New lease program bridges gap for potential homeowners

Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s Housing Department helps CPN members and other tribal citizens find safe, affordable homes in the Nation’s jurisdiction. With rental and mortgage assistance opportunities, the new lease with option to purchase program helps people transition into homeownership.

“Kind of bridges that gap for people that are almost here but not quite and just need a little bit of help with maybe getting their debt load reduced, getting their credit scores up to a point that the bank is not going to turn them away and just get them prepared for the homeownership experience, period,” said homeownership manager Sherry Byers.

In 2019, she and Housing Department Director Scott George began developing the program. The first family with a lease with option to purchase signed their contract in early 2021. CPN member Ashley Garcia and her husband Seth said they appreciate the guidance they received from the housing department and the Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation.

“I highly suggest it,” Ashley said. “It honestly hasn’t been hard at all. Just turn in your documents do what you need to kind of thing.”

George and Byers hope to build up a waiting list and help people prepare for homeownership before they move. The lease with option to purchase program allows participants to move into a new home built by the Tribe under a three-year lease. During that time, they take part in credit counseling services from the CPCDC and First National Bank & Trust, Co. and work to improve their credit scores. At the end of those three years, they have the option to buy the home with their lease payments helping reduce the purchase price.

“It’s going to give them three years to make their credit a little better. Maybe they have a student loan. Maybe they have something else out there that they’re trying to take care of. So there is also a debt-to-income ratio portion of that that we’re looking at also,” George said. Funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, applicants must meet the HUD low income limit — 80 percent of the state non-metropolitan median family level — determined by the household’s size. The program is open to tribal citizens within the Nation’s jurisdiction, with CPN members given preference. The lease payments generally match those of a mortgage, with taxes and insurance paid from them as well. If prepared to purchase within the timeframe, the lease may also qualify for a $20,000 buy-down grant toward the mortgage.

“We’re going to be doing constant inspections, constant budget counseling, financial counseling, homebuyer education counseling,” Byers said. “There’s just going to be a series of things going on that entire three years. And we’re not trying to get into all their business, but we want to make sure that they know and are prepared so that three years is up, they are able and should be successful at going through the homebuyer process and maintaining that home during their 30-year mortgage.”

In a few short months, the Garcias have learned from their sessions with the CPCDC and discussions with FNB’s loan office. They see purchasing the home before the end of the lease as a distinct possibility.

“They walk you through the entire process. So they make it really easy if you don’t know what you’re doing because we sure didn’t,” Seth said.
Group therapy offers Freedom from Smoking

While rates have decreased by approximately two-thirds in the last 50 years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2019 that 34.2 million Americans smoke cigarettes. Its prevalence among American Indians/Alaska Natives remains high at 1.5 times the national average, or 26 percent of all Native Americans.

“Back in 2001-02, Oklahoma tried to get the tribes more involved, and so they created a coalition, the Native American Tobacco Coalition, and I was one of the ones who was part of that original group representing (Citizen Potawatomi Nation),” said CPN Behavioral Health Therapist Ray Tainpeah.

He began working for the Nation’s behavioral health department in 2000, and after attending training and learning about resources, Tainpeah started leading smoking cessation classes for Tribal members and employees in 2005. The department holds eight-week courses throughout the year for groups of eight to 12. The sessions use the American Lung Association’s Freedom from Smoking curriculum and teach attendees various options for giving up cigarettes forever.

“Being open-minded and trusting the process of being involved with others who are trying to quit is one of the most difficult things to do in their life,” Tainpeah said. “And to be able to quit and stay quit is one of the most important decisions that a person makes in their life.”

The National Native Network’s Keep It Sacred campaign reported the disproportionate levels of chronic diseases among American Indians and Alaska Natives, including lung cancer and asthma, reflect high tobacco use in the same populations.

CPN Health Services offers Chantix as a method to quit; often something attendees have not tried before.

“That’s one thing that keeps people coming and staying is to get on the medication and that it will — it’ll do what it’s supposed to do to block the brain receptors. With the absence of the nicotine, the brain doesn’t realize that the nicotine is not there,” he said.

However, Tainpeah said the best method is whatever works; he discusses lozenge, patches, gum and other options during the course.

Group dynamic

While the physical methods to cessation remain essential, a strong peer network proves its psychological worth throughout the group class. Tainpeah said it typically takes six or seven serious attempts to quit before someone permanently breaks the habit, and encouragement makes all the difference.

“That’s what’s unique about this class is that you get support from the other people. Oftentimes when people try to quit on their own, they’re met with a lot of negativity. ‘You’re not going to quit. You tried to quit before.’ … And unfortunately, even sometimes in family members, there’s not a lot of support,” he said.

Tainpeah understands the struggle to quit; he smoked for 10 years as a youth and young adult.

“It’s helpful to work together, and it eases people’s resistance because sometimes they’re unsure whether they can do this,” he said. “And so when they see that there’s other people here who are going through it, too, or have been through it, it helps them.

It helps to calm their nerves about doing a smoking cessation class.”

Since successfully quitting takes many attempts, breaking someone’s self-doubt about their ability to commit to their decision is a significant barrier. Tainpeah believes the community environment allows people to redirect their thinking — the first step in the stages of change.

“In order to remove doubt, we talk about creating a vision. Can you see yourself not smoking? Do you see yourself not smoking? And making them create that vision in their lives, in their minds, to say, ‘I will quit, and I’m going to quit,’ and removing doubt and putting in hope and putting in a vision for change,” he said.

Native traditions

The Keep It Scared website reported, "Commercial tobacco companies have targeted American Indians and Alaska Natives in marketing, sponsoring events and giveaways, devising promotional strategies, and misappropriating cultural imagery and concepts.” Those efforts include branding and packaging targeted explicitly to Native Americans.

As a citizen of the Kiowa Tribe, Tainpeah knows the effects of Big Tobacco on Indigenous communities. He shows videos explaining the companies’ marketing efforts to create customers for life beginning at a young age. It often motivates attendees to attempt to stop the cycle.

He also incorporates Native uses of tobacco into our lives and put it back in its proper place where different tribes still use tobacco in a ceremonial way, in a controlled way,” Tainpeah said.

“Being in a tribal clinic, we have that opportunity to explore and incorporate those different tribal beliefs and customs and ways that’s going to be helpful for them to connect or reconnect to their heritage or to their identity as tribal people.”

Leading the group smoking cessation classes has become one of his favorite and most satisfying parts of his job.

For more information from the Behavioral Health Department, visit cpn.news/CPNBH or call 405-214-5101. Read more from Keep It Sacred at keepitsacred.itcmi.org.

The Hownikan is published by the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and is mailed free to enrolled Tribal members. Subscriptions for nonmembers are $10 a year in the United States and $12 in foreign countries. The Hownikan is a member of the Native American Journalists Association. Reprint permission is granted with publication credit to the Hownikan, Editorials/letters are subject to editing and must contain a traceable address. All correspondence should be directed to Hownikan, 1601 S. Gordon Cooper Drive, Shawnee, OK 74801.

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The Government Finance Officers Association awarded the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Accounting Department the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 32nd year in a row in December 2020.

The GFOA awards the excellence certificate based on an analysis of the Tribe’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. It takes meticulous record keeping and forethought throughout the entire fiscal year to prepare the report. While CPN has received the award for more than three decades, it remains a focus for the department.

“It’s still a sense of pride,” said CPN’s Chief Financial Officer Mary Chisholm. “The Nation’s been able to get it for so long, I would be devastated if we didn’t. You know, it’s like your child. It’s pretty exciting to get it every year.”

She became the Nation’s CFO in August 2019, and this year’s recognition felt particularly gratifying.

“This was the first award that actually came through with my name on it, and that was exciting,” Chisholm said.

While she served as the department’s official signatory on the report, Chisholm recognizes the entire accounting staff contributed and that compiling it alone would be impossible.

“It’s our produce,” she said. “This shows how our department functions as a whole. It takes every piece within our department to come up with this. And on top of that, it also showcases the Nation because it has pictures and other descriptions and notes about what’s happening with the Nation.”

The annual report outlines financial assessments of the Tribe’s government offices, enterprises, health care system and more. As a sovereign Native Nation, CPN’s comprehensive annual financial report is more complex than many other institutions that follow the same guidelines for the award.

“It is a challenge, and I really like a challenge,” Chisholm said.

It also highlights Tribal citizenship totals, the population distribution across the country and abroad, the education department’s scholarship funds and CPN’s economic contribution to the larger community.

“You have to remember that the Nation is the biggest employer in Taney County, so we showcase other employers to show how much bigger we are,” she said.

Due to the pandemic, the GFOA gave digital certificates for fiscal year 2018-19. This month, CPN anticipates receiving a medallion via mail to add to a plaque that displays a decade’s worth of awards.

“It’s what I expect to be normal around here,” Chisholm said. “My goal is to maintain a department that can continuously produce this quality. That’s really what my focus is.”

Reviewing the comments and critiques that come with the recognition, she is already thinking of how to improve next year’s report.

“They always seem to find something that you can make a little bit better. We had a few small tweaks that we need to make for the new one, and we go through and address each and every one,” she said.

With a new year comes new challenges, and the accounting department prepares for how to display what CPN has overcome and contributed to while considering the next fiscal year.

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Tribal member takes community creation into her own hands

Tribal member Amanda Funk knew Native people lived around her in Pennsylvania, but it seemed they sat beneath the surface. She decided to change things herself, searching for a way to bring Native Americans together and help the wider community see their influence and offerings. In 2020, she founded the Widoktadwen Center for Native Knowledge in Reading, Pennsylvania.

“There just was always the sense of invisibility being in this place,” she said. “And it was like if you didn’t live in Oklahoma or somewhere else more out West, that people didn’t see Native people at all.”

There are no federally recognized tribes in Pennsylvania. While many Native Nations called the area their homeland, including the Erie, the Haudenosaunee, the Lenape Delaware, and the Susquehannock tribes, Funk felt no Indigenous presence as a child and young adult.

“I thought of my own kids growing up here in Berks County, and I want them to have a different kind of experience,” Funk said. “I want them to grow up being able to proudly say who they are, to be able to show their community what Native people look like, what they do, what we’re capable of, what our contributions are.”

Innovation and education

Born in the Virgin Islands, Funk knew her Potawatomi descendancy came from her father, a member of the Texecer family. She later discovered connections with the Darling, Smith, Williment and Bourbonnais families while researching her genealogy as an adult.

Her desire to learn more grew while attending graduate school at Kutztown University and met other academics interested in Indigenous cultures and learning more about themselves. Funk’s idea for the Widoktadwen Center solidified when she took a trip to New Mexico for an Indigenous studies conference.

“I was very excited to see just a different world and just what it looked like to be in a place where you could see more clearly that Native people were there,” she said. Bringing her passion back to Pennsylvania, Funk has worked for the last five years on the organization’s development, eventually bringing on fellow Kutztown University graduate Alexi Weiskircher, the center’s visual director and research coordinator. Widoktadwen focuses on acting as an educational resource for local schools, environmental stewardship, and Indigenous activism in eastern Pennsylvania.

“I really hope that we’ll have a kind of cultural touchstone here, where there’s also an opportunity to create a networking community of Native people here and ways for us to learn together or to share some of the challenges we see in our own community, and the understanding that our neighbors and our peers have about who we are and about why it matters,” Funk said.

Educating children on Native history and Indigenous culture became a benchmark for the center, especially in an area whose public school curriculum does little to teach tribal history accurately. Funk believes in its importance for both Native and non-Native students.

“We are really doing all of our students and especially our Native students a disservice by not authentically representing them in all of these different arenas, but especially in the classroom, and I see the next wave of Native youth growing up … to feel proud about who they are,” she said.

Name and logo

Choosing a name for the organization proved difficult. Funk considered many English and Potawatomi words and phrases and finally decided on Widoktadwen (WIE-DOH-tahd-wuhn), which means community in Bodiewadunim. While she began learning Potawatomi and building her vocabulary, she felt like the phrase just fit.

“I kept thinking of, ‘What makes it the right one? Because I really do want it to embody who we are,’” Funk said.

When breaking down this word and its roots, it translates closer to “togetherness” and “to do things together,” she said.

“There’s this sense of being connected,” Funk added.

Continued on page 6
Porcupine quills have inspired recent research into improving the design of hypodermic needles and surgical staples, but Nishnawbe people have used them for practical and artistic purposes for hundreds of years. Quill art uses the structure of the mammal’s primary defense mechanism to create sturdy and beautiful hand-made appliqué quill boxes, headresses, jewelry and much more. While some traditional items serve utilitarian functions, the vast majority of the objects made in the last 150 years remain purely artistic.

However, it is a dying art form. Waunsasing First Nation member Shelley Baker carries on the tradition today, teaching other tribal members how to collect goweyk (quills), wigwaj (birch bark) and wiskkemissbikwe (sweetgrass).

“What people don’t realize or understand is the work that goes into gathering your supplies for making a quill box. I was really fortunate at a very young age, like 6, 7 years old, and getting those teachings from my grandmother. So when I go out, I close my eyes, and she’s with me. She’s with me all the time,” she said.

Finding the necessities
Baker began making quill boxes at 8 years old or younger. She remembers modeling the style after her grandmother’s and aunt’s work, always attempting to mimic their beauty and precision.

“It was a really great time for me as a child growing up to have that with her, and … her showing me how to pluck the porcupine and what to do,” Baker said. “There’s a lot of Aboriginal women or men that I’ve met who have their different ways or different teachings of how they gather the supplies.”

The surrounding community knows her as a quillwork artist. She obtains porcupines to pluck from others who come across roadkill and either call her or bring them to her home. She does not hunt. Removing the quills while preserving their structure requires practice.

“I look for someone that has a woodstove for like the ashes from the woodstove. … They give me a better grip when I start from behind the head of the porcupine and then pull the quills out,” Baker said.

Both the seasons and the porcupine’s age make the task more or less complicated and affect the quality.

“Porcupines aren’t good during July and August because it’s almost like they’re molting their quills, and in the end of the bottom of the quills, they retain water or they break off. So they’re no good to use unless you’re making, let’s say, necklaces or earrings,” she said.

Older porcupines sport longer, stronger pieces, and their thick winter coats present an additional challenge. She pulls the quills whole with no breaks or tears.

“Finding those quills took a lot of patience, which I have a lot of.”

Removing the quills while preserving their structure requires practice.

“I put water in (a pot) to boil, and then I’ll pour the dye in there, the powder. The coloring process. Dyeing the quills requires a significant amount of time, especially to achieve different shades of certain hues.

“Once I’m done with the porcupine, then I go bury it,” Baker said. “And I thank the Creator for the gift that they have given me, and I put my tobacco down.”

Painting a picture
Baker cleans the quills before beginning the coloring process. Dyeing the quills requires a significant amount of time, especially to achieve different shades of certain hues.

“I put water in (a pot) to boil, and then I’ll pour the dye in there, the powder dye, and make sure that it’s all mixed into the hot water. And then I add just a little bit of vinegar because the vinegar holds the color,” Baker said. After sorting the colors, she closes her eyes and envisions the image she hopes to make after threading the quills to the birch bark. Some of her favorites include animals and different flowers. The soaking and hot water make them flexible enough to build three-dimensional structures as part of a box lid. Baker has made many boxes for her family.

“I used to do cool pictures for my mom, and I used to do Blue Jays. And when people would look at my quill work, they were like, ‘Those aren’t quills. That’s a picture.’ I said, ‘No, they’re quills,’” she said and laughed.

Sorting the quills and placing them side by side is a time-consuming process, meant for those with a steady hand and vigilance to the art. Baker’s eyes often tire by the end of a long session, and she prefers natural light while working. The more important lesson behind the process of creating a box escaped her as a child.

“You have to have patience to do this,” Baker said. “At a very young age when I learned, not knowing what my grandmother was teaching me at the time, until I got older — she taught me patience, which I have a lot of.”

Now, she passes on quillwork to others and believes in the importance of Native Americans returning to their cultures.

Continued on page 14
Slavin descendant continues family traditions

Crafting one-of-a-kind, thoughtful pieces of regalia provides Citizen Potawatomi Nation member Lakota Pochedley encouragement and motivation. Although the Slavin descendant maintains a busy schedule as the tribal historic preservation officer for Match-e-be-nash she-who Band of Potawatomi Indians (Gaan Lake Tribe), she finds creating, especially for loved ones, offers a sense of balance.

“There’s nothing like it — when you see the whole puzzle come together because it took so much time, and so much of what I create is just for that one person. It’s truly amazing,” Pochedley said.

She grew up outside of Cleveland, Ohio, but her studies and career have allowed her to live all over the United States, including Texas, Oklahoma and Michigan. Throughout her experiences, she has taken the opportunity to learn traditional skills from those around her.

“Growing up, I was lucky because I was taken to powwow, and I did always want to participate and dance. So, that was a huge catalyst for me wanting to learn how to make these things because I wanted to be out there dancing. I felt that desire and wanted to carry on those teachings in that way,” she said.

Although she has a variety of talents like moccasin making and beading, Pochedley enjoys crafting ribbon work and appliqué pieces the most. She uses modern and time-honored methods to make astelks (traditional women’s blouses), ribbon skirts and shirts. Respecting each image, back story and message are important to Pochedley, and that reverence dictates which approach she employs.

“If I’m using old family designs or those meant to honor the old ways, maybe using old traditional colors, I will typically use or incorporate hand-stitched ribbon work techniques. Then if it’s more contemporary, I’ll just use my machine,” she said.

Pochedley began sewing in her youth, and she appreciates the opportunity to use the skills passed down to her by her mother and grandmothers.

“I would say if not all, most of my grandmas were seamstresses of some sort, whether they were professional seamstresses or just sewing to meet the needs of the family. … That’s part of where some of my interest came from,” she said.

When Pochedley moved to Oklahoma, many individuals shared different methods and styles of regalia making with her, including Ardena O’Neal, Gayla Mosteller, Leslie Deer and Esther Lowden. After moving to Michigan, Pochedley and her partner, fellow CPN member and Curley descendant Bill Hobia III, began attending local Potawatomi language and culture events, where she met Madalene Big Bear, Mon-e Zapata and many other Boduwawadmi/Nishnabé artists.

“Over the last year or so, I have really felt I have come into my own as an artist and seamstress. I credit my mom, mother-in-law, and other family members and friends encouraging me and folks like Madalene and Peggy Kinder (for) sitting down with me to discuss traditional designs and techniques, in particular, hand-stitched appliqué. Those conversations and encouragement really helped build up my confidence, but I’m also thankful they were willing to take the time to make sure I was comfortable with the different techniques and the ways in which we traditionally designed and constructed our regalia,” Pochedley said.

Finessing takes time and dedication, and within the past few years, she has begun crafting her own style and approach.

Process

Pochedley recently made ribbon skirts for her partner, Bill Hobia III, and her brother, Alan Pochedley. Through these projects, she found a renewed sense of pride in bringing back some traditional styles, like pleated men’s ribbon shirts and hand-stitched appliquéd.

“I like to experiment with different things, and I like to look at a lot of old pieces,” she said. “I’ll talk to people about those, like old photos or old pieces that you can find in digital collections, and kind of talk through some of those techniques that were used. I always like to keep in mind how we can incorporate those styles and techniques into our current regalia.”

When beginning the process, Pochedley speaks with the individual who will receive it. Next, she completes initial research, like reviewing family photos, before creating a sketch and finalizing colors and fabric. She employs mindfulness during every step.

“I look at old designs, but I talk with folks about which designs are still recognized as family or clan designs and which designs have become more available for all Potawatomi people to use,” she said. Pochedley often allows the imagery to come to her organically, letting inspiration flow unhindered. It can take a single night or months to finish one design. She said with regalia meant for traditional or ceremonial purposes, it is particularly important that others can recognize the pieces are Potawatomi by using traditional elements that set Nishnabé regalia apart.

“There are definitely moments where I feel much more comfortable and creative. … When I am at those points, I act on it, and I know it’s time to make some things because I don’t always know how long it will last or when inspiration will strike again,” Pochedley said.

Often, her partner will assist and provide his advice when deciding color combinations.

“I always joke that it’s a team effort,” she said and laughed.

Although Pochedley appreciates every part of developing regalia, she said nothing compares to seeing someone wear her creations, especially her nephew, Emilio Garcia.

“To see him go out there (dancing) — he just naturally knew what he needed to do. He’d make his way out there, then come running back to us. And I’d have to say that moment itself kind of sums up all the times that I see folks wearing the things I’ve made,” she explained.

Learn more about her work and potential commission opportunities, which Pochedley makes on a per-project basis, by reaching out via email at lakota_pochedley@outlook.com.

Lease Program continued...

The houses

Built along King’s Road on Tribal property in Portawatomi County, the five single-family homes range from 1,200 to 1,600 square feet on a one-acre lot. Each features an open floor plan, dryer, dishwasher and refrigerator and large pantries in the kitchen. The kitchen, living room, dining room is all an open area with bedrooms coming off of one side or the other. Two of the homes that were built with a loft to try to add a little extra to it and give a little extra feeling of not only openness but a place where you can either watch TV, separate from everybody else,” George said.

The housing department and developers also focused on reaching net-zero energy while remaining within the parameters and cost for those who qualify. Despite the difficulties of reaching those specifications in rural Oklahoma, the houses use less energy than many more expensive homes. It significantly decreases utility bills and allows homeowners to put more money toward maintenance and their mortgage.

In addition to their daughter, the Garcias recently welcomed a son, Fisher, and the energy efficiency and new appliances were selling points. They chose one of the homes with a loft, which Ashley said gives them space to grow as a family.

“It feels very homey and stuff. And obviously, we’re going to be here for a while and just a place to grow, and for (Ryley) to grow up and our baby to grow up too. So that’s exciting,” the DeLonais family descendant said.

The Garcias signed their paperwork and moved in to celebrate Ryley’s sixth birthday in their new house — a significant milestone since they typically travel for family parties.

“The kitchen, living room, dining room is all an open area with bedrooms

"I think it’s exciting, especially because we just got married in March of last year. … This is our first home together. I mean, we lived together in our rent house before that, but just having something that’s going to be ours and that we’ve worked so hard for is a huge accomplishment,” Ashley said.

To learn more about CPN housing programs, visit cpnnews/housing. Watch a video presentation about the lease with option to purchase program at cpnnews/leaseweb. Read about the Housing and Urban Development income limits at cpnnews/HUDLimits. Call the CPN Housing Department at 405-273-3833.
Native Americans are up to four times more likely to have their children taken and placed into foster care than their non-Native counterparts. Oklahoma Department of Human Services reported in 2020 that Native children represented more than 35 percent of those in foster care, yet Native Americans make up only around 9 percent of Oklahoma’s population. “That is the definition of racial disproportionality,” said Citizen Potawatomi Nation FireLodge Children & Family Services Foster Care/Adoption Manager Kendra Lowden.

While the Indian Child Welfare Act has existed since 1978 and provides added protections, numerous factors continue to impact the unequal rate of Native American representation within the foster care system.

Need for ICWA
Before 1978, approximately 80 percent of Native American families living on reservations at least one child in the foster care system, according to data compiled by National Indian Child Welfare Association. Additionally, more than 25 percent of all Native children were removed from their families, with 85 percent receiving placements outside of their tribes or relatives. “And that was even if there was no abuse — there were no issues occurring,” Lowden said. “Even if there were willing and fit family members available, these children were still adopted out to white families.”

These policies continue to negatively impact individuals, families and tribes. Non-tribal placement and adoption has created identity issues and disconnected feelings along with negative mental health outcomes. “They may be living in a community where they’re the only Indian person, and when people feel stress, anxiety, depression, a lot of times they cope in unhealthy ways, and that is in order to mask their trauma,” she said.

Past federal efforts including forced removal have hurt. We see fire as a symbol of community nonprofits. The coronavirus pandemic has forced efforts to remain online for the time being; however, Funk anticipates growth into in-person events and classes in the future.

“It’s going to be amazing to see what kind of a change comes about in our communities because I’m not the only one pushing to create this sort of change on the ground where I am,” she said. “I know that it’s Potawatomi the world over who are doing the same, who are doing it within their own households when they’re teaching their kids the language and struggling to learn right along with them.”

For more information about the Wild chipset Center for Native Knowledge, visit widoktadwen.org or facebook.com/widoktadwen.
Caseworker’s path lined with desire for investigation, love of families

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time when programs across the country like Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s FireLodge Children & Family Services bring awareness to child abuse and neglect and advocate for happy and healthy childhoods for all. CPN Indian Child Welfare Department caseworker Whitney Coots helps children of neglect and abuse improve their situation every day.

She sought a different career path while in college, but life events and interests opened doors for her to utilize her skills in an unexpected way. Coots graduated in 2015 from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond with a double major in forensic science and criminal justice, and joined FireLodge’s workforce in 2019. “I originally wanted to do crime scene investigation. I love it. I still do. My major was a blast, but it is really hard to find jobs in forensic science,” Coots said.

She persisted in working in criminal justice and spent four years as a probation supervisor before accepting her current role as an ICW caseworker in September 2019. The change reset her career goals, unveiling a desire to help Native children and families.

“I didn’t understand the depth of the (the Indian Child Welfare Act) whenever I started. I knew what it was, and I knew the basis of ICWA, but not truly what it stood for. And so now that I understand that ... protecting ICWA and Native American children is what I feel I was called to do,” Coots said. However, her love for forensic science remains strong and manifests itself in true crime television binges and Investigation Discovery. Eventually, Coots’ husband Ryan still has trouble understanding her affection for the genre.

“He’s like, ‘How do you watch this to go to bed?’ I’m like, ‘I just like it,’” she said and laughed.

Seeing both sides

While working for Oklahoma Court Services as a probation supervisor, Coors spent her time keeping in touch with those on probation in Lincoln County with misdemeanor charges, including DUIs, drug possession, domestic assault and battery, public intoxication and more.

“That would include monthly reporting with each client, drug testing, testifying in court, creating court reports, making sure that they are completing all their necessary probation requirements as well as being a support system,” she said.

Coots found the work fulfilling as she saw many people make significant strides towards improving their day-to-day lives.

“It was rewarding that you would see each person go through stages and come out of an addiction and come out of this lifestyle and become a more positive parent and person. You just saw them overcome so many obstacles,” she said.

Often, the State of Oklahoma puts clients’ children into foster care.

“During my time with OCS, I saw the parent and adult side of the child welfare system, and that’s when I realized I actually wanted to be more on the ‘kids side’ and work with the children in custody,” Coots said.

Having her second son, Cohen, and a love for kids pushed her to seek a new position. After interviewing with CPN, she knew it was a perfect fit. A year and a half later, she named reunifications and adoptions as her favorite part of her job.

“It can be mentally and emotionally draining. But at the end of the day, it’s really rewarding seeing children be reunified with their parents, and knowing you helped play a role in that is just such an awesome feeling,” Coots said.

Growth through knowledge

Coots quickly learned about ICWA after accepting her position. It prioritizes reunification and keeping Native American and Indigenous foster kids with families of the same tribe to decrease generational breaks in heritage and cultural tradition.

When that didn’t work, the parent and adult side of the child welfare system became her next priority. “Seeing both sides” was a major component of her growth.

Now that a lot of people are working from home or are quarantined, elders are at a greater risk of abuse.

Many abuse hotlines are claiming the number of calls are down, but that should not be perceived as a positive sign. Elder abuse has not “gone away.” The lower amount of abuse calls received should be considered a red flag that people are unable to reach out for help. Abusers are using the threat of the virus and quarantine to further isolate their victims. Being locked in the house with the person they might be most afraid of — who might be threatening, hurting or manipulating them — makes their fear even worse. Isolation is one of the greatest risk factors for elder abuse, and the coronavirus pandemic is a breeding ground for social isolation.

This isolation is also occurring in long-term care facilities. Denied visitation from family members, friends and clergy has only added to the stress, fear and hopelessness our elders are experiencing. As many elders are attending virtual church services and doctor appointments, this is an excellent time for others to observe and be alert for any signs of abuse.

We agree that masks should be worn, caution should be taken and social distancing should occur; however, we must be allowed to visit our elderly, especially if they are in a long-term facility. It is a known fact that abuse and neglect occurs in these facilities. Now that no one is “putting eyes” on our elderly, we wonder, what is happening?

Since COVID-19 is a new virus, we must put laws into place to address these special circumstances. Most of our elderly cannot make phone calls without assistance. If abuse or neglect is occurring, they cannot make this issue known, especially if the abuser is the one assisting them to make or receive a phone call. The visits must somehow be made in person, if not by a family member, by a trained professional APS worker.

Please contact the CPN Adult Protective Services if you suspect abuse/ neglect is occurring or has occurred. Call 405-878-4831, Janet Draper, ext.1171 or Brian Moore, ext.1186. The statewide reporting hotline is 1-800-522-3511. ICW, or you can contact them at OICHotline.com.

If the victim is Native, the state will contact the proper tribe. Citizen Potawatomi Nation Adult Protective Services has a memorandum of understanding with the State of Oklahoma.

Taking care of our elders during the pandemic

By Janet Draper, CPN Adult Protective Services Director

In fiscal year 2019, the Tribe used Office of Victims of Crime funding it had set aside to establish and develop the first adult protective services program to address elder abuse issues within our community. Officially established in January 2020, the program made great strides in its first few months. We were excited to provide these necessary services to our older elders. Then came the unthinkable happened — COVID-19.

Aging adults are a particularly vulnerable group to the deleterious effects of COVID-19. With numerous shelter-in-place orders in effect to promote social distancing during the pandemic, and increased dependency of older adults on others, the pandemic heightens the potential for elder abuse. Most perpetrators are often close relatives.
Tribal election candidates 2021
Chairman candidates

John “Rocky” Barrett - Keweoge (He Leads Them Home)

with a team of bright people; and (3) experience – a wise man once said: “Experience is not what happens to a man, it is what a man does with what happens to him.” Over the 36 years I have had the honor to serve as your Tribal Chairman, I’ve had the good fortune to have many successes: our new Constitution, the new Legislature, the Executive Branch, the Tribal Courts, grocery businesses, medical facilities, the banks, CPDC, Heritage Center, golf course, our gaming and hospitality facilities, Elder and low-cost housing, the Rural Water District, and the aggregation of the very talented people who made it work. Some were not successes. The cattle ranch, our radio stations, the Sacred Heart Historical project, St. Gregory’s University partnership, the pecan farm, the Mini-Putt, and the RV Park, were not huge failures, but each taught a lesson: do not get into businesses that you aren’t experienced in, or in a market for, or another business that helps the business or service you want to provide. Most of all, do not get the Nation into operations that it does not or cannot control. Pick talented people and let them learn from their mistakes and benefit from encouragement.

How do you plan to engage Tribal citizens?

The last year has been the most difficult of my experience. The pandemic cut us off from each other, isolated our most vulnerable people, and often left us with a sense of dread and fear. For many, it was a time of financial stress, joblessness, and worry about their future. It is the job of CPN to be the “light at the end of the tunnel, the beacon of hope in a dark place.” Throughout our history, as we were robbed of our land and livelihoods for four straight generations, our Tribe that provided for our survival. Our shared blood, our kinship, saw us through the hardest of times. That is what we are doing now. CPN is stepping up again and helping our kin. We are providing financial help, medical treatment, shelter for the homeless, protection for our most vulnerable, and most of all – opportunity. Opportunity is what we hope for, work for, and all need. That is how we can engage our people.

In your opinion, what is the most pressing Tribal issue currently?

It is what I call “disconnection.” How many of you know Potawatomi people, especially young people, who get all their news from Facebook, not the TV or newspaper? How many times have you been with a person who spends their entire time in your presence on their phone? How many young people do not or cannot control. Pick talented people and let them learn from their mistakes and benefit from encouragement.

What would make you an effective Tribal leader?

I believe the most important traits an effective tribal leader has. We need some essential traits an effective tribal leader – caring about your fellow Citizen Potawatomi and putting them first in the priorities of our tribe; and (2) innovation – using the successes of the tribe to guide you to the next project, but with some new approaches and ideas gleaned from working

Lisa Kraft

Nation, helping us grow and expand our lands. I know what we need to do to improve our support system for members, and to rekindle the fire and embrace the heritage of our great people. I will practice transparency, in leadership, in legislation, and in how we inform and engage our members. We need some essential checks and balances, stronger representation in our legislature, and an independent media. Lastly, I know how to execute programs and projects. I have spent my career organizing and leading some highly effective teams, and I will leverage that experience and those resources for our tribe.

How do you plan to engage Tribal citizens?

Language, ceremony, and modern tools and techniques. I have been privileged and am honored to be working with some of our great elders and teachers. I have learned the language, which is the lifeblood of our culture. I practice rituals and a way of living that is at the heart of who we are. We will bring back ceremonies, gatherings, and rituals and practices that we as a people have embraced for many generations. Lastly, we need to embrace modern ways of communication, including social platforms, to better connect with our people. We are all over the country and the globe, and this should not limit us or restrict us from knowing one another, or in helping our members, it should empower us and give us a stronger opportunity to expand and grow.

In your opinion, what is the most pressing Tribal issue currently?

Raising the power of our people’s voices. We can better honor the virtues of leadership and equal representation, and give our members a better opportunity to participate in our government and in our businesses. Being Citizen Potawatomi is a link to one of the most magnificent and enterprising tribal communities in America, and our full potential has yet to be realized. Our current chairman has been in place for 40 years, he has taken us down a long road, and it is time for change. We can better recognize and embrace our heritage, and there are several growth opportunities. This includes investing in our youth, marketplaces and networking for our artists and entrepreneurs, and sustainability efforts and sustainable businesses. To move further down the road, we need a unified and thriving nation, one that takes care of all of our members, regardless of location, and one where our collective voices are stronger than any one individual. We are a people of action, sensing from all angles, changing and adapting, working in harmony, and sensing all that goes into life to achieve our purpose. It is with that power in mind, that I would be honored to serve as your next tribal leader. You can learn more about me and my plans for our great nation at pschairman.com.

Steve Castaneda - EconOush (Little Leader)

I listen to everyone to make the best decision for all parties involved. In every decision I make I will keep our members at heart, our tribe is nothing without its people.

What would make you an effective Tribal leader?

All members have a voice. I believe it is overdue for their voices to be a part of every decision made. It is time to show we are a tribe of many not just the people of power.

In your opinion, what is the most pressing Tribal issue currently?

Where is the money for our people? How much money do we have to put the city and county in taxes? We as a tribe have plenty of funds from our business and our members do not benefit unless they jump through tons of hoops to get funds for different reasons. I am doer rather than a talker.
Kevin Roberts - Kakingshi (Grizzly Bear)

What would make you an effective Tribal leader?

I recently retired from an executive leadership position with a fortune 50 organization - State Farm Insurance Company. During my 36 year career, I held various management, and executive leadership positions. Our organization had an employee base of 150k, and 19k Agents. I have served in several department operations, I was responsible for decentralized staff across the USA & Canada, including our Corporate Headquarters. I lead virtual teams across Human Resources, Claims & Catastrophe Operations, Agency/Marketer, Enterprise Technology, and the Administrative Services department. Staying connected with my decentralized staff was critical. I leveraged in-person contact in addition to uniformed communication tools available at the time. I was consistently recognized by senior leadership, my staff, and my peers for being exceptional at forging strong, sustaining relationships; organizing, and motivating others. My teams were outstanding, and that was reflected in their achievements. The part I most appreciated centered on the people. The relationships forged, and helping them succeed both individually and as a team were very gratifying. I believe my experiences will serve me well in the CPN legislative role.

How do you plan to engage Tribal citizens?

Based on my experiences with leading decentralized, virtual teams, reconnected engagement is dependent upon others’ desire, motivation and willingness to engage. I plan to provide the opportunity and motivation for engagement within my respective legislative district. I will do that by offering in-person, geographical area meeting forums during each calendar year, supplemented with access via social media platforms, email, text, and phone access.

Drew (Jon) Boursaw

What would make you an effective Tribal leader?

I have many years of leadership experience. During these years I found that the key to being a successful leader is communication. An effective Tribal leader listens and communicates with every Tribal member in their region. Tribal members need to know that I will listen and support them.

How do you plan to engage Tribal citizens?

This falls in line with the importance of communication. I will use every form of communication possible to reach every Tribal member in Region One: social media, email, phone calls, etc… I also plan to create virtual regional meetings. With COVID and 2020, this form of meeting has become commonplace. These virtual meetings will take the place of in-person meetings until the pandemic is over.

In your opinion, what is the most pressing Tribal issue currently?

I believe the most pressing issue is not only maintaining the existing Tribal benefits but expanding them. These benefits are valuable to the lives of every Tribal member. I believe it would be in the best interest of all to work on expanding these benefits.

What would make you an effective Tribal leader?

Alan Melot

When I completed the questionnaire for my naming ceremony, I talked to my dad about question 17. The question asked, to put these four words: wisdom, compassion, courage and generosity, in order of importance. I stated to my dad that this would be hard to do as they are all important in your personal and professional life. I believe now, as I did then, if I use these four attributes as a guide and good communication. It will help me in being a good effective Tribal leader.

How would you plan to engage Tribal citizens?

I found that the key to being a good effective Tribal leader is to understand other’s choices and beliefs. In that place of in-person meetings I will use every opportunity as a guide and good communication. These virtual meetings will take the place of in-person meetings until the pandemic is over.

In your opinion, what is the most pressing Tribal issue currently?

Tribal sovereignty has always played a role in my career. It is the most pressing issue. We must have effective self-governance and cultural continuity to maintain our cultural identity. Cultural knowledge is the foundation of tribal identity. Citizens need to know our language, our wisdom and our ways to be able to justify our existence as a nation. Our language department has worked hard to preserve and teach the language, and I believe that we should spare no efforts to support their work. Further, I believe that we need people in each district who can connect personally and teach Potawatomi language and culture. We need to expand our language department to have individuals in each district who are tribal employees with the task of helping people learn our language, culture and unique Potawatomi identity. As we establish districts that are populated with engaged, caring, knowledgeable and wise Potawatomi, we will ensure that we have a tribe worth fighting for. Helping to make the tribe stronger is a candidate had it not been for Henry Ford once said …”Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”
What would make you an effective Tribal leader? I have had career of positions that have prepared me to be an effective Tribal Leader. I am a retired Colonel of the US Air Force where I served on active-duty for 24 years. I served as Commander in 4 of my assignments and as a Staff Officer in several key positions. Most recently I have had 17 years' experience in senior positions in Native American Governments. Originally, I served as the Executive Director for the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation in Mayetta, KS for 6 ½ years where I supervised 32 Tribal Programs. This gave me firsthand knowledge on how tribes are supported by federal funding and grants. This was followed by being asked to take on the position of Director of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Culture Heritage Center in Shawnee, OK for 2 ½ years. My first assignment was to lead the effort in creating the Tribal Veterans Wall of Honor. Finally, I have served as the Department of State's Legislative Representative for eight years. I have worked very hard to make myself available to the CPN members in the District. I have kept them apprised of items of interest, upcoming events, and benefits such as the CARES assistance. As a result of my time in these two positions I am very familiar with the major activities, programs, and projects ongoing within the Nation. I have developed and maintained a good relationship with the CPN Program Directors. Through out all of this time I have regularly attended and participated in the CPN Annual Family Reunions and the Gathering of Potawatomi.

How do you plan to engage Tribal citizens? I plan to continue to hold annual District meetings at various locations in the District. I will attend the monthly Elders Potluck Luncheons held in Roseville. I will use my monthly Hownikan column as a way to keep the members aware of new developments, upcoming tribal functions and give recognition of individual achievements by CPN members. I will continue to expand my email list of members in the District which allows me to contact members directly about Tribal activities, upcoming events and other items of interest. Finally, I plan to continue to hold regularly scheduled hours in my office in Topeka. This allows me to directly assist members with topics such enrollment, mail order pharmacy, health aids, housing issues, some housing issues, and health aids,

In your opinion, what is the most pressing Tribal issue currently? To me the most pressing issue is the future cost of providing the benefits and services we enjoy today that are funded through Tribal revenue. With the substantial growth of new members over the past couple of years how are we going to fund the increase costs in the future for benefits such as scholarships, mail order pharmacy, health aids, funeral fund and even the Hownikan? We must continue to expand the Tribe's economic development efforts while ensuring those we have and those in the future are generating lasting revenue for the Tribe.

Elexa “Amo” Dawson My campaign is a response to a spoken need in the community for closer connection to our tribe and our heritage, so we can be whole, healthy people in the present. Physical and mental wellbeing are our birthright as Potawatomi people, yet our communities struggle with dis-ease and disconnection. I believe our culture, including our foods, language, and spiritual practices, is the path forward for our people. I plan to create space for community and connection on a regular basis. One of the primary ways we learn our culture is from our elders, but too often age groups are broken apart. How do our kids know that elders eat first if they’ve never been to a meal where that tradition is practiced? Mainstream culture taught us to hide elders away and consider communication with them a charity. That is not our way. We can gather together as multi-generational families and see how that cultural practice benefits us all.

Financially, I believe we should be investing in our culture and our people. We are over-consuming as US citizens, creating more than our share of waste. I do not believe that industrial growth and the pollution that comes with it are wise investments for our people. I believe we can be simultaneously prosperous and strong in our values as people of the fire, stewards of the land. How do you plan to engage Tribal citizens? My priority as Citizen Potawatomi Nation District 4 legislator will be community. Our families are spread across the state, and we need regular, accessible, in-person (when safe) community gatherings to strengthen our community in Kansas. Did you know that there are more CPN members living in Kansas than members of any other nation? We are many, and our alliances can be strong if we invest in ourselves, and in each other. I join with many other Tribal leaders in calling for all CPN members to make learning our language a priority. It’s hard to learn language without practicing it. Meeting and prioritizing language and culture will strengthen our Nation.

In your opinion, what is the most pressing Tribal issue currently? I would like to see more people claiming their heritage and being proud to be Potawatomi in their daily lives today. What does that mean? What makes us Potawatomi? What are the elements of our culture? How do we honor our ancestors today? These are questions our people are asking, and I feel that the answers are found through the discovery of our culture through language, food, and togetherness. I think we can only know who we are in the context of community.

Travel restrictions prevented the 2020 Potawatomi Gathering. Having been to a few of these Gatherings, I can say it’s a loss for our community that was. As a legislator, I will support all citizens traveling to a gathering, and hold regional gatherings independently to keep our culture alive.

By Kayla Woody, House of Hope DVPI Prevention Specialist Picture yourself out with friends on a Friday evening, and you follow them to your destination, the first thing you want to do is drink, or do you? Some ways on education and prevention. There needs to be an atmosphere of comfort and trust that you create throughout any experience. Just because you do not hear “no” does not mean the person is consenting. Planned Parenthood provides a great idea on how to remember the idea of consent. “Use the main phrase “I love FRIES. This stands for Freely Given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic and Specific. “Can I have a few fries?” is a good way to ask for consent.

What's in your glass? What's in your glass? Does this sound right? Are you enjoying this? Is this OK? Consent is never implied by things like past behavior, what you are wearing, where you go, who you are with or if you have consented previously. There has to be clear communication every single time. Even couples who have been in long, committed relationships or who are currently married must first get consent before acting. It is important to understand that anyone can be a victim of sexual assault, no matter their gender, sexual orientation, age, race or economic status. To be able to make changes and put a stop to sexual assault, we have to educate ourselves and also help educate others. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and there is a great time to reach out to local organizations like CPN House of Hope to find ways on education and prevention.

If you or someone you know are experiencing sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and/or stalking and would like more information, please contact the House of Hope at 405-275-3176 or visit us online at facebook.com/cphouseofhope. 
Keep Our Fire Strong

Under Rocky Barrett’s Leadership, CPN:

- Has come from just a trailer for an administrative building, to 18 major businesses on tribal land with over 2000 jobs.
- Continues to expand to over 36,000 tribal members.
- Went from under $600 in the bank to having over $550 million in assets and community economic impact last year.
- Established the largest tribally-owned national bank chain.
- Provides over 1,500 college scholarships per semester with an annual scholarship fund of $7.5 million.
- Distributed over $40 million in CARES funds during the COVID-19 pandemic and thousands were vaccinated.

Thirty Six Years Of Continuous Progress!

Vote To Stay On The Right Path.
Vote For Rocky Barrett.

Paid For By John “Rocky” Barrett (Kewoge - “He Leads Them Home”), Shawnee, Oklahoma
It’s Time For Change

I am running for Chairman because I think we can do better for our members, and work together to achieve more for our people. With over 26 years of experience in Oklahoma Indian Country, assisting leaders in strategic planning, development projects, and nation building, and after 4 consecutive terms as an elected legislator for the CPN, it is obvious to me that we have an opportunity to rekindle the fire of our great nation.

Lisa Kraft

We can better honor the virtues of leadership and equal representation, and give our members more of an opportunity to participate in our government and in our businesses.

Learn more at cpnchairman.com
VOTE KEVIN ROBERTS

DISTRIBUTION 1 LEGISLATOR

ABOUT KEVIN
- Married 37 years to Diana
- Son, Cody (wife Jess & son Beauden)
- & daughters Emily and Sarah
- Neshnabe name: Kakingeshi (Grizzly Bear)
- 3rd great grandson of Joseph Bertrand Sr.
- Retired, Assistant Vice President, State Farm Insurance Company
- Owner/Operator Migwetch Mtiek Designs (wood decor)

FOLLOW ME
Kakingeshi
Kevin Roberts Candidate for CPN Dist 1 Legislator

COMMUNITY
- CONNECTION
- PROGRESS
- SPIRIT

ELECT
DAVID SLAVIN

DISTRIBUTION 1 LEGISLATOR

My goal as District 1 legislator is to help meet the challenges we face as a Nation. So that we all can enjoy the festival and the gathering of the Nations once again. I look forward in working with district 1 to reach our goal of economic growth and development. Request your ballot and vote David Slavin.

Paid for by David Slavin

RE-ELECT
JON BOURSAW
WETASE MHOU, BRAVE BEAR
BOURASSA/DGE

DISTRICT 4
LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE

MY QUALIFICATIONS TO BE YOUR REPRESENTATIVE ARE:

- 17 years’ experience in senior positions in Native American Governments.
- 8 years in current position as Dist 4 Legislative Representative preceded by 2 1/2 years as Director of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Culture Heritage Center in Shawnee, OK. As a result of my time in these two positions I am very familiar with the major activities, programs, and projects ongoing within the Nation. I have maintained a good relationship with the CPN Program Directors.
- Previously I served as the Executive Director for the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation in Mayetta, KS for 6 1/2 years where I supervised 32 Tribal Programs.
- I am a retired Colonel of the US Air Force after serving on active duty for over 24 years. I served as Commander in 4 of my assignments and as a Staff Officer in several key positions.

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY SOLICIT YOUR SUPPORT FOR CHAIRMAN JOHN “ROCKY” BARRETT AND DISTRICT 1 CANDIDATE JON “DREW” BOURSAW IN THEIR ELECTION

Email me at boursawdist4@aol.com
PREPARED TO SERVE THE CPN MEMBERS OF DISTRICT 4
Paid for by Jon Boursaw, Topeka, Kansas

NEED SPRAY FOAM INSULATION?
CALL 918-261-2045
Gearing up for a successful harvest

Late winter and spring marks the time of year farmers prepare for the busy seasons ahead. For the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, this includes soil testing, planting crops, administering key nutrients as needed and conducting the first harvest.

CPN has grown its agricultural operations in the past year, adding 105 acres of cover crops and expanding lease opportunities.

“We actually had a pretty profitable 2020 season,” said Tonya Kitchen, CPN’s ag manager. “We tried some new programs, what we call a 50/50 contract, and we did figure out that those are profitable on acreages that were over 20 acres.”

With a 50/50 contract, CPN retains land ownership and pays for any herbicide or fertilizers, but the lessee takes on the expenses of harvesting and processing. In the end, the Nation and producer each receive 50 percent of the harvest, which usually includes bailed hay.

On the Nation’s smaller acreages, production is lower, so utilizing the 50/50 model does not provide enough return on investment. Allotment and other policies caused CPN and its Tribal members to lose much of the Nation’s original 900-square-mile reservation.

The CPN Department of Real Estate Services oversees the Tribe’s agricultural endeavors and works hard to get property under CPN’s domain once more. This often means purchasing a few acres at a time, but Kitchen and her staff employ teamwork to determine the best option for every piece of Tribal property, regardless of how small or large.

One main goal of CPN’s agriculture enterprise is to increase year-round economic growth. Cover crops provide key nutrients and soil insulation throughout the winter, resulting in spring harvesting opportunities that other producers do not have.

“We’re really excited about is that everybody is running out of hay or they will be running out of hay, and we’re going to have it. We’ll have a product to sell,” she said.

The variety of seeds included in the cover crops mixes also ensure that the animals who consume the hay receive a balanced diet.

According to Michigan State University Extension, “Harvesting cover crops offers livestock producers the opportunity to capture highly digestible nutrients for their animals and provides benefits to the soil in their cropping systems.”

After the spring harvest, CPN allows native plants, like little bluestem, big bluestem, Indiangrass and switchgrass, to grow and flourish.

The benefit to that is we’re getting all those natural fertilizers from the cover crops that are going to benefit the native grasses in the summer. We have made it to where we have almost zero input aside from a very small nitrogen application in the winter,” Kitchen said.

Before settlement, grasslands thrived across Oklahoma. According to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife, tallgrass prairies have been reduced by 85 to 98 percent. The Nation’s approach helps restore Oklahoma’s native grasslands along with improving soil health and economic viability across CPN land for generations to come.

Kitchen hopes CPN’s agricultural enterprise experiences another fruitful year in 2021 by expanding on best practices and making sound land-management decisions. Learn more about their efforts as well as how to purchase hay at cpn.news/dres.

Helping make homeownership a reality

By Payton Moody

Debating on purchasing your first home? Are you considering the costs compared to renting or leasing? There are many factors to keep in mind when buying a house, and it is important to consider every avenue. Understanding the benefits of homeownership can help make the decision easy. First National Bank & Trust Co. is here to assist Citizen Potawatomi Nation tribal members across the United States with becoming homeowners.

Return on investment

Owning a home is more than just a purchase; it’s an investment in your future, especially in regard to establishing a family. It is a gateway to long-term financial success. Instead of paying monthly rent to a landlord, mortgage payments go toward building equity. In a sense, this creates savings for the future. Homeownership also can provide potential tax deductions.

Making consistent mortgage payments on time demonstrates to lenders that you are a good borrower and pose a low risk for defaulting. This strong credit history will be helpful in the future when applying for car loans, making home improvements or paying other major expenses.

Aside from the financial benefits, homeownership also gives people a sense of pride in themselves and embodies the “American Dream.”

FNB benefits

At First National Bank & Trust Co. of Shawnee, Oklahoma, we are dedicated to helping you find the solution that best fits your lifestyle and budget. Our bank is one of the few financial institutions that provides HUD-184 home loans from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, available only to federally recognized tribal members. Our mortgage lender, Jeff Scroggins, specializes in these home loans and is dedicated to finding the right fit for you.

No matter your current financial situation, we are committed to service. Our team of experts are here to make the seemingly difficult process of purchasing your own home a breeze. First National Bank is here to help in all of life’s tough decisions, so give us a call today to get started: 405-275-8830.

"The benefit to that is we're getting all those natural fertilizers from the cover crops that are going to benefit the native grasses in the summer. We have made it to where we have almost zero input aside from a very small nitrogen application in the winter," Kitchen said.

Before settlement, grasslands thrived across Oklahoma. According to the

Home Loan Financing

HUD-184 Available only for Federally recognized tribal members

- Geographic and loan amount restrictions apply
- FHA, VA, USDA & Conventional loans also available
- All applicants and/or properties subject to qualifications

Contact

Jeff Scroggins
VP/Mortgage Lending
NMLS 813929

www.fnbokla.bank
405.275.8830
130 East MacArthur
Shawnee

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center displays several pieces of quill art, including boxes. Some are available for online viewing at potawatomiheritage.com.
Remembering Potawatomi ghost towns

From bustling pioneer settlements to oil booms and busts and growing metropolitan areas, the state of Oklahoma has undergone many changes since the Potawatomi arrived in Indian Territory in 1872. That includes the demise of many small, rural communities. Although numerous towns once existed throughout Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s jurisdiction, a few stand out, including Adell, Burnett, Econtuchka, Isabella/Clardyville, Pleasant Prairie, Sacred Heart and Pearson/Pearson Switch.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, municipalities existed within a short distance from each other due to the lack of modern transportation. While a journey of 10 to 20 miles today can occur in less than 30 minutes, in the late 1800s, that was simply not the case.

"It was truly just for a function of daily life. It was easier to have these smaller, scattered communities so that people could go about their daily business of farming or doing whatever they needed to do," said Dr. Kelli Mosteller, Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s Cultural Heritage Center director.

The arrival of railways increased transportation and travel, which impacted whether or not communities thrived or dwindled.

"The land runs really determined what..." before the railroads came, said Adell Toupin Bowles. "You see this a lot, towns named after the daughter of Amable and Mary Margaret Toupin, Adell Toupin Bowles. The Toupin family are known as one of the founding families for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

Adell

Once located 2 miles east and 1/5 mile south of the Old Seminole Agency in present-day central Pottawatomie County, the town of Adell received its name after the daughter of Amable and Mary Margaret Toupin, Adell Toupin Bowles. The Toupin family are known as one of the founding families for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

"Why Mary Margaret chose hers in the center of the county is likely that being in a central location is a good bet. … If you scatter your land out a little bit, and the tide changes and the circumstances change … you protected yourself a little bit from those vulnerabilities," Dr. Mosteller said.

Although Adell ceased to exist around 1898, the Toupin family remains alive and strong within the CPN.

Burnett

Named after descendants of Potawatomi Chief Abram Burnett, the town of Burnett was located 4 miles west and 1 mile north of present-day Macomb, Oklahoma. Although Chief Burnett remained in Kansas where the family established successful businesses, many of his descendants moved to Indian Territory to expand their enterprises.

"When you're close to borders like that, there is oftentimes a question of jurisdiction, and it becomes a grey area because people don't know which authority has jurisdiction over that space," Dr. Mosteller said.

Several Potawatomi families took allotments nearby through the Dawes Act of 1887, including some Bertrands and Bazhaws, due to its proximity to the North Canadian River.

"It was a strategic location to choose, especially when there were still a lot of questions about where the Oklahoma Capitol was going to go — where the real centers of power were going to be and where the railroads would continue to extend back into Seminole, Creek and Cherokee territories," she said.

Sacred Heart Mission

The town of Old Burnett (Photo provided by the Pottawatomie County Museum)

"Burnett gave them a run for their money for a few years before settlement patterns changed, and it slowly died out," Dr. Mosteller said.

The town dissolved in 1907, but its legacy continues.

Econtuchka

While many Indian Territory communities were quiet, sleepy towns, Econtuchka held a reputation as a haven for outlaws. Econtuchka is Seminole word that means "the line," named for its location along the Potawatomi and Seminole reservational boundaries in the northeast corner of what is now Pottawatomie County.

"When you're close to borders like that, there is oftentimes a question of jurisdiction, and it becomes a grey area because people don't know which authority has judicial control over that space," Dr. Mosteller said.

Several Potawatomi families took allotments nearby through the Dawes Act of 1887, including some Bertrands and Bazhaws, due to its proximity to the North Canadian River.

"It was a strategic location to choose, especially when there were still a lot of questions about where the Oklahoma Capitol was going to go — where the real centers of power were going to be and where the railroads would continue to extend back into Seminole, Creek and Cherokee territories," she said.

Continued on page 16
By the end of 1907, the town dissolved as residents began moving closer to Shawnee to be near businesses, schools, and churches.

Isabella/Oberlin/Clardyville/Wagoza

Early in Indian Territory and Oklahoma’s beginnings, it was not uncommon for a town to change its name based upon its leadership at the time, as was the case for Isabella/Oberlin/Clardyville/Wagoza. The town, located approximately 5 miles west of Asher, began as Isabella on Feb. 15, 1875. Ten days later, it became Clardyville.

“This is one of those towns that if … you had a name on the map of the county, this one would be changing fairly rapidly, and it would actually be changing location as well,” Dr. Mosteller said.

Joshua Clardy, a Citizen Potawatomi, established a general store. The town was first named after his wife and local postmaster Isabella before its change.

“Clardy was primarily his family, and a few others, who settled around him,” she said. “As people started moving closer to other resources, the town actually moved a block.”

Sadly, Clardy experienced the negative aspects of living in the “Wild West” firsthand when he was violently attacked at his store.

“He just sort of threw his hands up, and said, ‘This is not really worth all of what we’re going through,'” Dr. Mosteller said.

He returned to Kansas where he became involved in the newspaper industry.

“He was really successful,” she said. “As people started moving closer to other resources, the town actually moved a block.”

In 1883, the town actually moved a few miles.

“According to Dr. Mosteller, this area of the country may not have been as healthy meat and offers opportunities for CPN members to continue adhering to Pleasant Prairie cultural customs,” she added.

Pleasant Prairie

After signing the Treaty of 1867, Citizen Potawatomi began making their way south from Kansas, moving to a community named Pleasant Prairie in the southern portion of the new reservation in Indian Territory.

“It was temporary. They were settling here to just get their feet under them,” Dr. Mosteller explained.

When Tribal members had to select allotments in the years that followed, many of the families moved elsewhere across the reservation. Eventually, Wanette absorbed Pleasant Prairie. However, the Nation remembers its impact.

“It was sort of the first home base. It was where those Potawatomi families came down and saw this was going to be their future and resolved to make the best of it and to turn this into our new homeland as best we could,” she said.

Traditional take on Oklahoma’s state meal

Hunting, trapping and fishing have always been mainstays for the Nishnabē. Since the Citizen Potawatomi arrived in Oklahoma, taking advantage of the state’s plentiful white-tailed deer population as well as other wild game has provided lean, healthy meat and offers opportunities for CPN members to continue adhering to Pleasant Prairie cultural customs.

Preparing venison dishes today may seem difficult, but employing a little time, proper seasoning and love can provide delicious results. Check out this recipe below to learn how to use venison to create a traditional spin on fried steak. Check out the video tutorial at cpn.news/steak.

Chicken Fried Venison Steak

Ingredients

1 lb. tenderized venison steak
2-3 cups of flour and 3-5 tbs. for gravy
3-4 large eggs
3-4 tbs. milk for dredge and 2-4 cups for gravy
⅓ cup of vegetable oil
½ red onion, diced
1 cup of sliced mushroom
2-4 tbs. butter
⅛ cup chicken broth
Seasoning: salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, onion powder, garlic powder, onion powder and all-purpose seasoning of your choice.

Directions

1. Mix the flour and seasonings together. Use as much or as little of the seasonings as you’d like! It’s all about personal preference. In a separate container, crack the eggs and add the milk. Whisk together until combined.

2. Begin heating a pan and oil over medium heat. We’re using avocado for this tutorial.

3. Working one at a time, take a tenderized steak and coat with flour mixture. This helps the eggs stick better to the steak. Then dip in eggs until covered, and again, coat completely with flour mixture. Shake off excess.

4. Gently place steak into pan, and cook on both sides until golden brown.

5. Begin the process over with the next steak. Once all the steaks have been cooked, add the onions and mushrooms to pan.

6. Cook the vegetables until the onions begin to become translucent, then add butter. Once the butter has melted, sprinkle in the additional ingredients.

7. Stir the flour and vegetables for a few minutes to remove the raw flour taste.

8. Add broth and stir continuously, then add in milk.

Quick tip! Start with only 2 cups of milk. You can always add more if your gravy is too thick. Continue stirring constantly to avoid lumps and to prevent the gravy from burning.

9. Once the gravy has reached the correct consistency, pour over steak and serve!
Active duty Army soldier sees opportunities in travel, people skills

Citizen Potawatomi Nation member Justin Swarb sought to fulfill his desire to see the world when he enrolled in the right military branch out of high school.

"Before I left for the Army, I’ve only been to Mexico on a cruise and then the state of West Virginia, and I think Alabama when I was a kid," he said. “Other than that, I never really seen any other state or country. So (I joined) just to do something, I guess you can say, and serve my country. … Proud to do it.”

Following boot camp, Swarb deployed to Kuwait in May 2018. After spending a few months there, he switched between a couple of bases in Afghanistan and returned to the U.S. in January 2019. His work as a forward observer requires precision and focus while aligning artillery and mortar fire as well as setting up observation points — all while adjusting to rapidly changing circumstances.

Still active duty, Swarb is stationed at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado, until November 2021.

"While I’m in the States, it is pretty much just being mission-ready, training and everyday tasks, whether it be paperwork or going to fix our vehicles,” he said. “I’d say probably about once a month we go out to the field for a couple of weeks.”

Communication and decision-making

When asked about abilities he learned while enlisted, Swarb said, “I’m not even sure where to start to name off.”

He listed the people skills he has honed throughout the last several years as something he uses every day.

“I’ve always had them, but in the military, you try to be as clear as possible and communicate as much as possible so that everybody’s on the same page,” Swarb said.

Consistent and precise correspondence is essential to his position as a forward observer and a mission’s success. He also disseminates information, and the position requires quick thinking and confidence.

He also learned “the ability to just figure stuff out on my own,” he said.

Traveling to bases throughout the country and around the world made Swarb feel comfortable talking to anyone and everyone, from casual acquaintances to professional contacts.

"Just meeting people from different walks of life, and different states and different heritages, all different kinds of backgrounds — it’s definitely cultured me, in a sense," he said.

While stationed in Bagram, Afghanistan, Swarb and the other soldiers in his unit sometimes socialized with Afghan National Army members from a nearby base.

"Me and my buddy played pool with two ANA soldiers. It was pretty cool. We couldn’t communicate because we couldn’t really understand each other’s language, but it was nice. … Never thought I’d be able to do that," he said.

Swarb emphasized that improving communication skills comes down to one thing: “Just always be open-minded because you never really know the other person unless you converse with them consistently and are around them and know how they react and talk and everything like that.”

Family and service

Before joining, Swarb talked with one of his uncles who served in the Army for more than two decades. He helped Swarb pick what path to follow, which led to his position as a forward observer, the same job as his uncle. With no regrets, Swarb enjoys the opportunity to talk with someone about their experience.

“If you’re going to join, definitely take the time, do the research and make sure you find a job, no matter what branch you’re in, that you’re going to love when you go to join,” he said.

Swarb’s family members on both sides of the family have long military service records in many branches, including the Army, Marine Reserves, Coast Guard, Navy and more. His great-grandpa on his father’s side, where his Potawatomi lineage comes from, served in the Army as well.

Although Swarb attempted to prepare himself to leave his family and hometown of Waller, Texas, to serve, the longing to return took over.

“When I left for the Army, I thought I was ready to get out of Texas, and as soon as I got on a plane to Oklahoma to Fort Sill, I realized that I wanted to stay in Texas. I’m counting the days till I get back to it. But I thought I wouldn’t miss it, but I definitely do,” he said.

However, he grew close to the others in this unit. Swarb named the “brotherhood” between him and his fellow soldiers as his favorite thing about enlistment.

“I’ve got friends that I’ve known for a couple of years — or we’re not even so much a couple of years, just a few short years — but we would take a bullet for me, and you can’t really find that anywhere else,” Swarb said.

Following active duty, he, his wife Bailey and son Ryker plan to return to Texas, where job prospects await him.

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center honors Tribal members who served and places their pictures on the Veterans Wall of Honor. If you are a veteran and member and would like your place on the wall, please call 405-878-5830 and ask for KeAnne Langford or Blake Norton or email keanne.langford@potawatomi.org or bnornton@potawatomi.org.

Felicia Freeman serves Native-owned business in multiple capacities

Felicia Freeman did not plan to seek out a board seat with the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Oklahoma.

It just sort of fell into her lap.

"I don't think I ever officially ran," she said with a smile. “It was one of those situations where the officers and members asked me to do this. Last year, I said we might have more capable people available, but it was easy for the board to ask me as someone who knows how to put items on the agendas and upload them and take minutes. I didn’t just jump out and say, ‘I’ll do it’.”

A descendant of the Rhodd family, Freeman started a two-year term in 2019 as a Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation board member.

Along with the state level organization, the chamber has about 300 members, including a handful of businesses based outside of the state. Along with the state level organization, there are local chapters in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, the Lawton area, southeastern Oklahoma, north-central Oklahoma and far eastern Oklahoma.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the chamber has moved its monthly meetings online, both at the state and local level. Although plans are underway for an in-person event in July at River Spirit Casino in Tulsa. Zoom participation may be a COVID-induced change that becomes permanent for the chamber.

“It’s something that’s probably going to turn into an option, even when we can meet again in person,” she said. “It may be a great option for people who want to join a meeting in say, Tulsa, where I’d have to spend two hours driving up there. "It will open up a lot of doors all over the state versus just networking with your Tulsa people or Stillwater people or Lawton people or even Oklahoma City.”

"When I left for the Army, I thought I was ready to get out of Texas, and as soon as I got on a plane to Oklahoma to Fort Sill, I realized that I wanted to stay in Texas. I’m counting the days till I get back to it. But I thought I wouldn’t miss it, but I definitely do," he said.

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Felicia Freeman served Native-owned business in multiple capacities

Felicia Freeman Outside of her board seat, the University of Central Oklahoma alumna is a commercial loan officer and certified credit counselor for the Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation. Since coming on board with the CPDCD over a decade ago, she has assisted in making more than $40 million in loans to Indigenous entrepreneurs. She is also the CPDCD’s liaison to the Comanche Nation’s Revolving Loan Fund.

For Freeman, joining the chamber was simply a natural extension of her professional work.

“Our goals are common,” Freeman said. “At the CPDCD, our goal is to enhance financial futures for Native-owned businesses. The chamber’s goal is the same; we want to help those Native-owned businesses, give them any kind of technical support, any networking or any collaboration that we can do to help Native-owned businesses in Oklahoma.”

Find more about the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Oklahoma at aicoc.org. Visit the Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation online at cpdcd.org or on Facebook @cpdcd.
Tribal Chairman – John “Rcky” Barrett

On March 26 as FireLake Arena, we administered our 10,000th vaccine dose to the spouse of a Tribal member from Oklahoma City. Our success is thanks to an innovative collaboration between our emergency management department, CPN Health Services and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I thank them all for their commitment to our people. By the time you receive this paper, we’ll have administered a few thousand additional doses in our community to Native and non-Native alike. We are thankful that the vaccination efforts have reduced the number of confirmed positive cases. We have also seen fewer of our employees out on quarantine or through confirmed COVID-19 diagnoses, which is a great financial benefit. Throughout 2020, it was common to have more than 150 employees on average away from work each pay period.

Our trust in CPN’s medical experts got us to this point. Not every decision we have made through this last year has been easy, and perhaps with hindsight of a few years, we’ll have a better perspective of where we might have made a different call. I am very disappointed to have another Family Reunion Festival canceled, but I trust the advice of our medical professionals. These same doctors treat our loved ones at the clinic and have guided us through this horrible year of pandemic.

Here is the hard fact: this pandemic is not over. We have had double the number of positive cases reported this week, and another six people are in quarantine. Our worry is that half of the Festival attendees who come to Shawnee in June are from out of state, where case numbers remain high and vaccines aren’t widely available. With a large portion of Festival attendees being youths who cannot be vaccinated and elders who are much more likely to have serious complications, the risks outweigh the rewards. Imagine a multi-generation family attending and everyone from the great-grandchild to the great-grand-parent falling ill and taking the virus back to their community. It would be a great tragedy to our Tribe and your families.

Believe me — I wish with all my heart that I could predict the future. I don’t relish selling you this news, especially because under my leadership, we started and shaped the Family Reunion Festival to be a Citizen Potawatomi event, unlike the old days of inter-tribal powwows when our people virtually quit participating. Festival is of utmost importance to me, but so is the well-being of you, my fellow Tribal members.

This is what leadership duty requires: listening to the experts, telling our people the truth and making the best out of a bad situation. There is a rumor that one of my election opponents is planning a personal powwow with the help of a few who have opposed my election in the past. Please use caution in considering this, if you are. The news of Festival’s cancellation is sad, but getting sick would be worse. We are working to still make some parts of it possible online. Our CPN Cultural Heritage Center and CPN Public Information Department will host digital Festival activities, and I encourage you to participate.

In-person voting will take place. This is just as it was last year, when CPN members cast their ballots inside a very socially distanced FireLake Arena.

Vice-Chairman – Linda Capps

Thank you,
John “Rcky” Barrett
Vice-Chairman (He Leads Them Home) Tribal Chairman
During the February meeting, we considered and approved a proposal to accept a sizeable allocation from the federal government of $3.1 million for distribution to Tribal citizens through the Low-Income Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance Program, the terms of which are specified in detail by the federal government. You can find more details about the program at potawatomi.org/low-income-program or by calling 855-481-0638 Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST. Please read the program description, call the information number if you have eligibility questions, and spread the word about the program to all Tribal citizens who might be eligible.

**Knowledge 360° (NK360)**

at gpnews/legislature. You’ll find educational materials and teacher training materials that incorporate Native narratives, more comprehensive histories and accurate information about Native America. This could be a valuable resource to use if you are a teacher or to introduce to your favorite student’s teaching staff. I am eager to get back to the Archives with a group of fellow Potawatomi as soon as NMAI will let me schedule a visit! I’ve included here some photos of past visits to the NMAI Archives.

**District 2 contest?**

I’ve not posted details for our annual contest because I’m short on ideas this time. This would be our 11th contest year, I believe, and perhaps the contest has run its course. If you have ideas for our theme (Potawatomi heritage and culture-centric), please share them with me. As a reminder, in 2020, you were asked to submit stories about your use of your CPN ID card; our 2019 contest asked for photos of something or someone that best reflects your Potawatomi heritage.

I’ll miss you

It’s so regrettable that we are not able to gather for a Family Reunion Festival this year. I’ll miss you and so many CPN citizens who might be eligible. Next year in Shawnee!

Please be in contact

Write, call or email me to chat or obtain or offer information. As your elected legislator, I am here to listen and to assist when I can.

---

**District 2 – Eva Marie Carney**

Bozho nikan

(Hello friend),

February meeting video and catch up with earlier meetings at cpn.news/legislature. You’ll see within a day or two of the meeting, the videos of the legislative meetings we held on Feb. 25. Our information technology department posts the videos of our legislative meetings within a day or two of the meeting. You can watch the February meeting video and catch up with earlier meetings at cpn.news/legislature.

Our latest quarterly legislative meeting was held on Feb. 25. Our information technology department posts the videos of our legislative meetings within a day or two of the meeting. You can watch the February meeting video and catch up with earlier meetings at cpn.news/legislature. You’ll see within a day or two of the meeting, the videos of the legislative meetings we held on Feb. 25. Our information technology department posts the videos of our legislative meetings within a day or two of the meeting. You can watch the February meeting video and catch up with earlier meetings at cpn.news/legislature.
On Saturday, May 8, 2021, I am holding a District 3 Zoom meeting from 10 a.m. to noon. Our June 2021 Family Reunion Festival has been canceled due to COVID-19 uncertainty. I am hoping to hold face-to-face meetings later in the year and will be asking you what you would like those meetings to include at the May meeting. The link for the May meeting will be provided later.

District groups
As with each of our districts, they tend to be fairly large, and we are not able to get to all locations on a regular basis. I have had a couple of District 3 citizens ask if they could setup a group in their immediate area to help build more interest in our Nation. My thoughts are that by forming such groups, they can assist me in finding meeting locations as well as offering ideas on what they would like me to bring to a meeting in the way of information, crafts, or for that matter, stuff to talk about a specific topic. The most recent person to contact me was Joshua Walters who lives in Leander, Texas. Leander is very near Austin and Round Rock, Texas, and really not too distant from San Antonio. We have a fairly large population and several counties that are adjacent to those cities. For those of you living near Leander and are interested in joining a group to help increase interest in our Nation, please contact Joshua.

Joshua Walters
713-823-2644
jewalters316@gmail.com

If there are any other members residing in or near Corpus Christi, Galveston, Houston, Wichita Falls, Tyler, Dallas, or Ft. Worth who would like to get a group started, let me know and I will get your information out in the Hownikan.

In closing, I am humbled and honored to represent you. As already mentioned, I am your voice on the CPN executive and legislative council and services, benefits and questions about the budget, resolutions and expenses. I again ask for the avenue to contact you via email so I may get timely information to you as it surfaces.

Tama pi (Later),
Bob Whicker
Bmahi (He Soars)
Representative, District 3
112 Bedford Road, Suite 116
Bedford, TX 76022
817-282-0860 office
817-229-6271 cell
817-545-3507 home
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spv@jayhawktorah.com
District 5 – Gene Lambert

HOWNIKAN

(April 21, 2021)

As we travel forward through 2021, we see there isn’t much change before us other than the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccination plan. It has apparently changed state to state in regard to the priorities and timeframe involved. We do see a light at the end of the tunnel, however. We have reached the one-year mark of isolation and public concerns. How long this will last? We really don’t know as new strains are being identified. Politicians haven’t slowed down either as each party accuses the other of un-American acts. Let’s just go that for the moment. We’ve lost friends and relatives on that subject.

Betty Sigala and Aunt Liz Sigala, Pomo Nation citizen Leticia Leaders in California fear COVID deaths are going undercounted. We’re born Indian with a headline two COVID-19 deaths in California has the largest number of American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States. California’s COVID-19 data isn’t reflective of national data that shows American Indians and Alaska Natives are the single most important thing we can do to combat the pandemic. If we ignore our heritage, we won’t maintain our connection to the past. We recently received word that Family Reunion Festival is canceled this year. While we do have new states that have begun to vaccinate, it’s still too early to be confident we can gather safely. However, it is still an important election year. As Vice-Chairman Capps said in the February Hownikan, “I have said numerous times, voting in our Tribal elections is the single most important thing we can do as citizens of the great Citizen Potawatomi Nation. I believe voting is our most important right, and I also believe we should consider it our duty. As Vice-Chairman Capps said, "This is the way you can stay connected to your Tribe." I think that if we truly consider ourselves Native Americans, we should participate in our Tribal elections. Let your voice be heard and your vote be counted! Please take the time to request your absentee ballot, vote and mail it in. It’s that easy. In closing, I must share with you that on Feb. 5, my oldest brother Robert Lee (Bob) Payne has walked on. At age 76, he finally succumbed to his progressive heart failure. It was a lengthy battle that he fought with fearless determination. His death was not COVID related. Many of you have seen and talked to him at district events and Family Reunion Festival. Bobby was my biggest fan as I was his. We shared a bond that only the closest of brothers can share. He was always there for me. I will forever be reminded of his caretaker spirit in a gentle breeze, a soft rain, a sleepy and rainy sunset, a full moon, a shooting star, children playing and an empty chair at the campfire. His passing is a great loss for our entire family, and we miss him dearly. Rest peacefully in the arms of Jesus, dear brother. Bama mine.

Potawatomi word of the month: neez
Remember, you can look up this word or any other word at potawatomidictionary.com. Wisdom from the Word: "A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need." Proverbs 17:17

Migewetch (Thank you!) Bama pi (Later)

Rande K. Payne

Visalia, CA 93292-9585
559-999-5411 cell
raned.payne@potawatomi.org

Distric 6 – Rande K. Payne

I would rather write about some of the beauty in the world.

A discussion came up with an associate a few months ago. I found it interesting and sparked research. I hope you find it worthy as well. It is about a Spanish mission on Native American land. If you have additional information not written here, I would love to hear about it.

Let’s start with one of the most famous missions here in Arizona.

San Xavier del Bac Mission, Tucson, Arizona

Francis Xavier was a Spanish Jesuit and acknowledged as a patron saint of the Roman Catholic missions. He was known as a member of the first seven Jesuit order and traveled extensively. He was born on April 7, 1506, at the Xavier Castle close to Sanguesa, Navarre (Spain) and died Dec. 3, 1552, and was canonized on March 12, 1622. It was also said the founding of the mission actually occurred in 1692.

The project was taken on by Father Eusebio Kino, a Jesuit priest who worked to spread Christianity to the American Indians and Native communities. I think that it’s our duty to remember the sacrifice and bravery of the Jesuit priests who worked on the mission. The Xavier Castle was close to Sanguesa, Navarre (Spain), the historic capital of modern Spain. As you move through the mission, you will see a magnificent white form out in the middle of the desert. If you are in the middle of the desert, you can see the mission from a distance of 3 miles. The mission was built on what is now the Tohono O’odham Nation. We should not forget the missions that were built on the Tohono O’odham Nation.

I will not get into the Catholic faith, but it is not unusual to hear about the mission. The mission was built on what is now the Tohono O’odham Nation.

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I’m so glad that we were able to have them counted. It meant a lot to us as Natives,” she recalled 8 months later. Agualicis was fearful that if hospital staff were allowed to fill out the death certificates, her family members would have been missclassified as Latino, white or other. California Native American tribal leaders said that COVID deaths have shrouded their communities, yet state figures show few Native Americans have died here compared to other states with significant Indigenous populations. Leaders lost a group of artists who participated in the refurbishment of the already beautiful San Xavier del Bac.

According to the National Park Service, the San Xavier building was started in 1706 on land conveyed to be sacred by the Tohono O’odham Nation and completed by Franciscans in 1797. It was also said the founding of the mission actually occurred in 1692.

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District 7 – Mark Johnson

I know many are all looking for opportunities to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. At time of writing, a third vaccine came online, and it will greatly expand the opportunities for members around the country to receive an inoculation from COVID-19. While CPN Health Services has done an excellent job in distributing vaccines in the Oklahoma jurisdiction, those of us in the other legislative districts may need help finding vaccines in and around them. Although there are a wide array of federal, state and local websites and call centers that have come online, like vaccinefinder.org from the CDC, Tribal members with a valid CPN ID card are allowed to be seen at Indian Health Service clinics throughout the United States. HHS has been increasing its supply of vaccines for Native Americans throughout the year, and that looks to continue. According to their own statistics on the cdc.gov/coronavirus as they relate to CPN District 7, they have:

- California area • 73,075 vaccines available • 37,090 vaccines administered
- Phoenix area (includes Utah and Nevada) • 87,840 vaccines available • 59,607 vaccines administered

Seeing how the same statistics show the case positivity rates in those two HHS areas are 10 percent and 6 percent respectively, it is best to explore as many ways as possible to find a way to get vaccinated or other health care services. Don’t forget that ihss.gov/findhealthcare can help you locate a health care facility around the country that will treat you with proof of your tribal citizenship. If you do not have a Tribal ID, please contact CPN Tribal Rolls immediately at cpn/tribalrolls or by calling 880-880-3880.

And again, election season is here, so please take the time now to request your ballot and return it when you get it. I urge you to examine the growth and stability our Nation has enjoyed, and let us not step off the path that’s gotten us to where we are as Citizen Potawatomi.

Once again, I would like to say what an honor it is to serve you as your District 7 representative.

As always give me a call, and I will be happy to work with you on any questions you may have or provide you with additional information you may need to access Tribal benefits that may be available. Please also take the time to give me a call or send me an email with your contact information so that I can keep informed of the happenings within the Nation and district.

Thank you,
Mark Johnson,
Wick Metz (Strong as a Tree)
Representative, District 7
1565 Shaw Ave., Suite 202
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559-351-0078 cell
mark.johnson@potawatomi.org

District 8 – Dave Carney

Please be sure to vote this year. The Chairman’s seat, District 1 and District 4 are contested elections. There are two challengers for Chairman, four candidates for the District 1 seat (the North-east states) and one challenger for the District 4 (Kansas) seat.

2020 was a very challenging year for all of us personally and the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Challenging would be an understatement. Lost enterprise revenue, distribution of CARES Act funds and the enrollment of a record number of new Tribal members were the highlights of the year. I’d like to compliment the administration and staff for rising to the occasion.

In our first legislative meeting of 2021, the body passed several resolutions applying for federal funding for museum and library services, technical and adult education, supplemental CARES Act funding and National Park Service funds for Tribal historic preservation. Additionally, the Nation was able to acquire a much sought after property — the Hardesty Grocery Store land that sits in the center of our properties — and it was a great thing to be able to vote to put this land in to trust for the future generations. Lastly, we approved a resolution containing a large list of new enrollment into the Tribe.

It is my sincere hope that the District 8 Fall Feast can happen in Portland, Oregon, this year and that the turnout is even better than in years past.

Please be sure to request an absentee ballot and participate. As always, it is my honor to serve as your legislator.

Dave Carney
Kagagibi (Raven)
Representative, District 8
520 Lilly Road, Building 1
Olympia, WA 98506
360-259-4027
dcarney@potawatomi.org

District 9 – Paul Wesselhöft

We approved a resolution containing a large list of new enrollments into the Tribe.

As my pleasurable surprise, I’m pleased to be a member of this important committee and plan to propose resolutions that will enhance our Tribal history, culture, arts and language.

Thank you,
Paul Wesselhöft
Naganit (Leader)
Representative, District 9
pwsesselhoff@gmail.com
pwsesselhoff@potawatomi.org

District 11 – Andrew Walters

When does a journey really start? Does it start at your first step, or when you pack to go? Maybe it starts when you first begin planning. For me, I believe my journey started when I was sworn in as a Tribal legislator. But then maybe, the moment when I decided that upon retirement, we would move to Shawnee, and I would try to give back to the Tribe all the Tribe has given us.

After much thought, I now know that my journey started hundreds of years ago and thousands of miles away. It started when our ancestors, fighting to survive, formed a cooperative, a group, a Tribe to help one another. That Tribe grew, through good times and bad — through journey after journey. From the western shores of Lake Michigan, through the Great Lakes, Indiana and Illinois, to Kansas and finally Oklahoma, the journey has taken our people to this point in time, to this place we know as home. If it had not been for their tenacious ways, their desire to survive, their bonding into family, I would not be here.

Our ancestral family laid the bricks that formed the road we now walk on, that we all now share. If it had not been for them, we would not have a Tribe. We would not be family. So it is proper to thank our ancestors for their ways, their work, their hardships, their trial and blood. I think we all have a debt to pay to them for their lives and their impact on ours by keeping our Tribe strong and honoring their sacrifice. I also have a debt to each of you — a debt I hope to pay in service to my Tribe. I am honored to be your District 11 legislator.

Thank you for your trust and blessings as we continue our journey together as Citizen Potawatomi.

Thank you for your trust and blessings as we continue our journey together as Citizen Potawatomi.

Andrew Walters
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HOWNIKAN

APRIL 2021
Steven Tinney

Steven Britt Tinney, a resident of Wichita City, Oklahoma, passed away on Jan. 28, 2021, at the age of 85. He was born in Porterville, California, on April 11, 1937, to Mary “JoAnn” (Staley) and Elton Tinney. Steven was an avid music lover who spent many of his younger years enjoying fishing, hiking, camping, shooting and going to concerts with family and friends. A 1985 graduate of Monache High School, Steven was active in wrestling, swimming, diving and water polo, and became a Tulare County Sheriff Explorer, which eventually led to a career in law enforcement. Steven was a deputy sheriff before going to work for the California Department of Corrections, where he retired a correctional sergeant.

Several years ago, Steven told his brother Ron that he missed their dad Elton, whom he dearly loved, and that he had decided to move out of California to live closer to him. Steven had moved to Oklahoma a few years earlier, and that he and his brother had spent a lot of time together. The last several years, they were blessed to have been able to spend a lot of time together. Steven was survived by his father, Elton Tinney; his brother, Ron Staley (Jossie); nieces, Amanda Barber and Victoria Staley (Dayton Waggoner); nephew, Ronnie Staley; great-niece, Layla Barber; and great-nephews, Mason Barber and Brynn Waggoner. He was preceded in death by his mother, JoAnn Tinney; and stepmother, Brenda Tinney, as well as beloved pets June, Reign, and King.

Steven was buried next to his mother, whom he dearly loved, in Porterville, California.

Edna Gay Blevins

Funeral service for Edna Gay Blevins, 103, of Verden, Oklahoma, were held Saturday, Dec. 5, 2020.

Edna was born the daughter of Jerome and Anna Melot on Oct. 7, 1917, in Wanette, Oklahoma, on the Citizen Band Potawatomi Reservation. She died on Dec. 1, 2020, in Sulphur, Oklahoma.

Edna married her husband Denver Blevins on May 21, 1935. The couple moved to Verden in 1953 where they raised their three sons, Wesley, Tony and James. During her life, she served others as a homemaker and an active member of her church. She was known for being an excellent cook. The older member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Edna enjoyed being on the go and looking at the scenery along the back roads of Oklahoma.

Edna was preceded in death by her husband Denver Blevins; parents, Anna and Jerome Melot; son and daughter-in-law, Wesley and Georgia Blevins; grandson Cory Blevins; and siblings, Wanda, Roy, Ruth, Thelma and Vera.

Edna is survived by her son Tony Blevins and wife Juanita of Globe, Arizona; son James Blevins of Verden, Oklahoma; grandson Terry Blevins and wife Darling of Los Angeles, California; grandson Rodney Blevins and wife Jolanda of Colorado Springs, Colorado; grandson Neal Blevins of Denver, Oklahoma; grandson Andrew Blevins and wife Jennifer of Verden, Oklahoma; grandson Denver Blevins of Verden, Oklahoma; granddaughter Brantley Blevins of Quinton of Sulphur, Oklahoma; 11 great-grandchildren; 2 great-great-grandchildren; and special friend Karen Wilkerson of Chickasha, Oklahoma.

Melba Schencks

Melba Lee Schencks (Sinor) was born on March 9, 1934, in Pryor, Oklahoma, to George and Alta Sinor (Carrillo) of Pryor. After an extended illness, she accepted the Lord’s invitation to join her heavenly family on Jan. 1, 2021. She grew up in Pryor and graduated Pryor High School in 1952. She then attended College at Northeastern State University, where she received a master’s degree in education. She was part of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society while attending NSU and after. She went on to teach in several states, holding teaching certificates in Kansas, Maine and Oklahoma. She ended her career in Oklahoma after 24 years of teaching at Chouteau Elementary Public Schools. Even after retirement, she went on to mentor the next generation of teachers by observing and helping in the teacher’s certification process.

Melba was married to Frazure Schencks in 1958 in Salina, Kansas. They moved all over the United States due to Frazure’s career with the United States Air Force. Finally retiring home in 1976, they settled and made their home in Chouteau, Oklahoma. They raised two children together, Alta and George Schencks.

She was a proud Citizen Potawatomi Nation member. She enjoyed reading about the history, learning the language and knowing the solidarity of her Indian family. She was part of the Willmette family.

She is survived by Alta Schencks of Tulsa, daughter; and George Schencks of Pryor; son; several surviving members of her family include grandchildren, Anthony Schencks, Brian Schencks, Joshua Schencks and Talyah Schencks; great-grandchildren, Hailey Schencks, Curtis Schencks, Sawyer Schencks and Sage Schencks; sisters, Judith Washam, Nora McMans and Lora McHenry; and one brother, Jon Sinor.

Preceded in death by her loving husband, Frazure Schencks; mother, Alta Sinor; father, George Sinor; and her sister, Georgia “Lucy” Link.

Mary O. Jeffords

Mary O. Jeffords passed to her heavenly home on Jan. 11, 2021, in her home surrounded by her family after a long battle with cancer. She will be missed by so many.

Mary was a dedicated and loving mother, grandmother and wife. Mary held an unwavering faith in God, which she shared with those who surrounded her. Her beautiful smile and infectious laugh will forever live in our hearts.

Mary joins her father Charles O. Jeffords, her mother, Mary O. Jeffords passed to her heavenly home on Jan. 1, 2021, near her home surrounded by her family after a long battle with cancer. She will be missed by so many.

Mary was a dedicated and loving mother, grandmother and wife. Mary held an unwavering faith in God, which she shared with those who surrounded her. Her beautiful smile and infectious laugh will forever live in our hearts.

Mary joins her father Charles L. Baird, mother Olive C. Baird (Martin), sister Kay Baird, and brother Bob Baird in heaven. She is survived by her loving husband, John Jeffords; daughters, Michelle Huffman, Angela Huffman, Traci Lawson and Sondra Jeffords and their families; siblings, Pat Felton, Ron Baird, Sally Herman, Teresa Baird, Mike Baird, Joe Baird and Vi Pancratz, and their families.

Peggy Hutson

Peggy Hutson of Broseley, Missouri, passed away at the age of 85. She worked at Doctors Hospital and the Poplar Bluff School System before retiring to travel with the love of her life, Alex. Peggy was a member of Palace of Praise and a Tribal elder of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, a descendant of Rosetta Tromble. She loved to read and work outside in her flowers, but her favorite pastime was a good long conversation, as she never met a stranger.

Peggy is survived by her dog, Rosie; children, Karlyne (Kenny) Spencer of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, Larry (Carolyn) Hutson of Greenville, Missouri, Teresa (Ross) Gilmore of Palm City, Florida, and Lora Lee Hutson of Ash Grove, Missouri; one brother, Ronnie (Cheryl) Williams of Poplar Bluff, Missouri; four grandchildren, Cherish Hoyt, Kristal Hutson Aldana, Jona Trout and Emily J Warren; eight great-grandchildren; and Barbara Bynum, Frank and Charlotte Hillie; and many cherished family and friends.

She was preceded in death by her loving husband, Alex; her daughter, Rebecca Cook; and her parents, Irven and Hazel Williams.

Graveside services were held at Browns Chapel in Broseley, Missouri. We say good-by knowing they are now at peace. Together again.

Hau ndenwemagneg
Ho my relatives

Ébyé yak sotte gnom
We have come here today

Éwi nesh meu yak odpide wemow
To lay our brother to rest

Ngm she épamá sét odpide
tHe y walks today

Ga wje zhywag wol gi gambójok
Among those who have passed on

I yédéyebewok yi odpide néw
That is why we offer this song

Émmo shëkat we ja zhyat ibe shëpémwogok
That his journey will go well where he goes above

Iw ènáy moany
That’s all I have to say

A Potawatomi prayer for a specific loved one who has walked on.

By Don Perrot
Bobby Glenn Thomason, a member of the Pettifer family, walked on Jan. 16, 2021, at the age of 66 surrounded by his beloved family in Tecumseh, Oklahoma, after a two-year long battle with metastatic melanoma.

He was born April 9, 1954, in Longview, Texas, to Bobby Gene and Peggy (Pettifer) Thomason but spent his early life in Murfreesboro, Arkansas, and considered it his hometown. He met his beloved wife Kaye in 1976 at Henderson State University, and they were married Jan. 7, 1978, in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. He was a devoted and loving husband who considered her his partner in all things. He is fondly remembered by his son, Ben Thomason; daughter, Kendra Kirker and husband Gary; and his two grandchildren, Elizabeth and Timothy Kirker. He is survived by his mother, Peggy Hill; stepfather, Lee Hill; sister, Suzanne Pipkins; and brothers, David, Patrick and Sam; along with many nieces, nephews, cousins and aunts who loved him well and will miss him greatly. He was preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, Pat and Viola Pettifer.

Bobby loved literature, music and poetry but also enjoyed maintaining electrical equipment and “tinkering” of all sorts. He was a kind, gentle soul who worked hard and spent his life providing for his family and loved ones.

He chose to be cremated, and the family will announce memorial services at a later date. To share memories, visit the online guestbook at cooperfuneral.com.

Debbie Lou Haines James Netterville, age 59, of Weatherford, Texas, passed away at Harris Hospital in Fort Worth on Feb. 3, 2021, after a month-long battle against COVID-19.

Debbie was born to Ronnie Clyde Haines Sr. and Juanita “Dixie” Charline Haines on July 25, 1961, in Fort Worth, Texas. Debbie grew up in Weatherford, Oklahoma, and graduated from Weatherford High School in 1979.

During high school, Debbie began working at Citizens National Bank, now known as First Financial Bank, and continued working there after high school while attending Weatherford College.

Debbie devoted over 30 years to the bank and was currently serving as the vice president of First Technology Services, Inc. for First Financial Bank.

Debbie was a registered member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and descendant of the Hughey family.

She enjoyed attending Native American dances and events. She crafted dance clothes for her family as well as sold some, taking great pride seeing her work in the powwow circle.

Debbie enjoyed the time around Halloween, working several years at Hangman’s House of Horrors in Fort Worth, and devoted many hours decorating the yard at her home for others to enjoy.

Debbie is survived in death by her parents, Ronnie Sr. and Juanita Haines of Weatherford; husband, Kenneth Netterville of Weatherford; sons, Jesse James of Fort Worth, and Samuel James and his wife Traci and their children, Britton and Brayley of Aledo; brother, Ronnie Haines Jr. of Weatherford; nephews, Alex Haines and his family, and Austin Haines; and many friends.

There was a private family graveside burial service. A memorial service for friends and family is planned for May 15. A memorial fund has been established at First Financial Bank to help cover final expenses and medical bills. In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to this fund.

Juanelle Brant Beauford

Juanelle Brant Beauford joined her Lord and Savior on Monday, March 1, 2021, at 91 years of age. She was born on Aug. 28, 1929, to Walter and Lena Mae Brant, and was the youngest of seven children.

Juanelle was preceded in death by her parents, siblings and her husband of 66 years, Don K. Beauford. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Laree and C.L. Barnett; her son and daughter-in-law, Matt and Carla Beauford; four grandchildren; Melissa Rivera and husband Mark; Audrey Masoner and husband Chad; Mariah Robertson and husband Ryan; and Sierra Wells and husband Ethan; five great-grandchildren: Delane Janeway, Emma Masoner, Hazen Masoner, Tayin Masoner and Everly Mae Wells; as well as numerous loving nieces and nephews.

Juanelle went to meet her heavinly father at peace, surrounded by her loving family. She was a woman of quiet strength with a true zest for life. In her younger years, she loved to travel with her sisters as often as she could. She was a talented artist who honed her skills at Oklahoma A&M College for Art and would go on to publish her artwork in magazines and commission specialty pieces until her eye failed. She spent countless afternoons with her grandchildren on adventures to the zoo and science museums. Her quiet wit and contagious laugh filled her home with laughter until the end of her days. She was patient, kind and forgiving, and will be deeply missed.

Linda Marie Kirk

Linda Marie Kirk was the Daughter of J.C. and Marylee Johnson of Oklahoma, and wife of Larry “Mike” Kirk of Dibble. She is remembered by her daughter, Kathy Kraus and husband Barry of Nashville, Tennessee; son, David Kirk and wife Kathy of Moore; grandchildren from Nashville, Brandon and Evan; granddaughters from Moore, Shelby, Amber and little Sabrina. Linda fought many health issues but ultimately succumbed to COVID-19 on Feb. 8, 2021. She was a wonderful wife, partner and friend to Mike for 52 years. He would often tell her jokingly, “Princess, I don’t know if this thing is going to last. Only time will tell.” In 1970, she gave up her job at Oklahoma National Mortgage to be a stay-at-home mom and raised two kids of whom they are very proud. The result was six grandchildren, ages 11 months to 20 years.

Linda loved to rock and swing. She had recliner rockers in the house and porch swings on covered front and back decks. She chose which swing by where the sun was and the time of year. She enjoyed the simple things. Fancy clothes, jewelry or socializing were not at the top of her list. She and Mike traveled when they could in their fifth-wheel RV to the Rockies, Nashville or Florida.

Near the end, she got a smartphone. She loved ordering her own things as she got around poorly — clothes, patio furniture or medical needs. Amazon became her best friend, and she got so excited when the packages came. Linda loved to eat out, or as she called it, “making a burger run.” Everything from fast food to Dalots in Blanchard, to Chinese or the steakhouses in Norman.

She and Mike have four “grandcats.” They love to go camping with them and have a cat door on the RV. They were great company for Linda and showed their love in unique ways.

Linda did not want a traditional funeral or viewing. She only asked that family and friends get together at their home when the weather gets nice. The kids can all fish at their pond, which they have stocked for the little ones, and they can catch them with every cast. It is the only social gathering she would totally enjoy. She was cremated, and her beautiful urn sits on the mantel with a matching necklace holding their wedding rings. Every morning, Mike walks by and says, “Morning, Princess.”

Jimmy Joe Wyatt

Jimmy Joe Wyatt, age 58 of Social Circle, Georgia, passed away on Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021. He is preceded in death by his parents, Roma Collins and Larry Wyatt. He is survived by his wife of 35 years, Shanda Wyatt of Social Circle, and sister, Crystal Wyant of Conyers, Georgia.

Jimmy Joe was a loving husband, a good brother and a friend to all who knew him. He cared deeply for all his family. He was just Jimmy Joe who will always be in our hearts and remembered as a wonderful husband, brother, son-in-law, nephew, cousin, uncle and friend. He had that certain twinkle in his eye that let you know he was always up to something. He loved being outdoors, fishing and just working with his projects. Our love was truly blessed to have him with us.

We will see him again.

Love you always, dear.