



CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

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CHOCTAW, MISSISSIPPI 39350

JANUARY 2026



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◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ TRIBAL PUBLICATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Tangle wins CTS Spelling Bee

Grayson Tangle, sixth grader from Standing Pine Elementary School (SPES), claimed the title of Spelling Bee Champion during the 32nd Annual Choctaw Tribal Schools' District-Wide Spelling Bee on Friday, January 16, 2026. This year's competition was held at the Pearl River Elementary School Gymnasium.

Placing second was SPES sixth grader Cerulean Lewis. Dawson Tubby, seventh grader at Choctaw Central Middle School (CCMS), placed third. A total of 21 students participated in this year's competition as the top three spelling bee winners represented their respective school. Participants included:

Bogue Chitto Elementary School (BCES) - Rocco Sam, seventh grade; Elgin Amos, eighth grade; Kelsey Bell, eighth grade.

CCMS - Kady Hickman, seventh grade; Dawson Tubby, seventh grade (third overall); Kaceytn Williams, eighth grade.

Conehatta Elementary School (CES) - Kinsley King, eighth grade; Deanaly Chickaway, fifth grade; Shyne Chickaway, seventh grade.

Pearl River Elementary School (PRES) - Neyalih Dixon, sixth grade; Padmae Billie, fifth grade; Aceton Willis, fourth grade.

see SPELLING BEE, pg. 10



Pictured are, from left to right, second place finisher Cerulean Lewis, CTS Spelling Bee Champion Grayson Tangle, 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, & third place finisher Dawson Tubby.

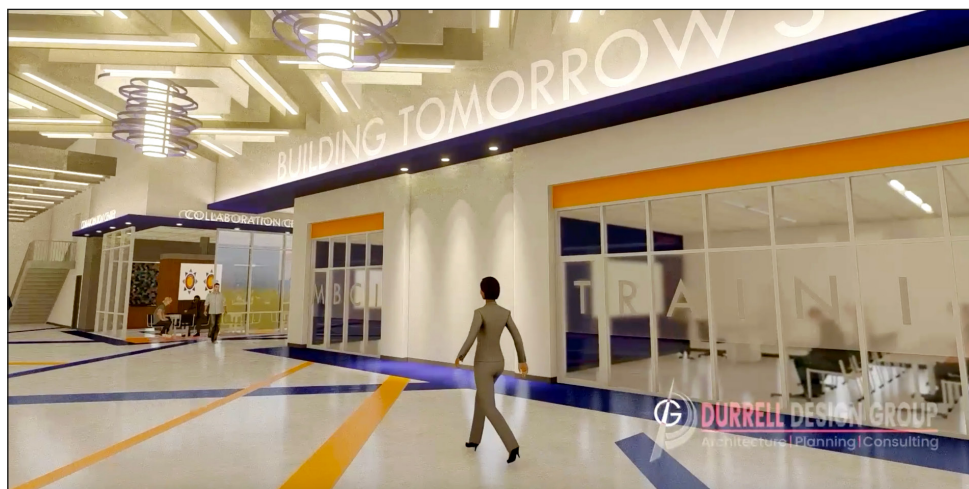
Tribe begins construction on Workforce Training Center

CHOCTAW, Miss. – The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has begun construction of a new Workforce Training Center that will include more than 37,000 square feet of space for vocational and technical job training. The Center is expected to open in December of 2026.

Center was provided by a \$5.8 million grant by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The Center will include spaces for classrooms, computer labs, flex labs, offices, an exhibit hall, a small business incubator, and a maker space.

Funding for the Workforce Training

see WORKFORCE, pg. 9



An artist rendering of the interior of a section of the Workforce Training Center. The facility is expected to open in December of 2026.



THE LAST RUN



Halito!
 We are just days into the new year, and we have already been busy. We are nearing completion on some of our construction projects, and we plan to break ground on some others. We weathered a couple of rounds of freezing temperatures, and I am deeply grateful to our Choctaw Emergency Management team for advocating proactive preparedness and ensuring our Tribal Members stayed well informed throughout the days of wintry weather.
 I was also proud to have the

opportunity to salute more of our high school seniors as they were recognized in various sports. We wish each and every senior the best as they finalize their post-secondary plans. I look forward to seeing these outstanding students and athletes graduate in a few months.
 To our Choctaw athletes preparing for post-season play, congratulations to each of you on a job well done and we wish you good luck as you make your run for the state championships. Our Tribe is proud of you, and we want you to know we are always behind you all the way!
 We also are proud of our students' outstanding academic and extracurricular achievements. Congratulations to the winners of our Choctaw Tribal Schools District Spelling Bee,



Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben officially signed a proclamation on Monday, February 2, 2026, declaring February as "Give Kids A Smile" Month on Choctaw Tribal lands. Joining the signing were members of the CHC Dental Department, CHC Director Mary Harrison, several young Tribal members who are dental patients, & 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez.

FIRST LEGO Robotics Tournament, and Upper Elementary District Science Fair. It is so wonderful to see our students excelling in and beyond the classroom. Keep up the good work and make a great future for yourselves!
 More information about our students' successes is included in this edition of the *Community News*.
 I recently signed a proclamation declaring February as "Give Kids A Smile" Month on Choctaw Tribal lands. Joining me at the signing were mem-

bers of the CHC Dental Department, CHC Director Mary Harrison, several young Tribal members who are dental patients, and our Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez.
 Launched nationally in 2003, "Give Kids A Smile" provides free dental care to children through the dedication of dentists and dental teams committed to improving oral health. This initiative emphasizes preventive care, education, and

continued next page

CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

The Choctaw Community News is available at no charge upon request. Donations to help cover the cost of printing, mailing are welcomed. Correspondence should be addressed to:

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Items of interest to the local & Native American community are welcomed. Letters to the editor should be signed; we reserve the right to edit material.



Participates in Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade
The annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade was held in downtown Philadelphia, Miss., on Saturday, January 17, 2026. The theme of the parade was "Moving Forward Together". Various organizations, band, & representatives participated in the parade, including our very own 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess, Miss Lexi Camille Rodriguez. The parade was an excellent tribute to Dr. King's legacy, & we thank the parade committee for their dedication & efforts!

treatment while raising awareness about the lifelong importance of good oral hygiene.

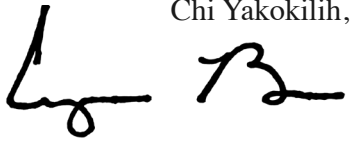
I encourage parents/guardians to schedule a visit for their children at the CHC Dental Clinic. From February 2–27, 2026, free diagnostic and preventative dental services are available for established CHC patients ages 0–17 through the Give Kids A Smile program. Call (601) 389-4030 to schedule a dental visit.

Although it is only a few weeks into the new year, I know it won't be long before we are gathering together at spring festivals, graduation ceremonies, and the Choctaw Indian Fair. Along the way, we will celebrate new beginnings, such as groundbreaking for new projects and the ribbon cutting of the new Choctaw Central campus. I look forward to standing side by side with you and witnessing these great milestones happening on our Tribal lands.

There are many challenges we are facing in our country and around the world. But I prom-

ise you, as Tribal Chief, I will make every effort to ensure the well-being of our people and employees and work tirelessly to build an even better future

for our younger generations. I appreciate all that you do for our great Tribe, and I pray for peace and prosperity for all of us in 2026.

Chi Yakokilih,

Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief

Princess attends commemoration

On January 8, 2026, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve hosted the 211th Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans at Chalmette Battlefield. The ceremony honored those who fought & sacrificed in the historic 1815 battle, along with the supporters of the troops before, during, & after the conflict. The commemoration also recognized the original peoples of this land & the free & enslaved African Americans who played vital roles in the battle, as well as the National Park Service partners who have helped preserve this history for generations. Chalmette Battlefield, located just east of New Orleans, is land that was home to many different Native American tribes long before the Battle of New Orleans & is also the site of Chalmette National Cemetery, the final resting place for more than 16,000 service members from the War of 1812 through the Vietnam War. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians was represented by 2025–2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, who attended the commemoration on behalf of Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.



Check presentation made to Choctaw Tribal Schools

The Citizens Bank of Philadelphia presented a check in the amount of \$3,543.70 to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians & Choctaw Tribal Schools on Friday, January 23, 2026. The presentation took place at the Department of Schools' main office. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, along with several Choctaw Central High School seniors, accepted the check on behalf of the Choctaw Tribal Schools from Mark Taylor, Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, & Jackie Hester, Vice President & Marketing Officer of The Citizens Bank. Also in attendance were the 2025–2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Director of Schools Delnita Jones, & Choctaw Central High School Principal Alaric Keams. During the presentation, Chief Ben encouraged the students to open a bank account & highlighted an incentive offered by The Citizens Bank. Students who bring in their report cards will receive one entry into a drawing for each "A" earned, for a chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship, with the winner to be announced in June 2026. The funds are donated by the bank at no cost to customers as part of its commitment to investing in students' education. The more purchases made through the program, the more funds are generated to support Choctaw Tribal Schools.



Know your rights if you are approached by ICE



NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE, REMEMBER:

- You have the right to remain silent.
- Do not lie to ICE.
- Do not physically resist or obstruct.
- Carry your Tribal or state issued ID.
 - » *Tip: Some state-issued IDs are not*

enough to prove you are a U.S. Citizen. Keep reading for what to know about IDs if you are being detained.

AT YOUR HOME:

- Do not open the door. ICE cannot enter your home without a valid judicial war-

rant. Most ICE warrants are administrative and do not allow ICE to enter your home without permission.

» *A valid judicial warrant: 1. Names a person in your residence and/or what specific areas are to be searched at your residence and 2. Is signed by a judge (not an immigration judge).*

» *An administrative warrant is signed by an ICE officer.*

» *(If you need help determining what is a valid judicial warrant you can review this resource: <https://www.nilc.org/resources/know-your-rights-warrants/>)*

- Ask ICE to slide the warrant under the door. Do not open the door to retrieve the warrant.

- If an ICE agent enters your home without your permission or a valid judicial warrant, do not physically resist as that could subject you to potential criminal charges.

- Say: "I do not consent to a search."

- Say: "I am exercising my right to remain silent." Do not lie to ICE.

- Record the interaction if it is safe to do so or ask someone else to record it. If you record, do not obstruct the ICE operation.

IF YOU ARE APPROACHED BY ICE IN YOUR CAR:

- There are many reports of ICE stopping cars or ICE approaching people in their cars.

- Things to keep in mind: 1. You have the right to remain silent, 2. Never lie to an ICE agent, 3. You can ask if you are being detained, if not, ask if you are free to go. If you are free to go, calmly drive away.

- ICE agents sometimes stop cars or approach cars based on a person's perceived ethnicity.

- In many states, you must pull over if you are stopped by any type of law enforcement officer, even if you do not think you did anything wrong.

- Because ICE agents sometimes use unmarked cars or wear plain clothes or clothes that say "POLICE," you may not know they are ICE when they approach you.

- You can ask the individual who they are & for their identification.

- You are only required to roll down your window if an officer asks you to. If you are asked to, roll down your window to allow



OFFICE OF THE TRIBAL CHIEF CYRUS BEN

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Halito, Tribal Members:

I am writing to you regarding concerns that some individuals have raised about possible recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity in Mississippi that may be occurring near Tribal lands.

Many of you may have seen reports in the news or on social media postings from other areas of the country that other Tribe's members are being approached, questioned, and possibly even detained by ICE based on what appears to be racial profiling techniques. While some of these reports have been determined to be factual and others false, I understand that MBCI members may be concerned about ICE agents being in Mississippi.

I want to assure you that the Tribe has not heard of any incidents involving ICE and MBCI members, and we are not aware of ICE entering Tribal lands. Please notify my office if you are aware of any incidents involving ICE and MBCI citizens, so that we may assist in gathering documentation and proof of citizenship on behalf of MBCI members for delivery to the appropriate ICE officials.

I encourage you to carry your Tribal identification or a valid form of ID at all times to help avoid unnecessary complications. Be informed and prepared; know your rights, but do not panic or feel unnecessary worry about this. I am including a fact sheet from a nonprofit organization serving Native Americans, so you have more information on hand.

As a general principle, ICE or other federal law enforcement agencies have the authority to enter open Tribal lands to enforce federal immigration laws; they cannot enter private areas, such as your home or non-public workspaces, without a valid judicial warrant. If a Tribal member encounters ICE agents, I encourage you to remain peaceful if approached or questioned.

If you encounter ICE agents and believe your rights have been violated, contact the MBCI Office of the Attorney General for assistance.

Please know that Tribal leadership remains committed to protecting the rights, safety, and sovereignty of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and its members.

Yakoki,

Cyrus Ben
 Tribal Chief

*This statement is for general information purposes and does not constitute individual legal advice.

for clear communication.

- Be aware that there are many instances of ICE agents opening car doors or breaking windows.

- If an ICE agent asks for your ID, & you are the DRIVER, you are required to show your driver's license.

- If an ICE agent asks for your ID & you are a PASSENGER, you do not have to show your ID or provide any personal information. However, ICE may still detain you, so it may be safest to show your identification or proof of citizenship.

- If an ICE agent asks you to get out of the car, before you get out, you should ask for a reason why you were stopped & ask the ICE agent to identify themselves.

- Remember, ICE generally cannot search your car or your person without a valid judicial warrant. If ICE searches your car without a warrant, say: "I do not consent to a search."

- There are also many reports of ICE detaining people who are following them, recording them, & monitoring their activity. Remember, it is not illegal to follow or film an ICE agent, but if you do so, you should do so from a safe distance & avoid physically obstructing ICE operations.

AT WORK:

- ICE can enter the public space of any workplace without any type of warrant.

- Public spaces can include an office lobby, a supermarket, retail store, or dining area of a restaurant.

- ICE cannot legally enter the private spaces like employee-only areas unless they have the permission of your employer or a judicial warrant.

- If approached, do not panic. Stay calm & avoid running or making sudden movements.

- If you are asked about another person's identification or for information pertaining to another person's whereabouts, you do not have to answer those questions.

- Ask if you are free to leave. If yes, calmly walk away. If you are not free to leave, ask if you are being detained. If you are being detained, you must show a form of identification.

- Keep reading for what to know if you are being detained.

- If it is safe to do so, record the interaction or ask someone else to record it. Do not interfere with the operation.

IN PUBLIC:

- ICE can enter public spaces without any type of warrant.

- Public spaces include an office lobby, a supermarket, retail store or dining area of a restaurant.

- If approached, do not panic. Stay calm & avoid running or making sudden movements.

- Ask if you are free to leave. If yes, calmly walk away. If you are not free to leave, ask if you are being detained. If you are being detained, you must show a form of identification.

- Keep reading for what to know if you are being detained.

- If it is safe to do so, record the interaction or ask someone else to record it. Do not physically resist or obstruct the operation.

IF YOU ARE APPROACHED BY ICE AND YOU ARE A MINOR:

- Minors have the same protections as adults. You have the right to remain silent & not answer questions about:

- » *Your immigration status.*

- » *Where you were born.*

- » *Your parents' immigration status.*

- » *Your address.*

- Say: "I choose to remain silent. I want to speak to a lawyer."

- Minors are not legally required to carry identification unless operating a vehicle. Carrying a copy of your Tribal ID, passport, birth certificate, or legal residency document should be done only if necessary & with safeguards (e.g., in a sealed envelope labeled "Confidential: Legal Documents – Access Only by Guardian").

- If you and/or your parent are detained, you have the right to be near & in-touch with your parent.

IF YOU ARE DETAINED BY ICE, STAY CALM:

- You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to consult with a lawyer. Say: "I wish to remain silent & ask for a lawyer."

- Tell ICE if you have medical issues or need to arrange for childcare.

- Request an interpreter for any conversation with ICE if ICE does not speak your language.

- If you are a U.S. Citizen, say: "I am a U.S. Citizen" & ask why you are being detained. ICE does not have jurisdiction to

arrest U.S. Citizens for immigration violations.

- If you are being detained, you must show a form of identification.

- Use your non-expired state-issued ID or Tribal ID to show your United States citizenship.

- » *Tip: Not all states require proof of citizenship to obtain a state issued ID. In some states a state-issued ID may not be enough to prove that you are a U.S. citizen. Double check your state's requirements, and it may be helpful to also carry your Tribal ID or keep a picture of your birth certificate or passport on your phone.*

- If an ICE agent does not accept your Tribal ID, request to speak with their supervisor. Not all ICE agents are aware that a Tribal ID is a legal form of identification in the United States.

- Do not say anything, sign anything, or make any decisions without consulting a lawyer.

- You have the right to make phone calls to family, friends, or a lawyer. You can request a list of free or low-cost legal service providers to seek representation

- You can receive visitors including family, friends, & lawyers, depending on specific detention facility rules.

- Native Americans who believe ICE violated their rights, contact the Native American Rights Fund. Find more information at narf.org/ice-resources-2026.

- If arrested by police (not ICE), you have the right to a government-appointed lawyer for criminal proceedings.

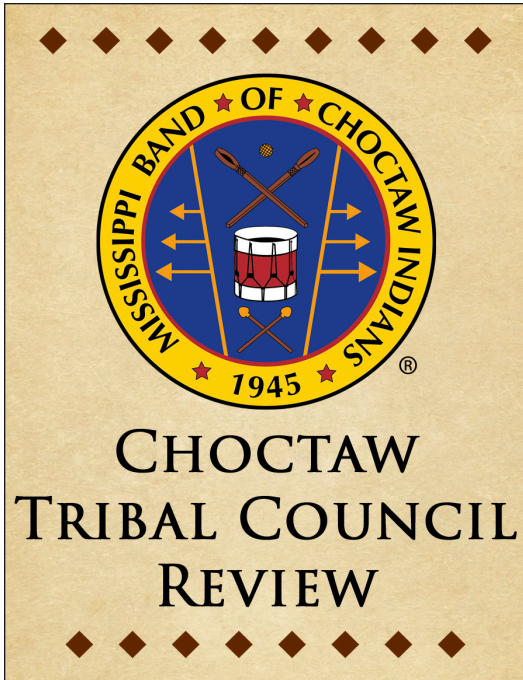
IF YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE AT RISK FOR A POTENTIAL ICE DETAINMENT:

- It may be helpful to create a safety plan. A safety plan should include:

- » *Identifying your emergency contacts & memorizing their phone numbers.*

- » *Providing your child's school or day care with an emergency contact to pick up your child.*

- » *Keeping your important papers, like birth certificates, medical records, children's medical records, in a safe place & telling a loved one where you put those papers. (It may be helpful to keep a copy/photo of your birth certificate or proof of citizenship with you.)*



**REGULAR CALL MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026**

ORDINANCE NO. 26-001, amending Title XVI of the Choctaw Tribal Code legalizing the sale & possession of liquor on Choctaw Reservation Lands, was ENACTED - 14 YES (*R. Anderson, Sr., L. Denson, C. Eaves, N. Gibson, A. Hundley, S. John, D. Martin, D. Mingo, H. Nickey, G. Shoemake, R. Sockey, T. Thomas, Sr., K. Wallace, & K. Wesley*); 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 Absent (*R. Henry, Sr., B. Steve & D. Wilson*).

SUMMARY: *The Ordinance approves amending Title XVI of the Choctaw Tribal Code. The approved amendments include updating the Tribal Code for regulation*

& control of possession & sale of liquor within the exterior boundaries of the Mississippi Choctaw Reservation & to accommodate potential liquor by the drink sales that may be opened on Tribal Reservation lands in Henning, Tenn., if all approvals are obtained by the Secretary of the Interior. For more information, please contact the Office of the Attorney General.

RESOLUTION CHO 26-019(B), approving an absolute relinquishment of membership in the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves an absolute relinquishment of membership for one (1) individual in the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Per the Tribal Enrollment Code, Section §22-4-1 provides that any adult MBCI Tribal member may voluntarily relinquish their MBCI Tribal membership provided that both the Tribal Enrollment Committee & Tribal Council approve the relinquishment. For more information, please contact the Office of Tribal Enrollment.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-020(B), approving increase in blood degree & name changes for previously enrolled Tribal Members, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves an increase in blood degree & name change for twelve (12) previously enrolled Tribal members. Per Section §22-2-8 of the Tribal Enrollment Code states that MBCI Tribal members may apply to increase their blood degree based on new or*

additional information about paternity or maternity & Section §22-3-11 states that MBCI Tribal members may change their names as they appear in MBCI's Tribal Enrollment records by submitting certain documents. For more information, please contact the Office of Tribal Enrollment.

RESOLUTION CHO 26-021(B), enrolling Tribal Members, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves to enroll eighty-three (83) Tribal members to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Per Sections §22-2-10 & §22-2-14 of the Tribal Enrollment Code states that new MBCI Tribal members are to be enrolled by Tribal Council Resolution upon a recommendation by the Tribal Enrollment Committee that those new members meet the membership criteria set forth in Article III of the Revised Constitution & Bylaws of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. With adoption of this Resolution, there are 11,188 enrolled members of the MBCI. For more information, please contact the Office of Tribal Enrollment.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-022, authorizing the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to submit a Section 20 application to the Secretary of the Interior for Tribal Land located in Henning, Tennessee, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to submit a Section 20 application to the*

continued next page

RIGHTS continued from page five

» *Written authorization for an emergency contact to make medical & legal decisions for your child.*

» *Information about ICE's online detainee locator: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/search>*

• *Sample safety plan: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a74cf7ef14aa1564b6a098b/t/67afb8e2d2d64e12cb6d09e5/1739569447250/Emergency+Plan_ENGLISH.pdf.*

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE RELEASED:

• *Write down what happened to you or*

ask someone to write it down for you. Include details like names & badge numbers of the ICE agents & anything that was said or done during the encounter.

• *Discuss your encounter with an attorney.*

• *Native Americans who believe ICE violated their rights, contact the Native American Rights Fund. Find more information at narf.org/ice-resources-2026.*

Native Americans, Alaska Natives, & Native Hawaiians are citizens of the United States. Although Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) has

no jurisdiction over citizens on immigration enforcement, ICE has targeted Native people, Tribal citizens, & descendants.

Sources:

- (1)<https://www.nilc.org/resources/know-your-rights-what-to-do-if-arrested-detained-immigration/>
- (2)https://denver.prelive.opencities.com/files/assets/public/v/1/human-rights-amp-community-partnerships/divisions/immigrant-amp-refugee-affairs/documents/doira-docs/c4a_kyr_resource_document_denver_english.pdf
- (3)<https://immigrantjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/KYR-Encounter-ICE-Nov.-2024-English.pdf>
- (4)<https://www.rmian.org/know-your-rights>

Secretary of the Interior for developing & opening a hotel & gaming facility on a part of the Tribe's reservation lands located in Henning, Tenn. For more information, please contact the Office of the Attorney General.

RESOLUTION CHO 26-023, approving a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Choctaw Health Center & Vanderbilt University Medical Center, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves a Memorandum of Understanding between the Choctaw Health Center & Vanderbilt University Medical Center to receive sub-award funds for the Practice Transformation Project. The Practice Transformation Project is a program that provides partnership, support & training to providers on infectious diseases including hepatitis, syphilis & HIV/AIDS. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Health Center.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-024, approving a Memorandum of Agreement between the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians & the Federal Emergency Management Agency for repairs to Moundville Archaeological Park in Moundville, Ala., was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Moundville Archeological Park is a significant ancestral site of shared cultural & historic importance to several Southeastern Tribes including the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, the Chickasaw Nation, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma & the Muscogee Nation. The FEMA proposes to administer grant funding to the University of Alabama pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief & Emergency Assistance Act to repair erosion, slope failures & storm damage sustained between February 5, 2020, & March 6, 2020, within the Moundville Archaeological Park. For more information, please contact the Development Division.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-025, authorizing the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to apply for the America250 Mississippi Grant Program from the Mississippi Humanities Council, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution authorizes the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Department of Chahta Immi to apply for*

the America250 Mississippi Grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council. For more information, please contact the Department of Chahta Immi.

RESOLUTION CHO 26-026, approving the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Long Range Transportation Plan & the Tribal Transportation Improvement Program for 2026-2030, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Choctaw Public Works Department.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-027(B), approving a Land Use Permit for K. McMillan & K. Bell in the Bogue Chitto Community, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-028(B), approving a Land Use Permit for C. Jimmie in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-029(B), approving a Land Use Permit for T. Kinsolving in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-030(B), approving a Land Use Permit for M. Ben-Ortiz in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-031(B), approving a Land Use Permit for R. Routh in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-032(B), approving a Land Use Permit for B. Farmer & E. John in the Tucker Community, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-033(B), designating a site for the expansion of Isaac Cemetery in the Pearl River Community,

was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-034(B), designating sites in the Bogue Chitto Community for development, maintenance & administration of single-family housing units by Choctaw Housing Authority, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves to designate a site in the Bogue Chitto Community to develop three (3) single-family housing units by Choctaw Housing Authority. For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-035(B), designating a site in the Crystal Ridge Community for development, maintenance & administration of a single-family housing unit by Choctaw Housing Authority, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves to designate a site in the Crystal Ridge Community to develop one (1) single-family housing unit by Choctaw Housing Authority. For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-036(B), designating sites in the Tucker Community for development, maintenance & administration of single-family housing units by Choctaw Housing Authority, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves to designate a site in the Tucker Community to develop three (3) single-family housing units by Choctaw Housing Authority. For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-037, approving the 2026 Choctaw Community Fund Budget, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves the Choctaw Community Fund Budget for 2026 in the amount of \$97,723.80. For more information, please contact the Development Division.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-038, authorizing disposal of surplus Tribal property, was ADOPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

RESOLUTIONS continued from page seven

SUMMARY: *The Resolution approves the disposal of surplus Tribal property including Tribal vehicles & lawn equipment. For more information, please contact the Office of Procurement.*

RESOLUTION CHO 26-039, amending Resolution CHO 25-060 “A Resolution to Approve Allocations of Funds Derived from Gaming Facility Patron Donations & Specialty License Plate Fees”, was AD-

OPTED - 14 YES; 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: *The amendment includes allocating the specialty license plate fees received to the Tribe to the Choctaw Elder Social & Nutrition Service Program instead of the Tribal Revenue Land Purchase Fund. For more information, please contact the Office of Finance & Accounting.*

To request a copy of the Resolution or Ordinance and/or attachment, please fill out a request for a Resolution/Ordinance form and submit the form to the Policy & Legislative Office at krystina.thompson@choctaw.org.

Requests for attachments to Tribal Enrollment Resolutions will not be honored due to confidentiality rules.

OFFICIAL NOTICE TRIBAL ID IS AN ACCEPTABLE FORM OF IDENTIFICATION

PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE
This notice is issued to provide clear and accurate information regarding the legal status, acceptable uses, and requirements of the Tribal Identification Card. Tribal ID is an official government-issued photo identification and is recognized under Mississippi law and by federal transportation security authorities.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PUBLIC
A Tribal Identification Card may be used to verify an individual's identity in situations where photo identification is required, subject to applicable laws and policies. This includes, but is not limited to:

- State and tribal government services
- Official transactions requiring identity verification
- Entry into secured facilities where permitted
- Domestic air travel at TSA security checkpoints
- Other lawful purposes requiring proof of identity

Acceptance of any form of identification may vary depending on the agency, organization, or transaction, and additional documentation may be required in some circumstances.

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (TSA) AIR TRAVEL
Effective February 1, 2026, Choctaw Tribal Identification Cards may be presented as an acceptable form of identification at Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security checkpoints for domestic air travel. Photo identification cards issued by a federally recognized Tribal Nation, including Enhanced Tribal Cards, are accepted by TSA for identity verification. Individuals presenting a valid Tribal ID:

- Are not required to participate in the TSA ConfirmID program
- Are not required to pay the \$45 identity verification fee
- May proceed through standard TSA security screening once identity is confirmed

All passengers and personal property are subject to TSA screening. In limited circumstances—such as when an identification card appears altered, damaged, expired, or when the photograph does not reasonably match the holder—TSA officers may request a secondary form of identification or take additional verification steps.



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI LEGAL RECOGNITION
PURSUANT TO MISSISSIPPI CODE ANNOTATED § 1-3-42(F), A VALID TRIBAL IDENTIFICATION CARD CONTAINING A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE HOLDER IS RECOGNIZED AS AN ACCEPTABLE FORM OF PHOTO IDENTIFICATION WITHIN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.

THIS STATUTE PLACES TRIBAL IDENTIFICATION CARDS AMONG OTHER LEGALLY RECOGNIZED IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS, SUCH AS STATE-ISSUED IDENTIFICATION CARDS, PASSPORTS, AND MILITARY IDENTIFICATION, AS A RESULT, TRIBAL IDS MEET MISSISSIPPI'S STATUTORY DEFINITION OF VALID PHOTO IDENTIFICATION.

VALID PHOTO IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Valid Photo Identification — Detailed Requirements
For an identification card to be considered valid photo identification, it must meet the following criteria:

- Be current and unexpired
- Be issued by a government entity or a federally recognized Tribal Nation
- Contain a clear, recognizable photograph of the holder
- Display the individual's legal name
- Be legible, intact, and free from alterations or damage

Identification that does not meet these requirements may not be accepted for certain purposes.

OBTAINING A TRIBAL IDENTIFICATION CARD

- Location: Lower Level Tribal Office

Required Documents:

- CDIB of the individual
- Social Security card
- Driver's license (Birth certificate required for minor children or adults without a driver's license)

Cost: \$10
(Payment receipt required from Finance)

For additional information, please contact: 601-650-7499


IMPORTANT IDENTIFICATION DISCLAIMER

While the Tribal Identification Card is legally recognized, no single form of identification guarantees acceptance in all situations. Certain agencies, programs, financial institutions, or private entities may require additional or alternate documentation in accordance with their policies or applicable law.

REAL ID & TSA ASSISTANCE CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information regarding REAL ID requirements or TSA security screening, the public may contact the Transportation Security Administration through the following methods:

- Visit [TSA.gov/real-id](https://www.tsa.gov/real-id)
- Text 275-872 ("AskTSA") or click @AskTSA
- Call 866-289-9673 for automated or live assistance
- Email www.tsa.gov/email



Choctaw Public Health Services
Healthy Community, Healthy Culture

PUBLIC NOTICE

Important Health Advisory – Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Pertussis is a contagious respiratory illness that can cause severe coughing fits, especially dangerous for infants, elders, and those with weakened immune systems. Pertussis cases are increasing throughout the State of Mississippi.

Choctaw Health Center and Public Health Services are conducting contact tracing to minimize exposure to pertussis. Whooping cough may begin like a common cold, but unlike a cold, the coughing can last for weeks or months. Treating whooping cough early with antibiotics may lower the risk of serious infection.

If you or a family member suspect being exposed to pertussis,

What You Need to Know:

- **Symptoms:** Persistent cough (often with a “whoop” sound), vomiting after coughing, difficulty breathing.
- **Transmission:** Spread through coughing, sneezing, or close contact.
- **Risk:** Infants under 1 year and unvaccinated individuals are at highest risk for severe illness. Including individuals with immunocompromising conditions or moderate-to-severe medically treated asthma.

What You Should Do:

1. **Monitor for symptoms** in yourself and your family for the next 21 days.
2. **Seek medical care immediately** if symptoms develop—early treatment can reduce severity.
3. **Stay up to date on vaccinations** (DTaP for children, Tdap for teens/adults).
4. **Practice prevention:** Cover coughs, wash hands often, and avoid close contact with sick individuals.

Questions About Pertussis:

Public Health Services 601.389.4110
Monday-Friday 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Ginger Flake, RN, Infection Prevention Coordinator
601.389.4489

Testing and Diagnosis:

Bogue Chitto Clinic	601.656.5442
Conehatta Clinic	601.775.3446
Red Water Clinic	601.267.8368
Monday-Thursday 8:00 am-6:00 pm	
CHC Primary Care Clinic	601.389.4300
Monday-Friday 8:00 am-4:30 pm	

CHC Emergency Department 601.389.4400	CHC Switchboard 601.389.4500
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PRES receives national honor

Choctaw Tribal Schools is proud to announce that Pearl River Elementary School (PRES) has been selected as a National ESEA Distinguished School for 2025. This is an honor awarded to only 100 schools across the entire United States.

The National ESEA Distinguished Schools Program, operated by the National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators (NAESPA), recognizes schools that demonstrate exceptional academic achievement, significant academic progress, or excellence in serving special student populations. PRES was identified by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) for its outstanding accomplishments and commitment to high-quality education.

As the largest elementary school in the Choctaw Tribal Schools system, PRES serves a significant portion of our

student population. While all five of our other elementary schools performed well and demonstrated strong academic progress, PRES stood out at the national level, earning this distinguished honor and representing the excellence of our Tribal schools on a broader stage.

This national recognition affirms the exceptional instructional quality, student achievement, and educational leadership within Choctaw Tribal Schools.

We extend our deepest congratulations to the students, faculty, staff, families, and the entire PRES community for this extraordinary achievement. Your hard work and dedication have brought national distinction to our Tribe and our schools. Yakoki for your continued commitment to educational excellence.

CTS hosts 23rd FLL Tournament at PRES

The Choctaw Tribal Schools held the 23rd Annual FIRST LEGO League (FLL) Tournament on Saturday, January 17, 2026, at the Pearl River Elementary School Gymnasium.

FLL is a hands-on, interactive engineering program that captivates students' interest in science & technology as they learn problem solving & team building skills.

A challenge is released in early fall based on a real-world scientific topic. This year's challenge was called UNEARTHED, as students

utilized creative thinking & LEGO technology to explore a dig site, carefully excavating artifacts hidden beneath layers of rock & soil & uncovering clues that reveal stories of past civilizations.

Nearly a hundred students participated in this year's event. Eight teams representing six participating schools included: Bogue Chitto Elementary School (BCES) - Connector Kings; Conehatta Elementary School (CES) - CES Little

see FLL TOURNEY, pg. 10



Above, members of Pearl River Elementary School's Nita Osi team get last minute instructions before participating in the Robot Game.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

(SAD) is a type of depression that affects millions of people around the world, especially during the winter months.

The lack of sunlight and cold weather can disrupt our body's natural circadian rhythms and trigger a drop in serotonin levels, leading to feelings of sadness and depression.

To help Alleviate Symptoms and Enhance Well-Being:

- Enjoy the sunlight
- Prioritize restful sleep
- Reflect on what you are grateful for
- Allow yourself to engage in activities that provide comfort, warmth, and peace
- Stay active
- Eat a balanced diet
- Participate in social activities

For further information or a free assessment please contact
Choctaw Behavioral Health
 at
601-389-4150.

This flyer was developed under G-64 OSF

WORKFORCE continued from page one

“Workforce development is a primary focus for our Tribe,” said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. “We have undertaken many projects to help our community members prepare to face a challenging and ever-evolving job market. This Workforce Training Center is a key component of our strategy to increase the skills of our Tribal community, whether choosing a career on or outside of our Tribal

lands.”

“We have a long-term plan to achieve our goals in the workforce development arena,” said Economic Development Director John Hendrix. “This facility will greatly enhance our efforts to provide instruction in a variety of areas, specifically vocational HVAC and Electrical certifications, computer/digital skills, healthcare, and management training.”

CHOCTAW TRIBAL SCHOOLS 2026 SPRING FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

CONEHATTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Friday, March 27 • 5:30 p.m.

STANDING PINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tuesday, April 7 • 5:30 p.m.

TUCKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Thursday, April 9 • 5:30 p.m.

RED WATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Friday, April 10 • 5:30 p.m.

PEARL RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Friday, April 17 • 5:00 p.m.

BOGUE CHITTO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Friday, May 8 • 5:00 p.m.

SPELLING BEE continued from page one

Red Water Elementary School (RWES) - Ja'Zairen Solomon, sixth grade; Bailey Nickey, seventh grade; Nylah Wilson, eighth grade.

SPES - Grayson Tangle, sixth grade (overall winner); Cerulean Lewis, sixth grade (second overall); Garilayne Willis, fourth grade.

Tucker Elementary School (TES) - Arianna Charlie, eighth grade; Madelynn Henry, eighth grade; Bresaya Isaac, fourth grade.

During the opening ceremony, PRES fifth grader Padmae Billie offered the invocation. Billie, along with PRES participants Neyalih Dixon & Aceton Willis, recited the Pledge of Allegiance. PRES Principal Suzanne Hyatt welcomed all in attendance as Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben gave words of encouragement to the participants.

LeAnn Boswell served as District Spelling Bee Coordinator, & judges were Kendall Grisham, Amy Pauls & Allen

Peoples. CCHS English instructor Andy Hardy served as pronouncer.

Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez presented the awards to the top spellers at the conclusion of the competition.

Spelling bee coordinators included: Debora McMahon, BCES; Sylvia Stevens, CCMS; Katie Taylor, CES; Donna Crawford, PRES; Dawn Stewart, RWES; Leigh Chandler, SPES; & Kristina Taylor, TES.

The top three spellers will compete in a semi-final online competition on Feb. 17-19. The top 20-25 statewide spellers will advance to the in-person Mississippi Spelling Bee at the Mississippi University of Women in Columbus on March 27-28.

The two top spellers from the state championship will advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. in May.

FLL TOURNEY continued from page nine

Warriors; Pearl River Elementary School (PRES) - Tushka Osi, Looksi Osi, Nita Osi; Red Water Elementary School (RWES) - Crystal Cavern Explorers; Standing Pine Elementary School (SPES) - Native Tech Tigers; & Tucker Elementary School, (TES) - Rez Builders.

A team's performance was evaluated based on four equally weighted components, each accounting for 25 percent of the total score. Core Values, Robot Design, & Innovation is evaluated during judging sessions, while the Robot Performance is evaluated separately during the Robot Game.

An awards ceremony was held at the conclusion of the tournament. The following awards were presented.

Robot Performance Award

The Robot Performance Award was presented to SPES's Native Tech Tigers. This award celebrates a team that scored the most points during the Robot Game. Teams have a chance to compete in at least three 2.5-minute matches, & their highest score counts.

Robot Design Award

The Robot Design Award was presented to TES's Rez Builders. This team used outstanding programming principles & solid engineering practices to develop a robot that was mechanically sound, durable, efficient, & highly capable of performing challenge missions.

Innovation Project Award

The Innovation Project

continued next page



ROBOT PERFORMANCE AWARD - NATIVE TECH TIGERS

Team members included (in no order) Liliana Frazier, Avia Thompson, Jack John, Brayden Sam, Grayson Tangle, Cerulean Lewis, Za'Daniel Thompson, Joe Joe, Violet Farve, & Coaches Kaylan Gibson & Jayasri Mitch.



ROBOT DESIGN AWARD - REZ BUILDERS

Team members included (in no order) Calum Comby, Keilani Gibson, Taylia Henry, Cooper Jefferson, Eve Lewis, Faithlyn Mingo, Rhyus York, & Coach Tressie Charlie.

Award was presented to PRES's Looksi Osi for their utilization of diverse resources to help them gain a comprehensive understanding of their problem; had a creative, well-researched solution; & effectively communicated their findings to judges & the community.

FLL Core Values Award

The Core Values Award was presented to PRES's Tushka Osi. This team displayed extraordinary enthusiasm & spirit, knows they can accomplish more together than they could as individuals, & shows each other & other teams respect at all times.

Champion's Award

The Champion's Award was presented to PRES's Nita Osi. This award recognizes a

team that embodies the FLL challenge experience by fully embracing the CORE Values while achieving excellence & innovation in Robot Performance, Robot Design, & the Innovation Project.

Nita Osi will represent the Choctaw Tribal Schools at the FLL Mississippi Championship in Biloxi on February 28.

Special thanks to Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & Director of Schools Delnita Jones for offering words of encouragement during the opening ceremony, Deidre Tubby for serving as Mistress of Ceremonies, Choctaw Veterans Color Guard members Meritza Shumake & Cynthia Massey for presenting the flags, Pastor Thomas Ben for the invocation, & the



INNOVATION PROJECT AWARD - LOOKSI OSI

Team members included (in no order) Adelyn Daniel, Marin Williams, Zaine Bell, Rainee Billy, Neyalih Dixon, Hayes Gordon, Neilani Thompson, Anna Laiya Tubby, Hazelin Joe, Elilee Steve, Mi'Kel Osceola, Shohmalali Dixon, Eva Willis, Andrew Blickenstaff, Kyree Bell, & Coach Gloria Seward.



FLL CORE VALUES AWARD - TUSHKA OSI

Team members included (in no order) Jayden Anderson, Carly Baker, Knox Bell, Semaycelynn Bell, Khalani Isaac, Alston Meely, Hush-toposhik McMillan, Zayvier Gamarr-Wesley, Kleilali Dixon, Hayden Dixon, Arlanda BigPond, Remington Isaac, Ayame Jim, Cadence Wesley, Kaison Thomas, Aceton Willis, & Coach Gloria Seward.



CHAMPION'S AWARD - NITA OSI

Team members included (in no order) Mylee Ben, Padmae Billie, Jalanna Dixon, Riley Isaac, Jayce Isaac, Kashay Charlie, Tamatoa Bald Eagle, Dakaizlee Clemons, Kylus John, Teyana Clemons, Kashay Charlie, Ahlaric Hernandez, Kaycson Clemons, & Coach Gloria Seward.

volunteers who donated their time, energies, & talents to the Choctaw Tribal Schools' FLL Tournament.

Special thanks to the following who served as judges: (Robot Design) Henry Shumake, Jr. & Paula Covarrubias; (Innovation Project) George Paul Wishork, Jr. & Eddie Johnson;

& Robot Performance referees Wes Wallace & Matthew Bell.

Special appreciation to all coaches & technical mentors for the countless hours spent on teaching, facilitating & encouraging the students in this program. Your contributions will have a lasting impact on our "Engineers of Tomorrow."

CCMS wins last CTS basketball tourney

The Choctaw Central Middle School Lady Warriors and Warriors were the last teams standing in the final Choctaw Tribal Schools' Annual Basketball Tournament as they claimed the 2026 girls and boys championships in front of a packed crowd in the Choctaw Central High School Gymnasium on Thursday, January 15.

The Lady Warriors defeated defending champion Red Water Lady Braves 36-22. In the boys' final, the Warriors defeated the Bogue Chitto Braves 28-25.

Dubbed "The Last Run," the tournament - since its inception in the early 1980's - has spotlighted seventh and eighth grade basketball teams representing Bogue Chitto Elemen-

tary School, Choctaw Central Middle School, Conehatta Elementary School, Red Water Elementary School, and Tucker Elementary School.

Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, all seventh and eighth grades from the outlying Tribal schools will be consolidated into the new Choctaw Central Middle School in Choctaw, to be completed this summer.

Choctaw Central earned a berth in the championship game with their semifinal win over Bogue Chitto Lady Braves 41-7 on Jan. 13. Red Water defeated Conehatta Lady Choctaws 31-7 in the Jan. 12 semifinal game to punch their ticket

see **LAST RUN**, pg. 12

LAST RUN continued from page eleven

to the finals.

In a rematch of last year's girls' championship game, Choctaw Central - coupled with an earlier loss in the season to Red Water - looked to redeem themselves as they jumped to a 5-0 lead with a 3-pointer and basket by Sanaeya Martin and Eleanor Smith, respectively. Red Water cut the lead to two with a 3-pointer by A'Dronai Lewis. Smith came back with five consecutive points for the Lady Warriors as they took a 12-5 lead at the end of the first.

Choctaw Central hit 3-pointers by Mel'Laney Lindsey and Samari Jefferson as Kandi Bell added a basket to close out the

half with a 20-9. Red Water's Lewis added two free throws and Kylah Dixon had a basket in the quarter.

Red Water had a 7-6 advantage in the third as Nylah Wilson chipped in five points and Lewis added a basket. Paizley Dixon added a basket and Alaysia Willis chipped in four points as the Lady Warriors maintained a 26-16 lead.

Willis scored another four points in the fourth for the Lady Warriors as Samari Jefferson, Paizley Dixon and Mel'Laney Lindsey added a basket for a 36-22 win over the Lady Braves. Red Water had baskets by Lyla Gibson, Kaylynn Wil-

lis and A'Dronai Lewis in the final quarter.

Alaysia Willis had a team high eight points for the Lady Warriors, followed by Mel'Laney Lindsey and Eleanor Smith with seven each, Samari Jefferson five, Paizley Dixon four, Sanaeya Martin three, and Kandi Bell two.

"After that first loss against (Red Water), we knew we had to put our best effort into it, and I knew they were going to do their best," said Lady Warriors Head Coach Kristen McBeath. "I knew what they could do, and it's big, especially when it's on your home court. You have to win it on your home

court. I knew my girls, and I had no doubt they were going to get this. I believed in them."

For the Lady Braves, A'Dronai Lewis had a game high 9 points, Nylah Wilson five, Kylah Dixon four, Lyla Gibson and Kaylynn Willis two each.

"We went into it expecting a physical game, and it was. We knew (Choctaw Central) was extremely talented and very experienced as they had a lot of big games and we knew we had to play our best ball, but we didn't tonight," said Lady Braves Coach William Gray. "I

continued next page



GIRLS CHAMPION - CCMS LADY WARRIORS

Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez congratulate team members (in no order) Shaylee Alex, Kandi Bell, Laken Dixon, Lovelle Dixon, Paizley Dixon, Caybriana Hickman, Ma'Liyah Johnson, Samari Jefferson, Alaysia Willis, Mel'Laney Lindsey, Sanaeya Martin, Isis Willis, Eleanor Smith, & Coach Kristen McBeath.



GIRLS ALL-TOURNEY TEAM

Named to the All-Tourney Team were (in no order) Mel'Laney Lindsey (Choctaw Central), A'Dronai Lewis & Nylah Wilson (Red Water), Jacy Tubby (Conehatta), & Tiana Robinson (Bogue Chitto). Alaysia Willis (Choctaw Central) was named Most Outstanding Player.



BOYS CHAMPION - CCMS WARRIORS

Chief Ben & Princess Lexi congratulate team members (in no order) Hector Willis, Rodrick Anderson, Jr., Alex Smith, Velton Williamson, Layden Johnson, Chrysander Jones, Kyrie Tubby, Del'Laney Lindsey, Jayden Hardy, Leim Mc-Millan, & Coach Dontelius Ross.



BOYS ALL-TOURNEY TEAM

Named to the All-Tourney Team were (in no order) Rodrick Anderson, Jr. (Choctaw Central), Cohen Morris (Bogue Chitto), Damari Thomas (Tucker), Quinten Mc-Millan (Red Water), & Jayden Evans (Conehatta). Velton Williamson (Choctaw Central) was named Most Outstanding Player.



got four or five girls that have gone 25-1 within two years, and this just happens to be the one. They got a lot to look forward to. It's hard knowing this tournament is the last one. There is a lot of talent spread out, and it's going to be interesting to see what goes in the future. It was an honor to coach these girls."

Named to the All-Tournament Team were Mel'Laney Lindsey (Choctaw Central), A'Dronai Lewis and Nylah Wilson (Red Water), Jacy Tubby (Conehatta), and Tiana Robinson (Bogue Chitto). Alaysia Willis (Choctaw Central) was named Most Outstanding Player.

In the tournament finale, defending boys champion Choctaw Central Warriors faced the Bogue Chitto Braves in a contest which saw a total of six ties and 13 lead changes.

The Warriors earned a berth in the finals with their semifinal win over the Red Water Braves 52-20 on Jan. 13. Bogue Chitto defeated the Conehatta Choctaws 49-15 in the other Jan. 13 semifinal game.

Choctaw Central took the first lead as their points came from the free throw line as Layden Anderson was 2-for-2 and Rodgrick Anderson was 2-of-4. Bogue Chitto's Cohen Morris had two baskets for a tie score of 4-4 at the end of the first.

Velton Williamson of Choctaw Central went on an offensive tear in the second quar-

ter as he scored 10 points and teammate Leim McMillan nailed a 3-pointer. Bogue Chitto kept it close as Elgin Amos added six points, with baskets by Cohen Morris, Reshawn Lewis and DeAngelo Vaughn to make it a slim 17-16 lead for Choctaw Central at the half.

The third was a defensive battle as Choctaw Central was only held to a basket by Del'Laney Lindsey. Bogue Chitto made it a 21-19 lead with a basket by Elgin Amos and basket and free throw by Cohen Morris.

Choctaw Central tied the game 21-21 with a basket by Chrysander Jones at the start of the fourth and took the lead for good as Layden Johnson was 1-of-2 from the free throw and added a basket for a 24-21 lead. Up 26-21 with a basket by Del'Laney Lindsey, Bogue Chitto got within 1 with a basket and two free throws from Elgin Amos with :30 seconds left. In the waning moments, Chrysander Jones added a basket for the 28-25 win for the Warriors.

Velton Williamson had a team high 10 points for the Warriors, followed by Layden Johnson with five, Del'Laney and Chrysander Jones with four each, Leim McMillan three, and Rodgrick Anderson two.

"We came into tonight knowing (Bogue Chitto) was going to give us all they had cause we beat them early in the season, we knew they were going to give us a run for our money," said Warriors Head Coach

Dontelius Ross. "The plan was to get up and make sure we played good, solid defense, get out on the run and make sure we controlled the tempo. It was a nailbiter, but also a surreal moment. This is my first year coaching middle school so to win my first ever championship, seventh and eighth grade, then the Tribal tournament. It's a very good feeling. It's something I can get used to."

For the Braves, Elgin Amos had a game high 12 points. Cohen Morris had 9 points, followed by Reshawn Lewis and DeAngelo Vaughn with two points each.

"It was a hard fought game between two good teams. The last time we played, it was a four point game, three point tonight. I think if we played 10 times, it would be nip and tuck," said Bogue Chitto

Braves Head Coach Herschel Smith. "We got a good team, and our kids don't have anything to be ashamed of. If you watch a game this close, it's going to come down to a missed shot here or a turnover. It happens at every level. I'm proud of our guys, they worked hard and been great all year round. Hopefully, they will go on and play high school ball wherever they choose to go, and down the road we'll see their name in the paper."

Named to the All-Tournament Team were Rodgrick Anderson, Jr. (Choctaw Central), Cohen Morris (Bogue Chitto), Damari Thomas (Tucker), Quinten McMillan (Red Water), and Jayden Evans (Conehatta). Velton Williamson (Choctaw Central) was named Most Outstanding Player.

CCHS Soccer Seniors honored

Choctaw Central High School celebrated Senior Night for the Lady Warriors & Warriors Soccer Teams on Tuesday, January 6, 2026. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, along with the players' families & coaches, helped celebrate this special occasion & recognize these student-athletes. Honored were, from left to right, Lady Warriors seniors Shareese Wallace, Alexis Weeks, Caitlyn Bounds, Cambee Johnson, Ryleigh Anderson, Emily Eaves, Marlena Rains, Alexcia Townsend (not pictured), along with Warriors seniors Albert Isaac & Devree Farve. Congratulations to all the seniors as we wish you continued success in your future endeavors!



Salmen Soccer Senior Night

Salmen High School in Slidell, LA, held Senior Night for their soccer teams on Friday, January 16, 2026. Amongst the players honored was Lady Spartan & Choctaw youth Gracie Williams. Family, friends, & supporters were on hand to congratulate Grace on her well-deserved recognition. Gracie's grandmother, Michelle York, General Manager of Bok Homa Casino, presented a gift on behalf of Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. Congratulations as we wish you the best in all of your future endeavors!



Neshoba Soccer Senior Jimmie honored

Neshoba Central High School celebrated Senior Night for Soccer on Tuesday, January 20, 2026. Among those recognized was Rocket senior & Choctaw youth Connor Jimmie. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben attended the event alongside Connor's family, friends, & supporters to celebrate this important milestone. Chief Ben presented Connor with a senior recognition gift in honor of his achievements. Congratulations as we wish you continued success in all of your future endeavors.



NE Jones hosts Soccer Senior Night

Northeast Jones High School hosted a Senior Night for Soccer on Friday, January 16, 2026. Amongst the players honored was outstanding Tiger & Choctaw youth Sonny Bohannon. Family, friends, teammates, & supporters celebrated Sonny's achievements on the soccer field. Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez presented Sonny with a gift on behalf of Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. Congratulations as we wish you the best in all of your future endeavors.



Kosciusko honors soccer seniors

Kosciusko Lady Whippets held Senior Night activities as Choctaw youth Amera Marquez was among the seniors recognized. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben joined Amera's family & supporters to congratulate her & present her with a gift. Congratulations & best wishes for a successful remainder of your senior year!

NCHS Basketball

Seniors honored

The Neshoba Central High School Rockets & Lady Rockets basketball teams celebrated Senior Night on Friday, January 30, 2026, honoring the achievements of their senior student-athletes. Tribal leaders, along with Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, joined family members, friends, & supporters to congratulate these outstanding Choctaw youth & present them with gifts in recognition of their accomplishments. Pictured, from left to right, are Tribal Council member Angela Hundley, Rocket seniors Xavier Ben, JQ Hughes, Vice Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr., Lady Rocket senior Sydney Williams, Prin-



cess Lexi, Rocket seniors Emjae Willis, Kodi Thomas, Lady Rocket seniors Lailah Henry, Jiar Henry, Miyah Henry, Kyli Truss, & Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. Congratulations to all the seniors as we wish them continued success & a great remainder of their senior year!



LCHS Basketball Senior Night

Congratulations to outstanding seniors Gavine Frazier, Treyton Jones & Cassius Kopaddy as they were honored during Leake Central High School's Senior Night for basketball on Friday, January 30, 2026. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Tribal Council Member Sam John, & 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez joined family, friends, & supporters to congratulate these outstanding athletes & present them with gifts in recognition of their accomplishments. Best wishes to them on continued successes in all their future endeavors!



CEYB teams receive rings

Congratulations to the extraordinary athletes who are part of the Choctaw Elite Youth Basketball (CEYB) program! These players were recognized & received their championship rings for an outstanding season last year prior to the CCHS basketball games on Tuesday, January 27, 2026. Teams that received championship rings were: 7-9 Girls – Coaches Kyle Henry & Shelvie Dixon; 7-9 Boys – Coaches Terrence Kinsolving & Desmond Jones; 10-12 Girls – Coaches Renita & Chris Perry; 13-15 Boys – Coaches Demando Mingo & TJ Ben. The CEYB program was established in 2025. Featured in the photos are some members of the CEYB leadership team. Jimmy Tangle



served as the 2024 CEYB President. The current President is Kendall Wallace, & Vice President is Demando Mingo. Congratulations again to these outstanding players & coaches & thank you to the fans for your overwhelming support!

2026 Warriors

February

Date	Opponent	Location	Time
6	Winston Academy	Louisville	4/6
9	Neshoba Central	Neshoba	5/7
10	Union	HOME	5/7
12	Nanah Waiya	Nanah Waiya	4:00
	Noxapater		
13	Union	Union	5/7
14	Neshoba Central	HOME	11/1
17	Quitman	HOME	5/7
19	Meridian	Meridian	5/7
24	Leake Academy	HOME	5/7

March

3	Newton Co.	Newton Co.	5/7
6	Newton Co.	HOME	5/7
9	Sebastapol SBT	Sebastapol	2:30
11	Sebastapol SBT		12:00
17	West Lauderdale	West Lauderdale	5/7
19	Leake Academy	Leake Academy	4/6
20	West Lauderdale	HOME	5/7
24	Philadelphia	HOME	5/7
28	Neshoba	HOME	11/1
31	Leake Central	Leake Central	5/7

April

7	NE Lauderdale	HOME	5/7
10	NE Lauderdale	NE Lauderdale	5/7
11	Meridian	HOME	12/2
13	Calhoun City	Calhoun City	5/7
14	Ethel	Ethel	5/7

Baseball Schedule

2026 CHOCTAW CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SOFTBALL

Schedule

7 FEB JAMBOREE- PISGAH V-10:00 AM, 11:30 AM	28 FEB OXFORD TOURNAMENT V-11:45, 1:30, 5:00	24 MAR NESHOPA CENTRAL JH-4:00, JV-5:00, V-6:30
12 FEB ETHEL JV-5:00, V-6:30	3 MAR LEAKE CENTRAL** V- DH 5:00, 7:00	27 MAR CHOCTAW COUNTY JV-5:00, V-6:30
14 FEB CHOCTAW CENTRAL CLASSIC V- 10:00AM, 11:30 AM	6 MAR NESHOPA CENTRAL JH-4:00, JV-5:00, V-6:30	31 MAR NEWTON COUNTY** JV-5:30, V-7:00
17 FEB STARKVILLE JV-5:00, V-6:30	12 MAR CLARKDALE TOURNEY JV-3:30, V-4:45	2 APR NEWTON COUNTY** JV-5:00, V-6:30
19 FEB PISGAH JH-4:00, JV-5:00, V-6:30	13 MAR CLARKDALE TOURNEY V-11:30, 1:30	7 APR NORTHEAST LAUDERDALE** JH-4:30, JV-5:30, V-7:00
20 FEB SEBASTOPOL JH-4:30, JV-5:30, V-6:30	17 MAR WEST LAUDERDALE** JV-5:00, V-6:30	9 APR NORTHEAST LAUDERDALE** JH-4:30, JV-5:30, V-7:00
24 FEB UNION JV-5:00, V-6:30	19 MAR WEST LAUDERDALE** JV-5:00, V-6:30	10 APR PISGAH JV-5:00, V-7:00
26 FEB SEBASTOPOL JH-4:30, JV-5:30, V-7:00	23 MAR STARKVILLE JV-5:00, V-6:30	14 APR UNION JV-5:00, V-6:30

HOME GAMES
 AWAY GAMES
 ** DENOTES DIVISION GAMES

Did You Know...



• *FBI Jackson's Safe Trails Task Force (STTF) focuses on crimes committed on Mississippi Choctaw Tribal Lands. The task force is comprised of 7 different local & tribal law enforcement agencies. FBI Jackson participated in FBI's Operation Not Forgotten, which surged 64 FBI personnel to 10 FBI Field Offices to support investigations of Indian Country Crimes.*

• *The Task Force assisted in FBI's Indian Country initiatives which accomplished the following across the country: 1123 arrests, 304 weapons recovered, & 458 child victims identified or located. FBI Jackson would like to thank Choctaw Police Department, Carthage Police Department, Philadelphia Police Department, Leake County Sheriff's Office, Neshoba County Sheriff's Department, Scott County Sheriff's Office, & Jones County Sheriff's Office for their support & being a part of FBI Jackson's STTF!*

• *In 2025, FBI Jackson STTF arrested 11 violent offenders for felonious crimes, identified & located 4 minor victims, & seized vast amounts of firearms & drugs, which includes cocaine & methamphetamine.*

18TH ANNUAL CCHS SPRING POW-WOW

INTERTRIBAL POW-WOW
 FRIDAY - SATURDAY • MARCH 13-14, 2026
 PEARL RIVER RECREATION SOFTBALL FIELD • CHOCTAW, MS
 FREE ADMISSION • OPEN TO THE PUBLIC 9:00 AM BOTH DAYS

HEAD STAFF

MC - CUBERT WINDWALKER BELL • ARENA DIRECTOR - KIRK McMILLAN • HEAD MAN DANCER - KENDALL L. WALLACE
 HEAD LADY DANCER - ALICE KEATS • HEAD GIRL DANCER - KARSYN WALLACE • HEAD BOY DANCER - ANTHONY NITA OSI BELL
 HEAD GOURD DANCER - TIMOTHY DENNETT
 HOST DRUM - SOUTHERN PINE DRUMMERS / HOST DRUM NORTHERN - BLUE NATION

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY: 9:00-12:00 BINGO (FREE) 12:00 NOON POW-WOW PRINCESS REGISTRATION DEADLINE 12:00-2:00 COMMITTEE AUCTION 2:00-3:00 HAND DRUM CONTEST 3:00-4:00 CCHS SOCIAL DANCING 4:00-5:00 TUSHKA BOLI - INTER-TRIBAL SINGING 5:00-6:00 GOURD DANCING 6:30-7:00 PRINCESS CONTEST - PART OF EVENING GRAND ENTRY (14-18 YEARS OLD) 6:00-10:00 GRAND ENTRY DANCING	SATURDAY: 9:00-11:00 BINGO (FREE) 11:00-12:00 GOURD DANCING 12:00-3:00 GRAND ENTRY 3:00-5:00 COMMITTEE AUCTION 4:00-5:00 DINNER BREAK 5:00-6:00 GOURD DANCING 6:00-10:00 GRAND ENTRY 10:00 18 TH ANNUAL CCHS POW-WOW CLOSES
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FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT: RANCHIE, 601-480-3261 • RALPH ISAAC, 601-741-0021 • ROWENA YORK, 601-663-7715
 DANCERS, VENDORS, DRUMMERS & ROYALTIES WELCOME • PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL & DO NOT BRING DRUGS OR ALCOHOL

Notice from the MBCI Dept. of Public Safety

CHOCTAW, Miss. - The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Department of Public Safety, including the Choctaw Adult Detention Center & Choctaw Youth Justice Center facilities, will close its correctional fencing gates on January 20, 2026, to restrict & allow access for authorized personnel

only. For other employees, public, or visitor access to the front main entrance of the Choctaw Justice Complex building will be from the James Billie Road entrance.

The main purpose of fencing

continued next page



ELEANOR CHICKAWAY

Funeral services for Eleanor Chickaway, 67, was held on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, at the Conehatta Community Gymnasium. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



Interment was in the Chahta Missionary Baptist Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Chickaway passed away on Friday, Jan. 2.

She was an artisan best known for her beautiful basketry. She loved being with family, Sunday dinners, attending pow-wows & her grandkids' activities, talking on the phone,

chanting for her dance group Kabotcha Boli Dancers, traveling, displaying arts & crafts at the Choctaw Indian Fair, making purse baskets, & watching Koni Hata Stickball.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Reuben & Janie Shumake; sisters, Jeanelle Anderson, Anita Anderson & Pearl Thomas; & brothers, Thurman Shumake & Genis Shumake.

Survivors include her husband, Troy Chickaway; daughters, LaShannon Ferris, Shondria Chickaway (Ronald Sr.), Chrisinda Chickaway, Breena Chickaway Dixon (Jermaine), Shaya Chickaway Hicks (Dakota), & Tara Chickaway Steve (Anthony "Bo"); sons, Daniel Ferris (Milena) & Richardson Chickaway; sister, Norma Shumake; 36 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces & nephews.

sons, Scottie Tyler Bell, Jr., Tyler Bell & Nathaniel Bozeman; sisters, Liea Bell, Renate Ben & Beth Holyfield; brothers, Elijah Ben, Nathan Bell & Seth Holyfield; & a host of nieces & nephews.

LEE EARL SHUMAKE, SR.

Funeral services for Lee Earl Shumake, Sr., 64, was held on Saturday, January 10, 2026, at the Conehatta CERF Building. Bro. Max Anderson & Rev. Brian Parkman officiated.



Interment was in Conehatta Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Shumake passed away on Wednesday, Jan. 7, at his residence.

He was a member of Pine Bluff Church & enjoyed playing his guitar, listening to Elvis Presley songs, playing baseball, & watching westerns.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Edmond & Birdie Shumake; sisters, Patty Shoemaker & Peggy Shoemaker; brothers, John Shumake, Norman Shoemaker & Arthur Shumake; grandson, Gilbert Casey Bell; & great-great-grandson, De'lason Bell.

Survivors include his daughters, Stacie Bell, Roxyann Jim & Sheena Tubby (Marcell); sons, Lee Shumake, Jr. (Sandra) & Ryan Shumake, Sr. (Veltina); a special son he called his own, Charles Jefferson, III; special friend, Sandra Jim; sisters, Lora Denson & Sherry Charlie; aunt, Juanita Shoemaker; 11 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives & friends.

see OBITUARIES, pg. 18

APPLYING FOR THE TRIBAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM?

2026 Summer Applications are currently being accepted. DEADLINE TO SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION IS **TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026.** FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW TO APPLY

Select ONE of the following websites:

- TSP Website: Scholarship.choctaw.org
- Application Website: <https://tribalscholarshipprogram.secure-platform.com/>

• Applicant must have an active email address.
 • Choose TSP website or Application website.
 • Read and follow instructions carefully on application Home page.
 • Complete application and make note of information required.
 • Submit application.
 • Applicant will receive an email confirmation.
 • Applicant must submit all transcripts as needed.
 • Applicant will receive a follow-up email from assigned assistant.
 • Files are complete after all documents are received.
 • Applicant will receive confirmation email by assistant of file completion.

For more information or assistance, please call the Tribal Scholarship Office at 601.650.7409

EMAIL US: Scholarship.Program@choctaw.org
 FOLLOW US Tribal Scholarship Program

at our correctional facility is to create a robust, multi-layered physical barrier preventing inmate escapes, deterring unauthorized intrusions, controlling movement within the facility, & protecting the public by defining secure zones for high-

risk individuals, contraband, & sensitive areas.

There will be no video or photography within the fencing of our correctional facility without prior approval. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Funeral services for Scottie Tyler Bell, Sr., 45, was held on Saturday, January 10, 2026, at the Pearl River CERF Building. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



Interment was in Greenhill Methodist Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Bell passed away on Monday, Jan. 5, at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg.

He enjoyed being with his family, riding around, playing stickball & basketball.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Barry Ben & Jennie Bell; grandparents, Mary & Arthur Ben, Joyce & Noah Joe.

Survivors include his wife, Jessica Hardy; daughters, Deelena Bell & Mileena Bell;

OBITUARIES continued from page seventeen

BEVERLY ANN BRISCOE

F u n e r a l services for Beverly Ann Briscoe, 65, was held on Friday, January 16, 2026, at Pine Bluff Baptist Church in Sebastopol. Bro. Robert Patrick officiated.



Interment was in the church cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Briscoe passed away on Sunday, Jan. 11, at her residence.

She was a member of Stone-wall Baptist Church & enjoyed singing Choctaw hymns, attending church activities, & being with her grandkids & sisters.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Carlton Briscoe & Annie Ruth Steve; brother, Harlan Briscoe; & grandson, Lucas James Thomas, Jr.

Survivors include her sons, Lucas Thomas, Sr. & Curtis Tyler Williamson; sisters, Melinda Gail John, Vanessa Pam Tubby, Paula Faye Bacon, Delanie Dawn Briscoe, Jashau-nique Duree Steve, & Janiesa Shayna Steve; 11 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren.

TROY LEE CHICKAWAY

F u n e r a l services for Troy Lee Chickaway, 75, was held on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at the Conehatta Community Gymnasium. Bro. Joseph Wesley & Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



Interment was in the Chahta Missionary Baptist Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Fu-

neral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Chickaway passed away on Saturday, Jan. 17, at Baptist Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian, MS.

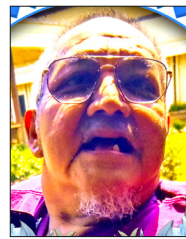
He served as Conehatta Community Representative to the Tribal Council for three terms. He loved helping his people. Prior to his service, he was employed with Pearl River Resort as Casino Security Supervisor, bus driver for the Conehatta Elementary School, officer for the Choctaw Police Department, & the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He enjoyed fishing, watching football & his favorite TV shows Gunsmoke & The Andy Griffith Show, caring for his horses, cutting grass, & being with friends & family, especially his grandchildren.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Eleanor Chickaway; parents, Ross Collins Chickaway, Sr. & Noleen Johnson Chickaway; sister, Ives Chickaway Rhodes; brothers, Alfred Chickaway, Ross Chickaway, Jr., Alan Chickaway, Sr., Robby Chickaway, Gerrard Chickaway, Ronnie Wayne Chickaway, Sr., & Harrison Hickman; & a grandson, Baby Boy Jefferson.

Survivors include his daughters, Tara Chickaway Steve (Bo), LaShannon Ferris, Shondria Chickaway (Ronald Sr.), Chrisinda Chickaway, Breena Chickaway Dixon (Jermaine), & Shaya Chickaway Hicks (Dakota); sons, Richardson Chickaway & Daniel Ferris (Milena); sister, Lynnette Farmer; brother, Randall Chickaway; aunt, Belfree Willis; 36 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren & a host of nieces & nephews.

PETE RANDALL LEE LEWIS

F u n e r a l services for Pete Randall Lee Lewis, 64, was held on Thursday, January 29, 2026, at the Pearl River CERF Building. Rev. Mark Patrick officiated.



Interment was in the Standing Pine Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Lewis passed away on Saturday, Jan. 17, at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle in Columbus, MS.

He lived most of his life in the Standing Pine community & was a member of Hopewell Baptist Church. He enjoyed playing softball, fixing cars & watching westerns.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Prentiss & Lula Mae Farmer Lewis; daughter, Infant Girl Lewis; sisters, Linda Champion, Betty Jane Lewis & Myra Lewis Stoliby; brothers, Amon Lewis, James "Boncho" Lewis, Sr., Danny Lewis, & Dickey Lewis; an aunt, Rosaline Sockey, & uncles, Horace Lewis & Bert Lewis.

Survivors include a daughter, a son, 6 grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, & other relatives.

MELVIN EDWARD ALLEN

F u n e r a l services for Melvin Edward Allen, 67, was held on Friday, January 23, 2026, at Mt. Zion CI Baptist Church in Red Water. Deacon Ricky Edwards, Sr. & Rev. Carl



Wilson officiated.

Interment was in the Red Water Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Lewis passed away on Sunday, Jan. 18, at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw, MS.

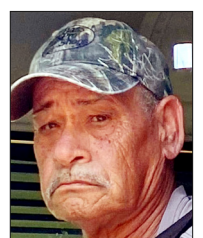
He lived in the Red Water community & was a U.S. Army Veteran. He was an outgoing person & made people laugh. He was a fan of the Mississippi State Bulldogs & Pittsburgh Steelers & enjoyed fishing, watching westerns, working on cars, helping in the garden, & being extremely proud of his grandchildren.

He is preceded in death by his parents, William Bradford Allen & Phelia Tubby Allen; sisters, Virginia Mingo & Birdie Allen; brothers, Chadwick Allen, Roland Allen, Elvin Allen, Jim Allen, & Gary Allen; niece, Priscilla Allen; & grandson, Lucas Seth Allen.

Survivors include his daughter, Marsha Elyshia Allen; son, William Shawn Allen; 6 grandchildren & a niece, three nephews, two great-nieces, three great-nephews, & his pet cat.

CHESTER BEN

F u n e r a l services for Chester Ben, 74, was held on Friday, January 30, 2026, at the Pearl River Community Center. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



Interment was in the Old Canaan Church Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

continued next page

Mr. Ben passed away on Friday, Jan. 23, at Baptist Hospital in Jackson.

He lived most of his life in the Pearl River community & was a member of Pearl River Baptist Church. He was a 1973 graduate of Choctaw Central & served as a dispatcher for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Law Enforcement for 16 years. He later worked as a bus driver for the Choctaw Tribal Schools for 35 years until his retirement in 2024. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, being at the casino, & watching his grandchildren play ball.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Jempson Ben & Mamie Bell Comby; & a son, Jeremy Ben.

Survivors include his daughters, Alicia Wheeler, Doris Ben & Melinda D. Ben; sisters, Carolyn Gibson, Mary Comby & Martha Comby; brother, James Ray Johnson; four grandchildren, one great-grandchild, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends.

KELSEY NITAYA JOHN

Funeral services for Kelsey Nitaya John, 35, was held on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at the Conehatta CERF Building. Pastor Tim Tubby officiated.



Interment was in the Conehatta Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. John passed away on Monday, Jan. 26, at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

She was a lifelong resident of the Conehatta community & enjoyed watching her son play sports, playing volleyball, making beaded jewelry, play-

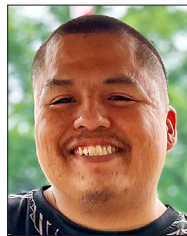
ing stickball, & being with her friends.

She is preceded in death by her parents, John Michael John & Gwendale Sue Johnson John; brother, Jonathan Darrell Johnson; & grandparents, Imogene Polk, J.D. Johnson & Katie Mae Stephens Johnson.

Survivors include her son, Jarrien Zie John; sister, Kristan Kate John; brother, Jeron Kyle Johnson; grandfather, Nelson John, Sr.; 3 aunts, 3 uncles, five nephews, a niece, & a host of relatives & friends.

NICHOLIS SCOTT MINGO

Funeral services for Nicholis Scott Mingo, 29, was held on Thursday, February 5, 2026, at the Bogue Homa CERF Building. Bro. Eddie Johnson & Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.



Interment was in the Bogue Homa Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Mingo passed away on Thursday, Jan. 29, at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

He resided in the Bogue Homa community most of his life. He entered the workforce after graduating from Choctaw Central in 2015. He was in powerline clearance, a truck driver then a heavy machine loader operator. He loved his family & enjoyed fishing, being with family & friends, playing video games, being outdoors, exercising, & traveling.

He is preceded in death by his mother, Julia Martin; grandparents, Patsy Tubby & Jerry Mingo, Sr.; & an uncle, Marshall Martin.

Survivors include wife, Bethany Mingo; father, Jerry Mingo,

Jr.; daughters, Breceis Mingo & Baby Girl Mingo; son, Nikolai Mingo; sisters, Xaviera Mingo, Nicole Mingo, Nakayla Mingo, & Esmaralda Mingo; brother, Marshall Mingo; grandparents, Tillie Martin & Harold Martin; 3 aunts, 2 uncles, 3 sisters-in-law, 3 brothers-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, & a host of nieces & nephews.

JAIME BLAINE NICKEY

Funeral services for Jaime Blaine Nickey, 47, was held on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, at Macedonia Baptist Church in Conehatta. Deacon Billy Smith & Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.



Interment was in the Nickey Family Cemetery. John E. Ste-

phens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Nickey passed away on Saturday, Jan. 31, at her residence.

She resided in the Conehatta community for most of her life & enjoyed baking, cooking & being with family & friends, especially her grandchildren.

She is preceded in death by her father, Daron Ray Charlie; infant son, David Anderson, Jr.; & grandparents, Dora & Thomas Nickey, Necie King & Thomas Charlie.

Survivors include her mother, Judy F. Nickey; daughters, Jaelissa Hall & Samariah Nickey; sons, Mathis Hall, Windell Hall, Jr., & Macaden Hall; a sister, Sonya Charlie; brothers, Daron Charlie, II & Aaron Charlie; seven grandchildren, six aunts, one uncle, & a host of nieces, nephews, family, & friends.

LIVING WATER
UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

LOCATED IN THE TUCKER COMMUNITY
(Adjacent up the hill from Tucker Elementary School)

We invite you and your family to join our family for services.

SUNDAY SERVICES - 2:00 pm
TUESDAY EVENINGS - 6:00 pm

Welcome To

NANIH WAIYA
INDIAN
Mennonite Church

10341 Road 789
Philadelphia, MS 39350
Sunday Service: 10:00 a.m.

Come & Worship with us

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH
130 Campus Drive
Conehatta, MS 39057

SUNDAY SCHEDULE


10:00 a.m. Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Worship Service
5:00 p.m. Evening Service
1st Sunday Service 4:00 p.m.
Pastor: Rev. Samuel Dixon

WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

6:00 p.m. Pray Meeting
6:30 p.m. Discipleship/
Family Ministry Class

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- John 8:31-32

Come Join Us...



Spirit of Life

SUNDAY: 10:00 a.m. WEDNESDAY: 6:30 p.m.

278 Black Jack Road
Choctaw, MS 39350
601-389-5446
Pastor Thomas Ben




MBCI
CAREER & TECHNICAL PROGRAM

**DEADLINE FOR FALL 2026 IS:
MAY 30, 2026**

REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be accepted by the training institution that you plan to attend.
- Must be an eligible, enrolled member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.
- Must have a high school diploma or a G.E.D. equivalent.
- Must be between the ages of 18 and up.
- Must fill out necessary applications AND provide any and all documentation before consideration.

Contact Us: **601-650-1749**
Email Us: **bhdixon@choctaw.org**

Located At Manpower Building

**CHOCTAW
COMMUNITY
NEWS**

JANUARY 2026

© 2026 MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS



UPCOMING APPLICATION DRIVE DATES:

- 02/02- Tucker CERF Building
- 02/05- Bogue Chitto CERF Building
- 02/10- Bogue Homma CERF Building
- 02/12- Pearl River CERF Building
- 02/17- Conehatta CERF Building
- 02/19- Crystal Ridge CERF Building
- 02/24- Standing Pine CERF Building
- 02/26- Red Water CERF Building

*Meeting time will be 3:00-6:00 P.M.
COME PICK UP AN APPLICATION AT OUR COMMUNITY DRIVES OR AT OUR YOP OFFICE

QUALIFICATION

- AGES: 15-24 years old
- Enrolled MBCI member
- Must enrolled in middle, high school, or college
- Must have a "C" average or higher grade point average

APPLICATION IS DUE ON MARCH 31, 2026

YOP OFFICE WILL OPEN DURING LUNCH HOURS AND EXTEND OUR BUSINESS HOURS TO 5:00 P.M. STARTING JANUARY 19, 2026 TO FEBRUARY 20, 2026

YOP@CHOCTAW.ORG
601-650-7321





COME OUT & ENJOY THE OUTDOORS WITH US!

2026

20th ANNUAL YOUTH RABBIT STICK HUNT

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026
BEGINNING 7:00 A.M.-UNTIL • ATTALA COUNTY PROPERTY OFF HIGHWAY 35 NORTH BIG RED BARN *LOOK FOR SIGNS*

LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED

- * Free shirts for the first 75 participants to sign-in onsite.
- * Everything is first-come, first-serve.
- * Rabbit sticks will be available, but feel free to bring your own.
- * Please wear weather appropriate clothing to have a great hunt.
- * Seating is limited; you are welcome to bring your own.

**For more information, contact us at:
601.663.7900 or 601.504.6519**

