

CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

VOL. LVI, NO. 2

CHOCTAW, MISSISSIPPI 39350

FEBRUARY 2026



www.choctaw.org

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

“History Rocks” Tour comes to CCMS

CHOCTAW, Miss. – The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians welcomed William “Billy” Kirkland, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior, and a member of the Navajo Nation, to the Choctaw Central Middle School (CCMS) campus on Friday, February 20, 2026, as part of the “History Rocks: America250’s Trail to Independence Tour.”

The tour is an initiative of U.S. Department of Education Secretary Linda McMahon. It is traveling to all 50 states in the order in which they joined the Union. This is the tour’s 20th stop, as Mississippi was the 20th state to join the Union on December 10, 1817. CCMS was nominated and then selected as Mississippi’s stop for the “History Rocks” tour.

see HISTORY ROCKS, pg. 6



Pictured above, from left to right, are CCMS Princess A'ria McMillan, Tucker Tribal Council Representative/Education Committee Chair Demando Mingo, 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs William “Billy” Kirkland, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, CCMS Principal Shannon Smith, CCHS Principal Alaric Keams, Choctaw Tribal Schools' Administrative Assistant Breanna Isaac, & CCMS Brave Kai Johnson.

PRES receives national honor at conference

The Choctaw Tribal Schools (CTS) is proud to announce that Pearl River Elementary School (PRES) has been recognized as a National ESEA Distinguished School for 2025. The honor, awarded to only 100 schools across the U.S., was presented during the National ESEA Conference in Denver, CO, held

from Feb. 10-12, 2026.

A delegation - comprised of leadership of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, CTS officials and several PRES staff members - were in attendance to accept the recognition and gain valuable tools and strategies to continue strengthening teaching and learning both in-

side and outside the classroom.

The National ESEA Distinguished Schools Program, operated by the National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators (NAESPA), recognizes schools that demonstrate exceptional academic

see PRES HONOR, pg. 7



In attendance for the recognition ceremony during the 2026 National ESEA Conference in Denver, CO, included several members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' leadership, Choctaw Tribal Schools' administrators & special education personnel, Pearl River Elementary School staff members, & representatives of the Bureau of Indian Education. Also pictured are representatives from the Meskawi Settlement School, fellow 2025 National ESEA Distinguished School honoree.



Special Section Inside

More information on **PROPOSED CHANGES TO TRIBAL ENROLLMENT CODE**

see pages 11-13



Halito!
 Time is one measure of life that does not stand still. The 2025-2026 academic year will conclude in just a few months. Our outstanding Tribal students both near and far have been busy making great accomplishments. We have been celebrating academic achievements, Senior Nights, BETA conventions, science fairs, athletic competitions, etc. And of course, our soon-to-be graduates of the Class of 2026 are eagerly awaiting their moment to walk across the stage and

receive their diplomas. I could not be prouder of our students and all the hard work and efforts they have made thus far this school year. I also offer my biggest congratulations to our winter sports teams who all had outstanding seasons, and I look forward to watching our spring sports teams have their time to shine. More information on these great successes by our students is included in this edition of the Community News.

I am so proud of Pearl River Elementary School, recognized as a 2025 National ESEA Distinguished School. PRES staff and Department of Schools officials proudly represented our Tribe at the National ESEA Conference in Denver, Colorado, where they received this national recognition and gained



Kicking off National Nutrition Month

The Choctaw Health Center's (CHC) Nutrition Department & WIC Program hosted a proclamation signing with Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben in the CHC lobby to kick off National Nutrition Month in our Tribal community on Wednesday, March 4, 2026. The goals of the programs are to promote healthy eating & nutrition awareness for individuals & families of all ages. The event also featured valuable resources, delicious samples, & engaging activities to help our community embrace healthier lifestyles.

valuable tools and strategies to continue strengthening teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom. I am so thankful for the great collaboration between my administration, Tribal Council, Department of Schools, and the Bureau of Indian Education. A heartfelt thanks goes to all of our faculty and staff in our Tribal schools for everything they do to ensure that our stu-

dents get the best education possible in a safe and nurturing environment.

Our Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) hosted a Chair Volleyball Tourney on February 7 at the MBCI Boys and Girls Club Teen Center. Participants enjoyed the fun and competitive atmosphere. Congratulations to

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:

**COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM
 P.O. BOX 6010
 CHOCTAW, MS 39350
 TELEPHONE: 601-663-7736**

Brian C. Willis
Communications Manager

Darron Tubby
Communications Photographer

Deon Denson
Communications Photographer

Jalen Willis
Communications Photographer

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.

Members of the Tribal Leadership to welcome William "Billy" Kirkland, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, to Choctaw included Tribal Council Members, seated, Vice Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr. (Bogue Chitto); standing, from left to right, Kendall Wallace (Bogue Chitto), Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta), Richard Sockey (Standing Pine), Demando Mingo (Tucker), Angela Hundley (Bogue Chitto), 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Sec. Kirkland, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Dorothy Wilson (Tucker), Kent Wesley (Pearl River), Nigel Gibson (Pearl River), Lalanía Denson (Standing Pine), Sam John (Red Water), & Deborah Martin (Pearl River).



tournament champions Team JJ Billy. Thank you, SDPI, for hosting this fun and energizing event and for your continued dedication to promoting healthy and active lifestyles!

The Tribe was well represented at the Dixie National Parade in Jackson on Saturday, February 14 with a beautifully decorated float featuring the Mystic Wind Social Dance Group and the MBCI Department of Early Childhood Education American Indian Day Brave Ezra'Ky Bell. In honor of America250, which celebrates the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, the parade theme was "For Love of Country." At the conclusion of the parade, an awards ceremony was held, in which the MBCI float won First Place in the Float category. I thank everyone who had a hand in designing, decorating, and participating on the float, and congratulations on the win!

I was pleased to be a part of the Mardi Gras Parade and Celebration held on Tuesday, February 17, at the Choctaw Elderly Activity Center. Our beloved Tribal Elders and residents from the Choctaw Residential Center were brought together to enjoy the parade and receive goodies and treats. Thank you to my Tribal Administration, Pearl River Tribal Council Representative Nigel Gibson, Princess Lexi, Choctaw Transit, Choctaw Food Distribution, Choctaw Behavioral Health, and the Elderly Center staff, who made sure the Elders and our CRC residents had a great time!

On February 19, I along with our 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Tribal Council Representatives Christopher Eaves (Crystal Ridge), Kendall Wallace (Bogue Chitto), Kent Wesley (Pearl River), Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta), Sam John (Red Water), and

Demando Mingo (Tucker), and officials from the MBCI Office of Construction Management, took part in a dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony for the Crystal Ridge Community Cemetery. I appreciate Councilman Wallace for offering remarks and a prayer to consecrate the site. Although it is not something we wish to think upon, I am honored that we were able to establish a cemetery for community members for their final resting place.

Following the cemetery dedication ceremony, we went down the road, where the Choctaw Housing Authority (CHA) hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for housing units to be built in Crystal Ridge. CHA Executive Director Gary Ben began the ceremony with welcoming remarks, followed by a prayer from Councilman Wallace and remarks by Councilman Eaves and me. Then the

ground was broken to commemorate the new housing project.

I am thankful to my administration, the Tribal Council, Construction Management, Choctaw Housing Authority, project partners, and all others who have worked with us to provide these needed developments in the Crystal Ridge Community!

The 20th Annual Youth Rabbitstick Hunt was held on Saturday, February 28, 2026. Participants gathered and took part in our ancestors' traditional method of hunting. Princess Lexi and I were there to greet participants and cheer them on as they went on the hunt. Everyone had fun enjoying the outdoors. T-shirts and door prizes were given away. A delicious lunch was served at the conclusion of the hunt. I extend my congratulations to the Choctaw Wildlife and Parks Department

on this milestone of 20 years of hosting this great event for our Tribal Members.

We are deeply honored that Choctaw Central Middle School was selected by U.S. Department of Education Secretary Linda McMahon as Mississippi's representative for the History Rocks: America 250 tour. A big thank you to Governor Tate Reeves and his office for recommending our school. It was a privilege to welcome Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs William "Billy" Kirkland as our distinguished guest on February 20. I am a strong proponent of education and am dedicated to ensuring our Tribal educational system receives its recognition. The Tribe has a great working relationship with both the Departments of Education and Interior, most presently on the new school

see LETTER, pg. 4



Tribe participates in Dixie National Parade

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) was represented at the Dixie National Parade in downtown Jackson, Miss., on Saturday, Feb. 14. As part of the annual Dixie National Livestock Show & Rodeo, the Dixie National Parade is a time-honored tradition that symbolically kicks off rodeo competitions & features an array of tractor & car clubs, rodeo & other titled queens, decorative floats, marching bands, & the famous Dixie National Wagon Train. The beautiful float featured members of the Mystic Wind Social Dance Group & the MBCI Department of Early Childhood Education American Indian Day Brave Ezra'Ky Bell. In honor of America250, which celebrates the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, the parade theme was "For Love of Country." Many of the parade participants, including the Tribe, decorated their entries in patriotic red, white, & blue. At the conclusion of the parade, an awards ceremony was held, in which the MBCI float won First Place in the Float category! Congratulations, & great job to everyone who had a hand in designing, decorating, & participating on the float!





LETTER continued from page three

project. This partnership helped to bring this program to CCMS. America250 History Rocks was a meaningful celebration of history, and it was truly inspiring to participate alongside our students. The tour is traveling to all 50 states in the order in which they joined the Union, which made CCMS the tour's 20th stop, as Mississippi was the 20th state to join the Union

on December 10, 1817. Secretary Kirkland had the opportunity to visit CCMS Teacher of the Year Susie Henry's English class, where students were working on a project featuring Choctaw tales. He also visited the NASA Teacher Enhancement Center, which has the distinction of being the only center of its kind in the U.S. to be located on a school

campus. Following the visits, CCMS students gathered for an assembly and participated in fun games to test their knowledge in U.S. history. The program concluded with the Choctaw Central Pow Wow Club showcasing traditional Choctaw Social Dancing and BETA student Anzarius Huddleston offering closing remarks. I want to thank everyone involved who helped us to prepare for this event and make Secretary Kirkland feel welcome here in Choctaw.

nity every day, and I look forward to sharing the fruits of our labor with you as we celebrate upcoming groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings. The Choctaw Indian Fair is only a few months away, and I am sure this year's edition of our biggest cultural celebration will be better than ever. Thank you to all of you for your devoted efforts on behalf of our Tribe, and I am proud to stand beside you as we build a better future for our children!

Chi Yakokilih,

Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief



Crystal Ridge Cemetery dedicated

A dedication ceremony was held for the Crystal Ridge Community Cemetery on Thursday, Feb. 19. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Tribal Council Representatives Christopher Eaves (Crystal Ridge), Kendall Wallace (Bogue Chitto), Kent Wesley (Pearl River), Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta), Sam John (Red Water), & Demando Mingo (Tucker), & officials from the MBCI Office of Construction Management, gathered for the dedication. Chief Ben & Councilman Eaves thanked everyone involved in the project to establish a cemetery in Crystal Ridge. Councilman Wallace offered remarks & a prayer to consecrate the site. The ceremony concluded with a ribbon cutting.



CHA breaks ground for Crystal Ridge houses

The Choctaw Housing Authority (CHA) hosted a groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday, Feb. 19 for housing units to be built in the Crystal Ridge community. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Tribal Council Representatives Christopher Eaves (Crystal Ridge), Kendall Wallace (Bogue Chitto), Kent Wesley (Pearl River), Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta), Sam John (Red Water), & Demando Mingo (Tucker), MBCI Director of Administration Jason Grisham, CHA Executive Director Gary Ben & CHA officials, & project partners (MBCI Construction Management & Willis Engineering), were in attendance to help break ground. Director Ben offered welcoming remarks, followed by a prayer from Councilman Wallace & remarks by Councilman Eaves & Chief Ben. The new housing project has three housing units currently under construction. There will be four houses once



the project has been completed (two 2-bedroom/2-bath homes & two 3-bedroom/2-bath homes), all handicap adaptable. Site work plans are being prepared by Willis Engineering, with the site work for three houses done by IKBI. The fourth house is currently out for bid. The projected completion date for the IKBI-awarded homes is June 2026. Thank you to Chief Ben & the Tribal Administration, Choctaw Tribal Council, Choctaw Housing Authority, Construction Management, & project partners for all of your efforts to plan & build top-quality homes for the members of the Crystal Ridge community!

CRC expansion underway

The Choctaw Residential Center (CRC) held a groundbreaking ceremony for an expansion on the south end of the facility on Monday, March 2, 2026.

To help celebrate this momentous occasion were Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Choctaw Tribal Council Members Vice Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr. (Bogue Chitto), Kent Wesley and Deborah Martin (Pearl River), Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta), 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, CRC officials, Tribal administration officials, project partners, Med-South officials, and CRC residents.

Princess Lexi served as the mistress of ceremonies for the event and welcomed all in attendance. CRC Director Gay Flake and Chief Ben offered remarks, thanking

everyone involved in the project and thanking the CRC staff for their dedication and efforts every day. Following the remarks, the official breaking of ground took place, and attendees were invited to enjoy delicious refreshments.

The CRC Expansion Project was developed to address critical space limitations at the existing facility, which is currently operating at full capacity. The lack of adequate space has constrained the Center's ability to provide essential services, particularly staff training and physical therapy, which are vital to maintaining high-quality

care for residents and elders. The expansion is intended to increase functional capacity, improve service delivery, and strengthen long-term care solutions for Tribal members. This project aligns with broader tribal priorities related to community well-being, infrastructure investment, workforce support, and sustainable care services.

The Office of Economic Development (OED) played a central role in advancing the CRC Expansion Project. OED engagement began through its Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) program, whose purpose is to help existing Tribal enterprises grow, address operational challenges, and become more successful. During BEAR meetings, CRC identified the need for additional space and support. In response, OED coordinated with CRC leadership to define project needs and scope.

OED provided construction management support by coordinating with Pryor-Morrow, who assisted in advancing the project through planning and pre-construction activities. In addition, OED supported business planning to ensure long-term operational sustainability.

To initiate the project, OED secured financial assistance through the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program in partnership with Central Electric Power Association (CEPA), providing the critical funding needed to launch the expansion. Construction investment is \$2.4 million.

The contractor is H&M Construction as completion is expected by October 2026. Once completed, the expansion will enhance care capacity, improve training and physical therapy services, support job creation, and strengthen CRC's ability to meet current and future demand.

The project represents a strategic, collaborative effort to address capacity challenges while advancing essential services that support the health and well-being of Tribal and non-Tribal members.



Members of the Tribal leadership & administrators joined CRC officials & project partner representatives as they broke ground for the new CRC expansion on Monday, March 2.

Celebrating Mardi Gras

A Mardi Gras Parade & Celebration was held on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at the Choctaw Elderly Activity Center. Tribal Elders & residents from the Choctaw Residential Center (CRC) gathered & enjoyed the parade & receiving goodies & treats. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & the Tribal Administration, Pearl River Tribal Council Representative Nigel Gibson, 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Choctaw Transit, Choctaw Food Distribution, Choctaw Behavioral Health, & the Elderly Center staff, made sure the Elders & CRC residents had a great time!



HISTORY ROCKS continued from page one

Welcoming Secretary Kirkland to the campus and to Choctaw Tribal lands were Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Rodriguez, Tribal Council Members Vice Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr., Kendall Wallace, and Angela Hundle (Bogue Chitto), Lalanía Denson and Richard Sockey (Standing Pine), Nigel Gibson, Deborah Martin, and Kent Wesley (Pearl River), Demando Mingo and Dorothy Wilson (Tucker), Sam John (Red Water), Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta), CCMS Principal Shannon Smith, and Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) Principal Alaric Keams. Two CCMS Peer Helpers provided the tour of the campus.

"We are deeply honored that Choctaw Central Middle School was selected by Secretary Linda McMahon as Mississippi's representative for the 20th stop of the History Rocks: America 250 tour. A big thank you to Governor Reeves and his office for recommending our school. It was a privilege to welcome Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Billy Kirkland as our distinguished guest," said Tribal Chief Ben.

"I am a strong proponent of education and am dedicated to ensuring our tribal educational system receives its recognition. The Tribe has a great working relationship with both the Departments of Education and Interior, most presently on the new school project. This partnership helped to bring this program to CCMS. A250 History Rocks was a meaningful celebration of history, and it was truly inspiring to participate alongside our students."

Secretary Kirkland visited CCMS Teacher of the Year Susie Henry's English class, where students were working on a project featuring Choctaw



tales. He also visited the NASA Teacher Enhancement Center, which has the distinction of being the only center of its kind in the U.S. to be located on a school campus.

Following the visits, CCMS students gathered for an as-

sembly, where middle school students opened the program with the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem in the Choctaw language. Students then participated in two fun games to test their knowledge of U.S. history.

Before the program concluded, the CCHS Pow Wow Club showcased traditional Choctaw Social Dancing with the Fast War, Stealing Partners, and Walk Dances. BETA student Anzarius Huddleston offered closing remarks.

Princess in Laurel Mardi Gras Parade

Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez participated in the Fraternal Order of Police's Mardi Gras Parade in Laurel on Saturday, Feb. 7. Sponsored by the Bok Homa Casino, the theme for this year's parade was "Blue Lights, Bright Nights." Princess Lexi rode atop Bok Homa Casino's beautifully decorated float. Also participating in the parade were members of the Bogue Homa Development Club. Princess Lexi, along with several associates of Bok Homa Casino, enjoyed throwing out candy & beads to the crowd. Thank you to Bok Homa Casino for hosting Princess Lexi on their float as she had the best time!





SDPI hosts Chair Volleyball Tourney

The Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) hosted a Chair Volleyball Tourney on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at the MBCI Boys & Girls Club Teen Center in Choctaw. Participants enjoyed the fun

& competitive atmosphere. Congratulations to Team JJ Billy on the win as tournament champions! Thank you, SDPI, for your continued dedication to promoting healthy & active lifestyles!

CTS students place at Beta conferences

Members of the Choctaw Tribal School's Beta Clubs recently attended their respective state conventions at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center in Biloxi.

The 80th Annual Senior Beta Convention for high school students was held from February 23-25, 2026. The 34th Annual Elementary/Junior Beta Convention for elementary and middle school students was held from February 25-27, 2026.

Congratulations to the following students who placed in their respective categories. First through third place winners advanced to the national

competition, to be held in June 2026 in Nashville, TN.

SENIOR CONVENTION WINNERS

Creative Writing Division I - Amee Stell, Choctaw Central High School (CCHS), 4th

place.

Digitally Enhanced Photography Division II - Lillian Hickman, CCHS, 1st place.

Hand Drawn Anime Division I - Tamiyah York, CCHS, 3rd place.

Jewelry Division II - Alexis Weeks, CCHS, 2nd place.

Pottery Division I - Yasmine Hickman, CCHS, 4th place.

Premier Performer Senior Dancer - Karsyn Wallace, CCHS, 1st place.

see **BETA WINNERS**, pg. 8



Choctaw Central High School Beta Club

PRES HONOR continued from page one

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.

The CTS System consists of six elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school, located in the east central Mississippi counties of Neshoba, Leake, and Newton. The schools are fully accredited by the Mississippi Department of Education and by AdvanceED. The system believes in the pursuit of excel-

lence and their motto is *Alla Momat Ikkaná Chih* (All Children Will Learn).

As the largest elementary school in the CTS system, PRES serves a significant portion of the student population. While all five of the 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 CTS on a broader stage.

CTS strive to be exemplary and exceptional schools that inspire, challenge, and empower students to succeed in a global-

ly competitive society. The CTS System is the largest Tribally controlled, consolidated school system in the country with over 2,200 students in grades Pre-K to 12. The Tribe exercises direct oversight of the schools and curriculum.

Deepest congratulations were extended to the students, faculty, staff, families, and the entire PRES community for this extraordinary achievement. This national recognition affirms the exceptional instructional quality, student achievement, and educational leadership within Choctaw Tribal Schools.

BETA WINNERS continued from page seven

Quilling Division II - Taijah Kessinger, CCHS, 5th place.

Spanish 10th Grade - Chacelyn Dixon, CCHS, 3rd place.

Woodworking Division II - Taijion Dixon, CCHS, 4th place.

ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR CONVENTION WINNERS

Accessorized Design Elementary - Red Water Elementary School (RWES), 5th place.

Campaign Skit Elementary (State) -

Conehatta Elementary School (CES), 4th place.

Campaign Skit Junior (State) - Choctaw Central Middle School (CCMS), 4th place.

Fiber Arts Elementary - Gracie Wilson, CES, 4th place.

Hand Drawn Anime Junior - Lindraya King, Tucker Elementary School (TES), 2nd place.

Jewelry Elementary - Isabelle Flint, RWES, 1st place; Ka'Draizlyn Williams, CES, 2nd place; Emerald Runnels, Bogue Chitto Elementary School (BCES), 3rd place; Khelali Dixon, Pearl River Elementary School (PRES), 5th place.

Jewelry Junior - Grayson Tangle, Standing Pine Elementary School (SPES), 5th place.

Living Literature Junior - Red Water Elementary School, 3rd place.

Mixed Media Junior - Braden Sam, SPES, 1st place.

Painting Elementary - Violet Farve, SPES, 3rd place.

Performing Arts Junior (Solo, Duo, Trio - Variety Act) - Pearl River Elementary School, 4th place.

Quiz Bowl Junior - Pearl River Elementary School, 5th place.

Scrapbook Junior - Standing Pine Elementary School, 5th place.

Sculpture Elementary - Maydream York, SPES, 1st place.

Social Studies 4th Grade - Zayvier Wesley-Gamarra, PRES, 5th place.

Social Studies 5th Grade - Kylus John, PRES, 4th place.

Three Dimensional Design Elementary - Standing Pine Elementary School, 4th place.



Bogue Chitto Elementary School Beta Club



Pearl River Elementary School Beta Club



Tucker Elementary School Beta Club

continued next page



From left to right, CCHS Beta members Karsyn Wallace, Premier Performer Senior Dancer 1st place; Taijah Kessinger, Quilling Division II 5th place; BCES Beta members Larson Robinson, Tiylee Bacca, Emerald Runnels, & Amelia Williams, Two Dimensional Design Elementary 1st place.



From left to right, PRES Beta members Mariah McBeath, Neilani Thompson, & Kyree Bell, Performing Arts Junior (Solo, Duo, Trio - Variety Act) 4th place; Zaine Bell, Mi'Kel Osceola, Neilani Thompson, & Andrew Blickenstaff, Quiz Bowl Junior 5th place; Kylus John, Social Studies 5th Grade, 4th place; Zayvier Wesley-Gamarra, Social Studies 4th Grade, 5th place; & Andrew Blickenstaff, US History 6th Grade, 4th place.



Pictured, from left to right, are RWES Beta members Ja'Zairen Solomon, Kajun Burnside, Cayson Willis, Zayden KyYale Willis, Brayon Billie, Charita Tubby, Landry Wilson, Ellynn Grisham, Isabelle Flint, Miley Dixon, & Nylah Wilson. They placed in the following categories: Accessorized Design Elementary, 5th place; Jewelry Elementary, 1st place; Living Literature Junior, 3rd place; & Two Dimensional Design Elementary, 3rd place.



From left to right, SPES Beta members placing in the following categories included: Maydream York, Sculpture Elementary 1st place; Violet Farve, Painting Elementary 3rd place; Three Dimensional Design Elementary 4th place; Riley Wilson, Scrapbook Junior 5th place; Braden Sam, Mixed Media Junior 1st place; Grayson Tangle, Jewelry Junior 5th place; & Cerulean Lewis, Two Dimensional Design Junior 1st place.

Two Dimensional Design Elementary - Bogue Chitto Elementary School, 1st place; Red Water Elementary School, 3rd place.

Two Dimensional Design Junior - Standing Pine Elementary School, 1st place.

US History 6th Grade - Andrew Blickenstaff, PRES, 4th place.

RIGHT, Conehatta Elementary School Beta Club placed fourth in the Campaign Skit Elementary (State).



Beta members place at convention

Congratulations to the following Tribal students who placed in their respective competition categories at the State Beta Convention in Biloxi. At the Elementary/Junior Convention, Jordee Jackson (pictured left) of Neshoba Central Middle School placed 3rd in the Jewelry Junior category. At the Senior Convention, Terriann Ben (right) of Neshoba Central High School placed 3rd in Social Studies 12th Grade. Not pictured, Miyah Henry of Neshoba Central High School placed 1st in Jewelry Division II.

ECCE hosts Native American Heritage Night

The East Central Community College (ECCE) Women's Basketball Program hosted a Native American Heritage Night at the Brackeen-Wood Gymnasium on the ECCE campus in Decatur on Monday, February 23, 2026. Two of the members on the Lady Warriors roster are outstanding Choctaw athletes Jakaylyn York (#1) & Raiyleigh Perry (#4). Prior to the Lady Warriors game against the Northeast Mississippi Community College Lady Tigers, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben presented beautiful medallions to ECCE President Dr. Brent Gregory, Athletic Director Paul Nixon, & Lady Warriors Basketball Head Coach Tia Pringle. At halftime, the Choctaw Central Pow Wow Dance Group



showcased the Stealing Partners & Walk Dances. Throughout the game, Conehatta Elementary School students were recognized for their recent excellent test scores. Congratulations to the Lady Warriors as they defeated the Lady Tigers 62-54! Pictured above, from left to right, are Jakaylyn York, Athletic Director Paul Nixon, Chief Ben, ECCE President Dr. Brent Gregory, Lady Warriors Coach Tia Pringle, & Raiyleigh Perry.



MCC celebrates Native American Appreciation Day

MERIDIAN, Miss. — It was more than just another conference victory inside the Graham Gymnasium on Saturday, February 21, 2026.

On Native American Appreciation Day, the Meridian Community College women's basketball team honored Choctaw standouts Nataysia Willis (#23) and Ashlynn Stephens (#3) while earning a decisive 78-62 victory over Coahoma Community College. With the win, the Lady Eagles improved to 20-5 overall and 8-3

in MACCC play, marking the program's first 20-win season since 2022-23.

The contest, originally postponed due to the ice storm that impacted Coahoma earlier this month, began with a powerful rendition of the National Anthem performed in the Choctaw language by Tribal youth Daislin Isaac.

Meridian wasted little time taking control on the court. The Lady Eagles built a 22-15 lead after the first quarter and extended it to 47-34 by halftime.



The Mystic Wind Social Dance Group showcased several dances during halftime.

At the break, the Mystic Wind Social Dance Group, performed for the large home crowd, joined on the floor by members of the Lady Eagles in

Eagles led 59-47 after three quarters and closed out the 78-62 win with steady play down the stretch.

Head Coach Jocelyn McGilberry praised both the milestone victory and the meaningful celebration inside the Graham.

"It was a special day for our program," McGilberry said. "Reaching 20 wins is something we're proud of, but seeing our team celebrate together with members of the tribe at halftime meant just as much. It was a great atmosphere and a great win."

Back on the hardwood, Meridian maintained command. The Lady



From left to right, National Anthem singer Daislin Isaac, MCC Lady Eagles Head Coach Jocelyn McGilberry, Lady Eagle Ashlynn Stephens, Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, Lady Eagle Nataysia Willis, Lady Eagles Assistant Coach Jatterra Hurst, & a Mystic Wind pow wow youth dancer.



CCHS Warriors football team receives donation

A special donation presentation was held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at the back of the Choctaw Central High School gym/field house in support of the CCHS Warriors Football Team. Coaches & players gathered as a generous gift was presented to help purchase Guardian helmet covers, enhancing the safety & protection of our student-athletes on the field. The donation was made in honor of the late Sheila Rivera, reflecting her family's heartfelt commitment to supporting our Choctaw youth & the community. Mrs. Rivera's widower, Nolan; her mother, Rita Mattered; her siblings, Sonny &



Angelina; & other family members were present to make the presentation. Together, they shared a meaningful moment of remembrance, honoring Sheila's legacy while investing in the safety, well-being, & future of our Warriors. The ceremony served as both a touching tribute to Sheila's memory & a powerful show of love & community support for CCHS football.



Participates in Indigenous Bowl

Mississippi Choctaw student-athletes Kooper Wesley, Malakai Morris, Slater Jim, Schade Thompson, Tajjion Dixon (Choctaw Central High School), & Ladinian King (Taylorsville High School) participated in the 2026 Indigenous Bowl, held at the Soboba Oaks Sports Complex on the Soboba Indian Reservation in San Jacinto, CA, on Sunday, February 22. Players were selected to either the Res Dogs & Unconquered Young Natives teams. Serving as an assistant to the coaching staff was Choctaw Central coach Kiezer Johnson. At the end of regulation, both teams were tied 14-14. In OT, both teams had one series to score, but were unsuccessful & the game ended with a tie. The bowl, a premier event for the 7G Foundation to further the goal of molding the next 7 generations of Native leaders through education, athletics, culture & real-world support, was first played in 2017. Open to high school seniors of American Indian descent who have not yet enrolled full-time in college, the event is an opportunity for young, Native athletes to showcase their talent on the football field, work with coaches & mentors, & develop the skills necessary to move to the next level of competition.

Track Schedule

2025 - 2026



March 16th	→	Big Blue Invitational @ Meridian HS
March 26th	→	Starkville Invitational @ Starkville HS
March 30th	→	Barbara Brown Invitational @ Meridian HS
April 11th	→	Regionals @ TBD
April 18th	→	Super Regionals @ TBD
April 20th	→	South State @ TBD
May 1st	→	MHSAA 4A State Championships @ Pearl HS



OFFICE OF THE TRIBAL CHIEF CYRUS BEN

101 Industrial Road • P.O. Box 6010 • Choctaw, Mississippi 39350
Phone: (601) 650-1501 • Fax: (601) 650-1606

Letter from the Office of the Tribal Chief

Dear Tribal Members,

Halito, I hope this message finds you and your families well. I am writing to inform you that the Tribal Council will be voting on proposed changes to the Tribal Enrollment Code on April 14, 2026. These updates are intended to modernize and clarify MBCI enrollment processes for future generations.

The Tribal Code only requires that the Tribe make notification to tribal members through a newspaper of general circulation (§22-1-3). However, we want to go a step further to ensure that all tribal members have the opportunity to learn about the proposed changes, ask questions, and share their thoughts. To accomplish this, I invite all tribal members to a series of meetings that will be held in each tribal community over the coming weeks. These meetings will give everyone a chance to participate in open discussions.

Key proposed changes to the Enrollment Code include clarification of how MBCI Choctaw blood degree is calculated, and the expansion of the Tribal Enrollment Committee to include a representative from all eight tribal communities. To be very clear, this is not a lowering of blood quantum.

I strongly encourage you to attend the meeting in your respective community. Your input is an important part of the decision-making process, and we want to hear from as many tribal members as possible.

Meeting dates, times, and locations are included in the document following this message. I look forward to seeing many of you throughout the communities during these sessions.

Yakoki,


Cyrus Ben
Tribal Chief

“Choctaw Self-Determination”



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEETINGS

AMENDMENT TO THE TRIBAL ENROLLMENT ORDINANCE

COMMUNITY	DATE	TIME
Henning, TN	Saturday, March 28, 2026	11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Conehatta	Monday, March 30, 2026	6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Tucker	Tuesday, March 31, 2026	6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Crystal Ridge	Wednesday, April 1, 2026	6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Standing Pine	Thursday, April 2, 2026	5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Red Water	Thursday, April 2, 2026	7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Bogue Chitto	Monday, April 6, 2026	6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Pearl River	Thursday, April 9, 2026	6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Bogue Homa	Saturday, April 11, 2026	11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

All meetings will be at the community CERF buildings.

Tribal Council Vote • April 14, 2026

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE TRIBAL ENROLLMENT CODE

MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS TRIBAL COUNCIL VOTE - APRIL 14, 2026

The Tribal Council will be voting on accepting or rejecting changes to the Tribal Enrollment Code, Title 22 of the Choctaw Tribal Code, on April 14th, 2026.

Most changes are minor. These proposed changes are to clarify the meaning of certain items already within the Code, adapt the Code to current language and technology, and add to the Code some enrollment procedures that are already in place by the Tribal Enrollment Office.

Key changes include the following:

CLARIFICATION ON THE CALCULATION OF MBCI CHOCTAW BLOOD DEGREE:

This change WILL NOT lower minimum blood degree to become an enrolled MBCI tribal member. This is only a change in how blood degree is calculated. Minimum blood degree to be a member of the MBCI is still 1/2 degree.

Currently, there is nothing within the Enrollment Code that explains how MBCI Choctaw blood degree is calculated, other than that a person must have 1/2 MBCI Choctaw blood degree to be an enrolled member of the MBCI.

HOW THE TRIBE CALCULATES BLOOD DEGREE CURRENTLY:

Currently, the Tribal Enrollment Office only counts the MBCI Choctaw blood degree of the biological parent(s) listed on the birth certificate if that parent is 1/2 MBCI Choctaw blood degree and already enrolled in the Tribe.

If a parent isn't enrolled with the MBCI, their MBCI Choctaw blood degree is not used to determine the blood degree of their child, even if they had an amount, such as 1/4.

HOW THE TRIBE WILL CALCULATE BLOOD DEGREE IF THE PROPOSED CHANGE IS ACCEPTED:

Now the Tribe will count the MBCI Choctaw blood degree of both biological parents*.

It does not matter:

- if the parent is enrolled in another Tribal Nation
- or not enrolled at all

If the parent has MBCI Choctaw blood degree, it will be counted and considered when determining whether their child meets the 1/2 MBCI Choctaw blood degree minimum to be a member.

* There is still the constitutional requirement that the child have at least one enrolled parent: "...born to any enrolled member..." Article III Sec. 1(b).

THIS IS THE PROPOSED CODE SECTION TO ACCOMPLISH THAT:

§22-1-2 Blood Degree Computation from Base Roll

For the purposes of calculating Choctaw blood degree and in order to determine whether an applicant has fulfilled the requisite one-half (1/2) Choctaw blood degree required for membership with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, the Tribal Enrollment Office shall:

- (a) Determine the Choctaw blood degree of each parent of applicant in accordance with the above¹, and;
- (b) Divide the Choctaw blood degree of each parent by one-half (1/2), and;
- (c) Combine/add the Choctaw blood degree of each parent to determine the Choctaw blood degree of applicant, regardless if the parent is enrolled in another Tribal Nation.

continued next page

Determinations of Choctaw blood degree may result in an amount that is less than the requisite one-half (1/2) necessary for membership with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Notwithstanding this fact, an individual whose Choctaw blood degree is below the requisite one-half (1/2) may still use such amount to calculate the eligibility of that individual's biological children, if applicable.

STEP-BY-STEP EXPLANATION OF HOW THE MBCI CHOCTAW BLOOD DEGREE CALCULATION WILL WORK:

1. The Tribal Enrollment Office determines the Choctaw blood degree of each biological parent listed on the birth certificate. A DNA test is required.
2. The verified blood degree of each parent is halved because a child receives half of their DNA from each parent.
3. The two blood degrees are then added together.
4. That final number will be the applicant's MBCI Choctaw blood degree. If it is 1/2 or more, then applicant will be eligible for membership in the MBCI. If it is less than 1/2, then that applicant will not be eligible for membership in the MBCI, but will receive a non-enrolled member CDIB.

EXPANSION OF THE TRIBAL ENROLLMENT COMMITTEE:

Currently, the Tribal Enrollment Committee has five members. This will be increased to eight members, one from each community, if these changes are passed by the Tribal Council.

This change will be within §22-2-1 Tribal Enrollment Committee.

§22-1-1 which states "Any child of one-half (1/2) or more Choctaw blood born to any enrolled member of the band after January 1, 1940 shall be entitled to membership." This is an excerpt from the MBCI Constitution and Bylaws.

ADDRESSING SURROGACIES:

The current Enrollment Code does not include a surrogacies section. A new addition to the Tribal Code will address surrogacies. This is included as §22-2-15 Surrogacies. The surrogacies addition provides an enrollment process for children born through surrogacies. This process will allow the Tribal Enrollment Office to test the genetic parents of the child, and not someone who just physically gave birth to a child.

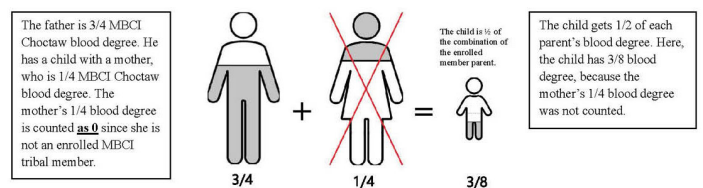
Proposed §22-1-2 Blood Degree Computation from Base Roll



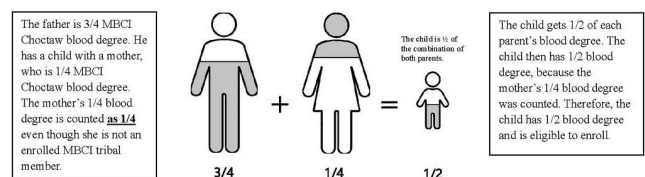
IMPORTANT INFORMATION

MINIMUM BLOOD DEGREE TO BE AN ENROLLED MEMBER IS STILL 1/2. THIS CHANGE DOES NOT LOWER ELIGIBLE BLOOD DEGREE. ONLY HOW IT IS CALCULATED.

Current Calculation Method:



Proposed Calculation Method:



To review the full Ordinance visit <https://www.choctaw.org/documents/>

To speak with someone please call the Enrollment Office at 601-650-1542 or email ordinance22@choctaw.org



To view the full redline version of the Enrollment Code (Title 22) please scan the QR code or visit choctaw.org.



To speak with someone please call the Enrollment Office at 601-650-1542 or email ordinance22@choctaw.org





CCHS State Champions honored

Prior to the 2026 Class 4A basketball playoff game between the Choctaw Central Lady Warriors & Lawrence County Lady Cougars on Friday, February 20, a special recognition ceremony was hosted by Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben in the CCHS gymnasium. The Lady Warriors & Warriors' state championship teams were recognized for their incredible achievements & the lasting mark they've made for Choctaw Tribal Schools. From that historic first gold ball in 1996 to eight more championship teams that followed, the legacy of the Choctaw Central Lady Warriors continues to shine bright! The Warriors won back-to-back titles in 1998 & 1999 as they set the standard for generations of Warriors to follow. This game also marked the final CCHS basketball game ever played in the current Warrior gymnasium, closing one chapter of history while celebrating the champions who helped build it.



Teams compete for basketball titles

Several area teams featuring Tribal student-athletes advanced in the 2026 MHSAA girls/boys basketball playoffs for a chance to play for state championships in their respective classification. We would like to acknowledge the following Tribal student-athletes, their teams & post-season honors they may have earned.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

The **NESHOBA CENTRAL LADY ROCKETS** were one win away from capturing their third Class 6A state championship in five years, but a determined Olive Branch team came away with a 58-57 win in the finals at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson on Thursday, March 5. The Lady Rockets concluded their season with a 26-7 record while winning the Region 2-6A regular season & tournament championships. They had playoff wins against Lake Cormorant 82-46, South Panola 85-24 & Forest Hill 64-27 to earn a berth in the finals. Named to the Region 2-6A All-District Team were Kyli Truss, Taelyn Mingo, Lailah Henry, & Shay Lewis. Iley Denson & Jiar Henry were named honorable mentions. Denson was also a recipient of the 2026 MHSAA/BSN Sports Scholar Athlete Award for Class 6A Girls prior to the championship game.



NESHOBA CENTRAL LADY ROCKETS



NEWTON COUNTY LADY COUGARS



CHOCTAW CENTRAL LADY WARRIORS

The **NEWTON COUNTY LADY COUGARS** made it to the Class 4A semifinals with playoff wins over Raymond 56-28, Columbia 50-39 & Moss

Point 46-15. Only one team remained in order to play for the state championship, and that team was Louis-

ville. Despite playing in the morning hours of Tuesday, March 3, the Lady
continued next page

Cougars played tough with the Wildcats but came short 52-35 to end their season with a 17-9 record. Named to the 5-4A All-District Team were Dazlie Tubby & Shae Jimmie.

The **CHOCTAW CENTRAL LADY WARRIORS**, defending Class 4A champion, were seeking their 10th state title since 1996. After capturing the Region 5-4A regular season & tournament titles, the Lady Warriors advanced in the Class 4A playoffs with wins over Mendenhall 75-20 & Lawrence County 48-36. In the quarterfinals on Friday, February 27, Choctaw Central faced Morton for the third consecutive year & a rematch of last year's 4A title game. Morton took an early lead, but the Lady Warriors fought back and took the Panthers to the wire, but were defeated 51-49. Choctaw Central concluded the season with a 24-6 record. Named to the 5-4A All-District Team were Lacy Alex, Yuriana Crosby, Zyanna Thomas, & Reannan Thomas. Kailynn Perry was named Girls Best Co-Defense & Yazzlyn Alex was named MVP. Lady Warriors Head Coach Elyse Willis as named Region 5-4A Girls Basketball Coach of the Year.

BOYS BASKETBALL

The **LEAKE CENTRAL GATORS** had the opportunity to win their first state basketball championship as they faced Morton in the finals of the Class 4A tournament on Friday, March 6 at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson. Leake Central made their way through the playoffs with wins over Forest 73-49, Columbia 83-63, defending champion Raymond 58-56, & Greenwood 50-42 in the semifinals. After a strong first quarter & halftime lead, Morton battled back to go on a 10-0 run in the final minutes to win 67-55. The Gators ended their season with a 25-9 record. They were the 5-4A regular season & tournament champions. Named to the 5-4A All-District Team was Jer' Michael Stewart, & Cassius Koppaddy was named MVP.

The **CHOCTAW CENTRAL WARRIORS** were highly competitive in the 2025-2026 season as they were runner-up to Leake Central in the 5-4A regular season & tournament. In the opening round of the Class 4A playoffs, they were defeated by eventual state champion Morton 63-60. They ended their season with a 17-10 record. Named to All-District Team were Zyan Hickman, Elias Isaac & Devion Davis. Koi Denson was named Boys Best Defense & Treyton Ricks was named Boys Best Co-Offense.

The **NEWTON COUNTY COUGARS** headed into the Class 4A playoffs where they faced Mendenhall in the opening round. The Cougars battled the Tigers throughout the contest, but Mendenhall came out victorious with a 65-52 win. The Cougars concluded their season with a 10-13 record.

The **NORTHEAST JONES TIGERS**, of Region 4-5A, were defeated in the opening round of the Class 5A playoffs to South Jones 64-28. They



LEAKE CENTRAL GATORS



CHOCTAW CENTRAL WARRIORS



NEWTON COUNTY COUGARS



NORTHEAST JONES TIGERS



NESHOBA CENTRAL ROCKETS

concluded their season with a 17-13 record.

The **NESHOBA CENTRAL ROCKETS** missed the Class 6A playoffs as their season concluded in the opening round of the Region 2-6A

tournament as they fell to Callaway 77-60. The Rockets ended the season with a 14-13 record. Named to the All-District Team was Emjae Willis, & JQ Hughes was named honorable mention.



Lady Bulldogs have outstanding season

The Mississippi School for the Deaf (MSD) Lady Bulldogs Basketball Team had an outstanding 2025-2026 season! Choctaw youth freshman Chyler Thomas (jersey #1) plays guard as the team exhibited hard work, determination, & Bulldog pride throughout the season. They placed fourth overall in their district & won the 2025 Alabama Classic championship. Great job, Chyler & the Lady Bulldogs! The future is bright for Lady Bulldog Basketball!

Area teams compete for soccer championships

Several area high school teams featuring Tribal student-athletes participated in the 2026 MHSAA girls/boys soccer playoffs for an opportunity to play for state championships in their respective classification.

The Choctaw Central Lady Warriors made a run in the Class 4A playoffs as they were Region 4-4A runner-up. After an opening round victory over Ripley 7-0, the Lady Warriors faced Itawamba Agricultural.

GIRLS SOCCER

continued next page



CHOCTAW CENTRAL LADY WARRIORS



STATE BOWLING CHAMPIONS

Congratulations to the Neshoba Central High School Bowling Teams as they competed in the MHSAA Class II Bowling Championships on Monday, February 2 at Fannin Lanes in Brandon. Choctaw seniors Isla Tangle & the Lady Rockets brought home another state championship as Zaymian Williamson & the Rockets placed third overall. Prior to the competition, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben presented Isla & Zaymian tokens of congratulations in recognition of their outstanding achievement in advancing to the state championships.



CCHS Bowling competes for state titles

The Choctaw Central Bowling Teams advanced to the MHSAA State Bowling Championships at Fannin Lanes in Brandon on Monday, February 9, 2026. During the season, the Warriors won the Class I Central Region Championship as Ladainian Isom, Malloy Williams & Seth Lewis were named to the All-District Team. The Lady Warriors were Class I Central Region Runner-Up as A'Lali Dixon was named to the All-District Team. Pictured above, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben presented the CCHS teams with goodie bags on Friday, February 6, in recognition of their hard work & dedication throughout the season & wished them well in the state championships. Competing in the tournaments included (in no order) Lady Warriors Zoe Bell, A'Lali Dixon, Kady Hickman, Amaya Isaac, & Braelynn Thomas. For the Warriors, it was Jzahn Conrad, Ladainian Isom, Seth Lewis, Ryden McGee, Malloy Williams, Micky Williams, & Hector Willis. Serving as Head Coach was Kendall Steve. Congratulations also to Ladainian Isom & Malloy Williams as they were selected 2026 Boys Bowling All-Stars by the Mississippi Association of Coaches.



KOSCIUSKO LADY WHIPPETS



NORTHEAST JONES LADY TIGERS



CHOCTAW CENTRAL WARRIORS



NEWTON COUNTY COUGARS

In a close contest, the Lady Warriors ended their season with a 4-3 loss & a 9-7-1 record.

The Kosciusko Lady Whippets captured this season's Region 4-4A title & entered the Class 4A playoffs facing Senatobia in the opening round. After a 7-0 win, the Whippets faced Amory in the 2nd round. What was a defensive struggle became a tough loss for Kosciusko as they were defeated 1-0 to conclude their season with a 12-9-1 record.

The Northeast Jones Lady Tigers made the Class 5A playoffs as the runners-up from Region 4-5A. They defeated Brookhaven 4-3 in the opening round, then Sumrall 3-1 in the quarterfinals. In the semifinals, they lost to East Central by

the score of 2-0. They concluded their season with a 13-10-2 record.

In the Class 6A playoffs, the Neshoba Central Lady Rockets were runners-up in Region 2-6A as they faced Grenada in the opening round. After a 6-0 victory, the Lady Rockets advanced into the quarterfinals to Saltillo. The Lady Rockets played tough but were defeated 5-0. The Lady Rockets concluded their season with a 17-8-1 record.

BOYS SOCCER

The Choctaw Central Warriors were #3 from Region 4-4A as they faced Byhalia in the Class 4A playoff opener. After a 4-2 win, they faced



NORTHEAST JONES TIGERS

New Albany the next day in the second round. New Albany took advantage to come away with a 8-0 win. The Warriors ended their season with a 5-13 record.

The Newton County Cougars were runners-up in Region 5-4A & faced Mendenhall in the Class 4A playoffs. With a 10-0 win, the Cougars faced Poplarville in the second round. In a defensive struggle, the game ended in a 0-0 tie. In a shootout, Poplarville came

away with a 5-4 advantage for the win. The Cougars ended the season with a 13-12-3 record.

The Northeast Jones Tigers, Region 4-5A runner-up, headed into the Class 5A playoffs as they defeated Brookhaven 3-2 in the opening round. They defeated South Jones 1-0 in the quarterfinals. In the semifinals, they lost to eventual state champion Sumrall by the score of 2-0. The Tigers concluded their season with a 15-5-1 record.

CCHS hosts Basketball Senior Night

Choctaw Central High School hosted its Basketball Senior Night on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, honoring the dedication & achievements of its senior student-athletes. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2025-2026 Choctaw Indian Princess Lexi Camille Rodriguez, & Tribal Council members Richard Sockey & Lalania Denson joined family members, friends, & coaches to congratulate these outstanding seniors for their hard work. Recognized were, top row from left to right, Lady Warriors Yazzlyn Alex, Yuriana Crosby, Hailey Jefferson, Reannan Thomas, & Zyanna Thomas; bottom row, Warriors Zyan Hickman, Elias Isaac, Jamire Lewis, Treyton Ricks, & Tyris Stokes. Congratulations to all the seniors on this memorable milestone as we wish each of you continued success in your future endeavors.



Newton County hosts Senior Night

Newton County High School held its Basketball Senior Night on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, recognizing the accomplishments of its senior student-athletes. Among those honored were Choctaw Tribal members Dazlie Tubby & Shallasen Jimmie. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & Tribal Council Member Timothy Thomas Sr. joined their families as they celebrated their well-deserved recognition. Congratulations & best wishes on continued success in all your future endeavors.



Sequoyah host Basketball Senior Night

Sequoyah High School in Tahlequah, Okla., held its Basketball Senior Night on Monday evening, Feb. 16. Outstanding Lady Indian & Choctaw youth Melyssa Williams was among those honored for her achievements on & off the court. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben sent a special gift, delivered by family members, to congratulate Melyssa & commemorate her success throughout her high school career. Family & friends celebrated the occasion & presented her with additional gifts in recognition of this milestone. Congratulations as we wish you continued success throughout your senior year & beyond.



Columbia Academy Senior Night

Choctaw youth Will Thomas, a student at Columbia Academy of Columbia, Miss., was honored along with his senior classmates at an Archery Senior Night recognition event held during the Waldo Cleland Cougar Classics on Monday, Feb. 9. Will is the son of Tribal Member Leonard Thomas & his wife Robyn of Columbia & the grandson of former Tribal Council member Jesse Thomas & his wife Velma of the Conehatta community. Will's aunt Valerie Thomas presented him with a gift on behalf of Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Congratulations & best wishes in your future endeavors!



Senior Night at Riverside

Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, Okla., held a Senior Night recognition ceremony on Friday, Feb. 6. Amongst the players recognized were Choctaw youth Arianna Cotton, Tayden Wesley, Landon Davis, Jairdan Thomas, & Daisy Perkins (not pictured). The seniors were joined by their families, teammates, friends, & supporters. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben sent the seniors congratulatory goody bags in honor of their achievements. Congratulations to these outstanding seniors as we wish them the best on their future endeavors!



Davis signs with ECCC

Choctaw youth & Union High School senior Aidan Davis signed his intent to continue his football & academic career at East Central Community College in Decatur, Miss. Family members, teammates, coaches, & friends gathered to celebrate with Aidan during a signing ceremony on Wednesday, Feb. 4. Congratulations as we offer best wishes in your future endeavors!



Thomas signs with Augsburg University

Choctaw youth & Riverside Indian School senior Jairdan Thomas signed his intent to continue his cross country & academic career at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minn. Family members, teammates, coaches, & friends gathered to celebrate with Jairdan during a signing ceremony on Friday, Feb. 6. Congratulations as we wish you the best in your future endeavors!



Belhaven hosts Senior Day

Belhaven University in Jackson, Miss., hosted Senior Day activities on Saturday, February 21, 2026, as the Blazers faced Wesleyan (Ga.). Among the seniors honored were Choctaw student-athletes Kyla Farmer (left) & Veronica Williams. Helping them celebrate were family & friends as they were offered best wishes in their future endeavors. Congratulations also to Veronica as she was named to her first All-CCS (Collegiate Conference of the South) First Team honor after serving as one of the Blazers' most consistent & versatile performers throughout the season. The senior guard averaged 17 points in multiple key conference contests down the stretch & routinely filled the stat sheet with scoring, rebounding, assists, & steals. In conference play, she averaged 12.3 points per game while shooting over 81 percent at the free-throw line.

PRCC holds Sophomore Night

Pearl River Community College (PRCC) in Poplarville, Miss., celebrated Sophomore Night on Thursday, February 26, 2026, as they took on Hinds Community College. Prior to the contest, a ceremony was held as Choctaw student-athlete Mattison Bell was among the sophomores honored. Family & supporters celebrated this wonderful occasion with her & offered best wishes for her continued success in her future endeavors.



USM hosts Senior Day

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in Hattiesburg hosted Senior Day activities on Saturday, February 14, 2026, as the Golden Eagles faced Texas State. Prior to the contest, a pre-game ceremony was held as Choctaw student-athletes Carly Keats & Meloney Thames was among the seniors honored. Family members & supporters celebrated this momentous occasion with them. Congratulations & much success in your future endeavors.



Sophomore Night held at Co-Lin

Copiah-Lincoln (Co-Lin) Community College in Wesson, Miss., hosted Sophomore Night on Thursday, February 26, 2026, as they took on Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in their home finale of the regular season. Prior to the contests, pre-game ceremonies were held as Choctaw student-athletes Kylinn Bell & Koie Williams were among sophomores honored. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & family joined family & supporters as they celebrated this momentous milestone with them. Best wishes for continued success in their future endeavors.



MCC hosts Sophomore Night

Meridian Community College (MCC) in Meridian, Miss., hosted Sophomore Night on Thursday, February 26, 2026, as they faced Southwest Mississippi Community College. Prior to the contest, a pre-game ceremony was held as Choctaw student-athlete Nataysia Willis was among the sophomores honored. Celebrating this memorable occasion with her included her family & supporters. Best wishes for much success in your future endeavors.




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

Gibson honored during MVLA Conference

Pictured right, Ronald Gibson, Program Supervisor for MBCI 4-H, was awarded the Kenneth Cook Award during the Mississippi 4-H Volunteers Leaders' Association (MVLA) Conference, held on the campus of Mississippi State University (MSU) in Starkville from February 27-28, 2026. MVLA's mission is to provide a collective voice to promote youth and adult development through teamwork, support, leadership opportunities, motivational encouragement, & inclusive activities in partnership with the MSU Extension Service. The Kenneth Cook Award honors a recipient who reflects outstanding support & service to Mississippi 4-H. Mr. Gibson is the epitome of this prestigious award because he provides support & service to the MBCI 4-H Program by ensuring that all Tribal youth have educational, fun activities that promote life skills & activities during monthly community 4-H meetings.



SUPPLEMENTAL YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM
Choctaw Employment & Training
Tribal Annex II East Building #3

\$\$\$Learn while you Earn\$\$\$
Deadline: April 17, 2026 @ 4:30 pm



*"A goal without a plan is just a wish."
It's time to plan!*

Work Keys-ECCC
Employer Expectation
Team Building Skills
Gain Youth Resources
Computer Skills Upgrade
Smart Start
Leadership Skills

Earn \$\$\$
Resume Writing
Interview Skills
Career Readiness-ECCC
Prevention & Invention Skills
Work Experience Training
Classroom Training
Online Training



Eligibility Requirements:

- Age 14-24 years
- Native American
- Youth from low-income families

Funding provided by U.S. Department of Labor

The Real World Budget Simulation

Students in the Ag. Science & Educator Prep classes at C-TEC learned how much "The Real World" costs on a monthly basis during The Real World Budget Simulation, conducted by Tribal MSU Extension Agent Kaitlyn Ford. During the simulation, students went through different "stations", such as groceries, housing, transportation, etc. Some students even had to get multiple jobs during this simulation. It was a fun, educational, eye-opening activity that taught the students the importance of financial management.



Youth hunting with rabbit sticks

The Choctaw Wildlife & Parks Department held their 20th Annual Youth Rabbit Stick Hunt on Saturday morning, February 28, at the Attala County property off Highway 35 North near Kosciusko, Miss. The event brought together hunters, especially the youth, to revive a traditional hunting experience utilizing rabbit sticks. Nearly 200 individuals took part in this year's event. Seasoned hunters explained hunting methods & etiquette to the youth & first-time hunters. Hunting dogs were used to track the rabbit scents as hunters followed their movements through heavy thickets & wooded areas. After several hours on the hunt, a couple of rabbits were harvested. The event concluded with a traditional meal prepared on-site. The first 75 participants to register on-site received T-shirts. Door prizes, generously donated by local businesses & individuals, were awarded to youth & adult participants.



IN MEMORIAM

ARNOLD GEORGE

Funeral services for Arnold George, 76, was held on Saturday, February 15, 2026, at the Tucker CERF Building. Bro. Leonard Jimmie, Jr. officiated.



Cremation was held afterwards. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. George passed away on Monday, Feb. 5, at his residence.

A graduate of Fort Wingate

High School in New Mexico, he had a 35-year career with Solar Turbines. He started his employment in Gardena, CA, & later retired to San Diego, CA. He enjoyed playing bingo & the lottery, going for drives, attending pow-wows, & being a fan of the San Diego Padres, Chelsea Football Club & Beaver Dam Stickball Teams.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Billy George & Fay Chee George; & siblings, Nellie Peshlaki, Michael George, Charles George, Francis Atsity, Nez George, Louise George, Frankie George, & Lewis George.

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

King graduates from MS Fire Academy

Twenty-six members of Firefighter Class 219 of the Mississippi State Fire Academy in Jackson graduated from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001 Firefighter I-II course. Graduation was held on campus in the auditorium on Thursday, February 19, 2026. Amongst the graduates was Ethan R. King of the Choctaw Fire Department.



Ethan R. King, CFD Firefighter

This intense seven-week course included online, classroom, & hands-on instruction in the areas of fire behavior, fire suppression, rescue, incident command, hazardous materials, & other fire related topics. This course meets & exceeds the NFPA for Firefighter Qualifications & the uniform minimum training standards stated in the Mississippi Code section 45-11-7.

The Mississippi State Fire Academy is a division of the Mississippi Insurance Department. State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney & Academy Executive Director Kelly Elliott believe these firefighters will be an asset to the fire departments they represent.

“We are confident the immediate impact & positive difference these firefighters will make, not only within their departments but also in their communities, will truly be substantial,” said Director Elliott.

OBITUARIES continued from page twenty-one

Survivors include his wife, Eileen Mildred York George; daughter, Billie George; son, Jon York; sisters, Beatrice Pete & Catherine Cly; brothers, Scott George, Albert George & Leland George; & a host of nieces & nephews.

TIMOTHY YATES THOMAS, SR.

Funeral services for Timothy Yates Thomas, Sr., 51, was held on Friday, February 13, 2026, at Macedonia Baptist Church in Conehatta. Rev. Mark Patrick officiated.

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

Mr. Thomas passed away on Monday, Feb. 9, at Baptist Leake Hospital in Carthage.

He was a member of Church Arise in Decatur. He enjoyed fishing, grilling & being with family & friends.

He is preceded in death by his son, Jayleyon Rashad Sockey; & uncles, Ronnie Thomas & Larin Thomas.

Survivors include his parents, Riley Jim & Barbara Thomas Sam; daughters, Merchaylee Sockey-Bell, Haylee Thomas & Marlei Hagan; sons, Lonzo Thomas, Timothy Thomas, Jr. & Caleb Thomas; sister, Adrienne Garrett; brothers, Michael Briscoe, Sr., Dustin Sam, Tory Sam, & Kevin Sam; 1 grandson, Ja'Shayan Bell; 6 aunts, 7 uncles, 4 nephews, & a host of relatives & friends.

MERRICK LEE BACON, SR.

Funeral services for Merrick Lee Bacon, Sr., 38, was held on Thursday, February 19, 2026, at Canaan Missionary Baptist Church in Pearl River. Rev. Mark Patrick officiated.

Burial was in the church

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

Mr. Bacon passed away on Tuesday, Feb. 10, at the Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

He had a passion for life & loved his children. He graduated from Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, CA, & will be remembered for his BBQ, hair cutting skills, unique drawings, playing sports, & sharing company with others. He honored the Choctaw culture & appreciated other Native cultures as well. He worked numerous jobs throughout his life & was employed at Dancing Rabbit Golf Club as a Food & Beverage Stock Clerk.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Lee & Connie Bacon, Bonnie Willis, Sudie Mae John Willis, & Helen Phillips; adopted father, Willard Bacon, Sr.; & biological father, Richard Cotton.

Survivors include his mother, Norma Bacon; daughters, Teyana H. Bacon & Jada L. Bacon; son, Merrick L. Bacon, Jr.; sisters, Clymene Johnson, Courtney Bacon & Isley Mingo; brothers, Brandon Nelson, Jeremy Bacon, Rashad Bacon, Willard Bacon, Stevie Bacon, Montae Bacon, & Kaiser Cotton; & a host of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

DOYLE MARDINO DIXON

Funeral services for Doyle Mardino Dixon, 52, was held on Friday, February 20, 2026, at the Conehatta CERF Building. Deacon Billy Smith & Rev. Samuel Dixon officiated.

Burial was in the Conehatta Community Cemetery. John



E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Dixon passed away on Thursday, Feb. 12, at his residence.

He enjoyed being with family & friends, playing dominoes, telling jokes, listening to church hymns, fishing, & being a Florida State Seminoles fan.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Selby Dixon & Florine Dixon Billy; a brother, Millard Dixon; grandparents, Ammon Dixon & Julia Hickman-Dixon, Joe King & Edna Denson King; nieces, Pandora Dixon Sockey & Shanitra Dixon; & a great-niece, Shanna Willis.

Survivors include his wife, Angela Dixon; daughter, Casondra Farve; sons, Kendrick Steve & Monte Farve; sisters, Freida Dixon & Kimberlyn Dixon; brothers, Willard Dixon & Glen Dixon, Sr; 2 grandchildren, Ammarie Steve & Bri'El-la Farve; 1 aunt, 1 uncle, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

VIDAL LLEWELLYN ISAAC

Funeral services for Vidal Llewellyn Isaac, 52, was held on Monday, March 2, 2026, at the Bogue Chitto CERF Building. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.

Burial was in the Nanih Waiya Mennonite Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Isaac passed away on Friday, Feb. 20, at his residence.

He was a devoted father, grandfather, brother, friend, &



protector. He enjoyed playing stickball & volleyball, fishing, & drawing. A gifted artisan & kabotcha ikbi, towa, & alhipa chito ikbahilah, he carried tradition through his craftsmanship. His work reflected patience, skill, & deep cultural pride. Through his hands & heart, he helped preserve a legacy for future generations.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Dean Eula Lewis; father, Clarence Thomas; brother, Timmy Isaac; grandparents, Snood & Rose Hickman; nephew, Matthew Thomas; & granddaughter, Braeleigh Dixon.

Survivors include his children, Brandon, Jeremiah, Bethany, Brianne Nicole, Fred, Deann, Hailey, Demarcus, Leann, & Vidal Jr; sisters, Naomi, Fedelia (Mark), Ferradee (Mike), Jessica, & Ashley; brothers, Derrick, Kendrick, & Isaac; grandchildren, Braelynn, Bryncess, Jemeriah, Brinaylin, Mylah, ChrisAenn, Messiah, Ares, Tushka, & E'Miley (who brought him great pride & joy); & a host of nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family members, & friends.

MARIE ANN DENSON

Funeral services for Marie Ann Denson, 39, was held on Wednesday, February

25, 2026, at Hopewell Baptist Church in Standing Pine. Deacon Shaunde Ahshapanek & Bro. Gerald Willis officiated.

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



continued next page

Ms. Denson passed away on Saturday, Feb. 21, at Anderson Baptist Hospital in Meridian.

She was a member of Hopewell Baptist Church & enjoyed being with her children, grandchildren & family, making TikTok's, watching her favorite TV shows, sitting outdoors, & being on social media.

She is preceded in death by her father, Ricky Lee Denson, Sr.; sister, Julie Denson; grandson, Ja'Mari Denson; & grandparents, Lucille Chickaway, Easlin Denson, Homer Sockey, Fannie Lou Willis Sockey.

Survivors include her mother, Mary Helen Sockey Denson; special companion, Antonio Perez; daughters, Brianna Denson & Mariessa Denson; sons, Dregen Denson & Nestor Denson; sisters, Lucinda Vargas, Beaudie Denson & Lynn Allen; brothers, David Denson, Emery Denson & Ricky Denson, Jr.; five grandchildren, Kamari Denson, Kayzen Denson, Eriyana Denson, Bryson Frazier, & Amberlyn Frazier.

RICKY LANE LEWIS

Funeral services for Ricky Lane Lewis, 62, was held on Friday, February 27, 2026, at the Red Water CERF Building. Rev. Mark Patrick officiated.



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

Mr. Lewis passed away on Saturday, Feb. 21, at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

He resided in Red Water community all of his life. He enjoyed listening to country music, visiting family & friends, & being an avid fan

of the University of Oklahoma Sooners football team. He was Casino Porter Supervisor at Pearl River Resort for many years until his health declined.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Claude & Lillian Lewis Sam.

Survivors include his sons, Devin Lewis & Alex Vaughn; sister, Melinda Kopaddy; brother, Ralph Sam; aunt, Eleanor Torralba; 2 grandchildren & a host of relatives & friends.

GLORIA JANE COTTON DALE

Funeral services for Gloria Jane Cotton Dale, 67, was held on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at the Bogue Chitto CERF Building. Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.



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

Ms. Dale passed away on Friday, Feb. 27, at Baptist Anderson Hospital in Meridian.

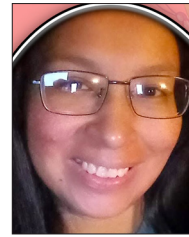
Born & raised in the Bogue Chitto community, she worked at Bogue Chitto Child Care for 33 years & enjoyed being around her co-workers & children, going thrift store shopping, being outdoors, cooking, fishing, & being with her loved ones.

She is preceded in death by her parents, David & Hazel Lewis Cotton; sister, Virgie Cotton; brothers, Gary Cotton, Jerry Cotton & Kenneth Cotton.

Survivors include daughter, Larosa Thompson; sons, Joey Cotton & Jonah Cotton; sister, Lora Tucker; bonus daughter, Amiyah Jefferson; 8 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

REBECCA LEANN DIXON LYONS

Funeral services for Rebecca LeAnn Dixon Lyons, 33, was held on Monday, March 9, 2026, at the Red Water CERF Building. Rev. Carl Wilson officiated.



Burial was in the Tucker Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Lyons passed away on Friday, Feb. 27, in Winston County.

She graduated from the Choctaw Virtual Learning Center in May 2025 & was employed at Creek Bank Laundry in Carthage. She enjoyed being

with family & friends, fishing, watching stickball games, & being her kids' biggest fan when they played sports.

She is preceded in death by her daughter, Angel Faith Osi Lyons; father, Adrian Dixon; grandparents, Lawrence & Joy A. McMillan, Eddie Dixon & Bobbie Jean Dixon; & uncles, James Sampson & Donovan McMillan.

Survivors include her husband, Michael Lyons, Sr.; daughters, Aleyah Lyons & MaKayla Lyons; sons, Rashard Lyons, Bentley Lyons, Michael Lyons, Jr., & Sika Lyons; parents, Laura McMillan Sam & Ralph Sam; brothers, Mario McMillan, Andrew Dixon, Dante Sam, & Lawrence Sam; aunts, Shirley Dean Sampson & Jackie McMillan; great-uncle, Jasper Ronald Sampson; & a host of relatives & 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

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

Welcome To

NANIH WAIYA
INDIAN
Mennonite Church

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

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

CHUCALISSA HOMECOMING FESTIVAL "HO MINTI"



April 11th, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Family Friendly Event

Native Art & Crafts, Native Food, Demonstrations, Social Dancing, Intertribal Dancing, Storytelling, Stickball, Princess Pageant, information booths

C. H. Museum Chucalissa
1987 Indian Village Dr.
Memphis, TN 38109

No drugs, No alcohol, No weapons or firearms are permitted

Contact: Shelly Bell 901-616-4478
Dorian Thompson 731-612-4366



**Schedule of Events
April 11, 2026**

9:00 AM Welcome by TCDC President Johnny Williams & Chucalissa Curator Dr. Anthony Lauricella	9:30 AM Prayer & Gospel Hymns by First Indian Baptist Church	10:00 AM Princess & Brave Pageant
11:00 AM Performance by Cultural Affairs Social Dancing	12:00 PM Performance by Intertribal Southern Pine Singers	1:00 PM Performance by Boys & Girls Club Social Dancing
2:00 PM Storytelling by Dan Isaac	3:00 PM Performance by West TN Choctaw Social Dancers All dancers - Last dance will be in honor of our late chanter, Wood Bell	4:00 PM STICKBALL EXHIBITION
5:00 PM Closing Remarks & Festival Closes		

**CHOCTAW
COMMUNITY
NEWS**

FEBRUARY 2026

© 2026 MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

**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.

