





**Tribal Contact:**

Misty Brescia Dreifuss  
(601) 650-1613

Email: [misty.dreifuss@choctaw.org](mailto:misty.dreifuss@choctaw.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tribe Receives Language Grants**

CHOCTAW, Miss. – (September 22, 2016) – The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians announces its receipt of two highly beneficial Federal grant awards to preserve and promote the use of the Tribe’s native Choctaw language in the Tribal School System and in the Choctaw communities.

The Tribe has received a total of \$2.4M through two Federal grant awards to expand its operation of the Choctaw Language Program in the Tribal Schools for the next five years. The funding agencies are the U.S. Department of Education and the Administration for Native Americans in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The “Carry the Language Forward” program, called “*Annopa Tikbishtiya*” in the Choctaw language, supports the teaching, learning, and studying of the Choctaw language, while increasing English language proficiency of Choctaw children. The Tribe will work to help reduce language barriers in Mississippi Choctaw households by increasing opportunities for children to learn and acquire the Choctaw language, while also providing opportunities for families to develop strategies and activities for overcoming Choctaw and English language barriers. The program will serve almost 800 young Choctaw students in its first year, with Choctaw language being taught in all six of the Choctaw Tribal elementary schools’ early grade levels. The program will also help to develop home- and community-based language advocacy strategies and Choctaw language-learning resources.

The Tribe’s increased capacity through these two new Federal grants will enable the Tribal Schools to hire more certified Choctaw language instructors, further develop the Choctaw language curriculum, and strengthen training and evaluation efforts. The Choctaw Language and Cultural Integration Program (CLCIP), under the Department of Schools, has been working in partnership with the Department of Chahta Immi’s Choctaw Tribal Language Program for the past three years. Currently, the first group is going through training sessions for the new Choctaw Language Classrooms at Bogue Chitto Elementary, Conehatta Elementary, and Red Water Elementary school. The next group will start as soon as classrooms are completed in Standing Pine, Tucker, and Pearl River Elementary. The two grants will, for the first time, provide six Choctaw language classrooms for Pre-K through 3rd grade to receive instruction daily. Roseanna Thompson serves as the director of both grant projects and will oversee the projects during the 3/5 year cycle of the grants. Some of the staff that will be instrumental in these projects are DeLaura Saunders, Tribal Language Director/Community Program; Jason Lewis, Training and Evaluation Coordinator; Abrianna Tubby, Curriculum Coordinator; Pam Smith, Accreditation Specialist; and Choctaw Language teachers Penny Isaac, Pandora Sockey, Renata Morris, and Darlene Vaughn.

Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson, who speaks Choctaw fluently, said, “These two new Federal grant awards that our tribe has received from the U.S. Department of Education and the Administration for Native Americans provide very necessary and important fiscal and human resources to support instruction of our native Choctaw language in our six elementary Tribal schools Reservation-wide. As we see a large number of Native American languages of other tribes being lost as English becomes predominant in their communities, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is determined to keep our native language alive and widely spoken for generations to come. Native American languages, including Choctaw, are a national treasure that we must preserve and protect.”

###

*The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, under the leadership of Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson, has an enrolled membership of more than 10,000 people and is the only federally recognized tribe in the State of Mississippi. Headquartered in Choctaw, Miss., the Tribe has emerged as a leader in economic development. The tribe provides a range of governmental services including schools, a hospital, medical clinics, police and fire protection, courts, and a center for the elderly, among many others. Phyliss J. Anderson serves as the first female Chief in Mississippi Choctaw history.*