continue receiving the nutritious food they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

Summer EBT Program

The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) program provides eligible families with \$40 per child, per month for groceries from mid-May through early August. Many children who receive free or reduced-price school meals are automatically enrolled through their school district. Additional eligibility is available for children in charter schools, homeschool settings, foster care, Head Start programs, and households participating in programs such as SNAP, TANF, FDIPI, or Medicaid. Children experiencing homelessness, those who are migrants, or runaway youth may also qualify. One of the things I am most proud of is that this program serves all families living within the Choctaw Nation Reservation, regardless of tribal affiliation. Our goal is simple: help children access healthy food throughout the summer months. Already, more than 17,000 children across our region have begun receiving Summer EBT benefits, helping families stretch their grocery budgets while ensuring children have access to nutritious meals.

Summer Food Service Program

In addition to Summer EBT, the Choctaw Nation operates the Summer Food Service Program at multiple locations across the reservation. This program provides free weekly grab-and-go meal boxes for children ages 1 to 17. Each box contains five breakfasts, five lunches, and enough milk for the week. There are no income requirements, and participation is open to all children regardless of tribal affiliation. Families can pick up meals through convenient drive-through distribution sites located throughout the reservation. The program is especially important in rural communities and USDA-designated food deserts, where access to healthy and affordable food can be limited. This summer, associates have an opportunity to give back by volunteering with the Summer Food Service Program, helping serve in communities across the reservation. Volunteers are needed at multiple locations throughout the summer to assist with food distribution efforts that help support children and families during school break. Whether you can volunteer once or throughout the summer, your support makes an impact in our communities. For more information on how you can help, search the Summer Food Service Program at choctawnation.com.

A Commitment to Our Children

Food security is more than a nutrition issue, it is a foundation for health, education, and success. When children have access to nutritious meals, they are better prepared to learn, participate in activities, and enjoy their summer break. These federally funded programs reflect our commitment to caring for our communities and investing in the next generation. By working together, we can help ensure every child has the nourishment they need during the summer months. If you would like more information about either program or need assistance with an application, please contact Choctaw Nation at 580-916-9239. Together, we are building stronger families, healthier communities, and a brighter future for our children – and that is what the Chahta Spirit of Faith, Family and Culture is all about. Yakoke and God Bless!

Five Tribes call for oversight of prediction markets, address the U.S. Senate 2026 Farm Bill and transportation funding

TULSA, Okla. (July 14, 2026) – The Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes (ITC) adopted several resolutions, including measures addressing prediction markets and agricultural issues. The ITC called on Congress and federal regulators to ensure prediction markets and event contracts comply with existing tribal, federal and state gaming laws and do not undermine tribal sovereignty or tribal-state gaming compacts. Prediction markets such as Kalshi and Polymarket have grown rapidly in popularity in recent years, becoming prominent advertisers and exploiting regulatory gaps. “Predictive markets undermine tribal sovereignty and the long-standing tribal gaming compacts and laws that have governed tribal gaming for decades,” Choctaw Chief Gary Batton said. “These markets are rapidly expanding, and regulators and lawmakers must close the legal loopholes that allow them to operate outside established gaming laws and ensure tribes have a seat at the table as these issues are debated and resolved.” Tribal leaders also honored Chickasaw Nation Governor Emeritus Bill Anoatubby at the general session for his years of service with the ITC. His temperance and perseverance were among the virtues that tribal leaders celebrated, emphasizing how Governor Emeritus Bill Anoatubby helped establish how sovereignty is practiced today through negotiating compacts and being involved in Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act rulemaking. The ITC additionally urged the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee to incorporate tribal



Photo Provided

The Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes recently approved resolutions on prediction market gaming and legal compliance.

priorities into the Agricultural Act of 2026, also known as the farm bill. The group is advocating for policies that better reflect the unique needs of tribal nations and Native producers, such as provisions that strengthen food sovereignty, expand access to USDA programs and support tribal self-governance. ITC also approved the following resolutions:

- Supported tribal federal contracting and the SBA 8(a) Business Development Program as essential tools for strengthening tribal self-determination, economic development and self-sufficiency.
- Called on Congress to maintain the current formulas used to distribute federal Tribal transportation and transit funding.
- Endorsed the nomination of Mark Cruz to serve as director of the Indian Health Service.
- Issued a proclamation recognizing the National Day of Prayer.

The next meeting of the ITC will be hosted by the Choctaw Nation Oct. 7-9, 2026.

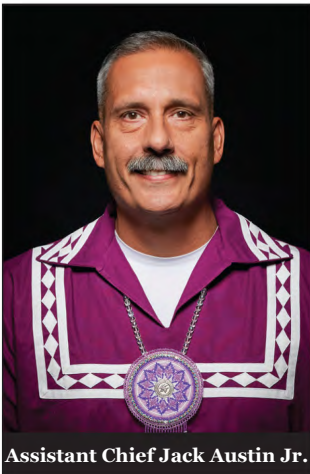
Choctaw Nation wins Tribal Blood Drive Challenge

DURANT, Okla. (June 10, 2026)– The Choctaw Nation, along with three other tribes, helped save over 14,000 lives during the Our Blood Institute’s (OBI) Tribal Blood Drive Challenge held from August 1 to January 31 each year. Now in its fifth year, Choctaw Nation won both the “Large Tribe Highest Collector” and “Projection Accuracy” categories. During the 2025 challenge, Choctaw Nation sponsored blood drives drawing 1,859 units. The tribe exceeded the goal of 1,822 blood draws. In total, the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee and Muscogee Creek tribes drew 4,907 blood products, almost reaching the goal of 5,058. “Because we are a regional blood center, the impact is huge,” says OBI CEO Dr. John Armitage. “The blood supply from the Tribal Blood Drive Challenge reaches farther than our



Choctaw Nation Photo

Representatives of the Choctaw Nation and Oklahoma Blood Institute celebrate the Nation’s recent Blood Drive Challenge win. communities. It radiates from here, traveling to neighbor states and beyond.” “While I’m honored to accept this award, it reflects the dedication of our associates and tribal members who consistently step up to give,” says Chief of the Choctaw Nation, Gary Batton. “Together, we’ve hosted over 1,000 blood drives and saved over 237,000 lives since 2004.”



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

engage with our youth on topics that matter—health and wellness, life skills, personal responsibility, and awareness around issues such as vaping,” Kevin said. “These conversations have always been intended to equip our campers with tools that support success both on and off the field.” As our camps continued to grow, I recognized an opportunity to strengthen another important area of development: creating space to talk with our youth about faith and what it means to live with purpose, character, and strong Christian values. “In 2024, I was introduced to Fellowship of Christian Athletes officer John Morris, who initially joined us to help instruct at our annual golf camp,” Kevin said. “During that visit, he shared his passion for encouraging young people through conversations about faith and the mission of Fellowship of Christian Athletes.” That introduction became the beginning of a meaningful partnership. “Since then, I have invited John or another FCA representative to participate across our camps each summer,” Kevin said. “They spend time with our youth discussing faith, encouragement, leadership, and the importance of building a strong foundation for life. Each camper also receives an FCA Bible to take home.”

This partnership has expanded our holistic approach to youth development. In addition to supporting physical activity, skill-building, and mental wellness, we are creating opportunities for spiritual growth and reflection. “Our camps remain focused on helping Choctaw youth discover their strengths, build confidence, and prepare for the future. By investing in the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—we continue working to ensure the next generation is equipped to lead with integrity, resilience, and purpose,” Kevin said. Yakoke to everyone who helps make these experiences possible for our youth each summer. God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

no value at all, without a trustworthy signature. When we pray in the name above every name, we are assured of an answer: We plead the name, merit and propitiation of Christ for sin. Thirdly, we must pray persistently. Luke 11:5-10 teaches us the parable of being persistent in asking. Persistence brings out the intensity and earnest of purpose from our heart. It is not that we are trying to coerce God into giving, because he is willing to give to his children. By being persistent, we are in a relationship with Father’s will and our request. Fourthly, we must pray in all humility. Luke 18:9-14 tells the story of the Pharisee and the Publican. The prayer of the Pharisee was with himself. His prayer was an expression of his pride of heart and religion. But the prayer of the publican was short but filled with humility and penitence. His prayer was answered with graciousness and blessed him with justification. Lastly, we must pray with consciousness that we are right with others. Matthew 6:14,15 reminds us of a truth, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” A wrong relationship with a fellow believer hinders effective prayers. For God to answer our prayers, there must be acts of reconciliation with those with whom we may be at cross purposes. One of the greatest prayer secrets is to pray in the realm of Bible truth and language.

Helping to Build Strong Futures

For more than two decades, our summer camps have been an important investment in the future of Choctaw youth. I had a chance recently to catch up with Kevin Gwin, Youth Events and Activities Program Manager for the Choctaw Nation, who highlighted the success of the program. According to Kevin, what began in 2003 as one large baseball camp has grown into more than 20 two-day camps held each summer, reaching young people across a wide range of interests and experiences. “Today, our camps include Stickball, Rodeo, Cultural, Softball, Baseball, Cheer, Football, Golf, Wildlife and Basketball,” Kevin said. From the beginning, our vision has been simple: create opportunities that help develop well-rounded young people and provide experiences that extend beyond competition and recreation. “Throughout the years, we have invited guest speakers to

Rules of Prayer

Jesus Christ taught the conditions upon which prayer is answerable and successful. He directed as to how prayer is to be offered. First, prayer must be accompanied by faith. Matthew 21:21, 22, “Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If you have faith, and doubt not, you shall not only do this which is done to this fig tree, but also if you shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” How can prayer be effective if it is not founded upon faith in God’s power? Secondly, prayer must be offered in His name. John 16:23 reads, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” The name of a person represents his character, his merit. The value of a check lies in its signature. The amount specified gives it

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

Big Game Report 2025-2026

The 2025-2026 fall hunting season has passed, and it was a fantastic season. The following report highlights the harvest of this past year. For the Choctaw Nation, these numbers show sovereignty and strength. Relations with the State of Oklahoma presented challenges in the Oklahoma tribal hunting and fishing world. During this time, Chief Batton, Assistant Chief Austin, and Choctaw Tribal Council held strong in their commitment to the Choctaw people. Tribal leaders from all members of the 5 Tribes Wildlife Management Reciprocity Agreement stood strong and defended the sovereign rights of tribal members.

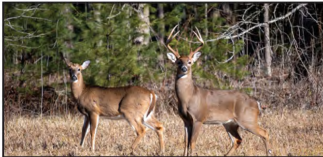
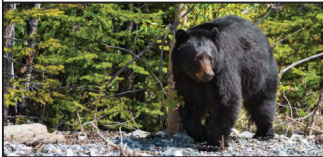
Despite all the confusing statements from the state and misinformation from state leadership, Choctaw tribal members registered harvest numbers that exceeded the 2024-2025 seasons. This is a true testament to the culture and resolve of the Choctaw people. Hunting is a woven part of the culture and identity of our Nation. Take a moment to review this report compiled by Choctaw Nation Department of Wildlife Conservation associates. Learn about the seasons and populations that so many people pursue each fall. It won't be long before we are grabbing those bows and guns and heading out again. Many are already making preparations by target practicing, scouting, and improving habitat conditions. However you spend your off season, CNDWC associates hope that you will find this report informative and an enticement to get out there for the 2026-2027 big game season.

Fall 2025-2026 hunting seasons marked the fourth year that Choctaw tribal members were regulated by the Choctaw Tribal Code 110: Fish, Game, and Animals Code. 2025-2026 marked the second year that Choctaw tribal members could hunt and fish in the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Muscogee, and Seminole Nations by carrying their proof of tribal membership. The 5 Tribes Reciprocity Agreement further strengthens tribal sovereignty and creates new and exciting opportunities for collaboration among tribes.

This marks the fourth installment of the Choctaw Nation Big Game Report. The Big Game Report 2025/2026 is a summary compiled from harvest reports, hunter observations, and what our wildlife associates encountered in the field while collecting data. Choctaw tribal members reporting harvest through the Chahta Achvffa membership portal are a critical piece of the CNDWC. Choctaw tribal members are required by law to check game harvested in the 5 Tribes Wildlife Reciprocity Agreement area through the Chahta Achvffa membership portal. The data you provide gives biologists insights into population trends, hunter participation, and public land use patterns.

CNDWC wants to hear from you! Please contact us with any observations, questions, concerns, or success stories. You can contact us by email at wildlife@choctawnation.com or by phone at 800-522-6170.

Check out the full 2025-2026 Big Game Report and other useful information by visiting choctawnation.com/about/eps/wildlife-conservation/.



Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation



District 6

The past few month have been a busy time for district 6. Pictured below are just a few of the highlights. For Councilwom-an Woods full column, visit biskinik.com/leadership-speaks.



Photos Provided
Leaders of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma attend the 2026 Chahtapreneur Awards Dinner on June 26.



Councilwoman Jennifer Woods and other District 6 tribal members show their patriotic spirit during the Red Oak Parade on July 5. The parade was one of several events celebrating America's 250th birthday.



Jayla King, shown with District 6 Councilwoman Jennifer Woods, received the Chahta Foundation Award on Wednesday, July 15, 2026. She was one of six award recipients.



Councilwoman Woods poses for a photo with the newly crowned District 6 Princesses, Hat- apushik Ramsey and Kitsey Bigpond.



District 8

Halito from District 8. I hope everyone had a fun and safe 4th of July. Last May, I had the pleasure of attending the end-of-year celebration for the Choctaw Heritage Club at Hugo Middle School. During my visit, the students shared the story of how their club was founded and talked about everything they accomplished throughout the school year. From practicing the Choctaw language to learning about our cultural traditions and building connections with fellow tribal members, it was inspiring to hear about their experiences.

As a student-founded and student-led organization, the Choctaw Heritage Club is a wonderful example of young leaders taking the initiative to learn more about their heritage and become more involved in the Choctaw community. I am incredibly proud of these students and grateful to the staff at Hugo Middle School for providing the support and space that helped this club grow.

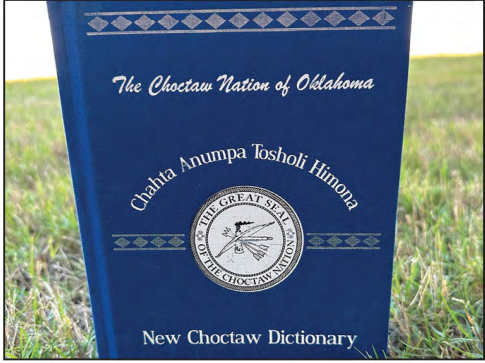
I also want to extend a big yakoke to Angie Williston, Program Director of the Language Department, for attending the celebration and sharing an encouraging message about the importance of learning the Choctaw language. Keeping our language alive is essential to preserving our culture, and it fills me with hope to see so many young people committed to carrying it forward. As the new school year approaches, I have high hopes for these young Choctaws and the continued success of their club. I wish all of our students, educators, and families a safe and rewarding school year.

Yakoke, Councilman Perry Thompson



Scott is July First Language Speaker of the month

During the July 11 tribal council meeting, Linda Scott of District 10 was recognized as the first Choctaw Language Speaker of the Month. Scott was unable to attend, but you can learn more about her recognition by watching the recorded session at biskinik.com/tag/council-minutes/.



McDaniel is the July Veteran of the Month

Jay Chock McDaniel, District #10, is the Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month. McDaniel, originally from Blackjack, Atoka County, graduated from Atoka High School in 1966. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in March 1968 and completed Basic Training at Fort Polk, LA. He went on to Fort Sill in Lawton, Okla., for AIT Training. He was stationed in Baumholder, Germany, where he served as a Gunner, then an Ammunition Sergeant and later a Radio Sergeant. McDaniel returned to Fort Sill to attend helicopter school, spending one year there before returning to Schweinfurt, Germany, from 1971 to 1973. He earned the National Defense Service Medal, a Marksman Badge with a .45 caliber weapon, and an Expert Badge with the M16. McDaniel enjoyed traveling to different places and meeting the people. He said that Baumholder was his favorite duty station and that he enjoyed his time in the military. Returning to civilian life, Buck Sergeant McDaniel worked at a hardware store in Atoka. Later, he was employed by Roberson Steel in Oklahoma. City, until he sustained an injury to his left hand. He then enjoyed a successful career as a truck driver before becoming a shuttle driver for Choctaw Casino. He married Veronica R. McDaniel in 1973. They have one daughter, Jennifer, and three grandchildren. McDaniel enjoys his time socializing with family and friends. 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.



District 7

Halito! Joey Tom here with another District 7 update. From community events to exciting accomplishments, here's what we have been up to! First, I would like to congratulate our District 7 princesses! I am proud to recognize our Little Miss, Ace'Lee Tom. Her dedication to our Choctaw traditions and the way she represents our Nation makes me proud, both as her father and as someone who has the privilege of serving our people. I am also proud to recognize our Senior Miss, Mia Reich. I've known Mia for many years, and seeing her earn the title of Senior Miss is a proud moment. She is a wonderful representative of our Choctaw values and traditions. They were crowned in Wright City on June 16. Thank you both for your hard work and dedication

to District 7. We look forward to cheering you on as you compete in Tushkahoma during the Labor Day Festival. We would also like to recognize Jett Gardner of Coffee Creek MFG LLC for being named Chatapreneur of the Year on June 25. Jett's Antlers roots run deep, as he was born and raised here by Amy and Jr. Gardner. He is married to Lacey Gardner, PA-C, who currently works at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Atoka. Together they have two children, Ellis and Hazel. Jett built Coffee Creek MFG from the ground up, often working on it after a full day's work and on weekends. He is a dedicated, passionate, and hardworking man, and we are truly honored to have him represent District 7 as our Chatapreneur of the Year. Jett, we pray for your continued success and for the Lord's guidance in the years ahead. Congratulations!

On May 20, we attended Senior Day in Durant. This annual event gives our senior groups the opportunity to compete in three categories: regalia, Choctaw singing, and badge making. We watched a regalia parade where many men and women proudly showcased traditional Choctaw clothing, and we enjoyed listening to traditional Choctaw hymns performed by senior groups from every district. We would like to congratulate the District 7 Wright City Senior Group on earning first place in the Choctaw singing category. At the conclusion of the competition, all 12 senior groups gathered on stage and began to sing together. Many audience members joined in, and the room was filled with the songs of our people. In that moment, it wasn't about who won; it was about unity. It was truly incredible to witness.

June was a busy yet rewarding month. We started the month with a ribbon-cutting ceremony for 10 new Independent Elderly Housing (IEH) homes in Antlers. Seeing these homes through every phase of construction and then watching families move in to begin a new chapter of life reminds me that the Choctaw Nation isn't just building homes; we are building stronger families, stronger communities, and a brighter future. Lastly, August has quickly approached, and with it comes the peak of summer. As temperatures continue to rise, remember to pay attention to the heat and the daily UV index before spending time outdoors. Whether you're working, attending community events, or enjoying time with family, take a few extra moments to protect yourself. Stay cool whenever possible, drink plenty of water throughout the day, wear sunscreen, and check in on our elders, young children, and neighbors who may be more vulnerable to the summer heat. A little preparation can go a long way in preventing heat-related illness and sun damage, helping everyone stay safe and enjoy all that summer has to offer.

We hope you have a fun, safe, and memorable August. As always, Yakoke and Chi Pisa La Chike!



COUNCIL MINUTES

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL SPECIAL
SESSION AGENDA July 11, 2026

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. CALL TO ORDER | Implementation of the Proposed Project on Choctaw Nation Tribal Lands |
| 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTES | |
| 3. ROLL CALL | |
| 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES | |
| a. Regular Session June 13, 2026 | |
| 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS | |
| a. Veteran of the Month, District #10 – Jay “Choc” McDaniel | |
| b. Choctaw Language Speaker, District #10 – Linda Scott | |
| b. School of Choctaw Language Certification Recipients – Hal-lie Sheffield and Lydia Dean | |
| 6. COMMITTEE REPORTS | |
| 7. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None | |
| 8. NEW BUSINESS | |
| a. Approve Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment | |
| b. Approve Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles | |
| c. Approve Application to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Tribal Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (Tribal HUD-VASH) Renewal Grant | |
| d. Approve Application for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for FY 2027 | |
| e. Approve Application for the Family Violence Prevention Grant for FY 2027 | |
| f. Approve Submission of Application under the United States Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, OVC FY 2026 Technology to Support Services for Victims of Crime Solicitation and to Authorize | |
| g. Approve One-Time Funding Grant for the Head Start Program | |
| h. Approve a Roadway Easement Renewal in Favor of the Latimer County Board of Commissioners on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Latimer County, Oklahoma | |
| i. Approve an Amendment to an Existing Revolving Credit Facility between Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and BOKF, NA, and other Lenders, and to Approve Related Matters | |
| j. Approve the Plan/Application for FY 2027 Funding through the Department of Health and Human Services for the Community Services Block Grant | |
| k. Authorize the Sale and Conveyance of Approximately 0.15 Acres of Fee Land in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma | |
| l. Council Bill to Approve Funding for the Investment in a Private Equity Real Estate Acquisition | |
| m. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Chief Gary Batton to Serve on the U.S. Department of Interior Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee | |
| n. Council Bill to Name the Choctaw Nation Wellness Center in Broken Bow, Oklahoma the R. Dewayne Hicks Wellness Center. | |
| 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS | |
| 10. OLD BUSINESS | |
| 11. ADJOURNMENT | |
| 12. CLOSING PRAYER | |

Road to Labor Day stickball begins with World Series send-off event

By Christian Chaney-Sackett

As the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival approaches, excitement is building for one of the festival's most anticipated events, the annual stickball tournament.

That excitement was on display July 5 when more than 200 players from four Tvshka Homma teams gathered for a community send-off before traveling to Mississippi for the World Series of Stickball.

Family members, friends and supporters filled the Tvshka Homma cafeteria to wish the teams good luck as they prepared to represent the Choctaw Nation.

After a practice led by head coach Jared Tom, players and their families shared a traditional meal prepared by Nakisha Ludlow and her family with help from community donors.

The celebration continued with social dancing on the Capitol grounds led by Choctaw drummers under the direction of Ashton Willis. Eli Williamson led the chants, and Jose Gonzalez led the social dances. District princesses also attended the send-off, cheering on the teams with handmade signs.

The send-off honored four teams: Tvshka Homma, Tvshka Homma Ohoyo, Tvshka Homma 35 and Older, and Tvshka Homma Himmitta.

After competing at the World Series, many of those same players will return home to compete in the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival Stickball Tournament.

Held each Labor Day weekend, the tournament is one of the festival's most popular events. Fans line the fields to watch fast-paced, exciting games while celebrating a tradition that has been part of Choctaw culture for generations.

The Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival began in 1969 as an annual gathering for the Chief to meet with tribal members and conduct tribal business while celebrating the first Choctaw Princess.

Today, the festival welcomes thousands of visitors each year for sporting events, cultural activities, entertainment, arts and crafts, food and family fun. Among those events, stickball remains one of the festival's biggest attractions.

Known as the "Little Brother of War," stickball has been played by Choctaw people for centuries. It is one of the oldest team sports in North America.

Historically, the game helped settle disputes between communities and prepared warriors for battle. It also taught teamwork, discipline and endurance while bringing people together. Players use two handmade sticks to catch, carry and throw a woven leather ball. The game is fast and physical, and players can only move the ball with their sticks.

For generations, stickball was more than a game. Families gathered to watch and support their teams, and communities came together for competition, celebration and fellowship. Those customs continue today each time players take the field.

Although public games became less common during the early 1900s, interest in stickball began to grow again in the 1970s. Since then, the Choctaw Nation has continued to preserve the game through workshops, youth programs, cultural demonstrations and tournaments.



Photos Provided by Crystal Davenport

Choctaw District princesses cheer on players with handmade signs at the community send-off.



Players and community members enjoy social dancing.



Volunteers gather for a photo during the event.



Players hold one final practice before the World Series.

The Choctaw Nation has also expanded its presence in national competition.

In 2009, the Nation formed its first official men's stickball team to compete in the World Series of Stickball in Mississippi. An official women's team followed in 2017. Today, Choctaw Nation teams compete against teams from other Tribal Nations while helping preserve one of the Nation's oldest traditions.

The next generation is also helping keep the game alive. Youth teams and stickball workshops give young players the chance to learn the game, its history and the values it teaches. As more children and families become involved, the future of stickball continues to grow.

During a question-and-answer session following the premiere of Stickball: Little Brother of War, one player reflected on the growth of the game.

"I love how this team has taken control of their culture and how they're making it a comeback," the player said. "They're bringing it back. They're loving everything about it, and it just brings a lot of joy to me to see that."

Whether cheering on a favorite team or watching for the first time, Labor Day Festival visitors will have the chance to experience one of the Choctaw Nation's oldest traditions in action and celebrate the players who continue to keep it alive.

Game times and bracket information will be announced closer to the festival.

If you are interested in volunteering for next year's Stickball Community Send-Off, contact Crystal Davenport at crystaladavenport@yahoo.com.

World Series of Stickball 2026

CHOCTAW, Miss. (July 16, 2026) — Several Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma stickball teams traveled to Mississippi to compete in the 2026 World Series of Stickball.

The Tvshka Homma, Tvshka Homma Ohoyo, Tvshka Homma 35 and Older and Tvshka Homma Himmitta teams competed against the Chickasaw Nation and Mississippi Choctaw teams for championship titles in four divisions.

At press time on July 16, the championship games had not yet been played.

However, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma teams found success throughout the tournament.

The Tvshka Homma Himmitta youth team opened the tournament with an 8-0 mercy-rule victory over Ittibatoli on July 14. At press time, the team was scheduled to face Mississippi's Pearl River in the semifinals on July 16, with the winner advancing to the championship game on July 17.

In the women's division, Tvshka Homma Ohoyo defeated Beaver Dam 5-0 in the opening round to advance to the semifinals before falling to Oka Homma 3-0.

In the men's division, Tvshka Homma opened tournament play with a hard-fought 4-2 loss to Oka Homma.

The Tvshka Homma 35 and Older team made history by earning its first berth in the championship game. The team defeated defending champion Beaver Dam 3-2 in sudden-death overtime. Center-shooter Tony Shepherd Jr. returned after suffering an injury to make several key plays, including setting up Alejandro Martin's game-winning shot. The championship game was scheduled for 8 p.m. Friday, July 17, against Oka Homma.

For the final result of the World Series of Stickball and additional content, visit biskinik.com.



Choctaw Nation Photos

Four teams represented the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in the 2026 World Series of Stickball, each competing in a different division.



APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [HTTPS://WWW.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/STAR](https://www.choctawnation.com/services/star)
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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Choctaw CAREERS

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Upcoming Events

Community Cultural Meeting – Allen | Aug. 1 | 2 p.m. | Courtyard by Marriott Dallas Allen at Allen Event Center | 210 E Stacy Rd Allen, TX 75002 | Join Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton for a fun, educational, and cultural event in the Allen area that offers insight into the programs available to tribal members. Update your tribal membership card, ask questions about the Choctaw Nation, and share in the fellowship.

Health Fair – Tvshka Homma | Aug. 6 | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | Tuskahoma Community Center | Council House Road Tuskahoma, OK 74574 | This fair focuses on education, prevention and access to community-based health services. Offering health screenings, vaccinations and educational resources from Choctaw Nation departments to support community wellness for the elderly population.

Health Fair – Wilburton | Aug. 12 | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | Wilburton Community Center | 1455 NW Highway 2 Wilburton, OK 74578 | This fair focuses on education, prevention and access to community-based health services. Offering health screenings, vaccinations and educational resources from Choctaw Nation departments to support community wellness for the elderly population.

PACT ACT: Bringing VA Benefits Home | Aug. 14 | 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. | Wilburton Community Center | 1455 NW Highway 2 Wilburton, OK 74578 | Learn about VA benefits and resources available through the PACT Act. Open to all veterans — Native American status is not required.

Community Cultural Meeting – Los Angeles | Aug. 22 | 2 p.m. | Sonesta Los Angeles Airport | 5985 West Century Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90045-5463 | Join Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton for a fun, educational, and cultural event in Los Angeles that offers insight into the programs available to tribal members. Update your tribal membership card, ask questions about the Choctaw Nation, and share in the fellowship.

Cinema at the Center: Wreck-It Ralph | Aug. 22 | 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. | Choctaw Cultural Center | 1919 Hina Hanta Way Calera, OK 74730 | Get ready to enter the arcade and follow Ralph on his journey to prove he can be a hero too. This event is fun for the whole family! The movie starts at 1 p.m. Admission to watch the movie is complimentary to all.

Health Fair – Wright City | Aug. 26 | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. | Wright City Community Center | 5718 Rodeo Grounds Rd Wright City, OK 74766 | This fair focuses on education, prevention and access to community-based health services. Offering health screenings, vaccinations and educational resources from Choctaw Nation departments to support community wellness for the elderly population.

For additional information on these events and more, visit choctawnation.com/events/.

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Honoring Generations of Choctaw Artistry
May 5, 2026 – October 16, 2026



JUROR SUMMONS

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

HVPIM AIITTVFAMA

WHERE WE GATHER:

THE CHOCTAW NATION LABOR DAY FESTIVAL EXHIBIT



COME VISIT THE NEW EXHIBIT

July 24, 2026 - April 3, 2027

CHOCTAW
CULTURAL CENTER



Biskinik Submission Policy

The Biskinik reserves the right to determine whether submissions will be published and to edit for length, style, and clarity. Items are published on a first-received, first-run basis as space allows. Publication may take a few months due to high volume of submissions.

Submissions may be sent via:

Email: biskinik@choctawnation.com | Mail: Biskinik, P.O. Box 1210, Durant, OK 74702 | Online: biskinik.com/biskinik-submission-guidelines

Events

Event announcements must be received by the submission deadline. The Biskinik is printed on the third Thursday of the month before the issue month (e.g., the January issue prints in December).

People You Know (PYK)

Tribal members may submit announcements highlighting personal, educational, or professional achievements. Milestone birthdays are accepted for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, and older. Anniversary announcements are accepted for 25, 50, and 60+ years of marriage. Wedding, honor roll, and high school or eighth-grade graduation announcements are not published.

Letters

Letters and thank-you notes from tribal members are welcome. Due to volume, not all letters can be published. Letters must be under 150 words and include full contact information. Only the writer's name and city will be printed.

For questions regarding submissions, please contact biskinik@choctawnation.com.

Gary Batton
Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

BISKINIK

The premier news source for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

The Biskinik, the official monthly publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, is printed each month as a free service to tribal members. To be eligible to receive the printed version of Biskinik, readers must be a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal member. In effort to reduce waste, the Choctaw Nation restricts most mass mailings, including Biskinik, to one per household. The Biskinik is available to the public online at biskinik.com.

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800-522-6170

Biskinik or Bishinik?

On July 10, 2010, Tribal Council approved a bill correcting the spelling of the newspaper, changing *Bishinik* to the proper *Biskinik* as part of ongoing language revitalization efforts.

Editor's Note: Views and opinions in submitted articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Choctaw Nation.

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

District 9 Native American Film Festival

The Choctaw Nation District 9 Elders Education Committee invites community members to save the date for a Native American Film Festival planned for October 31, 2026.

Additional details about the festival will be announced as they become available. Community members are encouraged to mark their calendars and watch for future updates. Please contact Barbara Cates at ndnz12@yahoo.com for more info.

Red Clay Roots Festival

Join us Aug. 21-22 for the Red Clay Roots Festival, a celebration of Native culture, storytelling, art and the legacy of the World War I Telephone Warriors. Enjoy live music, film, visual art, cultural education and immersive experiences while supporting the preservation and educational efforts of the Choctaw Code Talkers Association.

The Red Clay Echoes encore show is set for Aug. 27, featuring live entertainment, special guests and reflection. More info can be found on the Red Clay Roots Music Festival's Facebook and Instagram pages.

Choctaw Feast of the Dead

Join us Saturday, November 14, 2026, from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. for the annual Chahta Feast of the Dead at Choctaw RV Park, 3650 Enterprise Blvd., Durant, OK 74701.

Honor the memory of loved ones during this traditional Choctaw mourning custom. The Feast of the Dead is a time for families and the community to gather in remembrance, share a meal, create family heritage crafts and tell stories around the memorial fire.

Unclaimed Funds

The Accounting Department of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is trying to contact the individuals listed below. The Choctaw Nation is in possession of unclaimed funds (uncashed payroll checks) that may be due to these individuals.

If you are an employee or former employee of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and your name is listed below, please contact: By Mail: The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma P.O. Box 1210 Durant, OK 74702 Attn: Lisa Jordan, Accountant | By Phone: 580-642-7530

Susan Cossey
Xavier Estaban Ochoa
Devon Christopher Clark
Dillon Brewer

Alexis Smith
Teresa Vazquez
Draven Moore
Aryana Joyce Miranda

Project Return Seeking Boarding School Survivors

Indian Boarding School survivors from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma can now request copies of their student records – FREE OF CHARGE.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has partnered with the University of Iowa's Native Policy Lab (NPL) for the pilot of Project Return. Project Return is an initiative to return copies of Indian Boarding School records to living survivors, free of charge. All returned records are confidential: they will not be shared and will not be used for research purposes.

The pilot phase of Project Return began in May of 2026. Following the completion of the pilot, Project Return will launch nationally to accept record requests from any living survivor of Indian Boarding Schools. Currently, the NPL is not accepting requests for records from descendants of survivors of Indian Boarding Schools.

To request your records, please visit the NPL website at <https://npl.lab.uiowa.edu/>. There, you will also find additional project details and answers to frequently asked questions. To contact the NPL, email native-policy-lab@uiowa.edu.

Housing Headlines

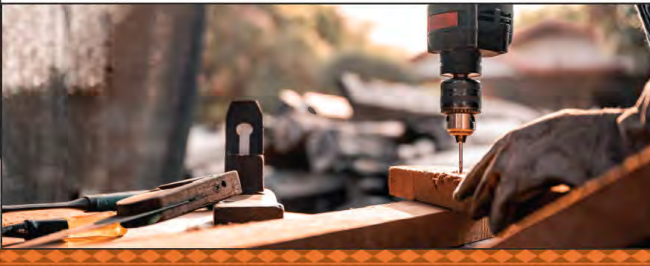
By Bobby Yandell

One of the most successful programs Housing now has is our voucher program for home rehabilitation. There are two types of vouchers, the Rehab Voucher and the SHIP Voucher. These vouchers allow the homeowner the ability to have repairs made on their home themselves by utilizing a voucher provided by the Tribe.

The Homeowners Rehabilitation Services Rehab Voucher provides assistance to homeowners for home repairs and ADA accessibility items to single-family homes. Eligible repairs are based on a priority list provided through a home inspection conducted by the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation. Homeowners must meet eligibility requirements based on income, age, disability, and family size. Voucher amounts are up to \$10,000.00 and up to \$15,000 for disabled persons (if ADA work is needed) or veterans. You can apply and qualify for 3 consecutive years up to \$30,000 in total assistance or \$45,000 for veterans/ADA repairs. The homeowner receiving the voucher is responsible for contacting contractors for bids and entering into a contract with the contractor for completion of the work according to the priority list. Once the work is complete, the signed and approved voucher is submitted for payment, and the work is confirmed through an inspection. This program is available within the reservation boundaries of the Choctaw Nation and does NOT require a lien to be filed on your property.

The Homeowners Rehabilitation Services SHIP Voucher provides assistance to participants who do not meet the requirements for the Rehab Voucher. This program assists tribal members who may have higher income, live in a family home or participants who are non-tribal homeowners but have custody of a tribal child. Participants must still meet eligibility requirements based on income, age, disability, and family size. Voucher amounts range from \$5,000 to \$15,000, depending on circumstances and eligibility. You can apply and qualify for 3 consecutive years. The homeowner receiving the voucher is responsible for contacting contractors for bids and entering into a contract with the contractor for completion of the work according to the priority list. Once the work is complete, the signed and approved voucher is submitted for payment, and the work is confirmed through an inspection. This program is available within the Choctaw Nation Reservation and does NOT require a lien to be filed on your property.

Applications can be obtained online, at community centers or at the Housing office.



Hodo releases debut YA sci-fi novel

Choctaw writer Kara Hodo of Lane, Oklahoma, has released her debut novel, "The Eschaton Diaries: Her Secrets Could Destroy Everything."

The independently published young adult science fiction novel is an epistolary novel told through a series of diary entries.

The story follows 13-year-old MZ Starr, who lives a sheltered life on the peaceful planet of Elara. When an influential interplanetary government threatens her world, MZ is drawn into a journey filled with advanced technology, betrayal, courage and redemption as she confronts secrets that could change everything.

Hodo has been writing since childhood and has completed several novels, as well as short stories, novellas, poems, essays and flash fiction. Her work spans multiple genres, including horror, fantasy, mystery, thriller and Christian speculative fiction. She has also been published in student journals at two universities.

"The Eschaton Diaries" and more of Hodo's self-published work are available on Amazon.



Busby earns her master's degree

District 11 tribal member Chasity Busby recently passed the Licensed Master Social Work exam after earning her Master of Social Work degree last August.

Busby interned with Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health for her Bachelor of Social Work in 2023 and her MSW in 2025. She is a registered Choctaw artist and currently works for the Choctaw Nation.

Busby is passionate about preserving and passing down Choctaw culture and traditions through beading, sewing, singing hymns, social dancing and storytelling. In April, she beaded a medallion for Tim Tebow to help share Choctaw culture.



Wilson earns her doctorate

Katherine Wilson graduated from the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine in 2026 with a Doctor of Medicine degree.

She began a four-year residency in emergency medicine at UCSD in June.

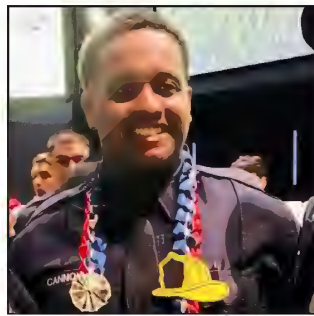
Katherine would like to thank all her family and friends, as well as the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, for all their support. She is the great-niece of David Wilson of Idaho, Glenn Wilson of Texas and Helen (Wilson) Caldwell of Octavia, Oklahoma.



Cannon completes academy training

Joseph Cannon, 22, of Modesto, California, has completed academy training for California Firefighter 1 and the tasks and testing for Firefighter 2 certification at Monterey Peninsula College.

He will work in the San Francisco Bay Area as a firefighter. Cannon's great-great-great-grandfather served as an interpreter for missionaries to the Choctaw Nation in the late 1800s.



Coffman wins OASA Award

VALLIANT, Okla.– The Oklahoma Association of School Administrators (OASA) is pleased to announce Linda Coffman of Valliant Public School as the 2026 OASA District #19 Assistant Superintendent/Central Office Administrator of the Year. Coffman was recently recognized at the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration (CCOSA) Summer Leadership Conference.

OASA annually recognizes outstanding administrators.

"This honor speaks to the essential leadership of assistant superintendents and central office administrators - leaders who work alongside the superintendent to translate vision into action, navigate complexity, and keep the district moving forward," said Dr. Pam Deering, CCOSA/OASA Executive Director. "This recognition highlights an administrator whose partnership with their superintendent, support of their team, commitment to service, and focus on results make a lasting impact on their district and community. Linda Coffman is among the best of Oklahoma administrators, and we are proud to recognize these outstanding leaders."

OASA has 20 Districts that consist of multiple counties. Eligible OASA members are nominated and selected by their peers in their OASA District.



Lane wins Miss Ripon pageant

On Feb. 19, 2026, Choctaw tribal member Adelynn Lane won the title of Miss Ripon.

The competition is a longstanding tradition in the small town of Ripon, California, and aims to build the confidence of young women and introduce them to the professional world. Lane competed in five events: a public speech, private interview with judges, timed essay, fashion show and selling raffle tickets.

Since winning, she has attended community events such as ribbon cuttings and the Memorial Day service.



Semple wins Texas home run derby

Choctaw Nation tribal member Chris Semple won the 40-and-over division of the West Side Little League Coaches Home Run Derby in Fort Worth, Texas, on May 1.

Competing against more than 30 participants, Chris claimed the title after hitting five home runs in six swings during the final round. The victory came after four years of competing in the annual event.



Choctaw Nation announces complete Labor Day Festival concert lineup

TVSHKAHOMMA, Okla. — The Choctaw Nation has announced the complete lineup for the 2026 Choctaw Labor Day Festival concerts, featuring platinum-selling country artist Mark Chesnutt as the Saturday night headliner and Dove Award-nominated Christian artist Ben Fuller leading Sunday evening's Christian concert.

The Choctaw Labor Day Festival, the largest event held in southeast Oklahoma, returns Friday, Sept. 4, through Sunday, Sept. 6, on the historic Choctaw Nation Capitol Grounds at Tvshkahomma. The free concerts are among the festival's biggest attractions and are part of a weekend filled with family-friendly entertainment and cultural celebrations.

Saturday's concert at the Amphitheater begins with Choctaw country musician

Vernon Johnson at 6 p.m., followed by Choctaw musical act The Close at 6:45 p.m. Festival favorite Neal McCoy will perform before headliner Mark Chesnutt takes the stage later that evening.

Sunday's Christian music concert opens with Southern Gospel group The Williamsons at 6 p.m., followed by gold record artist Hope Darst and headliner Ben Fuller.

Throughout the weekend, festivalgoers can enjoy the Choctaw Princess Pageant, sporting events, arts and crafts, carnival rides, food vendors, health and service information booths, and family camping.

Stay up to date on festival activities by visiting laborday.choctawnation.com or by texting LABORDAY to 888777.

Saturday, Sept. 5

6:00 p.m.

Vernon Johnson is a Choctaw country artist from Dog Creek, Oklahoma, began writing songs as a young child while growing up on a working ranch. At age 16, he joined the Country Music Singers Association, earning national Vocalist and Entertainer of the Year honors for three consecutive years through the North American Country Music Association International.



6:45 p.m.

The Close is a Nashville-based trio featuring Shannon Walker, Lori J. Rowton and James McKinney. Blending close-harmony vocals with indie-contemporary music, the group has shared the stage with artists including Diamond Rio. Their live performances showcase original songs and timeless covers, creating an experience sure to capture the attention of music lovers across generations and genres.



7:30 p.m.

Neal McCoy, a Choctaw Labor Day Festival legend, has released 15 studio albums and 34 country radio singles. His platinum-certified album "No Doubt About It" produced the No. 1 hits "No Doubt About It" and "Wink." McCoy has completed 15 USO tours and has received multiple humanitarian awards from the Academy of Country Music and Country Radio Broadcasters.



9:00 p.m.

Mark Chesnutt, a Beaumont, Texas native, rose to fame in the 1990s with eight albums that produced 20 Billboard Top 10 hits and eight No. 1 singles, including "Brother Jukebox" and "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing." He has received two Country Music Association awards, including the Horizon Award (now Best New Artist) and Vocal Event of the Year.



2026 ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

Sunday, Sept. 6

6:00 p.m.

The Williamsons have been a staple in Southern Gospel music for decades, earning numerous awards and chart-topping songs, including No. 1 hits "Shout" and "Every Moment, Every Mountain, Every Mile." Led by original member Donnie Williamson and his wife, Lisa, the family group is known for its inspiring performances and powerful harmonies.



7:00 p.m.

Hope Darst, originally from Kentucky, lives in Nashville with her husband and two daughters. A worship leader and songwriter, she is known for her certified gold single "Peace Be Still," along with songs including "Promise Keeper," "If The Lord Builds The House" and "Never Walk Alone." Her latest album, In The Mighty Name, is a 15-song live recording.



8:30 p.m.

Ben Fuller who grew up on a Vermont dairy farm, moved to Nashville to launch his Christian music career. His chart-topping songs include "Who I Am" and "If It Was Up To Me," featuring country superstar Carrie Underwood. Fuller's powerful voice and heartfelt lyrics have earned him multiple Dove Award and K-LOVE Fan Award nominations.



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CNO awards 12 businesses with 2026 Chahtapreneur Awards

DURANT, Okla. (July 9, 2026) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma recognized 12 small businesses at its annual Chahtapreneur Awards Dinner last week.

Each year, the Choctaw Nation presents Chahtapreneur Awards to one Choctaw-owned business from each of the reservation's 12 districts and names one overall Chahtapreneur of the Year. This year's highest honor was awarded to Coffee Creek MFG of Antlers.

Coffee Creek MFG is a trailer manufacturing business owned and operated by Jett Gardner. The company offers a variety of trailers, including utility trailers, car haulers, goosenecks, and dump trailers.

Below is a complete list of Chahtapreneur Award winners by district:

- **District 1: Jennifer Watson, Watson M&M Food (Idabel)**
- **District 2: Leona Rivers, Beads by Bears Lariat (Broken Bow)**
- **District 3: Emi Wright, Wright's Glass (Talihina)**
- **District 4: Matthew Coopers, Cooper's Furs and 6th Day Creations (Bokoshe)**
- **District 5: Tammy Jackson, Garland Drilling (Stigler)**
- **District 6: Charisse Gragg, Small Town Talk (Quinton)**
- **District 7: Jett Gardner, Coffee Creek MFG (Antlers)**
- **District 8: Amanda Milner, Red Bear Construction (Soper)**
- **District 9: Don Hyde, Jr., Pearl Snap Limo Services (Calera)**
- **District 10: Deidre Elrod, Stringtown General Store (Stringtown)**
- **District 11: Justin Few, Platinum Appraisals (McAlester)**
- **District 12: LaTildra Fortenberry, Kreative Kidz Learning Academy (Ada)**



Choctaw Nation Photo

District 7's Coffee Creek MFG, owned by Jett Gardner of Antlers, earned Chahtapreneur of the Year at the June 25 awards banquet.

“The Chahtapreneur Awards give us an opportunity to recognize small businesses that are working to improve the customer experience, expand their offerings and give back to the communities they serve,” said Gary Johnson, director of Choctaw Nation Small Business Development. “We are proud to shine a spotlight on these businesses and encourage them to continue making an impact within the Choctaw Nation.”

Choctaw Nation Small Business Development focuses on delivering technical assistance, one-on-one business coaching, training programs and access to capital to entrepreneurs, helping build successful, job-creating Choctaw-owned companies within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. For more information about Choctaw Nation Small Business Development, visit choctawsmallbusiness.com.

Boom in the Valley

TVSHKA HOMMA, Okla. – Choctaw Nation's Boom in the Valley July 3 featured over 400 drones, food trucks, Choctaw artists, cultural games, and family activities. Hundreds gathered at the Choctaw Nation Capitol Grounds to celebrate.



A Boom in the Valley attendee secures their snacks before the drone show begins



Raven Marris enjoys event's foam pit.



The crowd gathers to watch the first-ever Boom in the Valley drone show.



Photos by Christian Toews

Around 400 drones light up the sky during the 2026 Boom in the Valley drone show.



Young spectators watch as the drones form a variety of shapes and colors.

Choctaw at FIFA World Cup

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma used its partnership with the Dallas World Cup 2026 Host City program to share Choctaw culture with an international audience.

Choctaw Casinos were an official Dallas World Cup 2026 Host City supporter as North Texas hosted matches and events during the 2026 FIFA World Cup. This partnership showed how corporate sponsorship and tribal identity created opportunities to highlight Choctaw history, traditions and values.

Chief Gary Batton said at the outset that the partnership reflected the Choctaw values of unity, culture and togetherness. According to Batton, those values have guided the Choctaw people for generations and aligned with the global spirit of the World Cup.

As part of the Dallas World Cup activities, the Choctaw Cultural Center, Choctaw Country and other Choctaw businesses set up informational booths for visitors.

Choctaw tribal members shared traditional social dances and explained their historical meaning to attendees. Interactive displays highlighted Choctaw art, craftsmanship and heritage for international fans to experience. Choctaw performers took the stage at the FIFA Fan Fest and Choctaw princesses greeted international visitors.

This partnership introduced fans from around the world to Choctaw traditions and culture as well as to its growing presence in the region.

Visit biskinik.com for more Choctaw FIFA World Cup content.



Photos by Christian Toews

Marcus Bobb demonstrates stickball to an international visitor during one of the FIFA World Cup events in Dallas.



Choctaw Tribal Royalty take a picture with a soccer fan.

Yasmine Austin Sapulpa, Stickball Player

By Kellie Matherly

Tribal member and stickball player Yasmine Austin Sapulpa grew up rooted in Choctaw language, community, and tradition, even while living far from the reservation. Growing up in Virginia, she and her sisters learned Choctaw words before English ones, sometimes realizing years later that the terms they knew so well were not the same ones their classmates used at school. Their mother spoke Choctaw at home, and that everyday use of language helped form Yasmine's identity from a young age. Each summer, the family returned “home,” not simply to a place, but to people. They attended Choctaw singings that lasted late into the night, visited their grandmother, made traditional foods, and sang Choctaw hymns together as siblings. Long before she could articulate it, Yasmine was being shaped by a culture that valued belonging, responsibility, and togetherness.

“I think it's something that is kind of an extraordinary experience to know who you are, to know your culture, where you come from, and to have a community that you can call home,” said Yasmine. “Home doesn't just have to be the place that you live or the place that you're from.”

Looking back as a young adult, Yasmine recognizes how extraordinary it was to grow up with such a clear sense of who she is and where she comes from. For her, home has never been limited to geography. It is community, the people who watched her grow up, who shared stories, language, and laughter. She believes that having an anchor in culture gives people confidence and grounding, something she has seen many others search for throughout their lives.

Yasmine said, “I think it's really important to have that anchor in a culture. I know a lot of people who kind of search for culture and search for a place to belong. So, it's really meaningful to me that I do have that. And I feel that people are more grounded and are more confident whenever they do have a culture that they belong to or a culture that they can lean on.”

That foundation became especially important when Yasmine discovered stickball. At fourteen, she and her three younger sisters joined the newly formed Choctaw Nation youth league. Like many early players, they were learning as they went, fumbling with sticks and guided by coaches who were also finding their footing. What began as curiosity soon became a passion and commitment. Over time, stickball grew into something far greater than a sport: it became a place of belonging, leadership, and cultural connection.

As Yasmine progressed into adult play, she faced fear and uncertainty, especially when joining experienced teams filled with players she did not know. Encouraged by the kindness and support of seasoned players, she stayed on, learning not just the game, but also how generosity and mentorship sustain a community. Those early experiences now shape how she shows up for others.

“Those people are really important, and those are the people I think about,” said Yasmine. “Whenever I do see new players, or we have the youth that come to our youth league stickball practices, I can be that person for someone else—be the person that makes somebody want to stay, make someone want to get better and to learn more.”

Today, Yasmine plays center, a crucial position that is fast-paced and demanding. The role requires endurance, awareness, and trust. For Yasmine, it mirrors her leadership style: attentive, protective, and decisive.

Beyond playing, she is deeply committed to teaching. Alongside her sister, she coaches youth teams, including Nashoba Homma, helping guide the next generation of players with patience and intention. One of her proudest moments came when youth players began tackling for the first time, fearless and confident in ways she had struggled to be at that age. Watching them grow into strong, dynamic players affirmed her belief in the power of encouragement and preparation.

As an adult, Yasmine takes profound pride in representing



Choctaw Nation Photo

Yasmine Austin Sapulpa plays center for the Choctaw Nation women's stickball team and coaches youth league players, sharing her passion for Chahta culture through the traditional game. See and share her story at togetherweremore.com.

Choctaw traditions that have always recognized the strength of women. She speaks openly about the significance of playing a game that Choctaw women have participated in for generations, without having to justify their presence. On the field, she is fiercely protective of her “stickball sisters” and sees that bond as an extension of family.

Yasmine also carries her culture into creative expression, blending traditional Choctaw elements into modern textiles and fashion. She believes culture must live, evolve, and invite participation. Preservation matters, but so does adaptation, allowing people to connect, ask questions, and feel welcomed rather than excluded.

Whether on the field, in the community, or through cultural expression, Yasmine understands that cooperative effort, shared responsibility, and mutual care are what allow individuals and nations to thrive.



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

OBITUARIES

Hiram Stanton Jones

Hiram Stanton “Stan” Jones, 94, passed away April 10, 2026.

Stan was born Jan. 29, 1932, in Fort Sill, Okla., to Hiram Forrest Jones and Gladys (Lee) Jones.

He was preceded in death by his first wife Elizabeth “Liz”; sons Mark and Steve; and sisters Pat, Jackie and Betty.

Stan is survived by daughters Kim, and Marion (Keith); sons Marshal (Bernice) and Craig (Janice); daughters-in-law Kathy, Vikki, and Judy; wife Cora; 11 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.



John Courtney Holleman

John Courtney Holleman, 78, passed away May 7, 2026.

John was born May 7, 2026, in New Iberia, Louisiana, to Thomas Charles Holleman and Eleanor Landry Holleman.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Eleanor Ann Holleman; and mother-in-law and father-in-law Pat and Billy Dale.

John is survived by his wife Betsy; children Elizabeth Robertson (Wes), John Courtney Holleman (Emily), and Lindsay Penley (Jake); grandchildren James Robertson, Thomas Robertson, Eleanor Holleman, John Courtney “Jack” Holleman III, Wilton Holleman, Mary Louise Holleman, Madalyn Penley, Gentry Penley, Daisy Penley, and Reed Penley; siblings Mary Beaulieu (Buster), Tommy Holleman (Vicki), and James Holleman (Kelly); brother-in-law Bill Dale (Cammie); sister-in-law Patricia Roberts (Fred); Godchildren Charlie Beallieu, Helen Holleman Bayard, Andrew Holleman, and Sara Dale Thomas; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.



Griffie Will Ratterree

Griffie Will Ratterree, 96, passed away March 13, 2026.

Griffie was born June 23, 1929, in LeFlore, Okla., to John Henry and Ada Ratterree.

He is survived by his children Linda, Ronny, Sandi, Danny, and Glenn; partner Patricia Henry; a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren.



Terry Glen Shaw

Dr. Terry G. Shaw, 77, passed away June 12, 2026.

Terry was born July 18, 1948, in McAlester, Okla., to Earnest and Tommie Sue Shaw.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Dale Shaw.

Terry is survived by his wife Donna; daughters Erin Shawn, and Cady Shaw and her spouse Sean Seelye; son Dr. Parker Shaw and spouse Katie Shaw; grandchildren Isobel, Oliver, Penny, Thora, and Carson; sister Patti McCullar; as well as many cousins, nieces, nephews, colleagues, and dear friends.



Beverly Jean Witman

Beverly Jean Witman, 79, passed away May 8, 2026.

Beverly was born Sept. 17, 1946, to Lois and Aubrey Baker.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Don Witman; and brothers Ronnie and Jim Baker.

Beverly is survived by daughters Kelley (Ray) Walker and Tammy Glatzer; grandchildren River West (partner Sephanie Menotti), Ann (Ryan) Trisel, Dannin Tauber, and Leandra Cearly (fiancé Jaiden Shaheen); and her great-grandchildren Alaura, Lily, and Hannah Trisel.



Cheryl Lynn Hanley

Cheryl Lynn Hanley, 43, passed away May 15, 2026.

Cheryl was born Dec.11, 1982, in Fort Smith, Ark., to Linda Ishcomer Cannon.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents Leroy and Ethel Ishcomer; aunt Rita Ishcomer; uncles Robert and Johnny Ishcomer; and great-niece Marisa Ishcomer.

Cheryl is survived by her mother and stepdad Harold Cannon; brothers Perry Cannon and spouse Anna, Robbie Bradshaw and spouse Jessica; sister Corey Cannon and partner Cooper Turner; stepdaughter Leigha Hanley; grandchildren Braylyn, Elizabeth and Gatlin; numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends; and special friend Ricky Smith.



Nancy Lee Stell

Nancy Lee Stell, 81, passed away June 14, 2026.

Nancy was born Nov. 17, 1944, in Hugo, Okla., to Ray Collins and Lois (Corn) Wilkins.

She was preceded in death by her parents; stepfather J.C. Wilkins; husband Johnny B. Stell; brother Hal Collins; and sister Raynell France.

Nancy is survived by her son Kevin Stell; daughter Gwendolyn Dawn Stell; grandchildren Stacy Simmons, Jonathan Stell, Jessica Stell and Justin Stell; great-grandchildren Abigail Stell, Hailey Howerly, Alice Peterson and Isaac Simmons; along with many other family members, friends and loved ones.



Jerry Paul Belvin

Jerry Paul Belvin, 77, passed away May 16, 2026.

Jerry was born July 24, 1948, in Talihina, Okla., to Jimmie Lou (Belvin) Hunt.

He was preceded in death by his mother; sister Judy Murray; and Dante Arthur Belvin, Baby Belvin, Virgil “Buddy” Belvin, John Belvin, Henry “Poochum” Belvin, Richard Belvin, Vernon Belvin, Solomon Belvin, Lavada Duke, and Virginia “Weaver” Rutledge.

Jerry is survived by his family; Debra Bacon; nieces and nephews Sara, Joe, Austin and Tyler; along with numerous other family, friends and loved ones.



Arnold Dean Noah

Arnold Dean Noah, 59, passed away May 22, 2026.

Arnold was born Nov. 23, 1966, in Talihina, Okla., to Culbertson and Ora Mae (Watson) Noah.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Culbertson Noah Jr., Johnson Noah, and Donald Noah; and sister Patricia Choate.

Arnold is survived by his wife Christy Bess; sons and daughters-in-law Christopher and Morgan Standridge, Leewee and Carmelita Standridge, and Howie and Randi Standridge; daughters and son-in-law Hailey and Jaren Richards, and Shawntel Standridge; grandchild Kenai Noah Standridge; sisters and brother-in-law Doris and Leon Choate, Darlene Estrada, Diantha Noah, and Angee Noah; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other family and friends.



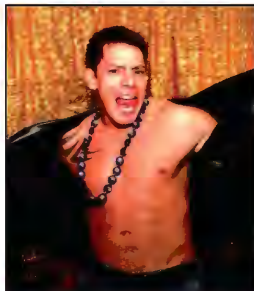
Madison Jacob Jefferson

Madison “Matt” Jacob Jefferson, 38, passed away May 19, 2026.

Matt was born June 4, 1987, in Talihina, Okla., to David Lewis Jefferson and Julie Ann Grantz Vallier.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Lisa Carterby; and brother-in-law Randy Bakenhus.

Matt is survived by his son Jace Jefferson Bonofiglio; brothers and sisters-in-law Marvin and Ocean Jefferson; Edison Jefferson, Lyndon and Debbie Jefferson, David Jefferson, Jr., Phillip Jefferson, and Bo Grantz; sisters Tillis Johnson, Amber Grantz, Reba Eubanks, Gaythy Bakenhus, and Melitta Robinson; special friends Terry and Sheila Russell; special nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.



Damian Ray Duncan

Damian Ray Duncan, 26, passed away May 20, 2026.

Damian was born Jan. 25, 2000, in Jacksonvillle, Tenn., to Troy and Teri Minnis.

He is survived by his mother and her boyfriend Ray Robinson; his father; brothers Harley Joe Duncan (his twin) and Troy Junior Minnis; sisters Shannon Nicole Minnis and Arizona Spears; grandparents Mary and Gene Abney; grandmother Janie Minnis; uncle and aunt Bradley and Sherry Adkins; along with numerous cousins, friends, and other relatives.



Charles Allen Price Jr.

Charles Allen Price Jr., 41, passed away April 25, 2026.

Charles was born Sept. 1, 1984, in Chickasha, Okla., to Charles and Rhonda (Callahan) Price.

He was preceded in death by his father; sister Krissy Price Mayall; brother-in-law J.D.; niece Anna Mayall; and grandparents Roger and Panatha Callahan, and Alice and Jake Yates.

Charles is survived by his parents Rhonda and Wayne Miller; siblings Shancy Brown, Marcy and Eddie Redden, Shila and Bart Love, and Linda and Robbie Musick; nieces and nephews Tori Hunter, Cambrie, Blaine, Allen, Kylie, Jarrett, Blair, Jayden, Logan, Brett, Nelson, Derek, Laynie, Chance, and Keila; and many great-nieces and great-nephews.



Bobbie Jean Johnson

Bobbie Jean Johnson, 97, passed away May 30, 2026.

Bobbie was born Aug. 3, 1928, to Andy and Myrtle (Wilson) Anderson.

She was preceded in death by her husband Milford R. “Jake” Johnson; and brother Andy Anderson.

Bobbie is survived by daughters B. Darlene Horten (Robert), and Sandra Huchel; granddaughter Laura Lynn Huchel; sister-in-law Sarah Anderson; one niece; two nephews; and numerous great-nieces and great-nephews.



Sally Ann Lewis

Sally Ann Southerland Lewis, 73, passed away June 5, 2026.

Sally was born June 28, 1952, in Gainesville, Tex., to John Yarbrough and Shirley (McMakin) Townsend.

She was preceded in death by her first husband Danny Jack Southerland; her parents; and in-laws Norman and Juanita Lewis.

Sally is survived by her husband John Lewis; son Travis Southerland and spouse Tasha; grandchildren Payton Hill and spouse Cody, and Creedan Southerland; great-granddaughter Carter Hill; sister Diane Yarbrough Boland; nephews Barry Boland and spouse Ragan, and Jay Boland; and numerous other nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends.



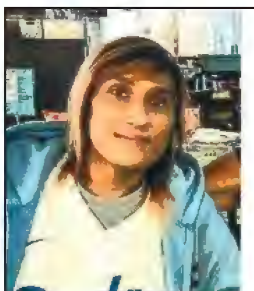
Daniel Paul Simon

Daniel Paul Simon, 30, passed away Jan. 31, 2026.

Daniel was born Jan. 16, 1996, in Bellflower, Calif., to Marvin and Bernadette Simon.

He was preceded in death by his mother; and grandparents Lois Tebo, Albert Simon and Rose Simon.

Daniel is survived by his father; sisters Candace Wauneka, Kelly Tohannie, and Andrea Rose Simon; aunts Norma Cook, Lena Tiger, Melvis Wilson, and Alberta Di Angelo; uncles Mike Wauneka, Mike Simon, Alvin Simon, Danny Diangelo, Gary Simon, Darrell Tiger, and Tony Wilson; cousins Rachelle Diangelo, Amanda Narkevicius, Jasmine Simon, Denise Ripley, Cheryl Tiger, April Tiger, Annette Martinez, Hailey Martinez, Andrew Cook, Kai Wauneka, and Alex Wilson; and his friends from the Los Angeles area, Steve Torres, Jorge Vidrios, Peter Brenes, Manuel Torres, Jesse Puente, Steve Gonzales, Mark Star, Jairo Martinez, Eddie Zuniga Martinez, Syrus, and Danny.



Sherry Covell-Rice

Sherry Lynn Covell-Rice, 69, passed away March 5, 2026.

Sherry was born July 16, 1956, in Anthony, Kan., to Jack Eastep and LoRee Louise (Whaley) Eastep.

She is survived by husband Vernon Rice; her parents; daughters Trenna Covell Lay, and Deana Covell Whitney and spouse Donald Whitney; stepdaughters Amber Rice and Karrie Rice Grillo; grandchildren Kelsey Rice, Sydney Rice and spouse Josh Laurent, Kassandra Grillo and partner Caleb McMillin, Neila Grillo and partner Sam Horne, Raymond Allen Grillo, Ashlyn Lay, Avery Vanat, Nathen Grillo, Andrea Lay, and Alexander and Nora Dusti Whitney; great-grandchildren Roger, Henry, Luis, and Adien; brothers David and spouse Debbie Eastep, Jay and spouse Tiffany Eastep; multiple nieces, nephews, cousins, and many good friends.



Helen Jacquelin Stephens Hodges

Helen Jacquelin Stephens Hodges, 81, passed away May 2, 2026.

Helen was born Aug. 3, 1944, in Tampa, Florida, to Paul and Troy Lavelle Stephens.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters Waunette Lopez and Leveice Sievers; brother Marion Stephens; aunt “Auntie” Reed; nieces Gail Tyler Phillips and Paula Tyler Hodge; nephew Randy Stephens; great-nephew Robert J. Winkler III; and brother-in-law, Harry R. Hitson.

She is survived by daughter Kandi J. Glunk(Michael); grandson Salvatore J. DiCristofalo; grand-fur baby Abbie Laine; sister Zenobia Stephens Tyler; nieces Debbie Stokes (Marc), Lynda Sue Remund (Rene), Lisa Marie Haskins (Kerry), Karen Ginsberg (Marc) and Anna Clark (Matt); nephews Timothy Stephens (Debbie) and Skip Hitson; former husband Ronnie L. Hodges; many great-nieces and great-nephews; and great-great nieces and great-great-nephews.



Tammy Darlene Morrison

Tammy Darlene Morrison, 66, passed away June 15, 2026.

Tammy was born Sept. 1, 1959, in Bates, Ark., to Marlow and Lois (Brown) Sanders.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Tommy Morrison; daughter Penny Lynch; brothers Scotty and Larry Sanders; sister Connie Benson; and grandson Kobe Ryburn.

Tammy is survived by her companion Chares Ritchie; sons Michael Morrison, Justin Morrison, and John Morrison; daughter Jennifer Green; sisters Mary Bolin and Bonnie Bolin; brothers Jerry Sanders, John Sanders, Ricky Sanders, and Randy Sanders; several grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and numerous other relatives and dear friends.



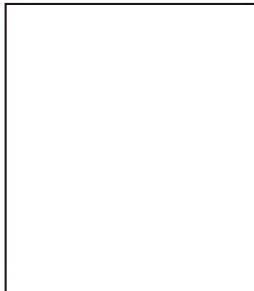
Clara Jean Jones

Clara Jean Jones, 79, passed away June 13, 2026.

Clara was born Jan. 30, 1947, in Snow, Okla., to Albert and Rhoda Jones.

She was preceded in death by her husband Donald Jones; son Chris Jones; her parents; sisters Lynn Johnson, Liza Alexander and Caroline Carter; sister/niece Delores Jones; brothers John Baker and Wilburn Jones; and sister-in-law Sue Jones.

Clara is survived by sons Donny Jones and Timothy Jones; daughter Kay Jones; grandchildren Andrew Jones, and Skyler Tucker and spouse Jason; great-grandchildren Remington Jones and Leighton Tucker; brother Abraham Jones; sister Nancy Peters; many nieces, nephews and cousins; and numerous longtime friends and church family members.



Biskinik Obituary Policy

The Biskinik publishes obituaries as a free service to Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal members.

Only official obituary notices are accepted. Funeral homes or family members may submit notices issued by a funeral home or published in a local newspaper. Self-written notices are not accepted, and any edits or additions must be confirmed by the funeral home. If no funeral home was used, special arrangements may be considered.

Due to space limitations, printed obituaries include only basic biographical details, “survived by” and “preceded in death” information.

Full obituaries are published online at biskinik.com/obituaries.

Submissions, including a link and photo, may be sent via:
Email: biskinik@choctawnation.com | Online: biskinik.com/biskinik-submission-guidelines | Mail: Biskinik, P.O. Box 1210, Durant, OK 74702

ITI FABVSSA

Two centuries of Choctaw constitutionalism

By Guestwriter, Reno Crims

“The chiefs and warriors of the different districts of the Choctaw Nation, having met in general council for the purpose of taking into consideration the affairs of the nation.”

These words begin the preamble to the first written Constitution of the Choctaw Nation, ratified two centuries ago in Mississippi, on August 5, 1826. This month, Iti Fabvssa celebrates two centuries of Choctaw Constitutionalism and explores how the Choctaw Constitution of 1826, and its successors, can be remembered even today.

It is important to state that, although several historians claim that the 1826 Constitution marks the beginning of “organized government” in the Choctaw Nation, that’s far from the truth. For the Choctaw Nation, the authority to govern itself and oversee its own decisions has existed since time immemorial.

Prior to 1826, the Choctaw Nation’s power structures, decision making capacities, and governing processes were mostly held through traditional law customs. We can understand many aspects of historic government through surviving treaties, documents and historic accounts, but the 1826 Constitution serves as the first written Constitution of the Choctaw Nation and can be studied in its original form. Over the last two centuries, the Choctaw government has continually revised its constitutional doctrine based on the needs of the era.

The first written Choctaw Constitution was ratified on August 5, 1826, and largely reflected the Choctaw Nation’s priorities and responses to the world around it at that time. It was revised and ratified again as many Choctaws were crossing into the present-day Choctaw Nation in 1834. After Chickasaw citizens were adopted by the Treaty of 1837 in Doaksville, the Choctaw Constitution was revised again in 1838. Further revisions and amendments occurred in 1842, 1850, 1857, 1858, 1860, 1861, 1863, 1883, 1897, and 1902, with each generation of Choctaws addressing key issues that impacted their lives.

It is important to remind readers that statehood did not stop the Choctaw Government, although it changed the way that Choctaw Constitutionalism was observed.

After Oklahoma statehood, some Choctaws fought to reignite historic constitutionalism in the 1920s, and again in the 1970s, while other leaders pushed forward in new and complex ways. In the present day, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma recognizes the 1983 Constitution as its most recent constitutional doctrine, and even that is directly influenced and impacted by all of its predecessors.

Each document from 1826-1983 has directly influenced its successor, with passages, phrases and concepts which have endured since the very beginning of written Choctaw Constitutionalism in 1826. The September 2021 Issue of Biskinik contains a complete transcript of the 1826 Choctaw Constitution. It also includes a very helpful overview of the document and what it did for Choctaw governance of the era. While this particular issue will discuss the document briefly, we recommend readers visit that article as well.

At its core, the 1826 Constitution is comprised of only seven articles, each addressing an aspect of Choctaw governance during the era. While some articles introduce entirely new ideas, others attempt to standardize or even preserve historic government customs.

Article 1 outlines the General Council of the Choctaw Nation, which was designated to meet at least twice a year. Historically, Choctaw leadership from each district would gather to make decisions as a nation, but there had been no regularly scheduled sessions. This change was important to unify decision making and create a standardized frequency of in-person meetings for all representatives of the Choctaw Nation. Although today the governing body may look different, and the National Capitol has relocated from Mississippi, Choctaw leaders from across the reservation area meet at the present national capitol, Tvshkahomma, each month for regular scheduled meetings.

Another key aspect of Article 1 is the ending line, which states, “Any law or custom of a particular district, which conflicts with a general law shall be void.”

Although customs and laws could still be observed and created at a local level, this provided the framework for a national legal system, which was unique at the time for the Choctaw Nation. Today, the Choctaw Nation still observes this national standard for lawmaking and exercises it through the tribal legislature and judicial system.

CNO earns Mental Health America Gold Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health

DURANT, Okla. (July 7, 2026)— The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) has been awarded the Gold Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health by Mental Health America (MHA), a national recognition honoring employers committed to creating mentally healthy workplaces and supporting employees well-being.

The Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health is one of the nation’s leading certifications recognizing organizations that prioritize mental health in the workplace. Employers are evaluated on workplace culture, benefits, compliance, and whole-health wellness programs, with recognition levels ranging from Bronze to Platinum. The Gold designation reflects Choctaw Nation’s commitment to fostering a supportive work environment where employees have access to resources that promote mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being.

“This recognition reflects our ongoing commitment to the health and well-being of our associates,” said Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation. “At Choctaw Nation, we understand that supporting mental health is essential to building a strong workforce and providing exceptional service to our tribal members and communities. We are proud to cultivate a workplace culture where employees feel valued, supported and empowered to thrive.”

“This recognition reflects our ongoing commitment to the health and well-being of our associates,” said Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation. “At Choctaw Nation, we understand that supporting mental health is essential to building a strong workforce and providing exceptional service to our tribal members and communities. We are proud to cultivate a workplace culture where employees feel valued, supported and empowered to thrive.”

Explore Choctaw culture at the Labor Day Festival

TVSHKAHOMMA, Okla.-This year’s Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival offers visitors the opportunity to experience Choctaw history and culture through activities at Choctaw Village, the Tuskahoma Capitol Museum and other attractions throughout the festival grounds.

Guests can enjoy traditional demonstrations, historical exhibits and interactive activities showcasing Choctaw heritage, customs and craftsmanship.Throughout the weekend, visitors can also watch stickball games and shop for handmade items from Choctaw artists and Choctaw-owned businesses in the Arts & Crafts Building. Choctaw Village will feature hands-on activities and demonstrations, including cornhusk doll making, beading workshops, stickball making, Choctaw dancing, hymn singing, storytelling, rabbit stick throwing and more.

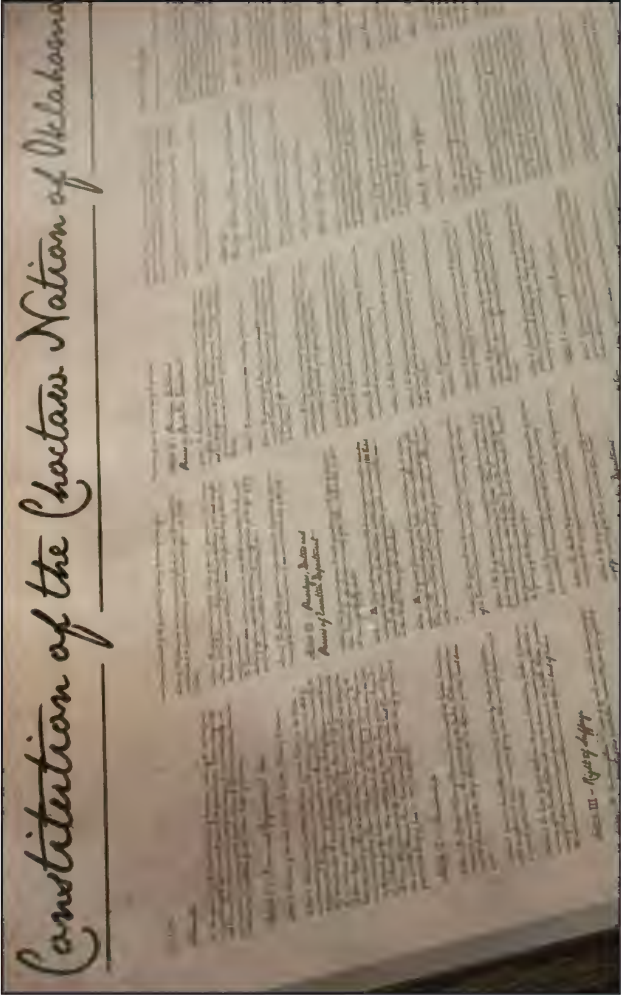
The Tuskahoma Capitol Museum will be open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and from noon to 6 p.m. Sunday.

For a complete schedule of cultural activities and festival events, see Page 12 of this issue of the Biskinik.

For more information on the festival, visit labordaychoctawnation.com.



Choctaw Nation Photos



A copy of the Choctaw Nation Constitution is publicly displayed at the tribal headquarters in Durant, Oklahoma.

Choctaw Nation Photo

Article 2 addresses land sovereignty and provides that “No district shall ever sell, or part with, any portion of this land without the full and fair consent of the other two districts.”

At the time, it was a common tactic to leverage debts or sales on land and force the Choctaw Nation as a whole to be accountable. This article helped prevent colonial powers from making treaties or predatory business deals with officials or citizens from only one district, which would negatively impact the Choctaw Nation as a whole. This was the written continuation of the Choctaw Nation’s land being held in common property, a system so robust that aspects of it survive even today.

Articles 3 through 6 work to establish early aspects of legislative and oversight committees, law enforcement, and also vital checks and balances in Choctaw Nation’s finances. Article 4 allows for a certain number of men to prevent disorderly and improper conduct at the councils and distribution of annuities. Today, at council sessions, there are still officers designated for this exact purpose.

Article 7 provides for the creation of a National Council House, which was established near what is now the city of Starkville on the Noxubee River near the Noxubee County line. Although the National Capitol has moved several times since 1826, Choctaw Nation’s present capital city, Tvshkahomma, was first ratified by Choctaw voters in August of 1883 and still serves as the Capitol today, thanks to the 1983 Constitution’s continued observation of this historic meeting place.

When we celebrate the Choctaw Constitutionalism or the 1826 Choctaw Constitution, we don’t celebrate the beginning of the Choctaw Nation, nor do we celebrate the beginning of tribal sovereignty, as those things have always existed. Celebrating the Constitution of 1826 honors an important milestone in the history of the Choctaw Nation, one that still has a meaningful impact today.

For more information on the Choctaw Constitution of 1826, check out the Sept. 2021 Iti Fabvssa that includes a full transcription of the document at choctawnation.com/news/iti-fabvssa/the-choctaw-constitution-of-1826/.

Further Readings:

- The Seven Constitutions (Anumpa Vhpisa Untuklo): Government of the Choctaw Republic, 1826-1906. Morrison, James D.
- “A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade” series Iti Fabvssa



Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna The School of Choctaw Language

Aiittahoba Chito – Labor Day

Q and A’s related to the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival.

1. Himak afvmmi ya Aiittahoba Chito ish ia chi ho? (Will you be going to the Big Gathering this year?) a. Keyu, a chukka antta la chi. b. A, ia la chi.	No, I’m staying home. Yes, I’m going.
2. Lvshpa chiyoyhma chi sv yimmi. (I believe it’s going to be extremely hot.) a. Anhli, lvshpa fehna chi. b. Ombakma achukma hinla.	For real, it’s going to be very hot. It would be good if it rained.
3. Hvchishnato, hvsh binacha chi ho? (Are you all going to camp?) a. A, e binacha chi. b. Keyu, a chukka ittafalama la chi. home.	Yes, we will camp. No, I will go back and forth from home.
4. Chim vlla vhleha yvt ilhkoli kvt im achukma? (Do your children enjoy going?) a. A, vlla vhleha yvt carnival ia kvt im achukma. (The kids like going to the carnival.) b. Awashowa ya washohvt ilhkoli beka tuk. (They usually play at the playground.)	
5. Vm ittikana ak peso tuk hopaki ya afama kvt vm achukma. (I enjoy seeing and meeting friends I haven’t seen in a while.)	
6. Micha, Miko Batton pisa la hinla matana. (And, I might see Chief Batton.)	

Behind the scenes of festival safety

Make safety part of your festival plans

By Chris Jennings

Every year during Labor Day, tribal members travel from across the country to Tuskahoma, Oklahoma. While there, they spend time with friends and family, participating in the many activities of the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival.

While the food trucks, carnival, stickball games, concerts and cultural events are what’s most visible, there’s an entire team working behind the scenes throughout the year to make sure everyone goes home safely.

Jeff Hansen, senior director of community protection for the Choctaw Nation, has spent more than a decade helping put that plan together.

From law enforcement, security, EMS and the lost child program, Hansen helps to oversee the safety aspects of the event.

“We participate in the planning process for Labor Day throughout the year,” Hansen said. “That subcommittee consists of basically all of the functions that would be considered public safety at an event.”

One of the things to come out of that planning process is what Hansen calls the Incident Action Plan, a single document that outlines safety objectives for the event and ensures every responder, from fire marshals to radio dispatchers, is working on the same page.

“We also develop for the Labor Day leadership the Incident Action Plan, which is a single document that details the objectives that we hope to achieve during the event, primarily being the safety of our guests,” Hansen said.

GROUND'S SAFETY

During the festival, that plan is referred to daily. Each morning, the safety team meets to go over what’s ahead for that day.

“We have our fire marshals that will do inspections on the food vendor trailers and make sure they’re safe to operate. We have law enforcement throughout the grounds, security throughout the grounds, and we all meet daily to go over that operational period,” Hansen said.

WEATHER

According to the National Weather Service, the three-month temperature trend, which includes Labor Day weekend, will likely be hotter than normal.

Weather is one of the biggest wildcards Hansen and his team have to consider. Southeastern Oklahoma’s late-summer storms can develop with very little warning, and outdoor gatherings elsewhere have seen the consequences firsthand.

A wind gust collapsed a concert stage at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in 2011, killing seven people.

A downburst leveled the Dallas Cowboys’ practice facility in 2009, injuring several people inside. Also in 2015, a storm tore through a circus tent in Angleton, Texas, injuring several.

According to Hansen, the festival relies on several systems to track and respond to severe weather before it reaches the festival grounds.

“If we have severe weather coming in, we need to be aware of what’s going on, and we need to be able to communicate with tribal leadership so they know when we need to take precautions,” Hansen said.

A tornado siren and a lightning detection system are both installed on the grounds.

“We also have a lightning detection system on the grounds that when lightning is detected within five miles from the festival, it sounds off an alarm and has a flashing light,” Hansen said.

According to Hansen, there have been times when he’s had to shut down the carnival because lightning was near the festival grounds.

When situations like that happen, a team of dispatchers stationed in the public safety trailer relays updates over the radio to every area lead on the grounds.

Guests can help keep themselves safe by checking forecasts before heading to the grounds and moving toward one of several enclosed buildings as severe weather approaches. Open fields, isolated trees and standing water should be avoided until a storm passes.

HEAT

Heat is also a constant concern. Hansen said this year is shaping up to be hotter than recent festivals.

“Weather-wise, heat is always an issue. We’ve had some very nice days over the past few years that were not too hot. This year, I think we’re going to see some pretty significant heat,” said Hansen.

Visitors traveling to Tuskahoma from cooler climates should plan to pace themselves and give their bodies time to adjust to the heat and humidity.

Drinking water consistently throughout the day, rather than waiting until feeling thirsty is crucial. Wearing light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and a wide-brimmed hat can also help festivalgoers protect themselves from the heat.

Free water stations are set up throughout the grounds, and several buildings offer air-conditioning to cool off in.

“There are water stations that we set up all over the grounds where people can get water,” said Hansen. “There are also various buildings that people can go into to cool off.”

The CDC says signs of overexposure to excessive heat conditions can begin with heat cramps. Anyone who may experience heavy sweating and muscle cramps in the heat should move to a cool place, drink water or a sports drink, and wait for the cramps to subside.

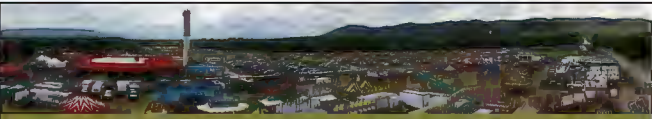
Signs of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating; cold, pale, clammy skin; fast, weak pulse; nausea or vomiting; muscle cramps; tiredness or weakness; dizziness; headache; and fainting. If you or someone around you is experiencing these symptoms, move to a cool place, loosen clothes and place a cool, wet cloth on the neck, armpits and/or groin.

At the festival, the first-aid tent near the capital museum is staffed with nurses and doctors. Anyone who overheats or gets hurt during a stickball game or other activity can be treated there.

According to Hansen, ambulances will be on standby for anyone who needs to be taken to a hospital.

LOST CHILD

Lost children are among the most common calls Hansen’s team handles at the event each year.



CHOCTAW NATION LABOR DAY FESTIVAL SAFETY TIPS

Emergency
For emergencies, including active crimes, fires or life-threatening medical situations, call 911.

Non-Emergency
For nonemergency public safety concerns, call Choctaw Nation Department of Public Safety dispatch at 580-642-2275 or contact the nearest Choctaw Lighthorse Police officer, Oklahoma law enforcement officer or Choctaw Nation staff member.

Medical Assistance
Visit an on-site first aid station if you or someone else is sick or injured, experiencing a heat-related illness, or in need of basic first aid.

Lost Child
Register children 12 and younger for a free lost child wristband with emergency contact information. If your child is missing, go to the Lost Child Station or notify the nearest law enforcement officer or staff member.

Information Booth
Visit the Festival Information Booth near the Member Services Tent for directions, event schedules, lost-and-found services, and general information.

Beat the Heat
Stay safe in the summer heat by drinking plenty of water, wearing sunscreen and lightweight clothing, taking breaks in the shade, and watching for signs of heat exhaustion.
Water stations are located throughout the festival grounds. Air-conditioned cooling locations include the Arts & Crafts Building, Cafeteria, Health Tent, Member Services Tent and Tuskahoma Capitol Museum.

Weather Safety
If severe weather develops, follow instructions from festival officials, move to a safe location if directed, watch for updates on official Choctaw Nation social media channels and sign up for text alerts by texting LABORDAY to 888777.

Traffic, Parking and Transportation
Help keep everyone safe by following directions from parking attendants and law enforcement, watching for pedestrians and obeying posted speed limits. Don't forget to lock your vehicle and keep valuables out of sight.
Trams, transportation carts and elder rides are available throughout the festival. For everyone's safety, only golf carts marked "Transportation" or "Elder Rides" may transport festival attendees. Other golf carts are reserved for official Choctaw Nation business.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT LABORDAY.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

The festival's wristband program, located at the Lost Child Station near the Council House, is one of the best ways to quickly reunite families.

Parents and guardians can register children aged 12 and under and receive a wristband loaded with emergency contact information. If a child is found without a parent nearby, staff can check the band and call the parent directly, rather than broadcasting a description over the radio and waiting for someone to spot the child.

According to Hansen, the band will have the parents' name and contact information on it.

“If there’s a child that we find that can’t find their parents, we can look at that band and get that information. We can just call the parents and say, ‘hey, we’ve got Johnny here, and we need to get you guys back together,’” said Hansen.

Hansen encourages all parents attending the festival to sign up for the wristband to help ensure the safety of their children.

“That (wristbands) has been such a huge help to the responders and to the event staff, because we’ve been able to reunite parents with their children much faster,” Hansen said.

SECURITY

The Choctaw Nation Lighthorse Police will be stationed throughout the grounds as well, alongside first-aid and lost-child staff, radio dispatchers and an aerial drone team that monitors traffic flow to help spot traffic backups before they grow.

After years of watching the festival grow, Hansen said the coordination between all those teams is what keeps guests safe without getting in the way of the celebration.

“I think behind the scenes, it’s coordination. It’s making sure that we’re all working from the same sheet of music,” Hansen said. “The Labor Day Festival has always been a very safe event, and I think that’s because of who we are.”

It’s important to make sure you take care of your family, especially elders, especially in the heat and when it comes to staying hydrated. Thanks to the behind-the-scenes planning, attendees can do all of that and still have fun.

For more information about this year’s Labor Day Festival and to view the 2026 festival’s interactive map, visit laborday.choctawnation.com.

SAME-DAY CARE NOW OPEN IN McALESTER

SICK OR NEED CARE TODAY?



Get seen today. Call 918.423.8440 or schedule through MyChart.

Learn more at CNHSA.com

 Choctaw Nation Health Services

PEDIATRIC CARE NOW EXPANDED IN McALESTER

YOUR CHILD’S HEALTH STARTS WITH ACCESS TO TRUSTED CARE.

The Choctaw Nation McAlester Health Clinic has expanded pediatric services by adding more providers and increasing appointment availability for families. From routine checkups to ongoing care, your child can receive care in a space designed for comfort and safety.



Schedule your child’s appointment today. Call 918.423.8440 or use MyChart.

Learn more at CNHSA.com

 Choctaw Nation Health Services

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Market Hours

Open: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Closed: The last two days of each month for inventory.

Nutrition Education & Food Programs are subject to change. Calendars are available upon request at any location.

August 2026

All markets open weekdays, August 1-27
Closed: August 28 & 31
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 AUGUST 4

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
FOOD DEMO AUGUST 11

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
FOOD DEMO AUGUST 18

McALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716
FOOD DEMO AUGUST 6

POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431
FOOD DEMO AUGUST 13

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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 PUBLIC HEALTH NEEDS YOU!

By reporting ticks, you will help everyone in your community.



Scan the QR code to report ticks.



Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

August 4	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
August 5	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
August 7	Crowder	By Appointment
August 11	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
August 12	Wright City	By Appointment
August 13	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
August 14	Atoka	9:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.
August 14	Coalgate	12:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
August 18	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
August 19	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
August 25	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
August 26	Stigler	By Appointment

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

Contestants set to compete for 2026-2027 Choctaw royalty titles

TVSHKA HOMMA, Okla. — The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has released the names of the 21 young women who will compete for the titles of Little Miss, Junior Miss and Miss Choctaw Nation during the Choctaw Nation Royalty Pageant.

This year's pageant will take place at 6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 4, at the Amphitheater during the Choctaw Labor Day Festival.

The contestants earned their spots by winning district pageants held earlier this year across the Choctaw Nation's 12 districts.

Each district crowned one representative per division, and those district princesses advanced to the tribal-level competition at Tvshka Homma, where the 2026-2027 Little Miss Choctaw Nation, Junior Miss Choctaw Nation and Miss Choctaw Nation title-holders will be crowned. Each will serve a one-year reign as an ambassador for the Choctaw Nation, making appearances at events and functions throughout the year.

The Royalty and Princess Program has shaped generations of Chahta ohoyo (women) through competition built around talent, poise, traditional dress and interview skills, according to program guidelines.

Miss and Junior Miss contestants are judged on introduction, poise, a 200-word essay, traditional Choctaw attire, interview and a talent performance. Talent must relate to Choctaw heritage, arts or crafts, last no more than five minutes and be performed in authentic dress without props, backup performers or amplification.

Little Miss contestants are judged on introduction, poise, traditional attire and interview. A panel of three judges will score each category, with each event worth up to 10 points. In the event of a tie, judges will determine the winner.

Each division will crown a winner, along with a first and second runner-up. If a titleholder is unable to fulfill her duties during her reign, the role passes to the first runner-up; if none is available, the position remains vacant until the following year's pageant.

For more information on the Royalty and Princess Program, visitchoctawnation.com/services/royalty-and-princess/. For more details about this and over Labor Day events, vist biskinik.com or labordaychoctawnation.com/.





CHOCTAW
POWOW
2026

SAVE THE DATE

NOVEMBER 6 - 8

SCAN QR CODE
FOR DETAILS

THE
ART BEAT
Ed Perkins



By Claire Green Young

The Choctaw Art Show is just around the corner, and anticipation is building for this annual celebration of creativity and culture at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, Oklahoma. This show offers visitors a chance to experience the depth and beauty of Choctaw art and heritage firsthand, where tradition and innovation meet in remarkable ways.

Last year's show left a lasting impression, thanks in part to one extraordinary artist: Edmon Perkins, an Oklahoma-based Choctaw artist celebrated for his mastery of traditional pottery. Perkins captivated audiences by recreating a historical garfish skin quiver, a piece with profound cultural significance for the Choctaw people.

His work earned him First Place in the Diversified Arts category and the prestigious Choctaw Heritage Award for his Gar Skin Quiver—a feat that resonated deeply with tribal citizens and art enthusiasts alike.

The original garfish quiver is preserved in the collection of the Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris, France. Through collaboration between several Choctaw Nation teams and the museum, this artifact—and others such as bear paw moccasins and trade bead necklaces—returned to Choctaw country for the Okhvta Chito Okhoatali: Choctaw and French Transatlantic Legacies exhibit, which ran from July through November 2024. Seeing these historic items inspired Perkins to revive a craft unseen for generations. The garfish quiver, once a utilitarian tool for Southeastern tribal ancestors, became a symbol of resilience and ingenuity. Perkins' recreation was not only technically impressive but emotionally moving—many tribal citizens described the experience of seeing it as deeply meaningful, reconnecting them to ancestral traditions.

Perkins is perhaps best known for his dedication to traditional Choctaw pottery methods, which include digging and preparing native clay, collecting and grinding mussel shells for temper, hand-coiling techniques, and wood pit firing with natural finishing processes. His pottery often features designs inspired by ancestral motifs from the Choctaw homelands in the Southeast, patterns believed to represent elements of nature—movements of stars, wind, and sun. These designs, carried through Removal and still in use today, create a tangible link between past and present. Works such as the Choctaw Sun Vase exemplify this connection. Made from native clay tempered with mussel shell and fired in a wood-burning kiln, it reflects both tradition and artistry.

For Perkins, the process of creating art is deeply spiritual. “Art is accomplished in a place of solitude for body and soul,” he explains. “The moment people see my artwork, hopefully it gives them a connection with our Choctaw ancestors. That special ‘moment’ is why I do traditional Choctaw art.” His words echo the purpose behind the Choctaw Art Show itself: to create spaces where heritage is honored and shared through creativity.

The Choctaw Art Show has grown into one of the most anticipated cultural events of the year, showcasing a wide range of works from painting and sculpture to beadwork, basketry, and pottery. Each piece tells a story—of survival, adaptation, and pride in identity. For many artists, the show is not only an opportunity to display their craft but also a way to educate and inspire future generations. Visitors often leave with a deeper understanding of the Choctaw Nation's enduring traditions and the innovative spirit that keeps them alive.

What will this year's Choctaw Art Show bring? If last year is any indication, expect breathtaking works that honor heritage while embracing innovation. Artists will continue to push boundaries while staying rooted in cultural values, offering pieces that speak to both history and contemporary life. Whether it's a meticulously hand-coiled pot, a vibrant painting inspired by the natural world, or a revival of an ancient technique like Perkins' garfish quiver, each creation carries meaning beyond its form.

Join us at the Choctaw Cultural Center this August to experience these creations for yourself—and perhaps witness the next piece of history in the making. The show is more than an exhibition; it is a living testament to the resilience and creativity of the Choctaw people, inviting all who attend to share in that enduring legacy.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

LITTLE MISS CHOCTAW NATION CONTESTANTS



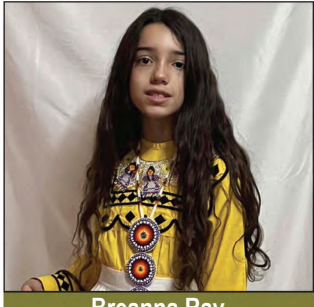
Oakley Mitchell

Age: 12 Grade: 6 District: 1
Town: Valliant Parents/Gaurdians: Colby & Cayla Mitchell



Adaline Colbert

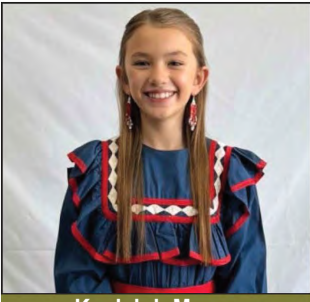
Age: 10 Grade: 4 District: 2
Town: Battiest Parents/Gaurdians: Katherine Colbert



Breanna Ray

Age: 10 Grade: 4 District: 4
Town: Spiro Parents/Gaurdians: Kelly Kinsey

LITTLE MISS (CONT.)



Kynleigh Moore

Age: 10 Grade: 4 District: 5
Town: Spiro Parents/Gaurdians: Jennifer & Blaze Moore



Kitsey Bigpond

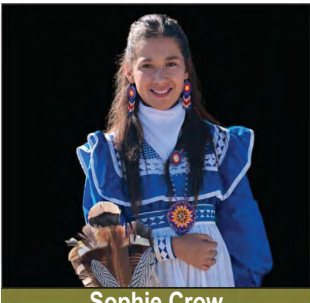
Age: 10 Grade: 3 District: 6
Town: Wilburton Parents/Gaurdians: Heather Ramsey & Casey Bigpond



Ace'Lee Tom

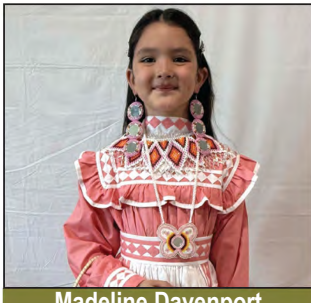
Age: 8 Grade: 2 District: 7
Town: Wright City Parents/Gaurdians: Joey & Hope Tom

LITTLE MISS (CONT.)



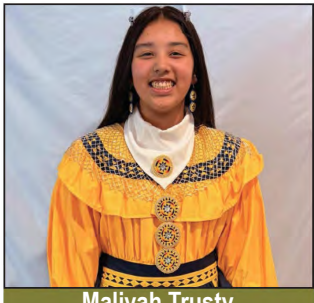
Sophie Crow

Age: 12 Grade: 6 District: 8
Town: Hugo Parents/Gaurdians: Shelby & Silas Crow



Madeline Davenport

Age: 8 Grade: 2 District: 9
Town: Durant Parents/Gaurdians: Crystal & Sean Davenport



Maliyah Trusty

Age: 12 Grade: 6 District: 10
Town: Caddo Parents/Gaurdians: Sarah & David Trusty

LITTLE MISS (CONT.) JUNIOR MISS CHOCTAW NATION CONTESTANTS



Olivia Scott

Age: 9 Grade: 3 District: 11
Town: McAlester Parents/Gaurdians: Honni Bear & Jeremy Scott



Kristin Jefferson

Age: 16 Grade: 10 District: 1
Town: Idabel Parents/Gaurdians: Whitney & Paul Jefferson



Milena Amos

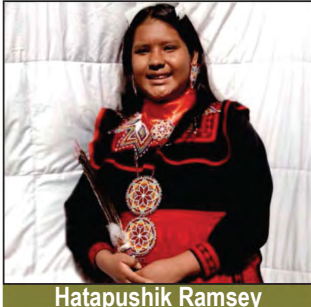
Age: 14 Grade: 9 District: 2
Town: Broken Bow Parents/Gaurdians: Dayla Amos & Jeremiah Tom

JUNIOR MISS (CONT.)



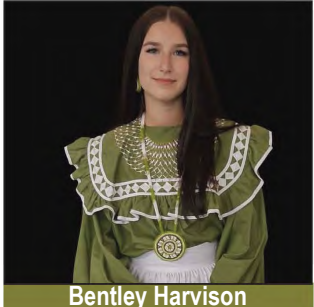
Tenley Reece

Age: 15 Grade: 9 District: 4
Town: Poteau Parents/Gaurdians: Patti & Brandon Reece



Hatapushik Ramsey

Age: 14 Grade: 7 District: 6
Town: Wilburton Parents/Gaurdians: Heather Ramsey & Jimmy Battiest



Bentley Harvison

Age: 15 Grade: 9 District: 8
Town: Grant Parent/Gaurdians: Yon & Sarah Harvison and Bionka Erwin

JUNIOR MISS (CONT.)



Jennifer Mann

Age: 14 Grade: 8 District: 10
Town: Atoka Parents/Guardians: Jessica Tenequer & James Mann



Sophia McFarland

Age: 15 Grade: 9 District: 11
Town: Hartshorne Parents/Guardians: Crysta & Daniel Mcfarland



Dorothy Rogers

Age: 14 Grade: 9 District: 12
Town: Coalgate Parents/Guardians: Lora & David Rogers

SENIOR MISS CHOCTAW NATION CONTESTANTS



Emma Battiest

Age: 18 Grade: 12 District: 3
Town: Talihiina Parents/Guardians: Heather Ramsey & Jimmy Battiest



Shelby Reece

Age: 18 Grade: 12 District: 4
Town: Poteau Parents/Guardians: Patti & Brandon Reece



Mia Reich

Age: 18 Grade: 12 District: 7
Town: Wright City Parents/Guardians: Melissa & Jay Reich



FOR FULL SCHEDULE VISIT:

LABORDAY.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

TIMES AND EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Friday, September 4, 2026

8:00 am - 9:00 am ~ Corn Hole Check-in, Beginners Bracket Registration, Red Warrior Park
9:00 am - 10:00 am ~ Corn Hole Check-in, Advanced Bracket Registration, Red Warrior Park
9:00 am - 11:00 am ~ Elder Chair Volleyball Tournament, Healthy Living Tent
9:00 am - 3:00 pm ~ Youth Crafts, Playground and Mobile Library, Playground
9:00 am - 4:00 pm ~ Corn Hole Tournament, Red Warrior Park
10:00 am - 2:00 pm ~ 5K Early Check-in, Capitol Lawn
10:00 - 6:00 pm ~ Quilt Show entries, Membership Building
11:00 am - 5:00 pm ~ Chahta Cab
2:00 pm - 6:00 pm ~ Gourd Dancing, Capitol Lawn
2:00 pm ~ Youth Physical Fitness Challenge Registration, Red Warrior Park
4:00 pm ~ Youth Physical Fitness Challenge, Red Warrior Park
5:00 pm ~ Opening Ceremonies with Chief, Amphitheater
5:00 pm ~ Stickball Tournament, Stickball Field
6:00 pm ~ Princess Pageant, Amphitheater
7:00 pm ~ Fast Pitch Tournament Begins, Red Warrior

Saturday, September 5, 2026

6:00 am 5K Race Check-in
7:00 am – 10:00 am ~ 5k Race (begins and ends in front of the Capitol Museum and Council House)
8:00 am ~ Fittest Warrior Registration, Red Warrior Park
8:00 am ~ Fast-Pitch Tournament continues, Red Warrior Park
8:00 am - 8:30 am ~ Co-Ed Volleyball Check-In, Red Warrior Park
8:30 am - 9:30 am ~ War Hoops Check-In, Red Warrior Park
9:00 am ~ Co-Ed Volleyball Tournament, Red Warrior Park
9:00 am ~ Horseshoe Tournament, Red Warrior Park
9:00 am ~ Fittest Warrior, Red Warrior Park
9:00 am - 3:00 pm ~ Mobile Library, Playground
9:45 am ~ Terrapin Race Registration, Playground
10:00 am ~ War Hoops, 3-on-3 Tournament, Red Warrior Park
10:00 am – 2:00 pm ~ Buffalo Tours, bus loads at Capitol Museum
10:00 am - 6:00 pm ~ Quilt Show, Membership Building
10:00 am - 7:00 pm ~ Healthy Living Expo, Council Lawn
10:30 am ~ Terrapin Races, Playground
11:00 am - 5:00 pm ~ Chahta Cab
3:00 pm ~ Tough Tough Registration, Red Warrior Park
4:00 pm ~ Tough Tough Contest, Red Warrior Park
4:00 pm - 12:00 pm ~ Stickball Tournament, Stickball Field
6:00 pm ~ Vernon Johnson, Choctaw Entertainment, Amphitheater
6:45 pm ~ The Close, Choctaw Entertainment, Amphitheater
7:30 pm ~ Neal McCoy, Entertainment, Amphitheater
9:00 pm ~ Mark Chestnutt, Entertainment, Amphitheater

Sunday, September 6, 2026

8:00 am ~ Fast-Pitch Tournament continues, Red Warrior Park

9:00 am - 3:00 pm ~ Mobile Library, Playground
12:00 am - 6:00 pm ~ Quilt Show (Pick up quilts following show), Membership Building
11:00 am - 12:00 pm ~ Worship Service, Chapel
11:00 am - 12:00 pm ~ Domino/Checker Tournament Registration, Healthy Living Tent
Noon ~ Gospel Singing, Amphitheater
1:00 pm ~ Domino/Checker Tournament, Healthy Living Tent
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm ~ Buffalo Tours, load bus at Capitol Museum
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm ~ Choctaw Code Talker Association Board Meeting, Museum Courtroom
2:00 pm ~ Choctaw Social Dancers, Capitol Lawn
2:00 pm ~ 5:00 pm ~ Stickball Exhibition, Capitol Lawn
5:00 pm (or immediately following Women's Softball Championship Game) ~ Legends Softball Game, Red Warrior Park
6:00 pm ~ The Williamsons Entertainment, Amphitheater
6:30 pm ~ Women's Championship Stickball Game, Stickball Field
7:00 pm ~ Hope Darst, , Entertainment, Amphitheater
7:00 pm ~Traditional Choctaw Hymn Singing, Chapel
7:45 pm ~ Men's Championship Stickball Game, Stickball Field
8:30 pm ~ Ben Fuller, Entertainment, Amphitheater

Choctaw Village Activities

Friday

10:00 am - Village Opens
10:00 am - Cornhusk Dolls Make and Take
11:00 am - Beaded Corn Make and Take
12:00 pm – Beaded two-loop Earrings
1:30 pm - Stickball Making
2:00 pm - Village Closes

Saturday

7:00 am – Bow Shoot (Youth)Registration
8:00 am – Bow Shoot (Youth)
10:00 am - Village Opens
10:00 am - Choctaw Social Dancing
10:30 am - Choctaw Hymn Singing
11:00 am – Choctaw Storytelling
11:00 am- Pony beads stretch bracelet
11:30 am - Rabbit Stick Throw
1:00 pm – Stickball
1:30 pm – Choctaw Language Lesson
2:15 pm - Choctaw Social Dancing
4:00 pm - Village Closes

Sunday

8:00 am – Bow Shoot (Adult) Registration
9:00 am – Bow Shoot (Adult)
12:00 pm - Village Opens
12:30 pm - Rabbit Stick Throw
1:00 pm – Choctaw Storytelling
1:30 pm - Corn Game

2:00 pm – Choctaw Tradional Wedding Vow Renewal
2:00 pm - Village Closes

Capitol Museum Hours

Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday Noon - 6:00 pm

Greenhouse Tours

Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday Noon - 6:00 pm

Arts & Craft Building

Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

Carnival

Friday Noon - Midnight
Saturday Noon - Midnight
Sunday Noon - 10:30 pm

CDIB/Membership & Voter Registration

Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday Noon - 6:00 pm

Program Information Tent

Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday Noon - 6:00 pm

Cafeteria

Daily - 7:30 am - 8:00 pm

General Store

Daily - 10:00 am - 10:00 pm

Going Green Tents

Daily - 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Lost Child Station

Daily - 8:00 am - 12:00 am

Child Safety Wristband

Daily - 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm

RV/Tent Gate Hours:

Wednesday - Sunday - 9:00 am - 9:00 pm

Check-in for both RVs and tents are at the main RV gate. (Gate opens for tents Saturday, August 29 at 10:00 am)

Ice available at all concession stands

FESTIVAL & CAMPGROUND RULES

- Alcohol, drugs (to include medical marijuana), guns, and weapons are not permitted on the Festival grounds.
- Due to limited space, only one vehicle will be permitted per campsite. Additional vehicles must park in the General Parking area.
- All roadways must remain clear for emergency vehicles. Do not park in: No Parking Zones, Vendor parking Zones or Reserved RV/Trailer Parking Zones
- Vehicles blocking roadways, RV/Trailers, or other vehicles

- subject to tow at the owner's expense.
- Pavilions are for public use only.
- Tent campers are permitted one plug per tent. Campers may not use splitters in electrical outlets. All extension cords must be 12-gauge, less than 100', and not installed across roadways.
- Unauthorized golf carts and ATVs are not allowed in the festival area. All personal Golf Carts/ATVs must remain in camping areas.

- ALL drivers must have a valid driving license. Please use extreme caution and watch out for pedestrians.
- No boats are allowed in the camping area.
- No pets are allowed in the Festival area.
- Please be courteous and pick up after yourself.
- Tvshka Homma Capitol Grounds is a No Drone Zone. Any use of a Drone (UAS) must be requested and authorized by the Choctaw Nation Public Safety Department.



INFORMATION UPDATES

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



Scan QR code for details.

LABOR DAY ENTERTAINMENT

The Choctaw Nation has announced the free concert lineup for the 2026 Choctaw Labor Day Festival. Things kick off Saturday night, Sept. 5, with performances by festival favorite Neal McCoy and country music star Mark Chesnutt. Sunday's Christian music concert will feature the Southern gospel group the Williamsons, gold record artist Hope Darst and Dove Award nominee Ben Fuller. For more details about this year's entertainment, visit laborday.choctawnation.com.

QUILT SHOW INFORMATION

The 2026 Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival Quilt Show will be held Sept. 4-6 at the Tvshka Homma Council Grounds. Quilt entries will be accepted Friday, Sept. 4, from noon to 5 p.m. with judging that evening. Ribbons will be awarded Saturday, including a People's Choice award, and entries may be picked up at 5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 6. For more information, call 580-642-8011.

FREE PLANT FIELD GUIDE

Pick up your FREE Plant Field Guide at the Environmental Protection Services booth during the Choctaw Labor Day Festival! Available to the first 80 visitors each day. Booth Hours: Friday & Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

LABOR DAY LEGENDS SOFTBALL GAME

Join the Inaugural Choctaw Nation Legends Coed Slow-Pitch Softball Game at the 2026 Labor Day Festival on Sept. 6 on the Purple Women's Field immediately following the conclusion of the Women's Tournament. Enjoy an afternoon of friendly competition as we honor elder players and make lasting memories. Men and women age 65 or older are encouraged to participate.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

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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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