



April 2020 Issue

Red blood cells must be used within 42 days

Type O- is the most requested blood type

Every 2 seconds someone needs blood

67,695 Lives saved since 2013

More than 36,000 blood donations are needed every day

“My wife was delivering our fourth child, a beautiful baby girl. She ruptured her uterus resulting in a near life-ending blood loss. With the quick hands of the surgeons, anesthesia team, nurses and techs, surgery was performed. The many units of blood she received during this emergency surgery saved her life. She is alive today because of your selfless gift. Alive to love, raise and hold our children again.” - Thank a donor message

Kind hearts save thousands through blood donations

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw Nation associates have collectively been donating blood since 2004. From the time Choctaw Nation facilities began holding blood donation events throughout the 10 ½ through February 2020, Choctaw Nation associates' blood donations have totaled 18,423 whole blood units. Each unit saves up to 3 lives for a total of 55,269 lives saved. In addition, 2,071 red blood cell units have saved a total of 12,426 lives. Combined, that is a grand total of up to 67,695 lives saved from 2004 through 2020 by our tribal associates.

Michelle McGuire, Senior Account Manager for the Oklahoma Blood Institute's Ardmore Center said, “We at the Oklahoma Blood Institute are truly grateful to everyone within the Choctaw Nation. This partnership is one that all our local patients depend on to save lives. We will never be able to tell you all how appreciative and grateful we are. We could not save local lives without our Choctaw family.”

McGuire's area covers Bryan, Marshall and Johnston Counties in southeastern Oklahoma. She stated, “In my area, Choctaw Nation headquarters is number one for drawing the most donors annually. Number two is Choctaw Casino. I am so honored to have the opportunity to have you all in my area. You are a huge blessing for our patients using blood.”

McGuire went on to say, “On behalf of the Oklahoma Blood Institute and our patients/families of blood recipients, we would like to extend our overwhelming gratitude to our dedicated drive coordinators Brenda Gabbart from the Choctaw Nation headquarters, and Brittany Lake and Carrie Barron from Choctaw Casinos. We could not save lives without their help and dedication to OBI's mission.”

Waddel Hearn Jr., a Choctaw associate and tribal member, has given blood throughout the years of his employment with the tribe.

“I'm O negative, which is the universal blood type. Anytime there is a blood drive, or even if there's not, I'm usually getting a call to donate because of how low blood is and since they can use my blood for anyone. I don't know how long I've been giving blood, but it's been a long time.” Hearn went on to say, “It's neat when you get the call that your blood helped save a life.”

In addition to receiving a phone call about a life you may have saved, through the Thank the Donor program, the patient receiving blood at the hospital can send a thank you message to the donor. Some patients will also include photos. The message goes to OBI, where they look up who donated the blood, and then send the donor the thank you message. Some messages from patients who received blood from a donor at Choctaw Nation Headquarters and Choctaw Casino in Durant are especially heart-warming:

“Bless you for being a blood donor! You are a hero and role model. Your blood was given to care for my family member today. Because of your kind spirit and selflessness, they have a chance to heal.”

-Thank a donor message

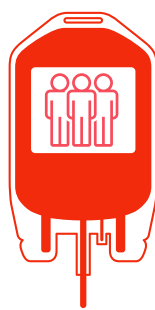
According to Oklahoma Blood Institute's website, about three gallons of blood is required to support the entire nation's blood need for just one minute. Donors must be at least 16 years old and meet weight requirements. Most donors who give blood once will do so again, and many have goals of becoming gallon donors. In order to reach the gallon-donor level, one needs to donate eight times.

Blood is still in desperate need during the current Coronavirus pandemic. Please contact your local blood institute to find out how you can help. Go to yourbloodinstitute.org/don/schedule/zip or contact the local blood institute or hospital in your area to find out who your local blood bank is.

2,650 blood donors across all 12 Choctaw Nation donation locations in 2019

It takes about 1 hour for a regular blood donation

Blood donation facts



3

Lives that can potentially be saved with just 1 pint of blood



1 in 7 people entering a hospital will need blood

Percentage of the U.S. population eligible to donate blood

37%

10%

Percentage of the population that actually does



3 teaspoons of donated blood can potentially save a baby's life



100 Pints

Amount of blood a single victim of a car accident may require for survival



Photo by Shelia Kirven

Oklahoma Blood Institute associate Michelle Steely draws a unit of blood from Choctaw Nation associate and tribal member Waddel Hearn Jr. during a recent blood drive at the tribal headquarters in Durant.

Faith, Family, Culture

Choctaw Nation takes necessary precautions during Pandemic



Chief Gary Batton

There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. I want to assure you that the Choctaw Nation's top priority is the health and safety of our tribal members, employees, the public and patrons of tribal facilities and businesses. We are working closely with the Oklahoma State Department of Health, as we monitor the impact of COVID-19.

The state and federal governments are monitoring this situation closely. The Choctaw Nation and our emergency management team are in contact with state and federal health officials, and we will all work together to figure out what is best for everyone.

The information we have on COVID-19 is changing by the minute. By the time this column reaches you, things will most likely have changed. Please follow our social media accounts, as this is the quickest way we can share vital information. We have established webpages to help better communicate with everyone. Please visit www.choctawnation.com/coronavirus-information for up-to-date information on COVID-19 and its impact on the Choctaw Nation.

Our top priority is the health and safety of our guests, associates, vendors, entertainment partners and individuals in the communities in which we are located. Choctaw has been closely monitoring the constantly evolving situation regarding COVID-19, and based on the latest information from local, state and federal health officials, we feel it is our responsibility to do what we can to help reduce the rapid spread of this disease.

As a public health precaution to help prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma decided to temporarily suspend all Choctaw Casinos & Resorts operations effective at 11:59 p.m. on March 16, 2020, until further notice. This includes casinos, resorts and concert venues. All gaming inside Choctaw Travel Plazas was temporarily suspended as well.

All concerts at the Grand Theater were postponed through April 3. Please check the Choctaw Casino & Resort events page for new dates. If you purchased tickets through Ticketmaster and prefer to receive a refund now, you must request one by calling Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000. We encourage you to hold on to your tickets, though, as they will be honored for the rescheduled date. Ticketmaster is the official ticketing agent for the Choctaw Grand Theater. All other ticket sellers are considered third party agencies. Third-party ticket sellers may have a different refund policy. You will need to reach out to that company directly for more information regarding refunds for postponed or rescheduled shows.

Casino Events & Promotions are temporarily suspended. This information will be made available on the Choctaw Casinos promotions page at choctawcasinos.com.

All hotels will be closed until further notice. If you already had plans to visit in the upcoming weeks, please contact, 888-652-4628 where a guest service representative will work with you to accommodate your needs.

All venues and related events and activities at The District are closed effective March 17. This includes the District movie theater, bowling and arcade.

The health of our tribal members, employees, the public and patrons is always our top priority. We have enhanced cleaning and sanitation actions at all of our properties to ensure that everyone is safe.

We are reminding employees through multiple channels about the importance of frequent hand washing. We are talking to them about it in daily meetings, posting signage in key employee areas and providing additional hand sanitizer dispensers in employee areas.

Hand-washing signage is located in public areas like bathrooms and restaurants for all of our guests.

Additional liquid hand sanitizer stations have been installed throughout our properties

in high traffic areas. We have also increased our supply of hand sanitizer, so it is available for our guests and associates for an extended period of time.

In addition to purchasing more cleaning and disinfecting supplies, Choctaw is increasing the number of times per day we clean high touch surfaces throughout our properties including restaurants, bars, fitness centers, public restrooms, hotel rooms, elevators, slot machines and table games.

To ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting, we have provided additional training for employees.

I want to reiterate, that as of March 19, when this paper was published, we had no reports of cases of COVID-19 connected to associates at any Choctaw Casinos & Resorts Properties or related businesses at this time. Further updates with additional details will be provided as needed.

We ask that our guests follow the precautionary measures outlined by medical authorities to help ensure everyone stays safe.

- The CDC recommends washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before eating, after using the bathroom, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, and before and after caring for a sick friend or a family member.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Staying home when you are sick.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash.

To keep up with the latest and most accurate health information, please visit the World Health Organization's website www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019 or the Centers for Disease Control's website www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html.

If you have a question about coronavirus (COVID-19), including testing criteria, there are call centers available. The CNHSA coronavirus call center can be reached Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. by calling 866-536-2766. The Oklahoma State Dept of Health coronavirus (COVID-19) call center is available Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. by calling 877-215-8336. The CDC information line is now open 24 hours, 7 days a week for questions related to coronavirus (COVID-19) by calling 800-232-4636.

I encourage all of you to follow the recommendations of the CDC and the World Health Organization. If you are ill, please contact a medical provider and practice social distancing. We will make it through this by working together and doing our part to flatten the curve.



Photo by Christian Toews

All Choctaw Nation Casino & Resorts operations were temporarily suspended effectively at 11:59 p.m. March 16, 2020. This decision was made in effort to reduce the rapid spread of COVID-19.

The two gates

In Matthew 7:13-14, we read the words of Jesus: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

The two gates are the places of making decisions to begin a journey. To take the wide gate or the narrow gate is a choice that is set before all people. This is a choice everyone will have to make.

The strait gate is narrow, and one cannot enter with ease. This is the decision for conversion and regeneration in which one begins a life of faith and godliness (John 3:3-5). This decision is with a new heart and spirit. Old things must pass away (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This conversation is not setting man against the world but against himself (Luke 13:3, 5). In the strait gate, one must humble himself and become as a child. He must deny himself and strip off the world and the old man within himself (Colossians 3:8 and Ephesians 4:20-24). The wide

gate stands open and has no check on carnal appetites. As the strait gate is narrow and calls for the denying of self, the wide gate is open to the pleasures of the flesh. In this gate, one walks in the way of one's heart and in the sight of its own eyes (Judges 21:25). Since it is wide open, it allows the multitude to enter in with their pleasures and preferences. The two gates or decisions leads to two roads of life. The broad or wide road is full of travelers. This road allows the indulgences of self and does not require sacrifice or surrender. The road is wrong, although it is the rule of the majority (Proverbs 14:12). The narrow road contains few travelers. It is a life of dedication and separation. And it is not a popular one. The two gates lead to the two roads which end in two destinies. The end of the wide road is destruction. And the end of the narrow road is life eternal. Everyone will enter at either gate and travel at either road and end at either destiny.



FOOD DISTRIBUTION

NOW SERVING ARKANSAS AND TEXAS COUNTIES

Choctaw Tribal Members in the following counties can now participate in the CNO Food Distribution Program

Arkansas: Sebastian, Scott, Polk, Sevier and Little River
Texas: Fannin, Lamar, Red River and Bowie

Eligibility Requirements apply
Participant must be willing to travel to one of the pickup sites in Oklahoma (Antlers, Broken Bow, Durant, McAlester and Poteau)

CONTACT

ANTLERS: 580-298-6443 | BROKEN BOW: 580-584-2842 | DURANT: 580-924-7773
MCALESTER: 918-420-5716 | POTEAU: 918-649-0431 | MAIN NUMBER: 800-522-6170



Choctaw Nation

Food Distribution

Stay Connected
CHOCTAWNATION.COM



Camp deadlines fast approaching

It is hard to believe, but summertime is right around the corner. For schools in Oklahoma, summer break will begin sometime in May. Now is the time to start making those summer plans as a family. If you are looking into summer camps, I would suggest checking out our Choctaw Nation Youth Events and Activities summer camps.

Each year, thousands of Choctaw youth take part in YEA summer camps. These camps are a fun and productive way for our young tribal members to spend their summer break. The program offers a wide variety of athletic, cultural and educational day camps. Many of these day camps are offered in two sessions. South camps are for districts 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10, while north camps are for districts 3, 4, 5, 6, 11 and 12. This helps cut down on group sizes and helps foster a sense of community. Each camp offers a different experience. No matter what your child is into, there is most likely a camp for that.

All camps take place in Tvshka Homma, unless otherwise posted. Golf camp will be hosted at the Arrowhead Golf Course in Canadian, Okla. and basketball camps will be held at various locations throughout the 10½ counties. Transportation is available for all camps, except for basketball. Participants must be a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma or a child of a current Choctaw Nation employee. They must also be between the ages of 8 and 18 on the first day of camp. Children must be a minimum age of 10 to participate in either wildlife or golf camp.

This year's lineup includes golf north and south, stickball north and south, softball north and south, baseball north and south, cultural north and south, wildlife conservation north and south, cheer, football, basketball McAlester High School, basketball Talihina High School, basketball Carl Albert State College, basketball Wilburton High School, basketball Broken Bow High School and basketball Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

For 23 years, our tribe has offered these camps as a free service to our youth. Our Youth Events and Activities team works hard every year to make these camps a possibility. I am so proud of the work they continue to do. Without our employees offering their hard work and time, these summer camps would not be possible. The goal of the Youth Events and Activities team is to continue to improve upon the success of the program each year.

It is so important for our youth to have opportunities like this. Instead of sitting at home, they get to go outdoors, be active and socialize. Experiences like these are essential in developing positive and productive lives. Camps are not only an opportunity to learn, but they are also a safe environment to meet new friends, build life skills and just have fun.

I hope to see more of our young people take part in our summer camps this year. Members must visit our Chahta Achvffa member portal to apply. The deadline to enroll for summer camps is April 15. To find out more about these summer camps, please visit <http://www.choctawnation.com/youth-events-and-activities> or contact Youth Events and Activities at 800-522-6170 or youthevents@choctawnation.com.

SUMMER YOUTH CAMPS

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE ON
WWW.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA

Choctaw Nation Youth Events & Activities

Wellness centers front and center in Nations health

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation completed construction on its 14th Wellness Center in 2018. The wellness centers are premier exercise facilities with top-of-the-line equipment and well-trained staff. These facilities are located in Antlers, Atoka, Broken Bow, Coalgate, Crowder, Durant, Hugo, Idabel, McAlester, Poteau, Smithville, Stigler and Wilburton.

The Wellness Center Program was started in 2005 by Chief Gregory Pyle, and Chief Gary Batton has continued to expand facilities and programs in order to make health and fitness facilities available for the entire Choctaw Nation.

While all of these wellness centers vary in size and available amenities, they all offer the same goal of preventative care for Choctaw Nation tribal members and employees. "It's all about wellness and prevention, and so what we're trying to do is to get people healthy before they have diabetes and before they have cardiovascular diseases," Chief Gary Batton commented. "We want our tribal members to live longer and have good, long, fruitful lives."

These wellness centers had over 442,000 visits in the last year alone. The Durant location leads the way in use with nearly 16,000 visits last year. In addition to state-of-the-art exercise space and equipment, these wellness centers provide 106 jobs to Oklahomans in the Choctaw Nation.

Chase Henson is the Wellness Director and oversees all 14 centers across the Choctaw Nation. Henson said that it is amazing that the Choctaw Nation can provide so many jobs to people in the health and wellness industry. "We are able to offer jobs to people in the fitness field. They can support a family and do something they are passionate about," Henson said.

Some of these employees began their fitness journey as members of the wellness center. These employees began healthy habits, and in turn, are able to help others. "We all start our fitness journey from different places," said Henson. "We realize it can sometimes be intimidating when you first come to the gym. The fact that most of us started as members here gives us great empathy and compassion for people who are just beginning their fitness journey," he continued.

The wellness centers offer comprehensive screening for people who want a starting point to grow their fitness level. They offer biometric screening, weight and measurements, flexibility and other tests. They will even assist with goal setting and personal training. All of these services are completely free to members.

Membership at the wellness centers is universal. Once you become a member, you can work out at any of the wellness center facilities across the Choctaw Nation.

Other free services offered by the wellness centers are group classes. These classes offer something for everyone, including Jazzercise, yoga, cycling, kickboxing, and more. The full class schedules for each location can be found at www.choctawwellness.com.

The wellness centers also have a number of CrossFit affiliates throughout the Choctaw Nation. These are group classes lead by certified CrossFit instructors. CrossFit has become one of the most popular ways to exercise in recent years. According to a TermLife2Go survey, CrossFit was the most googled New Year's resolution in the United States at the beginning of 2020.

For more information about the CrossFit classes offered at your local wellness center, you can visit www.choctawwellness.com.

Another benefit of being a wellness center member is the Well Bucks program. This program allows members to earn points for each visit to a Choctaw Nation wellness center. Members can spend these points on fitness gear that includes water bottles, hoodies, t-shirts and more. Ask your local wellness center about the Wellness Bucks program.

The benefits of physical activity are enormous. According to the Mayo Clinic, regular exercise helps prevent or manage many health problems and concerns including high blood pressure, diabetes, many types of cancer, and more. The Mayo Clinic emphasized in a recent article that everyone benefits from exercise, regardless of age, sex or physical ability.

According to a Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention, only 22.9% of U.S. adults from 18 to 64 met 2008 guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercise between 2010 and 2015.

Federal physical activity guidelines recommend that, for substantial health benefits, adults perform at least 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous physical activity, in addition to muscle-strengthening activities two or more days per week.

Henson commented on the wellness centers' holistic approach to fitness. He said they want people to get physically active for the many benefits, including mental advantages. "We try to hone in on mental health, too. A lot of people have stress in life, and that hour in the gym really helps people manage stress, anxiety and depression," he said.

In the 15 years since the wellness centers began opening, there have been countless success stories. Justin Jernigan manages the Durant Wellness Center and has worked there since 2011. He said "I was originally in pre-med in college, and I didn't agree with the amount of medication being prescribed. I really saw what we could do with the wellness centers as far as preventative health. In my time here I have seen people beat addiction, reduce medication or completely being able to get off of it. I have seen employees and members replace bad habits with healthy ones and change their lives."

Jernigan and Henson both encourage people to stop by and sign up if they are eligible for membership. "We want everyone to feel welcome when they first come in. We are going to give them a tour and show them how to use the equipment and make them feel welcome," said Henson. Jernigan added, "Starting is the hardest part so once you enter the door, you're past the hard part."

You can find contact information, addresses, and eligibility requirements at www.choctawwellness.com or by calling your local wellness center.



Photos by Christian Toews

Top, The Durant wellness center houses 46,000 square feet of state-of-the-art exercise space. Middle, The full-sized basketball court in many of the wellness centers functions as a multi-use space. The court in Durant is used for basketball games, senior chair volleyball, and other group classes. Bottom, Jordan Benson uses the bench press at a Choctaw Nation wellness center.



Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

Crowder Community Center
April 17, 2020
9:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.

COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS

CONSIDER THESE FACTS:

- Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States
- The best screening is the one that gets done
- Having type 2 diabetes increases your risk for colorectal cancer
- Colon cancer can be prevented

Talk to your Doctor about getting screened for colon cancer if you are age 50 and older

FOR MORE INFO CALL:
918-567-7000 EXT.6957

Choctaw Nation
 Diabetes Wellness Center

Stay Connected
CHOCTAWNATION.COM

CHOCTAW LANGUAGE COMMUNITY CLASSES

FOR ANYONE WANTING TO LEARN CHOCTAW

- FREE TO EVERYONE
- MATERIALS FOR CLASSES ARE FREE
- NO ENROLLMENT NEEDED
- 16-WEEK LONG SESSIONS

VISIT WEBSITE FOR CLASS LOCATIONS IN:
 ADA, ANTLERS, ARDMORE, BROKEN BOW, CLAREMORE, COALGATE, DEL CITY, DURANT, HUGO, IDABEL, MCALESTER, MUSKOGEE, NORMAN, OKC, POTEAU, TALIHINA, TULSA, WILBURTON, NEWCASTLE & SOUTH GATE, CA.

CHOCTAWSCHOOL.COM/CLASSES/COMMUNITY-CLASSES.ASPX
CHOCTAWSCHOOL.COM • 800-522-6170

Choctaw Nation Department of Education

Coronavirus information from Centers For Disease Control

All information on this page was current from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as of press date. For up-to-date information please visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

Background

CDC is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in more than 100 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19").

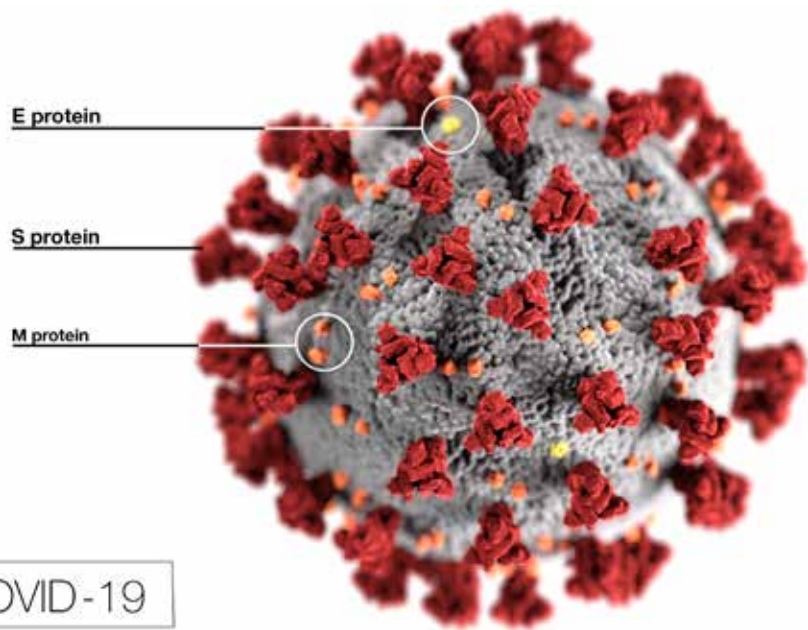
On January 30, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a "public health emergency of international concern icon" (PHEIC). On January 31, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency (PHE) for the United States to aid the nation's healthcare community in responding to COVID-19. On March 11, WHO characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic. On March 13, the President of the United States declared the COVID-19 outbreak a national emergency.

Source and Spread of the Virus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with this new virus (named SARS-CoV-2).

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is a betacoronavirus, like MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. All three of these viruses have their origins in bats. The sequences from U.S. patients are similar to the one that China initially posted, suggesting a likely single, recent emergence of this virus from an animal reservoir.

Early on, many of the patients at the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread was subsequently reported outside Hubei and in countries outside China, including in the United States. Some international destinations now have ongoing community spread with the virus that causes COVID-19, as do some parts of the United States. Community spread means some people have been infected and it is not



This illustration, created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reveals ultrastructural morphology exhibited by coronaviruses. Note the spikes that adorn the outer surface of the virus, which impart the look of a corona surrounding the virion, when viewed electron microscopically. A novel coronavirus, named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China in 2019. The illness caused by this virus has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

known how or where they became exposed.

Severity

The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is not fully known. Reported illnesses have ranged from very mild (including some with no reported symptoms) to severe, including illness resulting in death. While information so far suggests that most COVID-19 illness is mild, a report out of China suggests serious illness occurs in 16% of cases. Older people and people of all ages with severe chronic medical conditions — like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example — seem to be at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.



Eddie Bohanan

District 3 news

Halito District 3, Paula and I are happy to officially announce the birth of our third grandchild, Adalyn Danielle Kirt, to District 3! Born February 3 to our daughter, Faith and her husband, Justin. We are abundantly blessed and thankful that God entrusted our family with this precious life.

The Choctaw Nation awarded Leflore County \$17,200, the City of Heavener \$14,450, and the City of Talihina \$12,400 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to strengthen and develop the local area.

February 19, I spent the day in OKC in meetings with our Legislators, Lieutenant Governor, Matt Pinnell, and tribal members serving in the Legislature.

Congratulations to our District 3 Kids who participated in the McCurtain County Premier Livestock Show. They all did a great job!

I'm please to introduce a new game for our seniors: Choctaw Trivia. It's a fun and educational way to win prizes and promote learning Choctaw history and culture.

As the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to make headlines, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is monitoring the situation for new developments and communicating closely with the Council, Administration, and Emergency Management Team via conference calls and meetings. Precautionary measures are in place in accordance to CDC guidelines for the safety and wellbeing of our tribal members and communities.

Yakoke

COVID-19 Now a Pandemic

A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect people and can spread between people sustainably. Because there is little to no pre-existing immunity against the new virus, it spreads worldwide.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is infecting people and spreading easily from person-to-person. Cases have been detected in most countries worldwide and community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries. On March 11, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the WHO.

This is the first pandemic known to be caused by the emergence of a new coronavirus. In the past century, there have been four pandemics caused by the emergence of novel influenza viruses. As a result, most research and guidance around pandemics is specific to influenza, but the same premises can be applied to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemics of respiratory disease follow a certain progression outlined in a "Pandemic Intervals Framework." Pandemics begin with an investigation phase, followed by recognition, initiation, and acceleration phases. The peak of illnesses occurs at the end of the acceleration phase, which is followed by a deceleration phase, during which there is a decrease in illnesses. Different countries can be in different phases of the pandemic at any point in time and different parts of the same country can also be in different phases of a pandemic.

There are ongoing investigations to learn more. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Risk Assessment

Risk depends on characteristics of the virus, including how well it spreads between people; the severity of resulting illness; and the medical or other measures available to control the impact of the virus (for example, vaccines or medications that can treat the illness) and the relative success of these. In the absence of vaccine or treatment medications, nonpharmaceutical interventions become the most important response strategy. These are community interventions that can reduce the impact of disease.

The risk from COVID-19 to Americans can be broken down into risk of exposure versus risk of serious illness and death.

Risk of exposure:

The immediate risk of being exposed to this virus is still low for most Americans, but as the outbreak expands, that risk will increase. Cases of COVID-19 and instances of community spread are being reported in a growing number of states.

People in places where ongoing community spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported are at elevated risk of exposure, with the level of risk dependent on the location.

Healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19 are at elevated risk of exposure.

Close contacts of persons with COVID-19 also are at elevated risk of exposure. Travelers returning from affected international locations where community spread is occurring also are at elevated risk of exposure, with level of risk dependent on where they traveled.

Risk of Severe Illness:

Early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes:

- Older adults, with risk increasing by age.
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Lung disease

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

31875-4 March 16, 2020 1:22PM

SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness.

Symptoms* can include

FEVER

COUGH

*Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.



31875-4 March 16, 2020 1:22PM

For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19-symptoms

NOTES AND EVENTS

Noel and Roxie (Loman) Baker Family Reunion

June 27, 2020 (previously scheduled for June 2)

Choctaw Nation Community Center
2746 Big Lots Parkway, Durant, Okla.
Potluck lunch begins at 11 a.m.

For questions, please contact Lillie Dusenberry at 580-320-1039.

Ritter Family Reunion

May 23, 2020
Quarry Island, Wister, Okla.

For relatives of Isaac and Georgia Ritter or Frank and Jennie Ritter. Please bring covered dish and something to drink. Any donation to help with the reunion is appreciated.

For more information: Imogene (McCoy) Odell
507 Chickasaw, Poteau, Okla. 74953 or
(918) 647-3791 mobile (918) 647-7596

High school students who are interested in serving as pages for the Oklahoma State Legislature can apply for the High School Page Program at www.okhouse.gov/Pages. Pages are assigned for one week, Monday through Thursday, during the legislative session that begins the first Monday in February and ends the last Friday in May. Hotel accommodations and chaperones are provided. Student Pages will work with legislators in the House chamber during daily sessions and participate in the House Page Mock Legislature.

NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

Contact the Choctaw Nation
Circulation Department
580.924.8280 x4028
Read the Biskinik online at
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS



Biskinik

Announcement Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Mail to: Biskinik
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702

or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

The Official
Monthly Publication
of the
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Dara McCoy, Executive Director
Mary Ann Strombitski, Senior Director
Kellie Matherly, Managing Editor
Chris Jennings, News Reporter
Christian Toews, News Reporter

P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170
www.ChoctawNation.com
email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be type-written and double-spaced. You must include an address and phone number where you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK or your address needs to be changed, our Circulation Department would appreciate hearing from you at ext. 4028.

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

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

Tribal Council holds March session

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL
COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
March 14, 2020

- CALL TO ORDER
 - OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 - ROLL CALL
 - APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - Regular Session February 8, 2020
 - WELCOME GUESTS/RECOGNIZE VETERAN OF THE MONTH
 - Glen Junior Mitchell, District #9
 - REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 - NEW BUSINESS
 - Approve Funds and Budget for Year Two of Five Continuation for the Indian Education Discretionary Grants Program - Professional Development Grants Program (TEACH2REACH) Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve Funds and Budget for the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation Purpose Area #7 - Tribal Victim Services Grant Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve Funds and Budget for the Year Two of Three Continuation for the Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS) Grant Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve Funds and Budget for the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation Purpose Area #1 - COPS Tribal Resources Hiring and Equipment/Training Grant Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve Funds and Budget for Year Two of Three Continuation for the Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP) Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve Application for the Family Violence Prevention Grant Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve Oil and Gas Lease No. 4200205735 in Favor of Briar Oil and Gas Oklahoma I, LLC, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Haskell County, Oklahoma Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve an Electric Line Easement in Favor of Public Service Company of Oklahoma, on Choctaw Nation Fee Land in Latimer County, Oklahoma Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Authorize the Chief to Place Property in McCurtain County in Trust Status with the United States of America Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Approve to Dispose of Surplus Capital Assets Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - Amend the Criminal Code of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 - OLD BUSINESS
 - ADJOURNMENT
 - CLOSING PRAYER
- All Council Present except Tony Ward

Cornerstone FGC of Caddo

316 N. Main St., Caddo, Okla.
presents a Spiritual Revival
with pastor and evangelist Terry Holliday
April 19-23, 2020.

The Sunday service will begin at 6:30 p.m., and Monday-Thursday services will be held at 7 pm nightly.

Feature performances will be by Travis and Sheala Crosby (Sunday); Daniel Wesley (Monday); Heavenly Places (Tuesday); Tyler McClain (Wednesday); and New Creation (Friday).

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

WAREHOUSES & MARKETS

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

April 2020

All markets open weekdays, April 1-28
Closed: April 10, 29 and 30.

TRIBAL MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO CALL AHEAD FOR CURBSIDE PICK-UP. LIMIT OF TWO PICK-UPS PER MONTH. THIS IS EFFECTIVE MARCH 18.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773

MCALISTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

If you are at least 1/4 Native American, enrolled in an approved two-year college or a career tech center and live within the Choctaw Nation boundaries, Vocational Development may offer financial assistance to help with training and education.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL: (866) 933-2260

Wilson Family cemetery cleanup

The Wilson family annual cemetery cleanup day will be April 25th. Please meet at the Smithville Community Center at 9:00 a.m. For more information, please contact Jody Hendrickson at (918) 413-2084.

OK Choctaw Tribal Alliance

5320 S. Youngs Blvd
Oklahoma City Okla. 73119
405-681-0869

www.facebook.com/OKChoctawTribalAlliance

Choctaw Language Classes ◊ Indian Taco Sales Monthly Senior Activities ◊ Cultural Events and Presentations ◊ Volunteer Activities ◊ Craft Classes

Veterans meeting first Saturday of every month at 10 a.m. Scholarship Opportunities 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization

Veterans Association Members Needed

Choctaw Veterans Association is searching for new members. Most of our members are Vietnam Vets.

We need young Choctaw military men and women, active or retired. Members of different tribes are welcome as well. Veterans Association paperwork is needed.

Meetings are 8 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month at the Spiro Choctaw Community Center.

Members attend funerals, and Disabled American Veterans and Marine Corp League.

For information call:

Ed Hendricks, Recruiter 918-962-5524
Paul Perry, Commander 479-353-2709

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

April Language Lesson

Choctaw Phrases

I'm ready! - Present, Past, Future

Vm vlhtaha! - I'm ready!
pronunciation: Ahm ahthl-ta-ha

Context: 1) I'm ready as in I'm ready to go some where or . . .
2) I have finished or completed a task.

Vm vlhtaha tuk! - I was ready!
pronunciation: loh-wa tah-hah

Context: 1) I was ready or . . .
2) I finished or completed a task.

Vm vlhtaha chi! - I will be ready. Or I will get ready.
pronunciation: Ahm ahthl-ta-ha chi^h

Context: 1) I will be ready or will get ready.
2) I will prepare to be in a state of readiness.

vm - I am
vlhtaha - v. to be ready; to end; to finish
tuk - past tense marker
a chi - past tense marker, picks up the 'a' from the preceding word.

The upsilon character represented with a 'v' in this lesson has the sound of a quick 'ah'.

www.choctawschool.com

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

- Evaluations and Assessments
- Counseling and Guidance
- Referral Services
- On-the-Job-Training
- Physical and Mental Restoration

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

April 3	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 3	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 6	Durant	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
April 7	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 7	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 8	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 8	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 13	Durant	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
April 14	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 14	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 15	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 15	Stigler	By appointment
April 17	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 17	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 21	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 21	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 22	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 22	Coalgate	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 24	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 28	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment

Proposed bills directly affect Native Americans in Oklahoma

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Several bills have been introduced in the Oklahoma House and Senate this session that will directly affect Native Americans living in the state if passed into law.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Native Americans make up 9.3% of Oklahoma's population. As widely reported, that number is expected to change after this year's census, due to a massive undercount in 2010. A total of 39 tribes are based and operate business in Oklahoma as well.

Many of the bills focus on advocacy and representation of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples in Oklahoma.

House Bill 2847 was authored by Rep. Daniel Pae, R-Lawton. This bill would create a system, much like the Amber Alert System, that would alert the public when Indigenous people are reported missing in Oklahoma.

House Bill 2848 is a bipartisan bill authored by Rep. Daniel Pae, R-Lawton and Sen. Michael Brooks, D-Oklahoma City. The bill would require law enforcement agencies to offer one hour of training that focuses on cultural sensitivity. The sensitivity instruction would specifically cover issues relating to missing or murdered Indigenous people and would be required for CLEET training of law enforcement officers.

House Bill 3345 was authored by Rep. Mickey Dollens, D-Oklahoma City and Sen. Paul Rosin, R-Oklahoma City. This bill, "Ida's Law," is named after Ida Beard of El Reno. Beard, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, disappeared in June 2015. Her family members have been fierce advocates for her case and for all missing and murdered Indigenous peoples. Ida's Law would create a new Office of Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons. The office will develop protocol and work with law enforcement and other state agencies, assisting with resources and offering guidance and helping to organize training.

House Bill 3892 was authored by Rep. Merleyn Bell, D-Norman and Sen. Wayne Shaw, R-Grove. This bill would require law enforcement, when receiving a report regarding a missing or runaway person who is under 18, to collect detailed biographical and contact information for all involved parties, including the reporting party, any alleged suspects and the alleged missing or involved child.

House Bill 3893 was authored by Rep. Merleyn Bell, D-Norman. This bill would create an electronic repository of student photographs to help law enforcement identify missing children. The Department of Education would be required to keep the repository up-to-date with current photos of Oklahoma students, which would be released to OSBI if a child goes missing.

Another topic covered in this session is freedom of religion and wearing Tribal regalia during graduation ceremonies.

In 2019, many young Indigenous people were barred by their schools from wearing sacred regalia during high school graduation ceremonies because they violate school policy/dress code, according to their school's administration.

House Bill 2783 authored by Rep. Collin Walke, D-Oklahoma City would explicitly add

wearing tribal regalia at a high school graduation to the activities covered under the Oklahoma Religious Freedom Act. The amendments would not allow individual schools or entire districts to enact policies that bar students from wearing regalia.

Also introduced this session is Senate Bill 1184. Filed by Sen. George Young, D-Oklahoma City, this bill would require a racial impact statement for any Senate or House bill that does any of the following: creates a new offense; significantly changes an existing offense; changes the penalty for an existing offense; or changes existing sentencing, parole or probation procedures. This would also require that a racial impact statement be filed with a committee's chairman for a criminal justice bill to be heard in the committee. A new racial impact statement would need to be prepared if the bill is amended. Under Senate Bill 1184, the Oklahoma Statistical Analysis Center at the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation - with help from the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Office of Juvenile Affairs - would draft each racial impact statement.

As of March 19, the publication date of this issue of the Biskinik, all House Bills, except for House Bill 3893 had passed the House.

For more information on these bills, please visit oklegislature.gov.



Photo Provided

Several bills have been introduced in the Oklahoma House and Senate this session, which will directly affect thousands of Native Americans living in the state if passed into law.

Cuddle Cots provide needed comfort in tragic situations

By Chris Jennings

Thanks to a generous donation, the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Tali-hina can now offer families a Cuddle Cot after an infant or pregnancy loss.

Kelsey Stubblefield, with help from the Jaxon Kade Foundation, donated the Cuddle Cot to the health care center Feb. 25.

A Cuddle Cot is a bassinet that connects to a portable refrigeration unit. It provides families more time with their babies after their passing, allowing for some closure that they may not have otherwise felt.

"It really helped us to cope. Whenever Harper was in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit] she always had wires or breathing machines; we never really got to have her completely unhooked from IV's," said Stubblefield.

A Cuddle Cot can provide the family with up to three days of extra time, a drastic difference from the two or three hours that are common in these situations without such a device.

Ketra Burns, a case manager in labor and delivery at the health care center said, "We're so happy to have it. We've had families in the past that could have benefited from more time with their babies."

Brittany Martin with the Jaxon Kade Foundation said, "When you have a baby that lives and comes home, there's a whole list of things that you do...you don't have that when your baby dies."

Often, bereft mothers struggle to cope after the loss of their babies, and they are not given enough time to find a sense of peace and closure.

"Because most people aren't prepared to say goodbye, more time is needed...saying goodbye takes longer than 30 minutes," said Martin.

It is painful to think about, but sometimes life will end sooner than expected. For some, that is just as life is beginning in a hospital delivery room. Thanks to this generous donation, families at the health care center will be able to spend more time with their children after such a tragic event.



Photo by Chris Jennings

Kelsey Stubblefield places a plaque on a Cuddle Cot commemorating her daughter, Harper. Stubblefield arranged the donation of the Cuddle Cot to the Choctaw Nation Health Center.



STUDENT SCHOOL AND ACTIVITY FUND

The Choctaw Nation offers a \$100 grant to Choctaw tribal students who are attending 3-year-old head start through high school. The grant is provided one time each funding year and will be on a Visa card specifically for clothing; it will be declined at ATMs, gas stations, restaurants, movie theaters, etc.

Eligibility Requirements

- Students must possess a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal membership card (This is not the CDIB).
- Students must be at least 3-years-old in head start/daycare setting through 12th grade.
- If the student is 19 or older and still in high school, please submit a paper form via mail, email, or fax and include school documentation verifying enrollment.

The Student School and Activity Fund Program funding year is
July 1 - May 1 of the following year.
Applications can be submitted online.

CONTACT

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA
800-522-6170 EXT 2175 OR 2463

Choctaw Nation Student School & Activity Fund

The stigma of mental health



In 2017, Mental Health America estimated 43.7 million Americans struggled with a mental health condition annually, but only one out of five would receive the treatment they needed.

Let's face it--there is a negative stigma associated with mental health services which may have caused

many individuals to not seek these services despite significant emotional, physical, or mental distress. Stereotypes such as "counseling is for the weak" and the idea that mental health therapy should be "kept hush-hush" or one should "be ashamed" of having sought therapy continue to perpetuate a negative connotation regarding treatment and misconceptions about counseling.

In all actuality, most people who do initiate mental health services do not have a serious mental illness. They more than likely are merely going through a difficult situation which may be affecting their ability to cope. Such situations could include financial issues, problems with family or parent/child conflict, death of a loved one, a recent health diagnosis, getting married/divorced, work stressors, etc. Often, there may be more than one life stressor resulting in cumulative effects, or a "pile-up," of stressors. It is during these times counseling can be most helpful in both providing the support and skills to better address life situations and challenges.

There are ways to overcome the stigma of seeking mental health services. Whether you are seeking counseling to help sort through feelings of stress or anxiety or aiming to address a clinical mental health issue, realize that you are not alone, and counseling is a most productive tool in helping individuals develop coping skills as well as process emotions and feelings. Choosing to view therapy as a positive, healthy choice can help overcome the stereotypes surrounding counseling. Don't isolate. Reach out to people you trust for the compassion, support, and understanding you need. Talk about it with others. Through conversations with others and sharing stories, mental health issues become more normalized and less shameful, decreasing misconceptions surrounding therapy. Your story might encourage others to seek treatment themselves. Educate others; often, judgments are made based on a lack of understanding rather than information based on facts.

There are Behavioral Health Clinics throughout the Choctaw Nation with locations in McAlester, Tali-hina, Idabel, Poteau, Durant, Stigler, Hugo and Atoka, staffed with licensed and knowledgeable mental health professionals. If you, or someone you know, would benefit from counseling services contact your local Behavioral Health Clinic. Don't let negative stigmas and misconceptions prevent you or a loved one from seeking professional help.

Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Service (918) 567-3065, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255, National Text Crisis Line please text "hello" to 741-741.



NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN WHO WILL BE 3 OR 4 YEARS OLD BY SEPTEMBER 1

Providing educational, health and family services for eligible children and families, including children with special needs.
Available to all children.

FOR AN APPLICATION, CONTACT

800-522-6170 EXT 2219

Choctaw Nation Head Start

Ginn Officer of the Year



Phillip Ginn was awarded the title of Officer of the Year for the Little Elm, Texas, Police Department Jan. 31, 2020. He was awarded the title based upon votes from fellow officers.

He was also awarded Top Officer for his shift, which was based on his hard work, leadership and the example he sets for others.

Officer Phillip Ginn, left, is awarded Little Elm, Texas Officer of the Year, by Chief Rodney Harrison.

Ginn, a tribal member, is the son of Cheryl and Robert Farrar and the late Ricky P. Ginn. He is the great-great-grandson of Henry J. Bond, Oklahoma's first County Assessor for Atoka County.

He has been an officer for 11 years, two of that being with Little Elm. He was previously a corporal for the police department of Krum, Texas.

Mia Rogers turns 5

Mia K. Rogers, Moore, Okla., will turn 5 years old April 28, 2020.

Mia is the daughter of Larry Rogers and Kendra Woodward, and granddaughter of Nita James.

Her siblings are Larry Jr., Emily Nicole, Ricky, Amy and Jamie.



Hyland graduates from OSU

Josh Hyland graduated with a bachelor's degree in Applied Exercise Science from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla., Dec. 14, 2019. Josh is a very proud member of the Choctaw Nation, which

helped him along on his journey.

Proud family members are his parents Frank and Janice Hyland of Hugo, Okla., his grandmother Janet Phillips of Goodland, Okla.; and brother and sister Dustin and Jessica.

Ford graduates from UCO

Morgan Ford, Choctaw tribal member from Marlow, Okla., graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma in Dec. 2019, with a bachelor's degree in Sociology.

She is the great-great-granddaughter of John G. Burkes.

Morgan wishes to thank the Choctaw Nation for the support she received while pursuing her college education.



Nita James turns 60

Nita James of Moore, Okla., turned 60 March 12th.

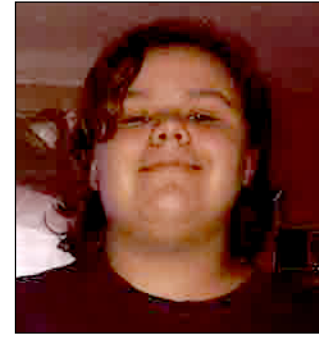
Nita has four children Amy Briones and spouse Armondo, Jamie Cooper, Richard Rogers, and Larry Rogers Sr.

Her grandchildren are Bryce Rogers, Dorian Rogers, Jonas Briones, Chad Cooper, Shelby Stricklen, Gadge Stricklen, Blake Stricklen, Emily Mitchell, Trey Wesley, Emily Destfino, Larry Rogers Jr. and Mia Kay Rogers. Nita's great-grandchild is Treyson Rogers.

Peasha turns 18

Jada Matri Peasha turned 18 years old Jan. 28, 2020.

She is the granddaughter of Priscilla Colleen Smith and great-granddaughter of Hazel Narcissa Noahubi. Happy birthday, Jada!



Hunting holds cultural and economic impacts



By Chris Jennings

Throughout history, the Choctaw people have relied on hunting for food, clothing, shelter and other necessities for their families. While hunting is less vital today than it was a hundred years ago, it still plays an important role in the economy for both the Choctaw people and their neighbors.

So far in 2020, the Choctaw Nation processed 19,513 hunting and fishing licenses for Choctaw tribal members living in Oklahoma, up from the 14,974 in 2019. When a tribal member applies for the package deal license available through the tribal compact, they save \$292 on their license over someone who purchases a license from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

That is a total savings of over \$5 million that invariably goes back into each person's local economy. On top of money being spent locally, the money raised through the purchase of the hunting and fishing licenses goes toward funding of the Department of Wildlife, along with matching federal dollars. Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. said, "That contributes to both parties' interest in protecting our state's natural resources while encouraging more people to enjoy the great outdoors."

Another perk of the license is that tribal members also gain free access to the Three Rivers and Honobia Creek wildlife areas. Normally any user of those two areas, whether hunting or recreational, would be required to purchase a \$40 Land Access Fee permit.

The Three Rivers and Honobia Creek areas offer a combined total of over 300,000 acres that can be used for hunting and recreational activities. When people from out of town come to these areas to take advantage of everything offered, they inject tourism dollars into the local economies. That counts toward both Choctaw and non-Choctaw owned businesses helping everybody to do better.

Tribal members can apply for their Hunting and Fishing license by going online to the Chahta Achvffa member portal to fill out the application or request an application from the Choctaw Nation Tribal State Licenses Department at 800-522-6170. Members under the age of 16 must have a parent or guardian apply for them.

Things have a come a long way since the Choctaw people hunted with blow guns and rabbit sticks. They do, however, continue to participate in the time-honored tradition of hunting, benefiting not just themselves, but the state as a whole.

Choctaw Nation, Royal Air Force Honor Crash Victims

DURANT, Okla. - Five British Royal Air Force officers and their families made an emotional visit to Pushmataha County on Sunday, Feb. 2, as local groups honored British citizens who were killed at war.

The ceremony, which is held yearly, took place at the RAF Monument on Big Mountain, north of Moyers, Okla.

The Choctaw Nation Color Guard presented the colors, as they have every year since the monument's dedication in 2000. Five of the Color Guard have participated each year for the past 20 years.

Bob Ludlow, a member of the Color Guard, opened the ceremony with a word of prayer in Choctaw, which he then translated into English. Chantelle Standefor of the Choctaw Nation's language department sang the National Anthem in Choctaw, and "God Save the Queen" in English.

"We thank the Choctaw Nation and the people of Pushmataha County for their many kindnesses in helping us honor our dead," said RAF Wing Commander Maj. Craig O'Donnell. He made special note of the lunch provided by the ladies' auxiliary of the Antlers chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which hosts a luncheon for the British visitors at the VFW Hall in Antlers each year.

The RAF Monument north of Moyers honors four Royal Air Force fliers who crashed and were killed there during stormy weather. One aircraft impacted Whiterock Mountain north of Moyers. The other crashed at the site of the monument on Big Mountain, west of Kosoma. A third aircraft crash-landed in a pasture in Jumbo; those fliers were unhurt and attended the dedication of the RAF Monument 57 years later, in 2000.



Photo by Brad Gernand

Five officers from Britain's Royal Air Force join members of the Choctaw Nation Color Guard at the RAF Monument Sunday, Feb. 2 on Big Mountain, north of Moyers.

Are Virtual Medical Visits for you?

Virtual Medical Visit services enables healthcare access to patients who are not able to travel to the provider for specific, non-life threatening, injuries or illnesses.

The service is a video appointment with a healthcare provider; that is available to patients with specific symptoms. Patients may have 3 virtual visits within a 30 day period, then must physically see a provider.

Eligibility
To qualify for a virtual medical visit, patient must:

- Be a CDIB holder and have a current Consent to Treat on file.
- Live in Oklahoma and be age five (5) years or older.
- Have an active chart at any Choctaw Nation Health Services facility and have been seen within the last 12 months.

To qualify for Virtual Medical Visits, you must meet eligibility requirements and have one of the approved symptoms:

- allergies
- poison ivy
- sunburn
- head lice
- pink eye
- insect bite(s)
- cough/cold
- yeast infection
- cold sores
- recurrent genital herpes

HOURS OF OPERATION
Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Please call (580) 916-9231 or visit us online at www.choctawnation.com/virtualvisits

Choctaw Nation Health Services
Living out the Chahta Spirit FAITH • FAMILY • CULTURE

EMPOWERING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Choctaw Nation Youth Advisory Board

Chief Batton's EASTER CELEBRATION

2020

APRIL 11 | 10:00AM | TVSHKA HOMMA

<p>11:30AM WELCOME Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr.</p> <p>OPENING PRAYER Olin Williams</p> <p>INTRODUCTION OF ROYALTY Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr.</p> <p>LORD'S PRAYER Miss Choctaw Nation Summer Moffitt, Jr. Miss Chayenne McCoy, Little Miss Alyssiah Camp accompanied by District Princesses</p> <p>INTRODUCTION OF EMPLOYEE CHAPLAIN OLIN WILLIAMS Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr.</p> <p>EASTER MESSAGE Olin Williams</p> <p>RECOGNITION OF CHIEF AND COUNCIL Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr.</p> <p>PRAYER TO BLESS THE FOOD Olin Williams</p>	<p>11:45AM - 12:45PM LUNCH SERVED Announcements Door Prize Drawings Closing Prayer</p> <p>12:45PM YOUTH EGG HUNT (Ball Fields)</p> <p>1:15PM ELDER EGG HUNT (Museum Lawn)</p> <p>10:00AM - 12:00PM LIVE CHOCTAW VILLAGE (Choctaw Village)</p> <p>10:00AM UNTIL DARK STICKBALL GAMES (Stickball field)</p> <p>BUNNY PICTURES (Tribal Membership Building)</p>
---	--

USE THIS CODE TO PREREGISTER FOR EASTER CHILD SAFETY WRISTBANDS **BIT.LY/CNO-EASTER**

QUESTIONS? CONTACT: MCRESS@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Stay Connected
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
CHOCTAWNATION.COM

ELDER LAWN CARE

APPLICATION OPENS APRIL 1, 2020

Must be at least 70 years old or have an ambulatory disability
Participants receive 20 vouchers, valued at \$25 each (no cash value), redeemable April 1 - December 31, 2020
Must live in 10 % counties of the CNO
Income requirement: Earn no more than 80% of the national median income as determined by HUD

FOR MORE INFORMATION
580-522-6170
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LAWNCARE

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

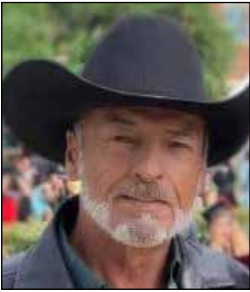
Charles Wayne Sexton

Charles Wayne Sexton, 63, passed away Jan. 9, 2020.

Charles was born Aug. 21, 1956, in Talihina, Okla., to Richard and June Sexton.

He is survived by wife Debbie Sexton; daughters Marcia Martinez and partner David Castillo, and Misty Dominguez and spouse Hugo; grandchildren Karissa Dominguez and fiance Bobby Albiar, Hugo Dominguez Jr., Johnathan Dominguez, and Nicolas Zuniga; sisters Beth Douglas and spouse Scott, Rosena Manor and spouse Dwain; brother Clay Normand and partner Shelly Crider; several brothers and sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews and friends.

For the full obituary, please see [Aria Cremation Service & Funeral Home](#).

**Bobby Jo Phelps**

Bobby Jo Phelps, 79, passed away Feb. 8, 2020.

Bobby was born Sept. 6, 1940, in Durant, Okla., to Ted and Lois (McDaniel) Phelps.

He was preceded in death by wife Ann; his parents; brother Benny Phelps; and sister Pat Edelen.

Bobby is survived by son Kenny Phelps; grandchildren Kim Phelps and spouse Jennifer, Falon Nelson and spouse Chris; great-grandchildren Harlee Mullens, Jake Mullens, Presley Nelson, Matthew Phelps; step-grandson Braydon Wright; brother M.J. Phelps and spouse Billie Gayle; sister-in-law Marveta Phelps; niece Gina Harris; nephews Jason Phelps, Rayford Phelps, Jimmy Edelen, Joey Edelen, Tim Phelps; niece Debbie Wells; aunt, Dorothy; and lifelong friend Kenneth.

For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

**Imogene Maxine Owens**

Imogene Maxine Owens, 92, passed away Feb. 15, 2020.

Imogene was born April 18, 1927, in Talihina, Okla., to Roosevelt and Josie (Woods) Bacon.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Benjamin Franklin Owens; daughter Olivia Raby; son Dwight Davis; brothers Everett Bacon, Theodore Bacon, Leonard Bacon and Elmer Bacon.

Imogene is survived by sons Tommy Davis, Floyd Davis and spouse Phyllis, Kenny Davis and spouse Diane, and David Davis; sisters Melba Bowman, Thelma Johnson, and Jerline Flowers; brother Wilburn Bacon; numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, other relatives and a host of friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Burkhart Funeral Service](#).

**Ahdohlowah Esther Tonihka**

Ahdohlowah Esther Tonihka, 74, passed away Jan. 22, 2020.

Ahdohlowah was born July 5, 1946, in Chicago, Ill., to Theodore Ray and Cora Lavada Tonihka.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sons Nick Wayne and Shawn Ray; nieces Shawna Lavada Perry and Ruth Willean Sehon; brother John J. Tonihka; sister Theda Ray Tonihka; brother-in-law Larry McCoy; and aunt Carrie Belle Bohanan.

Ahdohlowah is survived by son Heath Ford; sisters Betsy McCoy and Pheodosia Perry, Lajohnda Lynn and Herbie Highfill; brothers Joey Sehon and Carmen; grandchildren Samantha Ford and Heath Ford Jr.; great-grandchild Elias Ford; step-father Leon Petty; numerous nephews, nieces, great nephews and great-nieces; other relatives and a host of many friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral Home](#).

**Gary Lee Armstrong**

Gary Lee Armstrong, 87, passed away Feb. 3, 2020.

Gary was born Nov. 18, 1932, in Atoka, Okla., to William and Augusta (Evans) Armstrong.

He was preceded in death by wives Betty Armstrong and Karen Armstrong; his parents; brother Billy Gene Armstrong; and sister Patricia Gale Sapp.

Gary is survived by wife Eva Armstrong; sons Gary Armstrong and spouse Lori, Jeff Armstrong, Neal Armstrong and spouse Ann, and David Lynn Freeman and spouse Mary; daughters Sherri Gordon and spouse Danny, Evelyn Albright and spouse Cary, and Alma Prince; grandchildren, Chandra Potter, Mandi Peebles, Chase Hutson, Zach Armstrong, Jill LaCroix, Josh Armstrong, Eric Armstrong, Corey Bundrant, Royce Bundrant, Jennifer Jones, Matthew Freeman, Zane Hall, Colt Harris, Adam Harris, Blake Harris, Clay Albright, Kelsey Longhofer; 26 great-great-grandchildren; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives, and many dear and loved friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Home](#).

**Joseph Byington**

Joseph Byington, 69, passed away Feb. 5, 2020.

Joseph was born March 19, 1950, in Claremore, Okla., to Jesse and Lucille (West) Byington.

He was preceded in death by his parents; siblings Ike Byington, Lumpy Byington, Beatrice Walker and Sharon July.

Joseph is survived by wife Shirley; daughters Stacy Bogle and spouse Ron, Michelle Childress, Jenny Adams and spouse Jody, Crystal Cortes and spouse Jose, and Stacy King; brother Jeff Byington and spouse Marilyn; sister-in-law Cathy Byington; grandchildren Justin Bogle, Jessica Shoemaker and spouse Blake, Cashia Baker and spouse Briar, Billy Ted Childress and spouse LeeAnn, Mesa Childress, Callie Childress, Jacques Adams, Tyler Bruce and Micha, Marshall Scott and Kiera, Caleb Pittenger, Kaylee Pittenger, Joni Laster and spouse Seth; and three great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Chaney Harkins Funeral Home](#).

**Velma Roberts**

Velma L. Roberts, 95, passed away Jan. 19, 2020.

Velma was born Oct. 2, 1924, in Broken Bow, Okla., to Ida Wade Wesley and Louis Ontaiyabbi.

She was preceded in death by sons Austin Wayne Tushka, Walton Tushka, Jimmy Tushka; and daughter Norma Tushka Thompson.

Velma is survived by husband William E. Roberts; sons Ernest Tushka, Wallace Tushka, and Gary Tushka; daughters Glenda Skeet, Verna John, and Esther Davis; many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Aria Cremation Service & Funeral Home](#).

**Curtis Eldon Clearman**

Curtis Eldon Clearman, 46, passed away Feb. 6, 2020.

Curtis was born Oct. 20, 1973, in Okla. City, Okla., to Troy Eldon Clearman and Gladys Faye (Taylor) Hargrave.

He was preceded in death by daughter Karlie Clearman; grandfather Abner Taylor; grandmother Jincy Tom; uncles Benny Taylor, Jimmy Taylor, Newman Taylor and Leroy Taylor; and aunt Ann Taylor.

Curtis is survived by his mother; father and step-mother Bonita; daughter Kara Clearman; son Taylor Clearman; granddaughter Candence West; sisters Regina Clearman and Donna Hargrave; brothers Toy Clearman and Mitchell Covington; aunts Julia Davis and Delores Taylor; numerous cousins; and extended family and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service](#).

**Phyllis Charline Goar**

Phyllis Charline Goar, 83, passed away Feb. 2, 2020.

Phyllis was born Aug. 20, 1936, in Bokchito, Okla., to Charlie and Thelma Layman.

She was preceded in death by husband Jonnie Goar; brothers Michael, Charles, James and Gary Layman; sisters JoAnn Wallace, Wilma Boudreau, and Lavonna Wallace.

Phyllis is survived by daughter Billie Goar; son Barry Goar; sister Jackie Heinz; brother Kenneth Layman; grandchildren Cameron and Catherine Davis, Jamey Goar, Gregory and Sarah Goar, Wesley and Audra Goar; great-grandchildren Alyssia Proffitte, Jason Proffitte Jr., Nathan Davis, Samantha Davis, Kambryn Goar, Caleb Goar, Dana Davis, Anthony Goar, Colton Goar and Reece Goar.

For the full obituary, please visit [Absolute Economical Funeral Home](#).

**Thelma Cariker**

Thelma "Tink" Cariker, 87, passed away Dec. 27, 2019.

Tink was born May 11, 1932, in Bokoshe, Okla., to Beulah Marie Thomas and Turner (T.A.) Cariker Sr.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Ladosca "Dot" Cariker; brothers Irby Cariker, Doyle Cariker, T.A. Cariker Jr., and Leon "Butch" Cariker; husband Chester "Chet" Hulsey; and daughter Connie Sue Rivera.

Tink is survived by daughters Cherry DuLaney and spouse Albert Franklin; Jan Allis Cariker and Terry Lister and spouse Andrew; sons Bob DuLaney and spouse Pam, Ronnie Hulsey, 11 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren; and other family and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

**Lucille Delila Timmons**

Lucille Delila (Jones) Timmons, 85, passed away Feb. 10, 2020.

Lucille was born Feb. 4, 1935, in Keota, Okla., to Willie and Rebecca (Cooper) Jones.

She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Kimberly Pigeon; and brother Mike Jones.

Lucille is survived by husband Willard Timmons; sons David Howard and spouse Norma; Willie Howard and spouse Linda; and Michael Howard; daughters Francine Harper and spouse Larry, and Michelle Herd and spouse Ricky; sisters Mildred Davis and Viola Harrell; 21 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren, one great-great-granddaughter; and numerous nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Mallory-Martin Funeral Home and Crematory](#).

**Marie Gardner Wong**

Marie Gardner Wong, 80, passed away Feb. 24, 2020.

Marie was born Sept. 3, 1939, in Phoenix, AZ., to Leroy and Hazel Nickles Gardner.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Ronald Floyd Wong; siblings Charles "PK" Gardner, Joan Held, Jesse Greenwood, and John Calvin Gardner.

Marie is survived by children Charles Hodge and spouse Rachel, Mary Hodge, and Jefferson Hodge; siblings Nancy Kegley, Sam Gardner and spouse Cathy, and M.L. Gardner; grandchildren James Dean Hodge, Morgan Brittany Hodge, Christopher Michael Caldwell and Curtis Alan Hammonds.

For the full obituary, please visit Rest Haven Funeral Home.

**Lowell Herell**

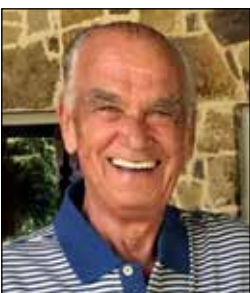
Lowell Herell, 80, passed away Dec. 4, 2019.

Lowell was born Sept. 29, 1939, in Purcell, Okla., to Thomas and Abbie (Bice) Herell.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brother Tommy Herell.

Lowell is survived by wife Jolanda "Lonnie"; daughter Tara Craig and spouse Leonard; son Lance Herell and spouse Nikkie; granddaughters Haley Craig and Charli Herell; grandsons Cameron Craig and Taylor Riccardi, Peyton Groom and Luke Herell; great-granddaughter McKinley Stephens; great-grandson Case Craig; brother Gene Herell; sisters Judy Selman and spouse Joe, and Carolyn Bennett and spouse Gary; sister-in-law Claudine Herell; numerous nieces and nephews; other loving family members and many more lifelong friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Dignity Memorial](#).

**Ruby Mae Samuels**

Ruby Mae Samuels, 75, passed away Feb. 11, 2020.

Ruby was born March 21, 1944, in Bethel, Okla., to Timothy and Rena (Roberts) Samuels.

She is survived by husband Eugene Hack; daughter Julie Samuels and Valerie; sons Stephen Samuels and Daniel Hack; sister Ruth Samuels; grandchildren Stephen, Ashley, Nancy, Jana, Thirl, Hope, Brandon, Katelynn, Christian, April, Katelynn, Heaven, Blake, Skylar, Star, Nikki and Dakota; other relatives, loved ones and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Evans and Miller Funeral Home](#).

**Wesley Wayne Wilson**

Wesley Wayne Wilson, 42, passed away Feb. 13, 2020.

Wesley was born Sept. 17, 1977, in Talihina, Okla., to Brenda (Baton) Wilson and Daniel Wilson.

He was preceded in death by grandparents Stanley and Bonnie Wilson, and Dolly and Earl Baton.

Wesley is survived by wife Andrea; his parents; sister Heidi Wilson; and nieces Abigail Wilson and Elizabeth Wilson.

For the full obituary, please visit McCarn Funeral Services.

**Loyd Keith Farris**

Loyd Keith Farris, 73, passed away Dec. 23, 2019.

Loyd was born Dec. 17, 1946 to William and Barbara (Battles) Farris.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Loyd is survived by wife Jackie; son Ryan Farris and spouse Diana; daughters Jaime Kerecman and spouse Kyle, Donna Miner and spouse Brian, and Michele Neil and spouse Bobby; grandchildren Nate, Kolt, Kassidy, Kaleigh, Kenny, Emily, Renee, Nik, Jakob; sister Shirley Dixon; and numerous cousins, nieces, nephews and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Phillips Funeral Service](#).



ITI FABVSSA

Integrated Services ensures Nation events go smoothly

This article is part of the continuing series, Enduring Legacies, where we reflect on the history of each division of our executive branch of government: Legal & Compliance, Strategic Development, Commerce, Integrated Services, and Tribal Services. While our needs today differ from the past, these services have deep roots in our Choctaw history. This month's article focuses on Choctaw Nation's Division of Integrated Services.

Every first weekend of September, Choctaw citizens and members of the general public converge on the grounds of the Choctaw Nation Capitol at Tvshka Homma for the annual Labor Day Festival. It is one of the best times of the year that showcases all that Choctaw Nation has to offer its citizens and non-citizens alike. But to pull together the weekend's offerings of member services, cultural activities, stickball tournament, softball games, arts and crafts show, carnival, and concerts (among many other events!) over the course of four days requires concerted coordination. Behind the scenes, the Division of Integrated Services' various departments help put on the biggest event on every Choctaw calendar. Together, the departments of Communications, Construction, Facilities Maintenance, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Marketing, and Procurement provide what SEO Kelly McKaughan describes as "operational, administrative and/or technical support for all the divisions of the Choctaw Nation." As they do with the annual Festival, Integrated Services works with every single Choctaw Nation government department to make sure it operates as one coordinated team to provide necessary services to its citizens and community partners. Without this teamwork, Choctaws would not have been able to come as far as we have today.

Prior to European settler arrival in the Americas, Choctaw society was divided into two iksa, or social groups that anthropologists call "moieties." According to Choctaw laws governing the iksa system, a Choctaw



Irene Hudson Heard and other women at an early Labor Day Festival event, standing in front of the Choctaw Capitol. Photo courtesy of Suzanne Heard and Judy Allen in Choctaw Nation Historic Projects.

person had to marry outside of their iksa. This ensured that both iksa were represented in each Choctaw community and household. Having each iksa in every household helped maintain balance throughout Choctaw society. Iksa were part of the system of Choctaw life philosophies that emphasized balance in every part of Choctaw society. Balance, as a guiding philosophy of Choctaw life, was also an important idea that was integrated into Choctaws' most important ceremony - the Green Corn Ceremony.

While the ceremony itself is sacred, the following is a description that helps us understand its significance and see how Choctaws have honored it throughout our history, especially as we continue to deal with the negative consequences of colonialism. The Green Corn Ceremony was an annual renewal ceremony where Choctaws gathered together to resolve issues and start the new year in a good way. This was the most important social and spiritual event for Choctaws and other Indigenous peoples from what is now called the Southeastern United States. The ceremony requires people to work together to accomplish the necessary tasks to prepare for the new year. Without Choctaws' emphasis on working together to achieve balance, we would not have been able to maintain our ways and sovereignty throughout time and survive until the present.

Nevertheless, because colonialism and Euro-Ameri-

can ways of thinking devalued Choctaw philosophies and government, Choctaws had to adapt to the U.S. government's suppression of Indigenous ceremonies. When the U.S. government removed us from our homelands to Indian Territory by the Trail of Tears, it was catastrophic for our ceremonies. Many elders who had knowledge of our ceremonies died during removal. When they arrived in Indian Territory, things were not as prepared as the U.S. government said it would be and many Choctaws did not have all the supplies they needed to build a new life in a new land. This led some to set aside ceremonies. Others practiced ceremonies

in secret or practiced with other Indigenous nations who performed a Green Corn Ceremony. Despite these changes caused by colonialism resulting in the decline of this important renewal ceremony among Oklahoma Choctaws, the Choctaw calendar and the gathering of Choctaw people at the beginning of the new year remained important to our people - which we now see in the present.

In May 1938, the Choctaw Tribal Council House at Tvshka Homma reopened after a series of renovations. Originally built in 1884, the Council House hosted annual meetings for all Choctaw people to attend in addition to serving as a meeting place for Tribal Council. The day before the 1938 re-dedication celebration, the McAlester News Capital ran an article announcing the event and declared that it was expected to be the "largest gathering of Choctaws that had taken place in many years." It included an address by Chief William A. Durant. The event was so successful that it became an annual reunion organized by a group called the Choctaw Educational Iksa. Their mission was to "promote the interest and ambition of all those who wish to assist their neighbors in growing into the kind of citizens that make the state and nation a worthwhile place in which to live." We believe this reunion might be an early version of our Labor Day Festival.

See Integrated Services on 10

Artists represent Tribe as mentors and culture bearers



Photo by Shelia Kirven

Choctaw registered artists Jennifer Byram, Celia Stall-Meadows and Leslie Widener do a burn test on a textile sample to identify its source at a recent textiles workshop held in Durant.

By Shelia Kirven

The Choctaw people have always been storytellers, sharing tribal history and culture. One way stories are told is through art. Choctaw artists spend their lives telling the Choctaw story and acting as culture bearers - those who pass on the Choctaw culture to future generations.

The Choctaw Nation's Artist Registry Program houses the names of over 600 Choctaw artists who work in a wide range of mediums such as weaving, painting, leatherwork, beadwork, photography, dance and writing. There are 100 recognized categories of media available, and many tribal artists are registered in more than one category.

The Choctaw Artist Registry gives artists unique opportunities and experiences, such as participating at tribally sponsored community events, selling products in Choctaw Nation retail locations, or having artwork displayed at tribal facilities. There are also countless opportunities for mentorship and being a culture bearer.

Many Choctaw artists do extensive research to ensure that the work they do is historically accurate. Norma Howard, a well-known watercolor artist, specializes in historic tribal paintings. Before beginning a new piece, she carefully researches her subject to ensure what she paints is accurate and as true to tribal history as possible. Her work represents the traditional past and is a prime example of teaching history through art. Norma's mother, a Choctaw storyteller, passed to her children many stories of animals, their behaviors, and how we learn from them. "That's why many of our dances are about animals," Howard stated. Her paintings tell the stories of Choctaws' way of life and their survival through time. Her art also serves as a platform to pass the stories down, preserving them. "It's real life for Choctaws," she said.

Many times, tribal art represents modern day cultural traditions. Artists observe and participate in tribal events, often photographing them, and then painting, drawing or writing about what they saw. The Choctaw Nation Labor Day festivities at Tvshka Homma and pow wows are popular places where artists record visuals and experiences, which they will later turn into artwork. When Choctaw artist Bobby Von Martin sees photos of youth practicing their culture, he sometimes paints the scene and gifts it to the family. He once painted a child who was at an event wearing a traditional shirt and holding hands with his parent. Not only was the painting

a beautiful piece of art but it was also turned into a greeting card for distribution to Choctaw Nation tribal members, and the original hangs in the Choctaw Nation headquarters. For every painting Von Martin sells, he gifts one to people in the community.

Audrey Jacob, the Choctaw Artist Registry and Heritage Day Coordinator, stated that there is a lot of mentorship and teaching going on within the Choctaw artist community. They learn from each other and network together often, sharing their knowledge. Not long ago, Jacob said she realized at an artist bazaar at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters that artists whose works were hanging in the tribal headquarters were getting each other's signatures in a booklet that displays photos of the artwork. "I thought, how neat is that? These people are so established, but they are the biggest fans of one another. I could see that there is a lot of support of one another," Jacob said.

See Artists on 11

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL CNO COMMUNITY CENTER

PRINCESS PAGEANT APPLICATION

CONTACT

800-522-6170 EXT 2192 OR 2504 | FSELF@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK
SEEK JUSTICE | ENSURE VICTIMS' RIGHTS | INSPIRE HOPE

WALK WITH US IN TVSHKA HOMMA
APRIL 23, 2020 | 10:00 AM
GAMES, BOOTHS, HOT DOGS

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CHOCTAWNATION.COM | 800-522-6170 EXT 6031

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services

STAR PROGRAM

SUCCESS THROUGH ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

To qualify for STAR awards, students must be enrolled in the second - twelfth grades and possess a tribal membership card. Incentives are given twice a year at the end of each semester, for the following academic achievements:

- ALL A'S: \$25 GIFT CARD
- ALL B'S: \$10 GIFT CARD
- ALL A'S & B'S: \$10 GIFT CARD
- PERFECT ATTENDANCE: \$25 GIFT CARD

AWARDING PERIOD: SPRING, MAY 1 - SEP 1 | FALL, DEC 1 - MAR 1

STARAPPLICATION.CHOCTAWNATION.COM
800-522-6170 EXT 2581 OR 2971

INSPIRE opportunity

100+ AVAILABLE POSITIONS

apply now at
careers.choctawnation.com

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma CHOCTAWNATION.COM

ICW office works to keep Choctaw families together

By Kellie Matherly

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) has been in place for over four decades now, but the number of Native children removed from their families remains an astonishing statistic. One-third of all Native American children are removed from their homes. The Choctaw Nation is actively working to reduce that number through the efforts of its Indian Child Welfare Office.

ICWA's roots lie in the late 1960s with research performed by Bertram Hirsch of the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA). Initially, Hirsch was assigned to a child welfare case in South Dakota on behalf of the Spirit Lake Tribe, but he quickly found that government child welfare workers were forcibly removing children from their families and placing them in non-Native homes, sometimes out of state, at an alarming rate. Hirsch's research, which had gone national by 1969, found that somewhere between 25% and 30% of all Native children had been placed in adoptive homes, foster homes or institutions. Of those children, 90% were placed in non-Native environments.

In many cases, children were removed from their families without due process and without prior notification of the family. Agents of the U.S. government simply appeared and took the children. Parents were often told the removal was in the best interest of the child and that their children would eventually be returned to them. Frequently, however, children who were removed from their families were never returned.

Between 1974 and 1978, Congress gathered hundreds of hours of testimony on the government's treatment of Native American communities. One task force report stated, "The removal of Indian children from their natural homes and tribal setting has been and continues to be a national crisis."

In 1978, Calvin Isaac, Chief of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, said of the removal of Native children, "Culturally, the chances of Indian survival are significantly reduced if our children, the only real means for the transmission of the tribal heritage, are to be raised in non-Indian homes and denied exposure to the ways of the People."

ICWA was passed at the last minute, just before the close of the 95th Congress on October 24, 1978.

The original intent of the law was to "address the policies and practices that resulted in the wholesale separation of Indian children from their families." In addition, Congress acknowledged that "cultural ignorance and biases within the child welfare system" were significant contributors to the issue. Finally, Congress recognized that it is in the best interest of children to maintain tribal connections and that children are crucial to the continued existence of the tribes.

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) advocates for full compliance with the law. According to NICWA's website, the organization believes, "ICWA provides high standards and requires accountability in today's complex and highly fractured child welfare system."

Despite the good intentions of ICWA, compliance has been inconsistent at best among the states, and even within states in some circumstances. The federal government has not collected any data over the life of the law that would show its national impact. Some states with more tribal communities have implemented ICWA elements to their adoption and foster care tracking systems, but there is currently no way to ensure consistency across those states.

According to NICWA, a 2015 study by Casey Family Programs found that American Indian/Alaska Native children were still being placed in foster care at twice the rate of their non-Native peers, but this can be explained by the inconsistent interpretation

of ICWA's provisions across the states in the absence of any federal oversight.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma established its Indian Child Welfare Program as part of the Choctaw Children and Family Services Department in the early 1980s to advocate for Choctaws in the 10½ counties as well as for Choctaws nationwide. The ICW program's main purpose is to "ensure safe and healthy homes for Choctaw children removed from their homes."

Hayley Carroll, an Indian Child Welfare Supervisor at the Choctaw Nation, says, "It is imperative [Choctaw children] are placed with a family that can help them maintain their sense of identity."

Carroll has been with the Choctaw Nation almost six years, and she has seen firsthand how important it is to have a deeper understanding of the role culture plays in her work. For her, breaking destructive patterns of behavior in families is a top priority.

"I have become significantly familiar with generational trauma and the fact that Native Americans tend to have higher ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) scores. I feel it is crucial to assist families in breaking cycles—suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse. These cycles can all be broken, but sometimes, extra help is needed," says Carroll.

ICWA requires the States to notify the appropriate tribe when an Indian family is involved in a removal. At that point, the Tribe can step in as an advocate. Carroll says the ICW office and the State generally work together to do what is best for the children and families, "though we don't always agree."

The Choctaw Nation's ICW office has intervened in hundreds of cases. There are 777 Choctaw children in State custody throughout the United States. That includes 153 children in the 10½ counties of the Choctaw Nation, 262 in Oklahoma

outside the Choctaw Nation, and 362 out of state. Those cases are handled by 16 social workers at the Nation.

Once the Choctaw Nation intervenes in a case, social workers from the ICW office visit with the child or children, attend team meetings, prepare court reports and attend court.

If a child or children must be removed from the home, ICWA allows social workers to use the following criteria for finding appropriate foster placements for the children:

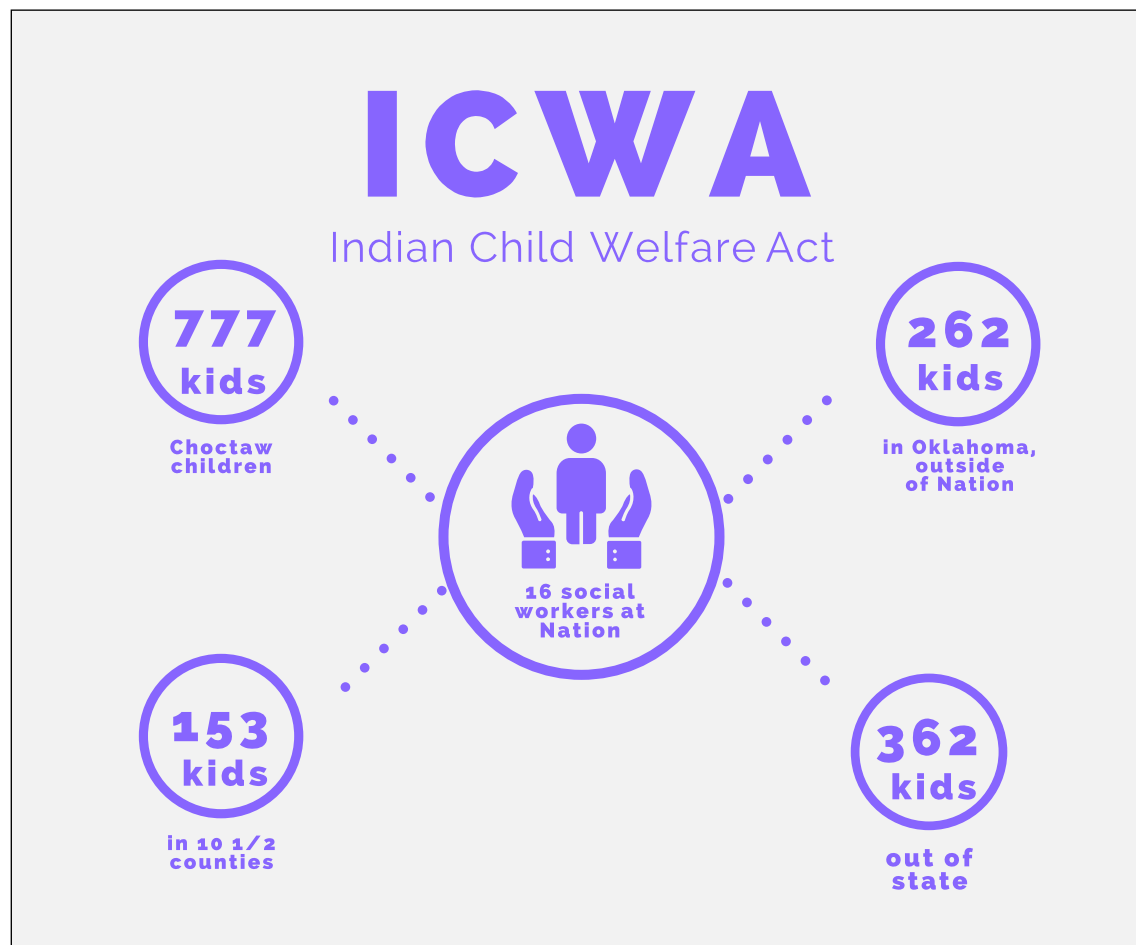
- A safe and appropriate biological parent
- A member of the child's extended family
- A foster home licensed by the Choctaw Nation
- A foster home licensed by another Indian tribe
- An Indian foster home licensed or approved by a non-Indian licensing authority.

Adoptive placements follow similar guidelines:

- A safe and appropriate biological parent
- A member of the child's extended family
- Other members of the child's tribe
- Members of another tribe.

According to Carroll, the Choctaw Nation currently has 60 tribal foster homes, but that is not nearly enough. "Given the number of Choctaw children in custody, we are in desperate need of more homes," she said.

The Choctaw Nation operates ICW offices in Durant, Antlers, Hugo, Talihina, Atoka, McAlester, Crowder, Idabel, Ardmore and Oklahoma City. If you are interested in becoming a Choctaw Nation Foster Home, please contact 800-522-6170.



Integrated Services

Continued from 9

Similar to today, the reunion featured a pageant, stickball games, and speeches on Choctaw history. The reunion ended with a barbeque and picnic on council grounds. By gathering all Choctaws together, the reunion became a way for the principal chief to get input from all citizens to plan the future of the Nation.

Today Choctaws carry on this reunion and its tradition of communication at our Labor Day Festival. Every Labor Day, Choctaws gather at Tvshka Homma and spend the weekend taking part in Choctaw culture and history with one another, and Chief delivers his State of the Nation address. While the Green Corn Ceremony among Oklahoma Choctaws has become limited to certain communities, the time of year is still important for us as a people. While Choctaw government does not manage the Green Corn Ceremony officially, Choctaws use the end of the harvest season to gather together and share information about the past year, our history and our ways of life. As Integrated Services' Executive Director of Communications Dara McCoy reminds us, "We have to understand our sovereignty can always be under attack." This shows us the importance of educating people about Choctaw Nation and our ways of life.

Whether through billboard campaigns along highways or articles in the Biskinik, Communications is part of the Integrated Services team that educates Choctaws and the wider public about who we are as a people, so we can better assert our sovereignty as a nation.

During our current Labor Day Festival, with the support of the Division of Integrated Services to make sure the weekend is publicized and runs smoothly, the Choctaw Nation carries on the social spirit of the Green Corn Ceremony by bringing our Choctaw family all together, so we can work collectively to chart our path forward. If Choctaws did not come together as we have done for centuries, we would not be where we are today. All parts of the Choctaw Nation contribute to our mission of ensuring that our ways of life not only survive but more importantly, thrive.

In the upcoming articles, we will reflect more on the ways the Divisions of Choctaw Nation's Executive Branch carry on ancient and important functions to the benefit of our community today. For more information, please contact Megan Baker at 580-924-8280 ext. 2377 or meganb@choctawnation.com. To read more on the Green Corn Ceremony or other past issues of Iti Fabvssa, visit <http://choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

Storm season is upon us! Have you had your storm shelter installed?

The Storm Shelter Program began in 2012, and to date, 5,698 storm shelters have been installed in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri. Tribal members over the age of 45 in these states are eligible to receive a \$2500 voucher for an in-ground storm shelter with the documentation they own their home, regardless of income. Those with ambulatory disabilities may receive a voucher for \$4,200 for the purchase of an above-ground shelter. All expenses over the voucher amount will be charged to the tribal member.

Tribal members under the age of 45 who own their home in one of the five states listed above are eligible for a \$1,250 voucher.

Contact our housing office for an application and return it with proof of your tribal membership and a copy of the deed to your home (the tribal member's name must be on the deed). If all eligibility requirements are met, you will receive your voucher. Simply pick the contractor of your choice and once they have installed the shelter to your satisfaction, present them with the voucher. The contractor will then submit the voucher to Housing for payment.

You may obtain an application by visiting the Choctaw Nation website at www.choctawnation.com or by giving us a call at (580) 326-7521 to have one sent to you.

TEAL TUESDAYS
FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS WEAR TEAL EACH TUESDAY IN APRIL

Choctaw Nation Member Services

FATHERHOOD
GUIDING ADOLESCENT PARENTS

403 CHAHTA CIRCLE, HUGO OK 74743
580-326-8304 EXT 6057

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority

Stay Connected
CHOCTAWNATION.COM



Jason Thomas given second chance at life

By Shelia Kirven

Jason Thomas knows firsthand how it feels to have to start over completely. He knows the feeling of making mistakes and then having to pay for them; and he knows the feeling of having nowhere to turn except to his family and tribe.

Originally from Tyler, Texas, Thomas has worked for the Choctaw Nation Recycling Center for the past five years and is now a supervisor at the facility. He credits God, his family and the Choctaw Nation for getting him to where he is today. But the road getting there was not easy.

Thomas grew up in a violent home, which influenced his behavior later on. As a child, he spent time during the summer with his grandparents and went with them to their country church. "We grew up in that church, and that's where it started for me. After leaving my grandparents' house and going back home, there was a little church that was across the street from my house that me and my sisters would go to, and the bad thing about it was, when we were going to church, we were praying for the beatings to stop. We were praying for our lives to not be like that anymore. We weren't praying for other people. We were praying because we were scared."

When he was older, Thomas ran with gangs, stole his mother's car for joy riding, and got into a lot of fights at school. "I just had this mentality that I was going to do what I wanted."

He was 15 when he went to live full-time with his grandparents in Denison, Texas. When he decided to drop out of school, his grandmother signed him up for GED classes, which he completed.

Thomas credits his grandfather with encouraging him to have a good work ethic and teaching him to work hard. He stayed with his grandparents for another two years, and then decided to go back to Tyler, which Thomas admits was a mistake. "That's when I started going in and out of jail...tickets, credit card abuse, things like that."

He soon found himself incarcerated. "Prior to jail I was working on myself, my path with God. God was a big deal with me," he stated. "But I wound up backsliding, basically going back to my ways and doing what I wanted." After release from jail, Thomas said he broke probation and ran for three years. "I literally sat in a house being worried about when they were going to be coming to pick me up." That day soon came, and he paid for violating his probation. Though he faced the possibility of a five-year sentence, he was able to finish out his probation, wearing an ankle monitor for six months instead. During that time, Thomas said he sought God more and desired to do what was expected of him.

Thomas tried to find work while he was on the run, but getting a job with an active warrant is not easy. Having talked to Choctaw Nation previously about a job, he turned to his tribe once again when he was about to get the ankle monitor off. A recruiter was able to give him two options, one being an opportunity at the Recycling Center.

Thomas said of his job interview, "I told them flat out what I was on probation for, what I had been arrested for, basically my entire life and what happened. After the interview, I just kept telling God if this is what You want, every day I will be here for You. This isn't for me. This is for You. I ended up getting a phone call about 30 minutes after I left." Thomas started as a sorter, but within two months, he was able to get a position as a driver. Over the next three years, he worked his way up to lead driver and finally to coordinator for the center.

"Jason Lilley, the manager, has been a big deal for where I'm at," Thomas said. "He and Tracy Horst believed in me in the beginning, and he has never stopped from day one."

When asked how it feels to work for the Recycling Center, he stated, "I enjoy the shop thoroughly. I get to deal with customers on a daily basis. I get to deal with my team out there who are doing their jobs as well. I'm humbled to be where I'm at. I'm not prideful. I'm not thinking I'm better than anybody else. I came from the bottom of the bottom. And God provided a way for me to open up doors and put me on that straight path of where I'm at today."

Thomas also gives his wife a great deal of credit for her support during the early years. "I was lucky to have my wife to stand by my side when I was in jail. I had that family aspect to come home to. But a lot of others don't have that," Thomas began. "They depend on themselves when they get out and don't have the skills they need." He went on to say, "A lot of them are used to that lifestyle and there's no way to break that habit unless they're ready to."

When Thomas talks about his job, he is very grateful. "My success is due to my faith, my family and my culture. Those three things are a big thing for Choctaws, but they've been a huge thing for me since day one. If I didn't have any of that, I wouldn't be where I'm at."

Today, Thomas supervises a staff of eleven and even leads a weekly prayer service for the center's staff at their request. "I'm grateful that the Choctaw Nation believes the way they believe and that they allow us to be very verbal about our faith, about our family, and obvi-



Photo by Shelia Kirven


Jason Thomas works with the cardboard baling machine at the Recycling Center in Durant. Thomas has turned his life around using core values of faith, family and culture.

ously about our culture."

Thomas, through his work at the recycling center, has been able to advocate for the Choctaw Nation Reintegration program. Kevin Hamill, director of the program said, "He is a huge supporter of giving people second chances, and that's a direct benefit and support to the Reintegration program." Hamill went on to say of the Recycling Center, "They were one of the first departments within Choctaw Nation to partner and advocate for hires in cooperation with Reintegration."

When asked what he would tell a young Jason Thomas today, he said, "Obviously, stay in school and graduate. A GED is a good thing to have because it's equivalent, but a high school diploma is where it's at. It gets better. Don't give up on yourself as much as you do."

To young people including his own children, he would say, "The biggest deal is never downgrade yourself. If you are going to put yourself in a box where 'I'm not good enough, I'm not worthy enough', you're going to stay in that box. I was in that box for my entire life until several years ago when God showed me that there's better for me, that I'm better than I'm giving myself credit for." He went on to advise, "It's up to you. You are your own worst enemy, and it is true, many people are their own worst enemy, and I was one of them. Don't let your past decide your future. Don't ever let your past drag you down and say you can't do something, because I was there. I was at the bottom, and I dragged myself out of it and I'm able to be where I'm at today."



Location	Days	Hours
Antlers 580-298-3161	1st & 2nd Tue. Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Atoka 580-889-5825	Mon., Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tue. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Tue. & Thur. (except for Battiest & Smithville days)	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Durant 580-920-2100 x-83582	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Hugo 580-326-9707	Daily Mon. - Fri	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Idabel 580-286-2600 x-41113	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thur. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Stigler 918-867-4211	Mon. & Tue.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Talihina 918-567-7000 x-6792	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Wilburton 918-465-5641	Mon. 7 Fri.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Mobile Clinic	Tues., Wed., & Thurs.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Building Healthy Families Through Good Nutrition

Artists

Continued from 9

She also witnessed an exchange between two of the artists who paired up together for an upcoming event. One of the artists didn't have funds to travel to the event or pay for the registration fee, so the other artist offered to take him under his wing, cover the cost for him to be able to attend and provide him the transportation to get there.

Artists in the communities teach the culture to old and young alike out of the love of their hearts and the need to keep tribal culture and traditions alive. Carole Ayers has volunteered with the Choctaw Head Start Program for several years. She has painted traditional scenes on the walls of Head Start facilities and regularly puts on puppet shows for the children, teaching them the Choctaw language.


Dr. Celia Stall-Meadows, manager of the Choctaw Nation Tribal Research Department in Information Technology, and former professor of textiles and apparel, recently taught a free textiles workshop in Durant entitled Preserving Heirloom Quilts and Textiles. Jennifer Byram, Historic Preservation Research Associate, joined in to create and present the intense one-day learning experience. Class members joined together for a hands-on opportunity to learn about preservation of historic textiles, fabric structures and basic weaves, through means such as burn tests and textile magnification.

An upcoming mentorship and cultural project in the Sardis, Oklahoma area will begin soon thanks to a BIA Tribal Youth Initiative (TYI) Grant received by the Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Services Department. The grant, received by the Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Services Department, will be used to create an environmental education trail, with murals painted together by Choctaw artists and youth.

If you would like more information on the Choctaw Artist Registry or upcoming artist/cultural events, go to <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/artist-registry> or call 800-522-6170, ext. 2346. To purchase Choctaw artist products, visit www.choctawstore.com.

The Display Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 states, "It is illegal to offer for sale, or sell any act or craft product in a manner that falsely suggests it is Indian produced, an Indian product, or the product of a particular Indian or Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization, resident within the United States." Also, "Under the Act, an Indian is defined as a member of any federally or officially State recognized tribe of the United States, or an individual certified as an Indian artisan by an Indian tribe." <https://www.doi.gov/iacb/act>

Choctaw Nation WIC & Connecting Kids With Coverage are Coming to a Location Near You



Enjoy Full WIC Services and See If Your Child Qualifies for SoonerCare

Mobile Unit Schedule

Van travel has been postponed for April. If you need assistance, please call 580-380-3628 or 580-380-9895 ext. 83582

For More Information Call (580) 380-3628

Free backpack with every approved Connecting Kids to Coverage application.

Egg Breakfast Cups

- **Cooking Spray** optional
- **6 Corn Tortillas, quartered, warmed**
- **1 c Black beans, drained and rinsed**
- **1 c Onion, diced**
- **¼ c Hot sauce,**
- **12 Eggs**
- **¾ c Cheddar cheese, shredded, reduced fat**
- **¾ c Fresh Salsa**
- **1 Avocado, cubed, optional**

Preparation

1. **PREHEAT** oven to 375°F. **SPRAY** a 12-cup muffin tin with nonstick spray and **SET** aside.
2. **PLACE 2** corn tortilla triangles in each muffin tin. Triangle points should overlap and point towards the middle, forming a "cup".
3. **PLACE 1 T** of beans, 1 T onion and 1 t hot sauce in each taco cup.
4. **CRACK 1** egg into each tortilla cup.
5. **BAKE** for 20 minutes or until egg is cooked to 160°F.
6. **REMOVE** from oven. **TOP** each cup with 1 T of cheese and **PLACE** back in the oven to melt cheese.
7. **REMOVE** from the oven and **TOP** with salsa and avocado, if desired.

getfreshcooking.com/recipes/breakfast-foods/egg-cellent-breakfast-cups



Where to Hike in Choctaw Country

Take a stroll through Broken Bow, Robbers Cave, and more.

CHOCTAWCOUNTRY.COM

Census undercounts equal big losses for Choctaw Nation

By Bradley Gernand

A bigger picture is emerging of the financial damages incurred by southeastern Oklahoma as a result of its undercount in the 2010 Census—and the numbers are troubling. According to Chief Gary Batton, however, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

At the request of the Choctaw Nation, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce generated data showing the amounts of federal and state funding each of the tribe's 10½ counties lost over the past ten years. A direct link exists between the number of residents filling out and returning their census forms and the amount of federal and state dollars, which then flow to their communities and to the Choctaw Nation.

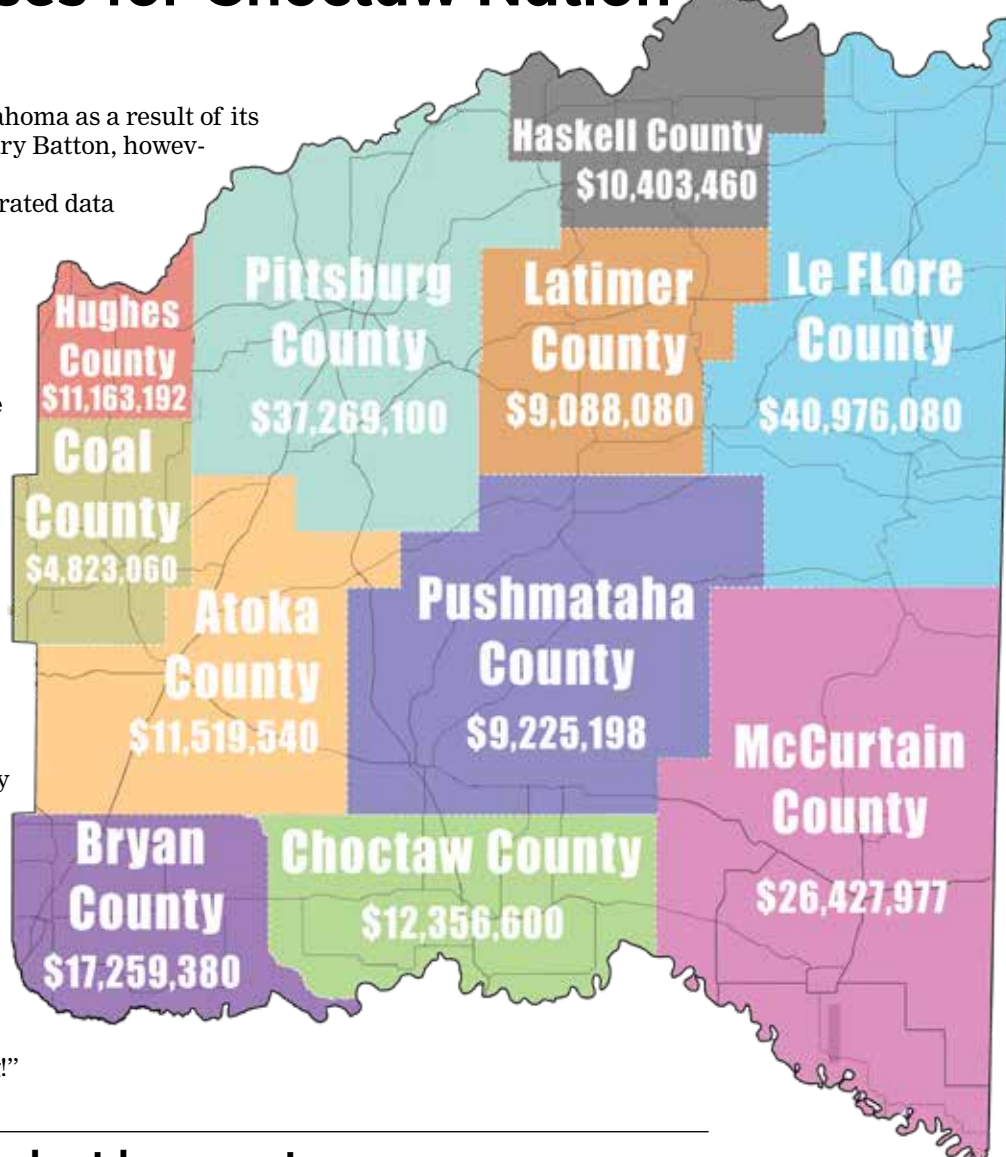
Because each of the 10½ counties experienced undercounts in the 2010 Census, they all lost prospective federal dollars. This money could have been used for repairing potholes in streets and buying equipment for law enforcement. The money could also have been used for education or health care. Each county is thought to have experienced at least a two percent undercount, with some counties likely higher.

Oklahoma's urban counties also experienced undercounts, but these were generally less severe. Metropolitan Oklahoma City, in which at least 25,000 Choctaw tribal members live, and Tulsa, in which at least 7,000 tribal members live, also lost federal dollars and are working to make the 2020 Census more of a success. The missing money has impacted educational efforts and infrastructure in each city.

Choctaw tribal members live in all 50 states. Choctaws across the United States are strongly encouraged to fill out the census and indicate their tribal affiliation as "Choctaw Nation." This will enable the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to bring in money which is used to assist during emergency situations—such as during the wildfires in California, the hurricanes in the southeastern United States, and elsewhere—as well as for educational purposes. In some cases, this relief is via funds provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which uses the census tallies of Choctaws living in each state to determine the amount of aid given.

Every household was provided with 2020 Census forms in late March. Have you received your form? Please fill it out, and on question #9, indicate your tribal affiliation by writing in the words, "Choctaw Nation." Did you not receive your form? Contact the tribe's customer care department at 800-522-6170 or at help@choctawnation.com.

Chief Gary Batton, in a recent quarterly letter to tribal members, urged everyone to fill out the census. "This represents a major opportunity for us, so you need to let your ancestors' voices be heard," he said. "This will ensure you are counted as a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and let everyone know that we are 200,000 Chahta strong!"



Census dollars lost by county

- Atoka County** had 14,182 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 289 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$1,151,954 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$11,519,540 over ten years.
- Bryan County** had 42,416 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 866 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$3,451,876 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$34,518,760 over ten years.
- Choctaw County** had 15,205 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 310 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$1,235,660 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$12,356,600 over ten years.
- Coal County** had 5,925 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 121 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$482,306 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$4,823,060 over ten years.
- Haskell County** had 12,769 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 261 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$1,040,346 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$10,403,460 over ten years.
- Hughes County** was created at statehood from portions of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Choctaw Nation. Its county seat, Holdenville, is located in the Muscogee Nation. Approximately 600 Choctaw tribal members live in southern Hughes County, which constitutes roughly one-third of the county's total land area. The county is thought to have lost an estimated \$11,163,192 in federal funding over ten years, factored across the entire county.
- Latimer County** had 11,154 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 228 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$908,808 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$9,088,080 over ten years.
- Le Flore County** had 50,384 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 1,028 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$4,097,608 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$40,976,080 over ten years.
- McCurtain County** had 33,151 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 663 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$2,642,798 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$26,427,977 over ten years.
- Pittsburg County** had 45,837 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 935 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$3,726,910 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$37,269,100 over ten years.
- Pushmataha County** had 11,572 people in 2010 Census. A 2% undercount means 231 people would have been undercounted from 2010. Using present federal funding of \$3,986/resident, that is \$922,520 in potentially lost federal funding per year or an estimated \$9,225,198 over ten years.

CENSUS 2020

#CHOCTAWSCOUNT



HOW TO RESPOND

For information on phone and mail options VISIT: CHOCTAWNATION.COM/2020CENSUS YOU CAN ALSO RESPOND AT CENSUS.GOV

HOW TO FILL OUT TRIBAL AFFILIATE FORM SECTION

What is this person's race? Mark one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.

American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name or enroller or principal tribe.

C|H|O|C|T|A|W | N|A|T|I|O|N

WHEN TO COMPLETE THE CENSUS: APRIL 1, 2020 — JULY 24, 2020

Federal law protects your census responses. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics.



CHOCTAW HUNTING & FISHING LICENSE

APPLY TODAY TO RECEIVE YOUR 2020 OKLAHOMA HUNTING & FISHING LICENSE

HOW TO APPLY:

- Auto renewal for 2020 at gooutdoorsoklahoma.com (download app and website license)
- To apply for a new license go to chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

April 2020

In This Issue

- Faith Family Culture
- Council Corner
- Notes to the Nation
- People You Know
- Obituaries
- Iti Fabvssa
- ICWA
- Health



Page 1:

Blood donations straight from the heart.



Page 3:

Wellness centers show Nations commitment to health.

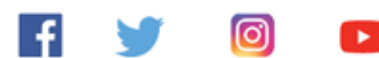


Page 9:

Art and history continues through mentors.

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

Stay Connected to the Nation CHOCTAWNATION.COM



CHANGING SERVICE REQUESTED PRESORT STD AUTO U.S. POSTAGE PAID CHOCTAW NATION

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

P.O. Box 1210 Durant OK 74702-1210 BISKINIK