

HOW NIKAN

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Sovereign Bank contributes \$5,000 to support early literacy in Shawnee Public Schools

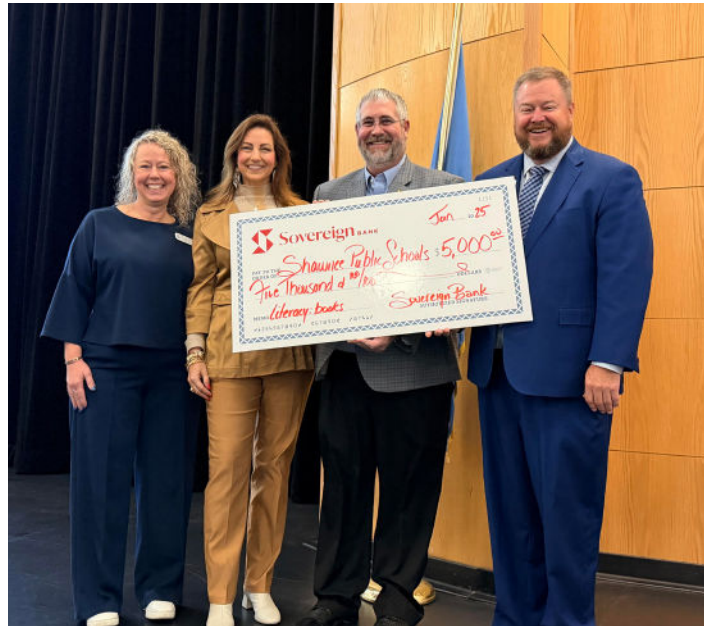
Shawnee Public Schools recently received a \$5,000 contribution from Sovereign Bank to support early literacy efforts across the district. The donation will be used to provide books for classrooms, helping ensure students have access to high-quality reading materials at an early age.

This investment directly supports Shawnee Public Schools' commitment to building strong literacy foundations for students, recognizing that early access to books plays a critical role in reading development, academic success and long-term learning outcomes.

"We are grateful to Sovereign Bank for their generous support of our youngest learners," said Jackie Noble, executive director of academic services for Shawnee Public Schools. "Providing books in classrooms allows students to engage with reading daily, build confidence and develop a love for learning that extends far beyond the school year. Partnerships like this make a meaningful difference for our students and teachers."

Rachael Melot, business development officer of Sovereign Bank, emphasized the bank's commitment to education and community impact.

"Early literacy is a cornerstone of student success, and we are proud to partner with Shawnee Public Schools to support this important work," Melot said. "By helping place books directly into classrooms, we hope to encourage curiosity, imagination and a lifelong love of reading for Shawnee students."



From left, Shawnee Public Schools Executive Director of Academic Services Jackie Noble, Sovereign Bank Business Development Officer Rachael Melot, Sovereign Bank President Brian Nave, and SPS Superintendent Dr. Jason James hold up a check Sovereign Bank donated to SPS.

Shawnee Public Schools extended its sincere appreciation to Sovereign Bank for investing in student learning and supporting literacy initiatives that will benefit classrooms across the district. 🌟

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Maker goes from intern to full-time employee

The *Hownikan's* newest staff member, social media and online assistant Rachel Maker, started with the department late in 2025. However, Maker's first experience working at CPN was as an intern.

Maker, who graduated in December from the University of Central Oklahoma with her Bachelor of Arts in Strategic Communications, worked with the Public Information Department as an intern in the summer of 2023.

"It gave me real-world exposure to the field of communications," she said. "I learned more about the Tribe, wrote three news stories, assisted with social media posts and content brainstorming, and helped with Facebook live coverage during the Family Reunion Festival. I was also able to go with some of the Public Information employees as they covered stories so I could better understand their process. I often think back to my internship and feel grateful for the valuable experience it provided."

When Maker was in her final semester of college, with only a few credit hours left to acquire, she decided to look for a full-time position. Thinking back on her time as an intern with CPN, she reached out to inquire about any openings and was hired as a full-time employee of the Tribe.

"It has been rewarding to take what I learned in college and during my internship and apply it to my career," Maker said.

She also added that each story she writes offers her a chance to learn new things about the Tribe.

"Growing up, I was always told that we were Potawatomi, but my family and I didn't explore it much further," Maker said.

Maker, a descendant of the Curley, Acton and Rhodd families, has lived in Oklahoma for about 10 years, with the time before that spent moving to locations all around the country. It wasn't until the move to Oklahoma that her father



Hownikan staff member Rachel Maker videographs the release of a golden eagle back to its natural habitat.

started to research CPN and the family joined the rolls. They attended their first Family Reunion Festival in 2022.

Now that she works full-time for the Tribe, Maker said she has had opportunities to "continue learning about the Tribe and Potawatomi culture while also meeting people from the families I descend from."

"In my first four months of working here full-time, I've already had some incredible experiences," she said. "One of those experiences included going to the golden eagle release in October to get video footage and information for the news story. This golden eagle release resulted in me visiting the Nation's aviary and learning more about eagles and how sacred they are to Native Americans."

Maker said she is grateful for the opportunity to "grow professionally and personally" and looks forward to her journey at CPN.

"I often think back to becoming a Tribal member in 2022 and how excited I was to finally be able to say I am truly Native American," she said. "Little did I know I would later be working for my Native American tribe."

More about the internship program

Internship and Project Coordinator Kym Coe said situations like Maker's are exactly what the Education Department hopes for with CPN interns.

"That's why we do internships," she said. "We want to see them intern with us, finish their degree,

and then come back and work with us here at the Nation. That's our goal, and we love to see it come to fruition."

Through the internship program, qualified applicants can receive paid internships with CPN Tribal departments that align with their career interests and educational pursuits.

Internships in the spring and fall are 160 hours spread out over the semester, while summer internships are 240 hours over the course of six weeks. The deadline to apply for summer internships is May 10. Internships pay \$13 an hour.

"The internship is a wonderful opportunity for students to get hands on experience relevant to their degrees,"

Department of Education Director Rachel Watson said. "They also get to see how working for a tribal government is a uniquely impactful role — everything we do as Tribal employees ultimately connects back to serving Tribal members. While not every intern will find a full-time job with the Nation at the end of their internship, they all walk away with new knowledge and having made a positive impact on the departments they've worked with."

For more information about CPN internships, reach out to kym.coe@potawatomi.org, or apply online at portal.potawatomi.org. A resume and cover letter are required for applications. 🔥

Education department offers assistance with Cobell, other scholarships

With the spring semester starting, many scholarships are opening the window for applications. It's a time when Tribal citizens can apply for additional funds to help with their education, and CPN Department of Education Assistant Director Charles Lee is available to help students with the process.

One of the scholarships open now is the Cobell Scholarship, named for Elouise "Yellow Bird Woman" Cobell. The scholarship is an annual, non-renewable scholarship that is merit based, with awards based on need. Any student may apply who is an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe and who will be enrolled full-time at any accredited school.

For the Cobell undergraduate scholarship, multiple professionals are flown into a location where they spend a week reading the submitted essays. Lee has been one of those involved in the process for multiple years, which he said makes him especially attuned to what the readers are looking for.

"The main thing is to sell yourself with your essays," Lee suggested, adding that in their essays many students talk about a family member who inspired them rather than themselves. "They want to tell a story about how awesome grandma is. I don't want to give grandma a scholarship. I want to give you a scholarship. Lean on that inspiration, but make sure you're telling your story in all of your essays."

The scholarship is fairly competitive, Lee said, and he estimated that only about half of applicants receive awards. Still, he encouraged "any and all students" who qualify to try to apply.

"Don't let your GPA scare you away from applying," he added. "They do look at GPA, but it is by no

means the only factor they look at. They really want students who are involved in their community and are active leaders in their community. It is a leadership scholarship before an academic one."

Students who are involved in clubs or extracurricular activities at school are among those who might be able to demonstrate their leadership qualities, and he encouraged them to apply.

For those who do apply, Lee said he is happy to help proofread essays and offer advice, whether for the Cobell or for any other scholarship a student might be trying for.

"I can give them one edit if they want to take it from there, or I can go with them every step of the way," he said.

Rachel Watson, director of CPN's Department of Education, said it is a privilege to have someone like Lee on staff and to be able to offer Tribal members services like this.

"Charles is great," they said. "With his knowledge and background, he is qualified to help students navigate scholarship applications, giving them their best chance at success. We're fortunate to have him as a resource for our Tribal members."

The Cobell Scholarship for undergraduate students is open now through March 31. For more information, visit cobell.prolificdigital.io.

For a list of some other scholarships Tribal members can apply for, visit cpn.news/scholarship.

For more information about the Department of Education, visit potawatomi.org/services/education. 🔥



Bergeron Family History

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Cultural Heritage Center provides resources to keep the Tribe's history safe and accessible for generations to come. One key way the Nation does this is through the CHC's archives and video interviews. To highlight some of the archive's holdings, the *Hownikan* is featuring photographs and family history of every founding Citizen Potawatomi family. If interested in assisting preservation efforts by providing copies of Citizen Potawatomi family photographs, documents and more, and to schedule family interviews, please contact the CHC at 405-878-5830.

Bergeron family beginnings

The Bergeron Potawatomi family roots begin along the Kankakee River in Bourbonnais Grove, Illinois, with *Watchekee*, the daughter of Potawatomi/Odawa headman *Shabonna* and *Monashki*. *Shabonna* was an ally of *Tecumseh* and *Tenskwatawa* during the War of 1812. He joined *Main Poc* and other Potawatomi leaders, including *Waubensee* and *Winamac*, to fight American forces. However, after the war, *Shabonna* eased his opposition of the United States.

Watchekee was born around 1810 and had a reputation for being intelligent and beautiful. Although she had mixed tribal heritage, because of her father's leadership with the Tribe, *Shabonna* raised her in a Potawatomi village. Family records indicate she was born during a bright star. Potawatomi often used natural phenomenon to denote time rather than years. After the Potawatomi signed the 1833 Treaty of Chicago, she was among those removed to Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1837.

Watchekee never forgot her home in the Great Lakes and traveled back and forth from the reservations west of the Mississippi in Iowa and Kansas to Illinois by foot on multiple occasions, and because of this, was ultimately removed numerous times. Bergeron descendants estimate she walked more than 6,000 miles on her travels. She was known to

return to a particular campsite along the Kankakee River each spring, where she would remain until summer.

French-Canadian Francis Xavier Bergeron was born between 1815 and 1819 and arrived in the Great Lakes region as a young man where he met *Watchekee* on one of her trips back to the region. In 1840, she received the Christian name Josette or Zozetta after her baptism. She and Francis wed around that same time, but it was not her first marriage. Before marrying Bergeron, she had two other husbands named LeVasseur and Hubbard. She had four children: Jean Batiste, Catherine (Kate), Matilda and Charlie.

Watchekee's children grew up in a pivotal, difficult time in Potawatomi history. They experienced forced removal many times and the challenges associated with being Woodland people on the prairies of Kansas. The resources they could depend upon in their ancestral Woodland home were no longer available to them in Kansas. Other resources promised by the U.S. government never arrived.

Although Potawatomi had hoped the reservation would be safe from outside encroachment, it did not go unnoticed by settlers and travelers. The Oregon Trail brought thousands through the area, and the railroad saw many economic opportunities.

As a result of westward expansion, the Tribe approached the federal government about the chance to take allotments and become U.S. citizens in 1861. The Bergeron family were among the Citizen Potawatomi listed on the 1863 census. However, this did not prove advantageous as the allotted lands quickly passed from Potawatomi ownership to white settlers. A clause in the 1861 treaty provided opportunity for the Potawatomi to sell their remaining lands in Kansas and purchase a new reservation in Indian Territory.

Creating community after removal

In 1872, the Bergeron family joined six other Kansas-based families to become part of the original Potawatomi to settle on the new reservation in present-day Oklahoma.

Watchekee's daughter Catherine (Kate) Bergeron was born in 1853. She married Frenchman Joseph L. Melot, and they became the principal founders of the Mission Hill community, now known as Wanette, Oklahoma. They had seven children: Joseph Edward, William W., Louis, Leander, Joseph Thomas, Theresa and Benjamin. Kate walked on in 1933, and was buried near Wanette, Oklahoma.

Wanette was founded on March 19, 1894, according to a January 1995 article in the *Shawnee News-Star*. The Bergerons occupied 240 acres on which the town was first built. However, in 1903, the Santa Fe Railroad began developing a new rail line and the citizens of Wanette voted to move the town one mile north to its present location so they could access the railroad.

Jean Baptiste Bergeron married Mary Hollaway in Wamego, Kansas. They had two children, William Oliver and Frank Alexander. Sadly, Mary passed when the children were young, and Jean Baptiste left William and Frank with the Indian Agency to find work out west. As a French last name, sometimes Bergeron was spelled Bazhaw by teachers with the agency. John walked on in about 1921.

Matilda was born Sept. 20, 1846, in Council Bluffs, Iowa. She wed Wesley Lewis, and they had Francis Lester, Ivy Bell, Sylvester, Josephine, Charley, Annie May, Omer Dee, Flora May, Edward James, David Albert and Martha. Matilda walked on March 8, 1886, and was buried in Louisville, Kansas.

Watchekee's youngest son Charles married Mattie Leslie in 1876, and they had one son, Robert.

The first inhabitants of what would become southern Pottawatomie County worked incredibly hard. Arriving in Wanette and other rural areas meant digging wells, building farmhouses, stables, pens and corrals. Hundreds of acres of land were cleared by hand so families could sustain themselves by raising livestock and planting corn, beans, potatoes and other food.

The area's first schools, post offices and even cemeteries were a direct result of the initiative of the Potawatomi.

A place in history

Watchekee was one of the very few to live in the Great Lakes, experience removal and eventually settling on the reservation in Indian Territory. However, her influence in the Great Lakes region remains today with the city of Watseka, Illinois, near the Indiana border derived from her name. According to *Daily Journal*, community leaders renamed the town in 1865 from Middleport to Watseka to honor her kindness toward settlers. Today a large mural in town features *Watchekee*, serving as a visual reminder of the community's past.

The vast majority of the infrastructure of southern Pottawatomie County would not have existed if not for the Potawatomi people who created it. Today, Bergeron descendants continue the family legacy of leadership and service to others as Tribal historians, writers, safe-keepers of Potawatomi traditions and more.

If interested in assisting preservation efforts by providing copies of Citizen Potawatomi family photographs, documents and more, and to schedule family interviews, please contact the CHC at 405-878-5830. Schedule interviews online at portal.potawatomi.org. Learn more about the Family Reunion Festival at cpn.news/festival, and find research resources online at potawatomiheritage.com. 🏡

Quarterly Legislative Meeting Minutes

Dec. 9, 2025

Present: Chairman John A. Barrett, Vice-Chairman Linda Capps, Secretary-Treasurer D. Wayne Trousdale and Representatives David Barrett, Jon Boursaw, Bobbi Bowden, Eva Marie Carney, Mark Johnson, Steve Livingston, Rande Payne, Paul Schmidlkofer, Brenda Trevino, Andy Walters, and Paul Wesselhöft.

Absent: Representative Dave Carney.

Guests: Jason Smalley, Greg Quinlan, John Coffey and Jamie Moucka.

Call to order: Chairman Barrett called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. followed by the invocation.

First item of business: Minutes from the previous meeting of Sept. 25, 2025. Motion to approve the minutes as read was made by Representative Schmidlkofer and seconded by Representative Trevino. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining.

Second item of business: Resolution 26-24-R&G: A resolution approving the rescheduling of the Quarterly Meeting of the Legislature from Thursday, Nov. 27, 2025, to Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025. Motion to approve Resolution 26-24-R&G was made by Representative Payne and seconded by Representative Boursaw. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining.

Third item of business: Resolution 26-25-NR: A resolution approving a fee-to-trust acquisition application to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and request for trust acquisition of the (non-gaming/on reservation) Ragle property. Motion to approve Resolution 26-25-NR was made by Representative Bowden and seconded by Representative Boursaw. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining.

Fourth item of business: Resolution 26-26-NR: A resolution approving a fee-to-trust acquisition application to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and request for trust acquisition of the (non-gaming/on reservation) Haney property. Motion to approve Resolution 26-26-NR was made by Representative Eva Marie Carney and seconded by Representative Barrett. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining.

Fifth item of business: Resolution 26-27-LCoE: A resolution approving the conditional relinquishment of Joshua Lee Downing V, a minor. Motion to approve Resolution 26-27-LCoE was made by Representative Walters and seconded by

Representative Bowden. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 10 absent and 0 abstaining.

Sixth item of business: Resolution 26-28-LCoE: A resolution enrolling 65 applicants into the membership of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Motion to approve Resolution 26-28-LCoE was made by Representative Wesselhöft and seconded by Representative Walters. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining.

Seventh item of business: Resolution 26-29-NR: A resolution approving the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's application for funding under the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation Native American Affairs: technical Assistance to Tribes for fy 2025 Program. Motion to approve Resolution 26-29-NR was made by Representative Bowden and seconded by Representative Barrett. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining.

Eighth item of business: Resolution 26-30-App: A resolution authorizing the Tribal Chairman or his designee to open one or more interest bearing cash accounts with Huntington Bank. Motion to approve Resolution 26-30-NR was made by Representative Walters and seconded by Representative Trevino. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining.

Ninth item of business: Resolution 26-31-R&G: A resolution confirming the appointment of the members of the Election Committee and designation of David Bourbonnais as the chairman of the committee. Motion to approve the resolution was made by Representative Bowden and seconded by Representative Payne. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent, and 0 abstaining.

6:30 p.m. Recess (Executive Session)

7:57 p.m. Reconvene

Tenth item of business: Adjournment: Motion to adjourn was made by Representative Schmidlkofer and seconded by Representative Barrett. The motion passed with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent and 0 abstaining. The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m. on Dec. 9, 2025.

See the minutes of the Sept. 25, 2025, meeting at cpn.news/legsept25. 🔥



Veterans Report

Bozho (Hello),

Well, one month has passed since the year 2026 started. Have you started working on your New Year's resolutions yet? I have an excuse. I can't think of any. Good luck with your list.

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Veterans Organization has begun to work on our New Year's resolutions, and it looks like it is going to be quite a challenge. We will need to start early to get all of them completed. Our toughest challenge is getting our Eagle Staff completed — hopefully before this year's Festival. And that is only one of our goals. I would list the other goals, but I would rather wait and see what gets done to list them.

We still need CPN veterans to attend our social meetings. Remember there are no dues and no obligations, your families are welcome, and a meal is provided. The meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. (or as soon as you can get there) in the Veterans Memorial Hall of the CPN Cultural Heritage Center in Shawnee, Oklahoma. I'll list the meeting dates below:

Feb. 24 at 6 p.m. | March 24 at 6 p.m.

April 28 at 6 p.m. | May 26 at 6 p.m.

June 27, Saturday at 9 a.m. on the 2nd floor of the CPN Golf Club

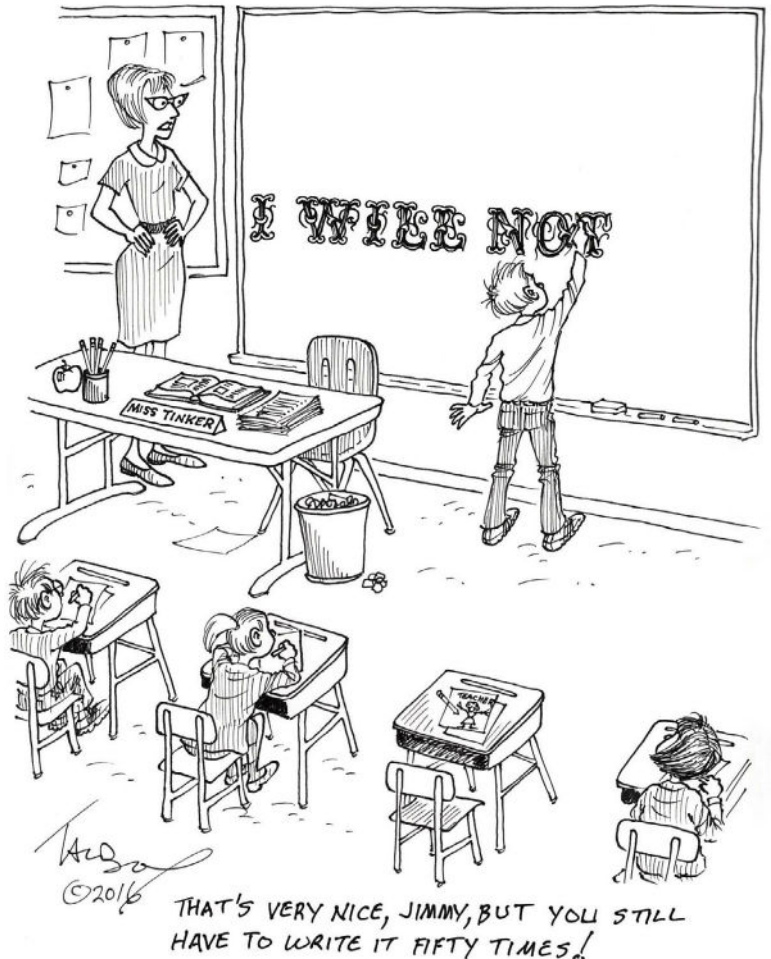
July 28 at 6 p.m. | Aug. 25 at 6 p.m.

Sept. 22 at 6 p.m. | Oct. 27 at 6 p.m.

No meetings in November.

December date to be arranged.

We hope to see you at as many of the meetings and activities as you can make.



Migwetch (Thank you),

Daryl Talbot, Commander, 405-275-1054

Daniel Castaneda,
Vice Commander/Event Contact, 209-207-2317

David Barrett, Treasurer, 405-613-7313

Bill Wano, Secretary, 405-670-1200

Chris Lenggenhager, Facilitator, 405-878-5840 🔥

Candidate filings for CPN's 2026 election

CPN's 2026 Tribal election will take place Saturday, June 27, in Shawnee, Oklahoma. The Hownikan will publish more information about voting as the election draws closer.

The following candidates filed for office:

Vice-Chairman

Jason Smalley
Charles Scott
Martha Kimberly Nootbaar

Secretary/Treasurer

D. Wayne Trousdale - Unopposed

Legislative District 5

Lorrie Underwood
Ryan Hubble
James Newberry

Legislative District 6

Rande Payne - Unopposed

Legislative District 7

Mark Johnson - Incumbent
Katie Bowie

Legislative District 8

David Carney - Unopposed 🔥

Non-profit helps connect tribal members to community

Living in Pennsylvania, Tescier family member Amanda Funk often didn't have access to cultural teachings or a way to connect to other Tribal members. Today, she is executive director and co-founder of *Widoktadwen* Center for Native Knowledge, where she hopes to offer these things to others.

"It was a concept that really was formed when I was in graduate school," Funk said. "I was getting my master's in English, but my focus was Indigenous rhetoric, and I wanted to know more about how Native people today situated themselves within a Native identity. And the more I tried to answer that question, the more I realized that there's just so much diversity in the community that everybody's experience is widely different."

Funk sat with the idea for several years. Then in 2020, while working from home for a non-profit organization, she finally felt like she was in a knowledgeable enough position to take the steps to found *Widoktadwen*. With help from Penn State's legal entrepreneurial assistance clinic and a jump start incubator for new small businesses at the Berks County Community Foundation Building, Funk and cofounder Alexi Weiskircher were able to get the non-profit off the ground.

About five years later, *Widoktadwen* has grown, as has its programming and community.

Today, its cultural resource center and administrative offices are located in Zion Spies Lutheran Church in Reading, Pennsylvania. The non-profit is also able to do its land-based education on the church property, where there are 28 acres of woodland, and host social gatherings in the social hall.

Workshops, day camps and more

Widoktadwen offers things like a Native book club, a monthly beading workshop and other workshops on a variety of topics. Local libraries, school districts, community groups and museums often reach out for programming requests.

"Sometimes, when people ask what our organization does, I'm like, 'What don't we do?' Because I feel like so much of what seems to be these different things are very connected. I look at it in terms of our holistic health, the health of the whole person," she said, adding that health is not just physical health but also emotional health, spiritual health, health of our environment, and the health of our communities.

"So, it's important to be stewards of community, stewards of land and water, because these are all things that tie into our overall health as Native people and people in general," she said.

In 2024, a summer day camp program was added to the lineup. Each Wednesday for seven weeks, children

are dropped off for the day and engage in activities that center around the Seven Grandfather teachings. The camp is open to all children, Native or non-Native.

"A lot of them have very minimal experience with nature. They haven't fallen in love with it yet," Funk said. "That's probably my favorite part, is getting to share that wonder and joy and excitement that comes from that discovery and that connection with the nature all around us. Teaching them to see in a different way."

Funk, who has gone through a community health worker training program, attends health fairs and has done presentations for health classes, including one at a university where students will be entering public health professions.

"I go in and teach them about urban Indian health and what are those considerations to keep in mind as you work with our community," she said. "I'm glad that I get to introduce that to them early on in their educational journey in healthcare."

Funk has also completed training on ecological gardening and managing woodlands, wetlands and meadows, as well as becoming a certified pollinator steward. With that knowledge, she has been able to do things like start a fenced-in garden for *Widoktadwen*. Inside are sections that include plants for fiber and dye, ceremonial and medicinal plants, edible perennials, and Three Sisters plants, as well as a mini orchard with pawpaw trees, serviceberries, chokeberry and other berries.

"I'm also a wild foods educator and a forager, so I would lead foraging walks and nutrition demonstrations," she said. "It's also a teaching garden, which is really important for our summer camp programming."

Providing connection

Ultimately, Funk believes *Widoktadwen* is about giving Native people a way to connect and form a community, and it has found a diverse community in Pennsylvania.

"I had always felt like we were kind of isolated as Native people and Potawatomi people in this area. I learned that that was not really true. We were just not connected. We had no means to meet one another, to connect with one another," she said.

Funk said they have had participation from many different tribes and Indigenous people — from CPN to Lenape to South American and Pacific Island tribes.

Looking at the data for Berks County, Funk was surprised to see that it has the highest population percentage in the state for urban Native people.

"So many other Native people that I've met here in Berks County have felt isolated, like there was nobody else, and our data indicates otherwise," she said.

Funk said they have met many new people through outreach activities in the community, including festivals, events, the day camp, and a summer reading program. They've also formed connections through programming at libraries, museums and



"We thought about what if it opens back up and SNAP benefits go out, then what? Are we still going to do it? And I said, 'Yeah, I still want to do it.' Because it's still hard, and there are plenty of people who are still struggling," Funk said.

A mutual aid fund, she explained, is not supported by grants, companies or government organizations, but instead is funded solely by individuals. Through donations, *Widoktadwen* was able to raise over \$2,000 in mutual aid donations.

Those funds were used to distribute grocery gift cards to families all over the country, with most applicants coming from Oklahoma but also families in districts 1, 2, 5 and 7.

"I think it's important that community comes together and tries to think of a way to address the problems and we consider what resources we have at our disposal. Who can move some money out to people quickly? And the best way to do that is just as a community," Funk said. "How can we move this kind of aid quickly and have it be something that didn't come from *Widoktadwen*? It's not my money. It's our money. It's the people's money. They gave it to us to steward and to distribute to those in need. And that's our role. I'm a facilitator. I'm just that pass-through entity to get those funds from our community out to our community."

To learn more about *Widoktadwen*, visit widoktadwen.org.

historical societies. Sometimes, she said, she meets people at health fairs or university events.

Funk even talked to one woman who came to a beading workshop because the church is her polling place and she saw a flyer while voting.

"It's been a blessing that the people who have engaged with our programming end up repeatedly coming back," she said.

Filling a need

Last year, *Widoktadwen* also stepped in to fill a gap when families faced the suspension of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.

"Fall was a particularly difficult season. Most Americans are struggling with affordability," Funk said, adding that many faced rising food and health care costs. "We're seeing it everywhere."

When SNAP benefits were suspended, Funk and others involved with *Widoktadwen* started to discuss the best ways to offer support to those in need, ultimately deciding to set up a mutual fund.





Snow snake game regaining popularity

The traditional winter game of snow snake is enjoying a resurgence across Turtle Island. Several Nations, including some Potawatomi, hold snow snake events. Whether tribal Nations are re-introducing the game to youth or hosting competitive tournaments, it is a positive way to bring community together.

"It's definitely made a comeback in the last several years. I remember someone saying that in the '50s, it kind of just died out," said Justin Neely, CPN language director. "But now there are tournaments all over and a lot of different tribes will play it. Whether it's the *Anishinaabe* people, the Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatomi up in the Great Lakes, or the Iroquois Confederacy, there's quite a few tribes that do have tournaments with snow snakes."

Neely lived for a few years in Michigan and played the game. Fortunately, whether Potawatomi live up north or down south, there are several ways to play.

The basics

A snow snake track is about 500 ft. long and resembles a trough. The snow can be banked up a few feet high or banked up several inches off the ground. A log or branch is then dragged through the center of the snowbank to create the trough. Water is applied to the trough to create an icy, slippery surface that the snakes glide over.

"I've heard it's pretty strenuous building one of those. A lot of times it might take six guys to do it," Neely said.

Alternatively, an icy, flat surface may be used, such as a paved area. However, players should use caution when walking along the icy surface. It is also possible to play across the surface of a frozen lake or pond, but only when players can ensure the water is frozen solid and able to hold their weight.

The snake is made from wood, usually maple or hickory. A straight branch about one inch thick and anywhere from two to five feet long is selected, and one end is carved to resemble a snake's head. The stick is then polished smooth and decorated. A small notch on the underside helps with grip.

Like many competitive sports, individual players have a variety of preferences. Some choose to weight the snake's head with a pewter tip, Neely said. Other players prefer certain polishing oils or wax to help the snake glide faster over the snow and protect it from water. This also helps preserve the snake over time.

Players use an underhanded motion to throw the snake.

"Someone described it like bowling. You would have your finger in that little notch that would help you hold onto the snake. Then the most important thing is to get a nice flat throw," Neely said.

He said whether players approach in a running motion or walking is a personal preference. It's more important to achieve a flat throw, which should increase distance.

"At some of these competitions, most people will have a cloth with them because you don't want your snake to be wet because it'll slow it down," he added.

Winners may be selected in a few different ways. Sometimes the individual whose snake traveled the greatest distance wins, or it could be a team competition. Another game may involve players trying to come closest to a fixed point without hitting it.

The competition rules vary from tribe to tribe.

"The way people do it is going to vary a little bit from area to area," Neely said. "The individual rules are probably more along the lines of how you throw, in what order, things like that. So it's hard to pin it down to definitive rules."

Prizes can vary. Tournament winners may receive cash, trophies, blankets or shawls. Some competitions involve each player putting a dollar in a jar and the winning player receives the cash. Others involve good-natured teasing and bragging rights at the end.

Whatever the prize, Neely is pleased to see the sport making a comeback. Snow snake has created some memorable moments.

"Somebody told me that in the '80s, *Sports Illustrated* went to Iroquois country and clocked some of the folks throwing the snow snakes. One of them went for over a mile and was going 65 miles an hour, so they can get going pretty fast. The straightness of your track affects how far you can throw it because if it's crooked it's going to slow things down," he said.

Alternatives

For those without snow, there are other ways to learn the game. Whether using a flat surface or simply using household supplies to hold water and letting it freeze, there are ways to compete.

"If you had a large, open area, maybe a field where you could smooth out the ground, theoretically could put some water down and kind of maybe create a track like that. I guess if you have to, you could do it like a slip and slide," Neely laughed.

Some online retailers sell small, backyard skating rinks. Across social media, snow snake players have creatively

used discarded household guttering, or dug a trench and filled it with water, then allowed the water to freeze.

Neely pointed out that some CPN members who live in colder climates may be able to find a local demonstration or competition. Residents of Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin and along the northeast, including Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and New York, may be able to attend in person. Some snow snake events welcome the public and include food trucks and traditional singing. It's best to check with the Nation hosting the event to find out if visitors are welcome.

Neely said he wishes there were more chances to play the sport in the south.

"It's a community-type event. I wish we had the weather with us. We never know when it's going to snow. You can't plan around it like, 'Oh, it's supposed to snow.' If it does snow, it may or may not last more than a couple of days. You have to be ready to move when the weather hits, I suppose."

For those who live in less snowy conditions, a virtual snow snake game is available via the Cultural Heritage Center both in person and on a mobile device. 🔥

“Why We Serve” exhibit at CHC until March 27

Tribal citizens have until March 27 to check out “Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces” at the Cultural Heritage Center.

The traveling exhibit opened at the CHC in January and will continue to be on display through March 27.

According to the “Why We Serve” website (americanindian.si.edu/why-we-serve/), the traveling exhibit “honors the generations of Native Americans who have served in the armed forces of the United States — often in extraordinary numbers — since the American Revolution.”

The exhibit gives information on Native military involvement and service from its origins to today, showing the contributions Native Americans have made to the U.S. military through our country's history.

CHC Director Blake Norton said this is the exhibit's last scheduled stop in Oklahoma, with it next going to the Irving Archives and Museum in Irving, Texas, before traveling to states farther away.

“Aside from the opportunity, possibly the last for many, to see such a well-researched and developed exhibition, it hits close to home for Indigenous communities,” Norton said. “The important position veterans and service members hold in communities is invaluable, on a personal, historical, cultural and spiritual level, and these unique insights are shared through the exhibition by many contributing nations. Those who have sacrificed so much should be studied, honored and celebrated.”



The exhibit is located in the Hall of Veterans and is open to the public during the CHC's usual operating hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

“We are honored to host the stories of so many warriors, from communities throughout the United States, who have served and sacrificed, especially in the same space that we memorialize Citizen Potawatomi *wédaséjek* (warriors) and ancestors,” Norton said.

Looking ahead, the CHC has additional temporary exhibits planned in 2026. Watch the CHC website (potawatomiheritage.com) and social media for updates. 🔥

Fire look for continued unparalleled success in 2026

By Chris Cox, FireLake Arena Events Manager

Following three consecutive seasons of dominating play in The Basketball League (TBL), it's fair to ask what's next and what's left to achieve for the Potawatomi Fire.

"We want to keep our championship streak alive. That's goal number one," said Fire General Manager David Qualls. "Beyond continued success on the court, we want to continue building the Fire brand in the community and growing our brand outside of the Shawnee area. We strive to give the Shawnee community and surrounding areas different types of events to choose from including concerts and other sporting events. Fire games play a vital role in our overall community outreach effort. We are confident in the product that we have on the court and the experience we give our fans. We have seen growth every year and we want to keep building on that this year."

As Qualls mentioned, the success the Fire have seen off the court can be directly traced to the success on the court. The Fire have seen unprecedented success over the last three seasons. Not only are the Fire back-to-back-to-back TBL champions, something never achieved in TBL before, but they have also won those championships in dominant fashion. Since the start of the 2023 season, the Fire are a combined 84-5 overall and 53-1 in the last two seasons. The Fire are also an astounding 47-0 at home inside FireLake Arena since the start of the 2023 season. In fact, dating back to their inaugural season in 2022, the Fire have won a TBL record 52 consecutive games at home, something that head coach Mark Dannhoff does not take for granted.

"We have the most incredible fans in TBL," said Dannhoff, the reigning three-time TBL Coach of the Year. "There have been games where we didn't play up to our standards, and our fans empowered us. They pushed us to victories we might not have achieved elsewhere. We're incredibly fortunate to play in front of such a passionate fan base every night, and that passion truly energizes our players."

As the Fire get set to embark on their 2026 season and a potential fourth straight title, they know it won't be easy.

"Teams are gunning for us," said Qualls. "Ever since we won our first championship we've had a target on our backs, and I think our players relish that. Just like the last three years, winning another title won't be easy but I am confident that Coach Dannhoff and the players we have this season will be ready for the task and will leave it all on the court."

The Fire have plenty of reason for confidence going into this season. They return arguably the best player TBL has ever seen in Chuck Guy (6-0, PG). Guy, who is the captain

and unquestioned leader of the Fire, is coming off back-to-back MVP seasons and is looking to continue to prove he is the best all-around player in TBL.

Also back is 2025 Finals MVP Ricardo Artis II (6-6, F). Ricky, as he's known to the fans, is one of the most entertaining players in TBL with his showmanship matching his level of play.

The Fire also return big men Jay Hedgeman (6-8, F) and Isaiah Wade (6-7, F). Both players were key for the Fire last season and will likely take on a greater role this year.

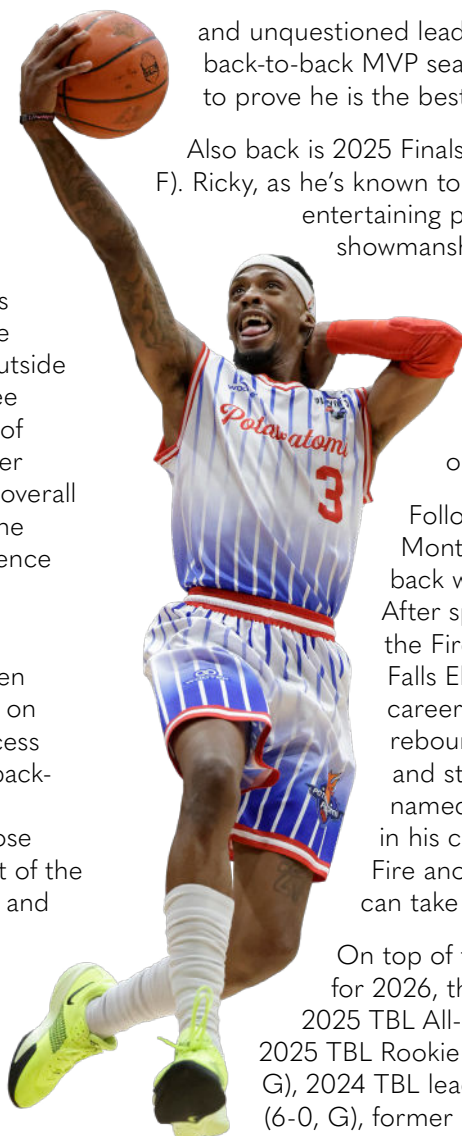
Following a year in Great Falls, Montana, K.D. Moore (6-4, G/F) is back with the Fire for the 2026 season. After spending 2023 and 2024 with the Fire, Moore played for the Great Falls Electric last season and averaged career highs in points (28.9 ppg), rebounds (6.6 rpg), assists (5.6 apg) and steals (1.6 spg) on his way to being named a TBL All-Star for the first time in his career. Moore's return gives the Fire another playmaker and scorer that can take over a game on any given night.

On top of those familiar names returning for 2026, the Fire are also adding another 2025 TBL All-Star in Corey Boyd (6-9, C), 2025 TBL Rookie of the Year Cam Williams (6-2, G), 2024 TBL leading scorer Jahmal McMurray (6-0, G), former Los Angeles Clipper and OU basketball star Willie Warren (6-4, G) and versatile forward Jeremiah Gilliam (6-7, F).

While the Fire are still finalizing their roster, Coach Dannhoff is confident this team will be ready for the start of the season.

"It's important for us to understand that anything focused on the past pulls you out of the present and any focus on the future does the exact same," said Dannhoff. "We need to stay in the present moment; that's where our attention must be every day. With that being said, I know we will put in the work and position ourselves to succeed. The leadership on this roster is second to none, and if everyone comes in ready to work, we'll have a chance for another amazing year."

The Fire began training camp on Feb. 16 and begin their 2026 TBL season on March 5 when they host ADS Sentinels inside FireLake Arena. Tickets for the season opener, and all other games, are on sale now at potawatomifire.com/tickets. 🔥



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HeritageOne® Mortgage: Expanding access to homeownership in Native communities

For many Native families, homeownership is more than a financial milestone — it is a way to build stability, strengthen communities and create opportunities for future generations. Yet buying a home on tribal land can present unique challenges that traditional mortgage products are not always designed to address. HeritageOne® was created with these realities in mind.

HeritageOne® is a conventional mortgage solution designed specifically to support enrolled members of federally recognized Native American tribes who are purchasing homes located on eligible tribal land. By combining flexible guidelines with long-term, fixed-rate financing, the program helps expand access to homeownership while respecting the unique circumstances of Native communities.

“Buying a home on tribal land can feel overwhelming if you don’t have the right support,” said EVP and Director of Mortgage at Sovereign Bank Matt Brown. “HeritageOne® was created to make that process clearer and more accessible while still offering the stability people expect from a traditional mortgage.”

Unlike some programs that limit eligibility based on household income, HeritageOne® does not impose income limits. This allows the program to serve a broader range of Native homebuyers, including working families whose income may change over time. The focus is on helping families achieve sustainable, long-term homeownership.

“One of the biggest things we hear is that people want something dependable,” Brown said. “Knowing what your payment will be month after month gives families peace of mind and helps them plan for the future.”

Stability is a cornerstone of the HeritageOne® program. Fixed-rate financing provides predictable monthly payments over the life of the loan, which can be especially important for homebuyers navigating the responsibilities of homeownership for the first time.

HeritageOne® also recognizes that purchasing a home on tribal land can involve additional steps and considerations. To support buyers throughout the process, homebuyer education resources are available. These programs are designed to help borrowers feel confident and prepared, covering topics such as budgeting, home maintenance, and understanding the mortgage process.

“We don’t want anyone to feel like they’re going through this alone,” Brown added. “Education and guidance are a big part of making homeownership successful, not just at closing, but for years down the road.”

The program may also include support to help offset certain upfront costs associated with buying a home, such



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EVP, Mortgage Director

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as appraisals. These features are intended to reduce barriers while maintaining responsible lending standards.

In addition to purchasing an existing home, HeritageOne® can also be used to transition from construction to permanent financing. This allows borrowers to build a home on eligible tribal land using a standard construction loan and later refinance that loan into a long-term, fixed-rate HeritageOne® mortgage. This flexibility gives

Native families a clear path from building their home to settling into stable, permanent financing.

Eligibility for HeritageOne® is straightforward. Borrowers must be enrolled members of a federally recognized Native American tribe, purchase a home located within an eligible tribal area, and occupy the home as their primary residence. First-time homebuyers are required to complete a homeownership education program.

“At the end of the day, this is about helping Native families put down roots,” Brown said. “HeritageOne® is one more way we’re working to support strong communities and long-term opportunity.”

Citizen Potawatomi Nation members interested in learning more about HeritageOne® can connect with Sovereign Bank’s mortgage team for personalized guidance and next steps.

To learn more or start a conversation, contact Sovereign Bank at 405-778-6500, visit banksovereign.com, or reach out directly to Matt Brown at mbrown@banksovereign.com.

HeritageOne® is not a commitment to lend, approval, or guarantee of eligibility. All loans are subject to credit approval, program guidelines, and property eligibility. Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender. 🔥



Teach children what healthy relationships look like

Kayla Woody, CPN House of Hope Prevention Specialist

Relationships are one of the most important aspects of our lives. The quality of these relationships impacts our physical and emotional health. In order to thrive as individuals, we need healthy relationships.

However, like many things in life, we need to be taught how to successfully create healthy relationships. It's a parent's job to ensure that children understand how to establish healthy boundaries and spot abusive behaviors. We cannot leave this to chance.

The rates of intimate partner violence in our communities are out of control. Without education on what violence looks like in any relationship, many children are likely to fall into abusive relationships as they develop.

To help children create healthy habits in relationships, we must begin teaching them at an early age. It's never too soon to educate someone about how to create healthy connections.

0-5 Year Olds

At this stage, it's important that children learn about emotions and that parents help them identify words to describe their feelings and how to effectively express those feelings safely. Avoid labelling a child as being good or bad, but rather identify their behavior as good or bad.

Helpful Videos to Watch with Your Child on YouTube

- Inside Out: Guessing the feelings
- Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat – "Belly Breathe" with Elmo

Helpful Books to Read with Your Child

- "When I Feel Frustrated" by Michael Gordon
- "The Way I Feel" by Janan Cain

6-8 Year Olds

At this stage, it's important to teach children about boundaries. You can talk to them about their right to stay safe, strong and free: safe from harm by others, strong in their mind and body, and having free choices over their actions.

Helpful Videos to Watch with Your Child on YouTube

- The Boundaries Song – "That's a Boundary."
- How to Feel Feelings

Helpful Books to Read with Your Child

- "My Body! What I Say Goes!" by Jayneen Sanders
- "Consent (for Kids!): Boundaries, Respect, and Being in Charge of You" by Rachel Brian



9-11 Year Olds

This is a stage where children begin to develop stronger peer relationships. They rely on their peers as a source of information and examples of relationships. Have open conversations about what it means to be a good friend and help your child identify unhealthy behaviors in friendships.

Helpful Videos to Watch with Your Child on YouTube

- 10 Signs of a Healthy Relationship
- Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships

Helpful Books to Read with Your Child

- "Being Me: A Kid's Guide to Boosting Confidence" by Wendy Moss

12-18 Year Olds

Kids at this stage are learning to become more independent and less reliant on parents. They begin to understand different points of view and the complexities of life. The interest in dating and sexuality increases substantially. Parents must have open and healthy communication with kids at this stage and provide a variety of support resources.

Helpful Videos for Your Child on YouTube

- #ThatsNotLove campaign | Because I Love You Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships
- One Love – Couplets
- Tea is Consent (Clean)

Helpful Books for Your Child

- "Can We Talk About Consent?" by Justin Hancock

If you or someone you know is experiencing stalking, intimate partner violence, and/or sexual assault and would like more information, please contact House of Hope at 405-275-3176 or visit us online at facebook.com/cpnhouseofhope. 📌

Language update

By Justin Neely, CPN Language Department Director

Bozho, Jayek (Hello, everyone),

Ni je na? (How are you?)

On Feb. 4, we had our annual Winter Story Telling event, which drew a nice crowd both in person and online. There are certain stories, particularly those involving *Wiske* or *Nanabozho* the trickster, which can only be shared in the winter. We believe traditionally that in the winter the earth and the spirits are asleep. The snow covering the earth is like a *waboyan* (blanket). In Oklahoma it can be challenging to find a time where there is snow on the ground, so we do the best we can by adhering to the timeframe of winter. A recording of the event may be viewed on our YouTube channel at cpn.news/winterstorytelling until about March 18. Once you learn some of these stories, share them with your children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren and cousins. But remember to only tell these in the winter.

We are into our second semester with our online school course with students in Tecumseh, Shawnee and North Rock Creek. The course is available anywhere in the state of Oklahoma for world language credit. So, if you have a student interested, let us know. It will take a little work to get it approved through your school board and then implemented at the school. It shouldn't take too much time to get this done, but we wouldn't want to wait until the last minute.

We are already in the planning stages for our summer immersion course. For the last three years we have been doing an eight-week immersive course for anyone interested in attending. We have had folks join us from

all over the country to participate. One thing we realize is it's difficult for most people to be gone from home for more than two weeks. Bills need paid and animals/plants taken care of. With this understanding, we are revamping the course to make it available in two-week blocks. The beginner immersion course will run Monday through Friday, May 11-May 22. The intermediate course will run June 1-June 12. We are also adding a children's course, which will incorporate cultural activities with language, that will run July 6-July 10. We have yet to set the age requirement, but I would guess 6-14. Please contact us if you are interested in any of these summer courses.

At the Winter Story Telling event, we announced our next in-person/online course offerings. This time we will have a beginner course but also an intermediate/advanced course. Please remember to use the many resources we have developed for self-learning. We have a number of courses at learning.potawatomi.org. We also have a great course at 7000.org. This course is designed with rooms of the house and everyday words to use around the house. There is also an online dictionary with over 10,000 words with audio. The dictionary can be printed out from the site as well. We also have a number of Quizlet sets for folks to drill themselves on. One particularly fun one is VTA verbs with audio. You listen to the card to know if you know the words. We also have started consolidating our two YouTube channels into one, which is also where we are putting new content. It is located at youtube.com/@cpnlanguage. We add new content on a weekly basis, so make sure to check those out.

To see some of resources, check out this video we made at cpn.news/7000tutorial. 🎧

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Award-winning book features Justin Neely and Potawatomi language

Director of Potawatomi Language Justin Neely was featured in the award-winning book "On the National Language: The Poetry of America's Endangered Tongues." Released in 2024 by author and photographer B.A. Van Sise, the book includes Neely and the Potawatomi language on page 130.

Van Sise gathered words and concepts from a wide range of less commonly spoken languages still living in the United States. Each language featured in the book is represented by a single word or idea along with a photograph by Van Sise.

"Van Sise's medium for expression was photography," Neely said. "It is his way of communicating with the world and highlighting the struggles and the endearing qualities of Native languages, showing how complex and unique they are."

With no prior connection, Van Sise reached out to Neely directly and asked him to provide a Potawatomi word or phrase that is difficult to define. Neely chose *mno bmadze*, which translates to "good life" or "good health."

"The reason that word is so hard to define is because our concept of a good life is different from the English sense of physical health," Neely said. "You're talking about mind, body and spirit. You're also talking about a connection to your language, culture, ceremony, regalia and dance. Understanding the traditional *Nishnabé* way of life is having that good life."

Neely built a fire and sang an honor song to help Van Sise capture the meaning of the Potawatomi phrase.

"The fire is central to who we are as Potawatomi people; we are people of the fire," Neely said. "Fire is central to all our ceremonies, songs and doings. Song connects you across generations, and it also shows that there are elements of culture that are part of that *mno bmadze*. It showed that it was much more than just health. It's so much more than that."

Native American languages do not always translate word-for-word into English.

"We're given this idea that America is a great melting pot where everybody comes here, gives up everything



Justin sings honor song beside a fire (Photo by B.A. Van Sise)

and speaks the English language," he said. "But there are so many languages that are still spoken in the U.S."

He shared that many people do not realize Native American languages are still living languages.

"This piece is displayed in museums across the country, and I thought that is a great way to put an image to a word, to make less spoken languages more visible and real to people," Neely said. "I have realized that visibility is important, particularly with minority languages. That is why it is important for us to put *gashnen* on stop signs. It makes the language more visible and real to people."

Neely explained the best way to connect with people to truly understand a culture is to learn its language.

"Language is kind of a window to the past," he said. "It shows us what was important to our ancestors 1,000 years ago and what still is important to us today as traditional Potawatomi people. There are so many small details that are inside the language that change the way you see the world. You start to see the world like your ancestors."

To learn more about the book, visit bavansise.format.com. 🔥

From the executives



John "Rocky" Barrett Tribal Chairman

Bozho, nikan, (Hello, my friend),

I hope that you and your family can find ways to escape the long winter months. Our CPN Cultural Heritage Center recently hosted its annual Winter Story Telling Festival. These stories were carried south by our ancestors, first to Iowa, then Kansas and finally to Indian Territory. It must have been incredibly disorienting to tell stories about the woodlands and lakes in deep, snow-covered winters when stuck on the cold, wintry prairies. There are ample opportunities to learn the traditional Potawatomi stories, like the Winter Stories, on our Cultural Heritage Center website at potawatomiheritage.com.

In a similar vein, another annual winter event in Oklahoma has come and gone. Governor Kevin Stitt gave the state legislators and assembled guests — including many Tribal leaders in Oklahoma — his final State of the State speech at the state capitol in early February. Mercifully, this is the governor's last time making such an address.

Moving forward, we will all be spared from his repetitive and divisive anti-Tribal rhetoric. For years his approach to Oklahoma's sovereign Tribal nations has involved the accrual of millions in attorney's fees and mischaracterizations of the law. Despite being an enrolled Tribal citizen, his public remarks display the ignorance of the basic aspects of Tribal sovereignty. I wish this governor well in whatever career path takes him out of the state capital as soon as possible.

I find this governor's stance particularly frustrating given just how important Tribes are to this state's economy. For nearly a decade we Oklahomans have been promised top 10 in all manner of category. What we've seen in economic development terms has been state executive leaders focusing on tax incentives for out-of-state entities who ultimately choose elsewhere. Now, two of Oklahoma's largest energy companies, with high employee headcounts, are decamping for other states. Contrast this to the status of Oklahoma tribes like Citizen Potawatomi Nation. We are tied to our jurisdiction. *We have to invest in our communities.* We cannot pick up, find a tax incentive in another state and leave.

These circumstances are why we continue to develop our FireLake complex, seek out new partners for Iron Horse Industrial Park and expand health and childcare services across the Tribal jurisdiction. It will be good to have an executive branch partner at the state capital who understands that. Whoever that may be.

As always, it is an honor to serve as your Tribal Chairman.

Migwetch (Thank you),

John "Rocky" Barrett | *Keweoge (He Leads Them Home)* | Tribal Chairman



Linda Capps Vice-Chairman

Bozho (Hello),

I feel good about the upcoming CPN election for 2026. Some of you have commented about my decision not to run for my present office of Vice-Chairman. My most common and best response is that it simply is time for me to step aside. I have cherished the opportunity to serve our CPN membership in my position as Vice Chairman. In addition, it has been a supreme honor for me to hold office along with our present Legislators, some of whom have held their position (due to the CPN Constitutional change of 2007) since their installation in June of 2008.

For those young Tribal members or new members who may not know, the 2007 CPN Constitution (Aug. 16, 2007, with ratification) changed the form of

government for the Tribe from a five-member business committee form of government to a 16-member legislative governmental body. *Constitution of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Article 7, page 6 — Tribal Legislature shall consists of the Executive Offices as provided in Article 6 (Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary-Treasurer), five (5) Legislators elected from Oklahoma, and eight (8) Legislators elected from Legislative Districts equally apportioned, within 30%, by population in the remaining States of the United States. Legislators shall serve four (4) year terms of office and until their successors shall be qualified and installed in office.*

Many of you know that I have been in this present office since 1990. I have been a part of some of the most incredible times for CPN. What an exciting period 1990 to the present has been. The Tribe has experienced the addition of infrastructure, programs, enterprises, employment growth and successful outreach. Today our Tribe continues to assert our sovereignty to improve the future for our Tribal members and our employees. The success of our Tribe has hinged on the above reference to the 2007 Constitutional change. Since we moved from a five-member business committee with representation only in Oklahoma to our 16-member legislative form of government, we now enjoy representation from all districts. Through our language and educational programs, we are touching more of our people throughout the United States and beyond. We have just touched the tip of the iceberg, and I predict that sensational advancements are in the making.

I plan to hit some of the major advances during my career with the Tribe in the next few months prior to the election the last weekend of June. This year's Family Festival will take place June 26-28, with the election being on Saturday the 27th. The 2026 families to be honored are: Acton, Bergeron, Bruno, Curley, DeLonais, Greemore and Slavin. Members of these families will be making plans to attend the Festival this coming summer. With modern technology, perhaps there can be ways for those who cannot attend to view parts of the Festival.

Until next month, *igwien* to all of you who have supported and, in some cases, endured my tenure as your Vice-Chairman. With deepest respect and heartfelt gratitude.

Migwetch (Thank you),

Linda Capps | Segenakwe (Black Bird Woman) | Vice-Chairman
Work: 405-275-3121 | Cell: 405-650-1238 | lcapps@potawatomi.org



The graphic is a promotional poster for a sticker design contest. It features a blue background with a white dotted pattern. On the left, the text 'Ngi-wénabjéje' is written in a yellow, stylized font above the words 'STICKER DESIGN' in large, bold, blue letters with a white outline, and 'Contest' in a white, cursive font below. To the right, the phrase 'Your design here' is written in a yellow, cursive font above a white dashed circle containing the text '3x3' in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, a list of rules is provided in white text on a blue background. At the bottom left, the deadline 'Designs are due at cpn.news/stickercontest by April 30, 2026' is written in white and yellow. At the bottom right, the prize information 'Cash prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in each age group' is written in white, with three age group categories in white boxes: '12 & under', '13 to 18', and '18 & up'. Finally, the text 'Winning designs will be printed and distributed to voters at 2026 Family Reunion Festival' is written in white at the bottom right.

Ngi-wénabjéje
STICKER DESIGN
Contest

Your design here

3x3

- Open to all Tribal members
- Design should reflect Potawatomi culture
- Include the phrase Ngi-wénabjéje and 2026
- Design should be a 3"x3" square or 3" circle

Cash prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in each age group

12 & under **13 to 18** **18 & up**

Winning designs will be printed and distributed to voters at 2026 Family Reunion Festival

Designs are due at cpn.news/stickercontest by April 30, 2026

From the legislature



Steve Livingston District 1

Bozho (Hello),

District 1 Update – February

I want to share a few updates with our district as we move through winter and toward spring.

In mid-December, I learned that the Eiteljorg Museum would be hosting a quillwork exhibition, “*Gaawii Eta-Go-Aawizinoo Gaawiye Mkakoons (It’s Not Just a Quillbox)*,” running through the end of March. I began exploring the idea of holding a District 1 meeting there on March 14, as quillwork is an important part of our history, identity and material culture.

Long before glass beads, Potawatomi and other *Anishinaabe* artists used dyed porcupine quills to decorate clothing, bags, boxes and ceremonial items. Quillwork carried spiritual meaning, conveyed stories and played a role in early trade.

Like many families, we’re in an active season of life, and my daughter’s volleyball schedule recently changed to include a tournament that same weekend. This is her final year playing, and I want to support her. Because of that, I won’t be able to host the March 14 meeting as originally hoped. I encourage anyone who has the opportunity to visit the Eiteljorg during the quillwork exhibit to do so, and I hope to host a district meeting there in the future.

Looking ahead, I’m planning to host our next District 1 meeting on May 16. While details are coming together, my goal is to hold it somewhere in the western part of our district, likely in Missouri, Illinois or Indiana. I’ll share more information in the March *Hownikan*. As always, please visit cpndistrict1.com/events for the most up-to-date information on upcoming gatherings.

I want to take a moment to address the recent news involving the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation and the Oneida Nation, whose external business entities were connected to ICE detention facility planning. These stories sparked strong reactions across Indian Country, and many District 1 citizens reached out to share concerns.

This is not about casting judgment on another Nation. Rather, it serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility to ensure tribal enterprises remain aligned with cultural values and community priorities.

Tribal governments do not exist to simply maximize revenue. Our purpose is to support our people, our culture and our ability to live authentically as Potawatomi. Economic development matters, but it must be grounded in accountability, transparency and cultural responsibility.

Many Nations, including Prairie Band, Pokagon, Gun Lake, Forest County and others, use chartered investment arms or LLCs to separate business operations from politics. That structure itself isn’t the issue. When done well, it can be a healthy model. But it only works when guardrails are in place. Cultural alignment cannot be optional, and growth cannot come at the cost of who we are as a people.

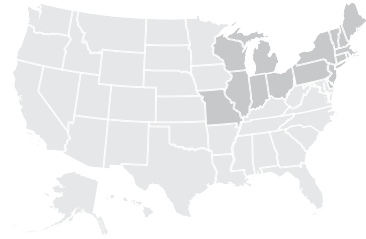
What stood out to me was the Prairie Band leadership’s response. They acknowledged the issue, took accountability and moved to course correct. That response highlights why engaged citizens matter. When people speak up and stay informed, leadership is better positioned to act in alignment with community values.

This moment also brings the focus back home. Our Nation is strongest when citizens stay engaged beyond election cycles by asking questions, reaching out to leaders and using the resources our Tribe already provides to stay informed. Being an enrolled Tribal citizen comes with both rights and responsibility, and participation is essential to protecting our sovereignty and ensuring our government reflects the people it serves.

As Potawatomi people, we carry the weight of removal, boarding schools and broken treaties. How we move forward, informed and grounded in our values, is how we ensure our future reflects who we are.

I hope to see many of you on May 16!

Steve Livingston | Legislator, District 1 | steve.livingston@potawatomi.org





Eva Marie Carney District 2

Bozho, nikanek (Hello, friends),

Bedo gde-dokmes mine mno bmadzeyen

The greeting above – translated to “Hope you have peace and good health” – was in the transmittal letter I received from our Tribal Rolls Office last year, sending me my new Tribal ID.

Do you need a new ID? My experience, and that of others who shared theirs with me, is that the process for obtaining the ID is efficient by mail and I’ve heard, even more efficient if one uses portal.potawatomi.org to request the card.

On a related note, I just updated the letter from me that welcomes new CPN citizens; our Tribal Rolls Office sends this out to all who are newly enrolled and living in CPN District 2. The letter includes a significant amount of information about accessing CPN history, current information and benefits. You can read it at cpn.news/d2welcome.

District 2 Meetings

I hope to see some of you at the medallion beading workshop taught by District 2 resident and art student Mars Pursley on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026, in Alexandria, Virginia, starting at 10:30 a.m. Mars will teach the two-needle flat stitch. More information about the class and instructor is at cpn.news/mars. There’s space for about 10 people; let me know if you plan to attend!

Thanks to CPN District 2 citizen Dennis Johnson, plans have come together for a March 14, 2026 meeting at Hillsborough River State Park in Thonotosassa, Florida.

The park is just a few minutes from downtown Tampa. You will find its location and features, including river rapids, historic structures, and seven miles of nature trails at cpn.news/Hillsborough. Please see the postcard printed with this column. The postcard will be mailed to folks in Florida, Alabama and Georgia. Please remember that you do not need to receive a postcard to attend, but you do need to RSVP so we have enough seating and enough lunch.

I have included a photo from our 2025 Fall Feast as encouragement for *mkesinen*-making during these winter months. Thanks again to Lyle Simmons for teaching us how to make pucker toe moccasins.

Woodland Culture Centre Resources

I made a delicious Three Sisters soup over the new year holiday, using a recipe posted to the Woodland Cultural Centre’s

District 2 Meeting

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Saturday, March 14, 2026</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">11AM - 2:30PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Pavillion 12 (Smokehouse)</i> <i>Hillsborough River State Park</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">5402 US 301 North, Thonotosassa, FL 33592 (minutes northeast of downtown Tampa)</p>
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Come visit with your family and friends, learn and share local and CPN family history, and enjoy lunch and conversation. Canoeing and kayaking available before or after the meeting (by reservation) and camping is offered, as well. The Park is open from 8 am to sundown each day.

All park details are here: <https://fiovibez.com/park-info>.

RSVP
by March 6

at evamariocarney@gmail.com or call 1-888-849-1484.
Please include names of attendees and ages if under 12.

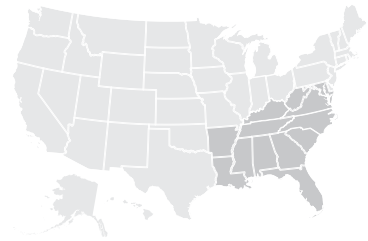


Fall Feast 2025 with instructor and District 2 citizen Lyle Simmons

Facebook page. I reposted it to my personal Facebook page, if you are interested in it (note: I substituted hominy for lye corn). The Centre also offers a downloadable coloring book, “Our Time to Colour,” featuring 17 Indigenous artists across Turtle Island. You can find it at cpn.news/ottc. As noted on the Centre’s website, “These pages really demonstrate the beautiful gifts and talents of Indigenous Artists.” And as many of you know better than I, coloring is not just for kids!

Family News

I am excited to share Navarre family member Dana Davis’s environmental work on the Piedmont University (Demorest, Georgia) campus. Dana has started an on-campus recycling program through the university’s Piedmont Environmental and



Conservation Effort (PEACE) Club and is spearheading fundraising to start a campus garden. Her university's website post (cpn.news/PEACE) about her work includes this quote about her motivation: "I feel like it is our calling to take care of the Earth we are blessed to walk on." What a good thought to take into 2026. *Migwetch* (Thank you), Dana.

Do you have family news? Please send me a note as I would love to share it in a future column.

Migwetch (Thank you),

Eva Marie Carney | *Ojindiskwe* (Bluebird Woman) | ecarney@potawatomi.org | evamariecarney@gmail.com
evamariecarney.com | PO Box 5595 | Arlington, VA 22205 | Toll Free: 888-849-1484 (voicemail)



Brenda Trevino District 3

Bozho, nikanek (Hello, my friends)!

To communicate with as many as possible and because a fair number of you don't participate on social media, I want to inform you about a very important service available to any Tribal member in Texas: Texas Native Health in Dallas. I toured the facility in early December on my way home from the most recent legislative meeting at the invitation of Blake Weaver (CPN Native Health Board member) and was amazed at the services they provide. This health and culture facility is located at 1283 Record Crossing Road in Dallas.

Native Health offers a broad range of services

and served approximately 100 CPN members for over 300 visits in 2025. Services include medical, dental, pharmaceutical (no mail order express at this time), optometry, counseling, family services, job and education training, cultural preservation and more. They have availability and are growing. When I asked how far some patients travel to take advantage of the services, I was told they have at least one patient from Corpus Christi! What a resource for those near DFW and beyond! Their phone number is 214-941-1050 if you would like to contact them for more information.

In addition to health and wellness,

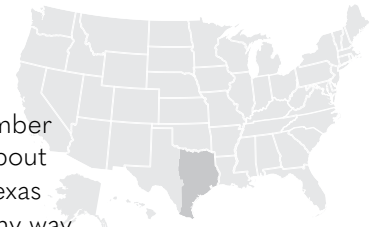
I also wanted to share places where I subscribe to get current Native news. Staying on top of current events that affect our Nation is very important and could potentially influence our sovereignty. I keep up with Native News Online, Native American Times, Oklahoma Native News, and Crosswinds News online sources as well as our *Hownikan* monthly issues and CPN's KGFF radio. Our world is moving so quickly. Being aware of federal/state/local tribal political happenings is one way to keep our eyes open to prepare for what's ahead. If you have a favorite current events resource that I didn't list, please pass it along. I would like to know.

By the time this article reaches you, The Woodlands Meet-and-Greet will be in the rear-view mirror. The March 7 meeting in Georgetown, Texas, will be in front of us. Don't forget to RSVP by Feb. 28, 2026, so I can plan on the right number of lunches and giveaways. Beginning with the March article, I will report on how well the meet-and-greets have been attended.

Thank you for our time together. And may the planned district meetings bring us all closer to our family, friends and ancestors who kept the fire glowing for us. Of course, giveaways, raffles and lunches are enjoyable too. We have plenty to celebrate.

Migwetch (Thank you) for allowing me to serve each of you! Please reach out if I can be of assistance.

Brenda Trevino | *Mkedewankwetkwe* (Black Cloud Woman) brenda.trevino@potawatomi.org | 281-466-7427





CPN District 3 Meet & Greet

Come for the family. Stay for the fun!

SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2026
10:30AM-1:30PM

GEORGETOWN RECREATION CENTER
1003 N. Austin Ave
Georgetown, Texas 78626

District meetings are for members, their spouses and immediate family.
Bring your tribal IDs to sign in.

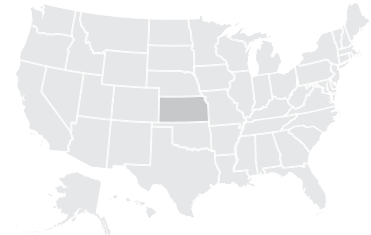
RSVP by February 28, 2026
to brenda.trevino@potawatomi.org or call 281-466-7427

Finally, please send me your email address and any other contact information you consent to provide so you can receive communication directly from me.



Jon Boursaw District 4

Possible Spring Activities



I've been thinking about scheduling some activities for Tribal members, family members and guests to participate in. These activities include a series of tours and an opportunity to learn how to start a fire with flint and steel. I would like to schedule the activities beginning in April and finish no later than the middle of August. Here are my proposed activities:

1. Starting a fire: A few weeks ago, I was approached by CPN member Steve Rhodd, who suggested we have a class on how our ancestors started their fires using flint and steel. He felt this class would be of particular interest to the male members of the Tribe. The tentative plans call for the class to be held on a Saturday in the Prayer Circle behind the CPN Community Center in Rossville. The date and time will be established within the next few weeks.
2. Tour of Sugar Creek. This would include a tour and discussion of the Tribe's historic site known as Sugar Creek, where over 670 Tribal members are buried. I would like to also stop at the cemetery in Osawatomi, where several additional Tribal members are buried. If time permits, I think a stop at Heritage Park near Olathe to view the art exhibit recognizing the Trail of Death would be appropriate. We will need to include a lunch stop there as well.
3. Tour of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Reservation and sites in Topeka. This tour would include several sites on the Reservation such as their Government Center, Health Clinic, Fire Station, Our Lady of the Snow Church, and a close-up visit with a buffalo herd. Upon returning to Topeka, we could make visits to the Potawatomi Baptist School, Burnett's Mound and his burial site.
4. Tour of the Uniontown Cemetery, the Vieux Family Cemetery and Vermillion Creek Crossing. I hope to add a couple more stops to this tour, but I will need approval from the landowner.

I want all of you to know that these activities will be open to all CPN members. This would be a great opportunity to visit and see part of your Tribe's history, and possibly part of your family's history. Unfortunately, I am unable to confirm the actual dates at this point, but I would like to know how many of you would be interested in participating in one or more these events. You can either email me at jboursaw@potawatomi.org or call me at 785-608-1982. My email address list contains well over 400 addresses, but I routinely received around 20 returns as undeliverable. If you are not receiving my emails simply send me an email to the above address and ask to be added.

Enrollment in the Tribe

The enrollment in the Citizen Potawatomi Nation as of Jan. 1, 2026, was 39,625, of which 2,756 reside in District 4, which is the state of Kansas. I am aware that there are several children and young adults in the district who are eligible to be enrolled but are not.

If you would like to enroll your dependent, it can be initiated online at Citizen Potawatomi Nation-Government-Tribal Rolls (portal.potawatomi.org). If the online enrollment is not available, you can stop by my office as I have copies of the enrollment form, or let me know and I can mail you a copy.

Upcoming CPN Elders' Potlucks

Dates for the Elder Potlucks held in Rossville at noon are:

March 13 Corned beef and sausage RSVP by the 10th

Bring your favorite side dish or dessert. Please RSVP to Tracy at 785-584-6171.

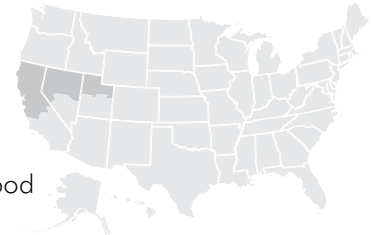
Migwetch (Thank you),

Jon Boursaw | *Wetase Mkoh* (Brave Bear) | jboursaw@potawatomi.org | 785-608-1982
2007 SW Gage Blvd. | Topeka, KS 66604 | Office Hours: Tuesday 9-11 a.m. | Thursdays 3-5 p.m. | Other times as requested



Mark Johnson District 7

Bozho nikanek (Hello friends),



I was talking to one of our Tribal members the other day, when the subject of traditional medicine came up. I spent some time going through some of my father's papers that he kept. Having spent a good deal of time with a lot of different elders, he learned some of the medicine that was used from the Great Lakes area to California and kept notes in his writings. I will note that medicinal plants have long been central to health and survival. The sharing of this information is not a suggestion or endorsement that you use or ingest any of these herbs, and none of it is a secret (any internet search will find these and many more). As with anything, you should study and make your own choices. My father never used the term medicine man, as he believed that we all should know and use our medicine when we needed. This knowledge was generally passed down orally and practiced by those who understood that medicine involved balance between the body, spirit and the natural world. I will do my best to interpret his writings, and I have added botanical names.

One of the most important medicinal plants for Potawatomi is Sweetgrass (*Hierochloa odorata*). It is known for its distinctive fragrance. Sweetgrass is used both ceremonially and medicinally. Braided and burned, it serves as a purifier and is believed to invite positive spirits. Medicinally, sweetgrass tea was used to treat coughs, sore throats and digestive discomfort.

White pine (*Pinus strobus*). Pine resin is applied as a salve for cuts, burns and infections, acting as a natural antiseptic.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). Yarrow is valued for its ability to stop bleeding and prevent infection. Fresh leaves were crushed and applied directly to wounds, while teas were used to treat fevers and digestive ailments.

Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) was used to treat colds, flu and respiratory infections. Its aromatic leaves were brewed into teas or inhaled as steam to clear congestion.

The one natural medicine that my father used on a regular basis is widely available in central and northern California: Yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*). He would gather the leaves from the new growth in the spring, dry them and make tea from them as the need arose, and he used it for everything from drinking a tea for colds to putting it in a cold compress to treat a burn.

As a reminder, attending the Family Reunion Festival is a great way to reconnect with your history. If you haven't been before, or it has been a while, start planning now and join us June 26 to June 28 in Shawnee, Oklahoma. I am always available to talk and love visiting with our members at the Festival. There is no better way to spend your summer vacation. The honored families in 2026 will be: Acton, Bergeron, Bruno, Curley, DeLonais, Greemore and Slavin.

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 are available to you. Please also take the time to give me a call or send me an email with your contact information so that I can keep you informed of the happenings within the Nation and district.

Migwetch (Thank you),

Mark Johnson | *Wisk Mtek* (Strong as a Tree) | 559-351-0078 | mark.johnson@potawatomi.org

Are you dually enrolled?

To remain an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, you are not allowed to be enrolled in any other Indigenous tribe. If you are dually enrolled, or if you think you might be, please contact Tribal Rolls at 405-878-5835 or tribalrolls@potawatomi.org.



Dave Carney District 8

Bozho, nikan (Hello, friends),

As they say, the only thing that is constant is change. This is a concept attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, meaning that everything in the universe is continually in motion; nothing remains the same. It is said a person never steps into the same river twice – the water, the circumstances and the moment have moved on. Adaptability is the key to success. Citizen Potawatomi has certainly been an example of that. We have shown amazing adaptability over the years.

I am writing my column for the February edition of the *Hownikan* on a rainy day in early January. Hopefully, the electronic version will be published online in mid-February, and it is likely that a paper copy may find its way to your mailbox in March. As of now, there are many unknowns in the upcoming Citizen Potawatomi election, but change is on the horizon in the CPN June election.

The biggest change will be the loss of Ms. Linda Capps in her roles in the executive and legislative branches of our government. Linda has been more than an elected official; she has truly been the heart and soul of the Nation.

In the years that I have served in the legislature, I have not only looked to Linda Capps for resources, answers and understanding in particular situations, but I have also looked at her as a role model. She has tempered her decision making with compassion and always done what she felt was best for the Nation. She is guided by her faith, and her peaceful demeanor and cheerful attitude is always remarkable.



Vice-Chairman Linda Capps

Over the years, I have heard many stories of Linda’s personal charity to members, and I can only assume that the sum of her financial kindness could pay for a cruise (or two) in her retirement.

To say that Ms. Capps will be missed is a great understatement. I know she will continue to be a presence at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Her many years of service will not be forgotten.

In 2025, Gene Lambert in Arizona (District 5) retired, and the representative position has been vacant since, so there will be some new faces in our government. I look forward to the contributions these new leaders will make.

I have filed to run again for District 8 representative. I have focused on building community in my region and assisting our citizens to access all the Tribe has to offer regarding cultural connection, information,

community and programs. I believe I have accomplished this and hope to do more in the future.

If re-elected, it will be my honor to continue to serve as your legislator.

Dave Carney | Kagashgi (Raven) | dcarney@potawatomi.org | 360-259-4027



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Paul Wesselhöft District 9

Bozho, nikan (Hello, friend),

Native American Drum and Dance

At ceremonies, powwows, gatherings and Family Festivals, dancing to the beat and rhythm of a large drum plays an important part in uniting the Tribe. Frankly, the drum, dance and singing reinforce my identity and pride in being Native American. Why should we dance to the drumbeat and song? Because our ancestors did so. We ought to be one with them.

When I hear that drumbeat and hear my people sing in voices that can only be Indigenous, I know I'm in a special place and time. It's a spiritual experience. It enhances our cultural identity. It makes us one. Some believe the low, loud, even haunting beat of the drum represents pulsations of Mother Earth.

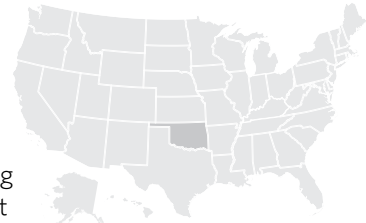
The drumming circle calls us, just as it called our ancestors. Drumming, singing and dancing conveyed prayers then, thousands of years ago, and now, and open communication between the human and the spiritual realm. Also, the drum and dance can convey prayers and hopes for successful harvests, hunting, fishing, or simply for recreation and enjoyment.

Like the human voice, the drum has its own unique voice. The drum is often made of a large cedar frame. Bison or elk rawhide is stretched across the opening and fastened down by strong strings of sinew. The drumsticks are made of animal hide. However, some drummers prefer using the palm of their hands.

There are numerous dances, such as the grass dance, the eagle dance, the hoop dance, the peace dance, the healing dance, the rain dance and others. When you hear that great drumbeat — boom, boom, boom — and hear your people singing in unison, join them in the circle of dance with an eagle feather in hand and dressed in your individual regalia. You will become physically rejuvenated and spiritually awakened to who you are and are meant to be.

Migwetch (Thank you),

Paul Wesselhöft | *Naganit* (Leader) | reppaul@gmail.com | pwesselhoft@potawatomi.org



Andrew Walters District 11

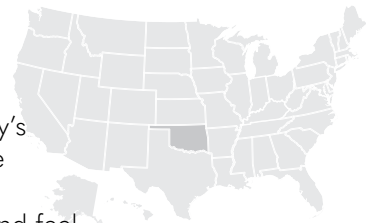
Bozho (Hello),

Opinions are funny little ole things. I guess it's true ... "everybody's got one." I find that opinions are simply perceptions, and those perceptions are based on where you're standing in the room when something happens. What you see, what you hear, what you smell and feel, along with your bias and prejudices, all form your perceptions of an event. Your narrative about the event is formed and becomes the basis of that opinion. That's why eyewitnesses are not reliable. What one sees isn't always what another sees. So with that preface:

A bit ago, I was asked what my desires and concerns were about the new Potawatomi Confederacy we've joined. I think before I speak most times, and in this case, I stood there like a buck private, a deer in the headlights. You see, I realized that I really didn't have any positive desires. Kinda like having a new baby. You see it laying there, cute and cuddly, all new and think, "I hope I don't screw this one up." I don't think your first thought, or at least mine wasn't, "He's gonna be a doctor!"

This Confederacy is like that new baby. Brand spankin' new. Never had one like it before. Like a child, it didn't come with an owner's manual or instructions. It was born. We knew what it was going to be, a Confederacy, but a lot of folks had their opinions, informed or not, of what it should be when it grew up. Like your Aunt Sippy when she said little George should be an engineer when he grew up. Maybe that's not what George wants to be.

Don't misunderstand. I've read all the materials on the Confederacy and was there at the meeting up north to talk about it. I knew it was gonna be a Confederacy, but some talked about it affecting our language, our culture. While others spoke of financial leverage and economic development. Some even mentioned religious aspects. I was the one on the Legislature that moved to vote on the Confederacy when it came up on the agenda. I knew it could be a good idea, just not what that good idea was going to grow into. I think that will come around when



we give the Confederacy a chance to mature and develop. I believe, with guidance and a lot of diaper changes, it could be anything we want. But like a child, we're going to have to raise it right, which brings on my concerns.

My concerns are that this Confederacy negatively affects our unique Citizen Potawatomi culture and language. I fully agree that economic development, leveraged purchasing and using our bank to help fund projects is a great idea. I don't agree with adopting customs and cultures from other "sister" tribes, or to homogenize our ways with those of other bands. I also don't believe in communal sharing of resources. We all should benefit equally or be disadvantaged equally.

We are the Citizen Band Potawatomi of Oklahoma, have been since the last 1860s, right here in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Our ancestors settled here, eked out a living and raised children. This is our land and our story. It has been for over 160 years. We should be proud of taking the step toward joining the Confederacy, but we should NEVER lose ourselves to its tenets or our own apathy.

That's my opinion. I'm sure some will be critical and some will agree, but that's what honest debate is for: understanding each other's perspectives.

Love y'all. Cora says "bozho (hello)." Bless her heart.

Andrew Walters | andrew.walters@potawatomi.org | nibwemko@gmail.com



Bobbi Bowden District 13

Bozho nikanek (Hello friends),

Workforce program supports Citizen Potawatomi Nation citizens

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation is committed to supporting our citizens and strengthening our community. One way this commitment comes to life is through the CPN Workforce Development & Social Services Program (cpn.news/workforce), which helps citizens prepare for, find and keep meaningful employment.

I've seen the impact of this program firsthand. A relative of mine recently used Workforce Program services, and the support they received made a real difference in their job search and confidence. Their experience reflects the care and dedication staff bring to their work and the meaningful role this program plays during important life transitions.

The Workforce Program is available to citizens who may be facing challenges finding steady work or who are looking for better opportunities. Services are provided based on individual needs and available funding, with the goal of helping people move forward in a way that fits their situation. Whether someone is entering the workforce for the first time, changing careers or returning after time away, the program offers guidance and support along the way.

Services may include help with resumes, job applications, interview preparation, career planning and job readiness skills. For those interested in education or training, the Workforce Program can also help connect citizens with vocational training, certifications and other workforce-related opportunities that support long-term stability.

What sets the Workforce Program apart is its personalized approach. Staff work one-on-one with participants to understand their goals, strengths and interests. This individualized support helps citizens do more than simply find a job. It helps them build confidence and work toward careers that support themselves, their families and the Nation.

In addition to working directly with individuals, the Workforce Program partners with employers and training organizations to help create pathways to employment. These partnerships benefit both participants and the broader community.

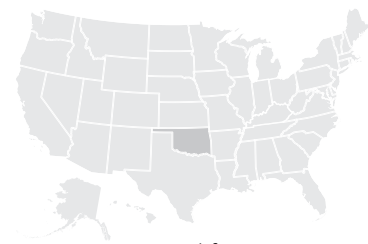
Through programs like Workforce Development, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation continues to invest in opportunity, self-sufficiency and the future of our people.

For more information or if you have any questions, call 405-878-3854 or visit 1549 Workforce Dr., in Shawnee.

Thank you for allowing me to serve our citizens and our Nation.

Migwetch (Thank you),

Bobbi Bowden | *Pkuhshnoqua* (Bald Eagle Woman)



Walking On

Shirley Rymel

Travis/Lamirand Family



Shirley Rymel was born on Sept. 3, 1943, in Salinas, California, and passed away peacefully on Dec. 15, 2025, in Carson City, Nevada, at the age of 82. She was a woman of deep faith and a loving presence to all who knew her.

Shirley and her husband were devoted members of their home church in Sacramento, California, where they worshiped and served faithfully together until his passing in 2021. She worked as a secretary at Dry

Creek Elementary School for 17 years, a role she carried out with care and dedication, but her greatest joy was always caring for her family as a devoted wife and mother.

Her faith was evident in the many ways she served others — as a Sunday School teacher, women’s ministry leader and faithful prayer warrior. Shirley was preceded in death by her beloved husband, David Rymel. She was also a proud member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and a descendant of the Lamirand family, a heritage she carried with pride.

Shirley is survived by her children, Judi Neifert (Steve) and Tim Rymel (Abel); her cherished grandchildren, Brandi Bannister (Michael), Justin Neifert (Samantha), Caitlin Rymel and Emma Rymel; and her great-grandchildren, Elizabeth and Theodore. She is also survived by her siblings, Clarisa Bentley, John Van Schuyver Jr., and Harold Van Schuyver. She will be remembered for her kindness, her steady faith, and the love she gave so freely to her family and community.

Donald Leroy Scott

Weld/Ogee/Lasallier Family



Donald Leroy Scott, 85, passed away on Thursday, Dec. 11, 2025.

The funeral service was Monday, Dec. 22, 2025, in Mount Olivet Chapel, with interment at Aspermont Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made in Don’s memory to Wounded Warrior Project or St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

Donald Leroy Scott was born on June 18, 1940, in Borger, Texas. In 1949, he moved to Aspermont, Texas, the place he proudly called home.

Don was deeply proud of his Potawatomi heritage and was honored with the name *Shemagneshi* (Soldier).

Don was a true, old-fashioned, America-loving man. He honorably served his country in the United States Army from 1962 to 1965, primarily as a door gunner on helicopters during the Vietnam War. Following his military service, Don worked for many years as a plasterer and also spent a short time working in construction in Kuwait. In the final months of his life, Don accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Don was preceded in death by his parents, Joe and Pearl Scott; nephew, Travis Scott; and granddaughter, Katherine Knapp.

He is survived by his brothers, Jim Boggs, Johnny Scott and wife, Ann, and Robert Scott and wife, Marlyn; children, Ramona Knapp, Denaye Reese and husband, George, Charlotte Archer and husband, Gary, and Andrew Scott and wife, Paula. Don’s legacy continues through his grandchildren, Blake Scott, Jeremy Whitworth and wife, Melissa, Kevin Whitworth, Gary Archer and wife, Jessica, Elizabeth Harrell and husband, Jesse, Wendy Baros, Stephanie Sullivan and husband, Cory, Dustin Barnett Hopson and wife, Amber, Alexander Knapp and wife, Alicia, and Cory Archer and wife, Lindsey, and 21 great-grandchildren. He is also survived by many beloved nieces, nephews and cousins.

Timothy Steven Tarter

Rhodd/Bruno Family



Timothy Steven Tarter, 77, of Shawnee, Oklahoma, passed away on Dec. 16, 2025, in Oklahoma City. He was born on June 18, 1948, in Palo Alto, California, to John Henry and Jessie Belle Tarter.

Tim grew up in Fresno, California, and in 1968 was drafted into the United States Air Force, serving as an electronic warfare specialist. After being honorably discharged in 1972, he moved to Vancouver, Canada,

completed an apprenticeship at Pacific Press, and worked there as a journeyman printer. In 1982, he incorporated his own company, TS Tarter Holdings Ltd., specializing in early business computer systems and applications and serving clients throughout the Lower Mainland.

In later years, he lived in Washington, California, Oklahoma and France. He was previously married to Jennifer McGillivray (now McQuade).

He was an avid reader with a lifelong devotion to learning, particularly in U.S. history, world history and Judeo-Christian theology. He carried a book wherever he went and kept a Bible at his bedside. He loved teaching math, science, history and philosophy to any audience, young or old. He admired Samuel Johnson and John Quincy Adams. He held strong convictions about fairness and moral responsibility in public life and lived by his personal motto: "Share information to increase knowledge." He loved to discuss, joke and tease, and was ever a devoted father and grandfather.

He was predeceased by his parents, John Henry and Jessie Belle Tarter, and by his brothers, Michael and Christopher Tarter. He is survived by his son, Ivan Tarter; his grandchildren, Henry Ian and Emily Rose, all of Montreal, Canada; and several nieces and nephews.

Graveside services with military honors were held on Dec. 30, 2025, at Fort Sill National Cemetery.

Mary Ellen Holland
Milot Family



Mary Ellen (Hulett) Holland, age 58, a lifelong resident of Clinton, Oklahoma, was born March 22, 1967, in Thomas, Oklahoma, to George C. and Audrey Ellen (Johnson) Hulett, and passed away Monday, Dec. 22, 2025, in Oklahoma City, surrounded by her loving family.

Mary was raised in Clinton and attended Clinton High School, graduating with the Class of 1985. On July 14, 2006, she

married Mark Holland in Clinton, where they made their home and shared many years together. Mary devoted her life to her family as a loving homemaker, finding her greatest joy in caring for those she loved.

Mary was young at heart and full of life. She had a deep love for watching OU Sooners football and rarely missed a game. She also enjoyed gardening and spending time outdoors. One of her greatest joys was playing sports and games in the front yard with the neighborhood children and her grandchildren. Mary was known for her strong spirit, quick wit, and her willingness to always speak her mind, traits that made her unforgettable to all who knew her.

She was preceded in death by her parents, George and Audrey Hulett; her husband, Mark Holland; her stepfather, Carl Rice and stepmother, Mamie Hulett.

Mary is survived by her son, Jason Hulett and Katie Parker of Arapaho, Oklahoma; her daughter, Amber Uribe and Jose Hernandez of Clinton; her aunt, Helen

Heddlesten of Marlow; her brothers, John Hulett and wife Sue of Clinton, and Charles Hulett and wife Susan of Clinton; and her eight grandchildren, Lance Hulett, Lachelle Hulett, Ayra Hulett, Tyler Menasco, Maddy Menasco, Kaycee Menasco, Briana Uribe and Braidyn Uribe. She is also survived by a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and other relatives and friends.

Matthew Henry Anderson
Anderson Family



Matthew Henry Anderson lived life without boundaries, guided by his free spirit, love for family, and deep pride in his heritage as an enrolled Tribal member of Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Born in Montgomery, Alabama, on Feb. 8, 1964, he grew up in Northern California, playing Little League baseball before moving to Bonney Lake, Washington. He cultivated a passion for adventure that would define his life.

A man of many talents, Matt served his country both in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army, traveling to places like Germany and Frankfurt. He worked as a cook in countless kitchens, perfecting delicious meals and even creating his own invention — the "enchilada burrito." He built with his hands in bricklaying and construction, worked the oil derricks, and left his mark wherever he went.

He was a daredevil in his youth, roaring down the road on his motorcycle, and carried that bold spirit throughout his life. He had an ear for music and a heart for the songs of Hank Williams, Ozzy Osbourne, AC/DC, Blue Öyster Cult and many more. He loved puppy dogs, laughter, good food and the open road.

Those who knew him will remember his red hair and mustache — earning him the affectionate nickname "Yosemite Sam" — and his unwavering loyalty as a friend. His travels took him across the country, living in California, Washington, Georgia and Oklahoma, always following the call of the road and the next big thing.

Matt loved his Creator and answered the call to come home surrounded by love. He is survived by his older brother Bill, younger brother Frank, and younger sisters Cynthia and Kate, as well as many nieces, nephews, and extended family who cherished him.

His heart was big, his laughter was loud, and his presence will be missed by all who had the gift of knowing him.

"Ride free, Matt. Your spirit lives on in the songs you loved, the stories you told, and the family who will forever hold you in their hearts."

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