

# HOWNIKAN

Giwségises/Aptebbongises | November/December 2025



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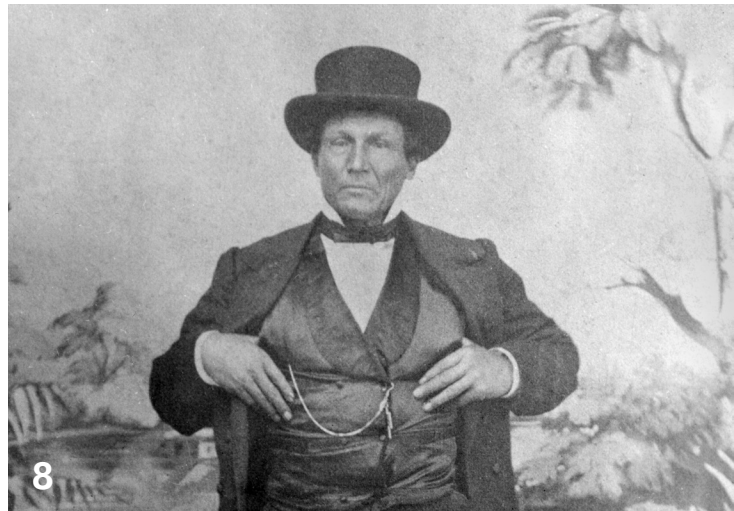
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# Cultural Heritage Center staff members work together to preserve CPN heritage

Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Cultural Heritage Center (CHC) is rich with culture, tradition and history.

The *Hownikan* spoke with four CHC staff members to learn more about the impact they have within the Nation. Spring Cleveland is a manager in the Tribal enrollment department. Keisha Lindsay is the CHC assistant director. Czarina Thompson is the Elders First program coordinator in the Cultural Development Department. Robert Collins is the interdepartmental Potawatomi language lead in the Cultural Development Department.



**Spring Cleveland**  
Tribal enrollment manager

Spring Cleveland is the Tribal enrollment manager at the CHC. She oversees the management and integrity of the official Tribal membership rolls.

"During my day-to-day operations, I supervise and train enrollment staff, delegate tasks and ensure that the department

functions professionally, efficiently and with the utmost respect for confidentiality and accuracy," Cleveland said.

Cleveland ensures compliance with Tribal and applicable federal laws, manages enrollment ID issuance, and safeguards membership records. She prepares reports for Tribal Council, analyzes enrollment trends and offers strategic recommendations. She also assists members with genealogy research and provides customer service related to enrollment inquiries.

Cleveland has worked for CPN for 26 years, with the past 14 years being dedicated to the enrollment department.

"There is much to love about being the Tribal enrollment manager," Cleveland said. "This role allows me to actively support Tribal sovereignty, preserve our cultural identity and strengthen our Tribal community."

Cleveland takes pride in upholding high ethical standards and representing the Tribe with integrity.

"Knowing that our work benefits not only current members but also future generations makes this role especially meaningful," she said.



**Keisha Lindsay**  
CHC assistant director

Keisha Lindsay is the assistant director at the CHC. She assists Director of Cultural Development Blake Norton and oversees administrative operations and facility management, among many other day-to-day duties that keep the CHC running smoothly.

Lindsay has worked for CPN for over 12 years with more than eight of those years spent at the CHC. She is passionate about her work and the community she serves.

"I love being able to work for my Tribe and coming to work every day to a great staff," she said.

Lindsay's leadership and dedication contribute to the CHC's impact on the community.



**Czarina Thompson**  
Elders First program coordinator

Czarina Thompson is the Elders First program coordinator. She leads cultural classes such as sewing, beading, leather work, weaving, food sovereignty and soap-making.

"I try to always provide cultural significance and

history to the project we are doing. Our classes create a place of community and learning, providing connection between the class participants as well as a connection to their ancestors' cultural knowledge," Thompson told the *Hownikan*.

Thompson began working at the CHC 20 years ago. She enjoys the meaningful connections that leading cultural classes offers, the challenge of learning new skills, and researching her ancestors' lifeways to share in her classes.

Thompson said, "I also enjoy the awesome people who come to our classes. I have built great friendships with many of the participants. The cultural classes have built connections and provided such wonderful community connections!"

Her favorite part about leading cultural classes is connecting Tribal members to their ancestors.

"We need to feel connected, and when I see that light come on in someone's eyes, it is such a blessing," she said.

She finds joy seeing participants gain a sense of accomplishment when they complete a project to their satisfaction or when they feel the confidence to help fellow participants. She believes these moments take the class experience beyond working on a project; they provide an opportunity to connect with wonderful people.



**Robert Collins**  
**Interdepartmental  
Potawatomi language lead**

Robert Collins serves as the CHC's interdepartmental Potawatomi language lead. He creates and instructs preK-12 curricula at CPN's child development centers, after school program, community classes, and offers courses at seven national universities

and colleges. Collins also develops community-focused

initiatives with the Cultural Development Department and partnering departments throughout the Nation.

He has worked for the Nation since 2018 and at the CHC since 2019.

"I take great joy in revitalizing Potawatomi culture because it represents an act of cultural survival, healing and empowerment," he said.

Collins shared with the *Hownikan* that his work is helping to restore identity and pride across generations. He asserts sovereignty through language, builds deep relationships through immersive teaching, and preserves the Potawatomi worldview and history as a living archive.

"I live by my values — equity, heritage and community," he said. "This work is sacred to me; it is an essential part of who I am."

Find the Cultural Heritage Center online at [potawatomiheritage.com](http://potawatomiheritage.com) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/cpnculturalheritage](https://facebook.com/cpnculturalheritage). \*

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## CPN donates to Community Market of Pottawatomie County

Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) donated \$25,000 to the Community Market of Pottawatomie County to help offset the impact of the lapse in SNAP benefits in November caused by the government shutdown. The funding helped Community Market purchase food and bridge food access gaps for families.

CPN Vice-Chairman Linda Capps shared that Shawnee is fortunate to have the Community Market located in the city.

"The Tribe's leaders and employees want to show our appreciation to the Community Market, Executive Director Daniel Matthews and all those who work and volunteer at the organization," she said. "These individuals are dedicated and passionate to help people in need of food."

"Our neighbors need to know we will always be here for them," Matthews said.

Since opening its doors in 2016, Community Market has served clients through a pandemic, tornado and now the first-ever suspension of SNAP benefits. The organization continues to be a resource for families by providing access to food in challenging times.

Matthews said, "The lead gift from CPN will enable up to 1,500 families to not have to worry about where their next meal comes from."



The organization experienced an increase in demand following the SNAP suspension. According to Matthews, service levels are up 28% year over year, 13% of that increase being guests who have never accessed Community Market's services before.

"The generosity shown by CPN Chairman John 'Rocky' Barrett, Vice-Chairman Capps and the entire Nation is something we will forever be grateful for." Matthews said. "In uncertain times, steps like these demonstrate that we can support and care for one another."

FireLake Discount Foods has supported the Community Market since the organization was founded. They had a food drive for Community Market throughout November at all FireLake Discount Foods locations.

For more information about the Community Market, visit [ourcommunitymarket.org](http://ourcommunitymarket.org). \*

# Mattena takes position to bring cultural items home

“Throughout my time in higher-education I have had Native advisors, which was really formative for me to be taught and mentored by Native scholars who are the cornerstones of Indigenous archaeologies,” she said, making mentions of Dr. Edward Jollie and Dr. Sonya Atalay, whom she worked with on her master’s and her Ph.D. work. “I had some really formative education in archeology, specifically, that pushed me to work in collaborative ways with my own community, as well as our kin.”

Mattena started with the association as a contractor in January 2024, doing work such as monitoring auctions for stolen cultural heritage. O’Loughlin then worked with Mattena to co-develop the position that she holds now.

“It came by total surprise, and it also came at a time when I was feeling really disillusioned with academia,” Mattena said.

While in her third year of her Ph.D. and working on a project with the Potawatomi Nation Tattoo Society, Mattena found it was becoming difficult to do her research *wéwéne* (in a good way) through the constraints of academia, both because of an inability to properly credit elders and knowledge keepers as co-authors and because of funding issues.

“Now that I’m not working through the university, I can still do my research,” she added. “Not only that, but my coworkers and the association are excited about it, and they support me in continuing that research.”

She said being able to work at the association has been “life changing.”

“I’m mentored by and work with a group of Native women who have decades of experience in their fields, and I get to be in an environment where I’m learning something new every day, and I get to do work that I can see has actual, tangible impact,” she said. “I know that I can speak from my heart and speak loud and be proud of who I am because I work for the association.”

Mattena said the role feels like a good fit for her, especially with her background in archeology.

Among the many things she does in her position, Mattena said one aspect that is exciting to her is seeing private collectors reach out to the association to return ancestors and belongings.



*Kay shows her art at 50 Arrow Gallery in Easthampton, Massachusetts.*

Navarre family member Kay Kkendasot Mattena accepted the role as program associate for the Association on American Indian Affairs, the longest-serving national Native non-profit, this year.

In her role, she will support programs such as Cultural Sovereignty, Next Generations, and Become an Ally, as well as conduct research on repatriation and protecting sacred places, work with Native Nations to support tribal museums and protect cultural heritage, and to support efforts toward intergenerational healing.

“Kay has been working with the Association as a contractor and has displayed a true heart-centered commitment to supporting the Association’s cultural sovereignty initiatives and relationship building across Turtle Island. The Association is excited to have Kay’s creative problem solving, kindhearted communication and dedication to supporting sovereignty efforts across Native Country,” said Shannon O’Loughlin, citizen of the Choctaw Nation and the Association on American Indian Affairs CEO and attorney.

Mattena received her bachelor’s degree in archeology from Mercyhurst University and her Master of Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

"It's been really healing and empowering to see, not just our Native Nations come together in a good way, but also to see our allies find an organization like us, or even reach out to specific Nations directly to return things that they never should have had in the first place," she said. "These are just individuals who, you know, maybe grandpa passed away and while they're dealing with his estate, they found ancestors' belongings, sacred items, or even just art that they want to return to their affiliated Nations and homelands. There's several who have offered to pay for everything from shipping to travel costs, which just warms my heart."

There are long days, and the work is busy, she said, with new things happening every day.

"There's something new all the time that we have to respond to. Good and bad, right?" she said. "I feel like I'm doing busy work that's good and actually having a good impact."

Going forward, Mattena said she hopes to learn how to be a good leader from the matriarchs she works with at the association, whom she called "giants" — women like Cultural Sovereignty Director June Lorenzo, Laguna Pueblo and Navajo (Diné), and Next Generations Director Kim Mettler, a citizen of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation.

"I have some amazing aunties and elders that I get to work with every day, and I really just want to spend time with them to learn from their decades of knowledge so I can be able to build my own skillset with the hopes that I can be a good ancestor to the next generation," Mattena said.

"I never had the chance to ask my *nokomis-ben* (grandmother who has walked on) for the advice I would



Kay speaks about her work with the Association on American Indian Affairs at the 10th Annual Repatriation Conference.



Kay visits the St. Josephs (now St. Mary's) Boarding School and orphanage where her great-grandfather, Wayne Murray, was raised and kept away from his grandmother, Julia Navarre-Burns.

need as a an adult, the stories about my ancestors, or why she worked so hard to hide who she was. My *kche-mishomis-ben* (my great-grandfather who has walked on) survived an orphanage and boarding school in Kansas and all I know from his time there, at St. Josephs Boarding School, was that he only ever showed anger at my mom when she asked about it. Being able to work alongside these warrior matriarchs heals those broken ties every day I have the chance to do so. They are teaching me what it means to be a matriarch and a warrior for our people in ways that my *nokomis-ben* only dreamed about," she added.

She also hopes to see more people get involved with the Tribal Partners Working Group, a closed group for Native Nations by Native Nations that focuses on discussing and sharing knowledge about cultural sovereignty and heritage. Representatives from within Native Nations are able to collaborate on things such as repatriation, museum and collection care, and more.

In addition to her work with the association, Mattena is also an artist who recently had her work featured in the main gallery of a Native-run art gallery, 50 Arrow Gallery in Easthampton, Massachusetts. View her artwork at [cpn.news/mattenaart](http://cpn.news/mattenaart).

For more information about the Association on American Indian Affairs, visit [indian-affairs.org](http://indian-affairs.org). ✨

# Artist connects to nature through cyanotypes

Cyanotypes, a way of capturing images without a camera by using light-sensitive iron salts, date back to when the process was discovered in 1842. Today, Peltier family member Rebecca Barnard uses the process to connect with nature and to create some of her art.

"It started out being used artistically and scientifically: to make prints from camera-produced negatives, and to record botanical specimens at scale," Barnard said.

Later, she explained that cyanotypes became used mostly for reprography of technical drawings (and where the term "blueprints" comes from). However, she said the method remains a simple way to create images and one that is accessible without the use of expensive equipment.

"You mix together two chemical solutions (potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium oxalate) to produce a photosensitive liquid, which is then applied to any porous surface and allowed to dry," Barnard explained. "Then objects or a film negative are placed on the material's surface and exposed to ultraviolet light (typically sunlight) for a few minutes. Finally, the image is developed by washing the material with water."

When the process is complete, the water-insoluble Prussian blue pigment remains in the paper and turns any parts that were exposed to the UV light into shades of blue.



*Medicine Wheel cyanotype in progress*



*Medicine Wheel cyanotype prototype*

Barnard said she was exposed to many types of artistic media through her artist mother, Donna Barnard, but she developed an interest in photography while in her teens.

While studying darkroom photography during her time at community college, she found she was intrigued by how hands-on the process was. She later transferred to the University of Texas at Arlington to major in photography, and there she took

an Alternative Processes class.

"I learned several antiquated processes: cyanotype, Van Dyke Brown, lumen printing,



and wet plate collodion tintype," Barnard said. "I love how un-instant this type of photography is; you really have to slow down and follow your intuitions."

In her own art, Barnard enjoys capturing shapes and patterns found in nature with items such as feathers, leaves and flowers, and using this process to feel more connected to the earth and to nature.

"I love that with cyanotype, you not only have the subject to consider, but also the presentation; you can apply the chemistry to many materials, and in a myriad of techniques. Your application of the chemistry can be delicate and sparse or wild and bold," she said. "Cyanotype is a combination of the infallibility of a photograph but with the whimsy of art."

Aside from her work with cyanotypes, Barnard has a freelance business called Vision Arts where she said graphic design and sign making are her "bread and butter."

She also sells some of her work on Etsy at [visionartstx.etsy.com](http://visionartstx.etsy.com) and occasionally shows her work in galleries.

Barnard lives in Dallas with her two cats, and she regularly visits her family in Oklahoma City and in Colorado. ✨



*Rebecca Barnard  
(Photo courtesy of Calen Barnum)*



# NOEK graduation

On Oct. 16, nine Citizen Potawatomi Nation employees from across the Tribe’s diverse range of departments and enterprises graduated from NOEK, a 10-month leadership program.

NOEK is designed to expose CPN employees to the history, culture, infrastructure and services that are at the heart of the Nation. Equally as important, NOEK is also designed to teach and encourage individuals to lead through love by exemplifying the Seven Grandfather teachings. The course includes modules on love, truth, bravery, respect, honesty, humility and wisdom. By merging the Seven Grandfather teachings with modern leadership

principles, participants gain a profound understanding of how to lead with integrity, compassion and resilience.

This year, employees from accounting, casino management, child development, GED instruction, child welfare, housekeeping/maintenance and public information participated in the program.

“It was a diverse group, which makes for great learning opportunities from different backgrounds and ideals,” said Director of Employee Engagement Kelley Francen.

The next NOEK program will begin in January 2026. Applications are available to CPN employees through the Employee Advocacy and Engagement Department. Anyone interested is encouraged to apply. \*

# CONTROL IS NOT REAL LOVE



## CITIZEN POTAWATOMI NATION DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM

**24/7 CRISIS HOTLINE 405-878-HOPE**  
VISIT US ONLINE AT [CPNHOUSEOFHOPE.COM](http://CPNHOUSEOFHOPE.COM)

# Vieux 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.

## Potawatomi leader's entrepreneurial spirit and the Oregon Trail

Louis Vieux held a reputation as a keen businessman and Potawatomi leader in the 1800s. He ran a successful ferry along the Vermillion River on the Potawatomi reservation in Kansas where he charged Oregon Trail travelers \$1 per outfit to cross, sometimes making upward of \$300 per day. Before removal west, Vieux and his family were prominent fur traders in the Great Lakes region. They continued pursuing the trading business after removal to Council Bluffs in present-day Iowa, and the family's business ideals followed them to the Potawatomi reservation in northeastern Kansas. Even today, Vieux's influence is not forgotten. The small, rural Kansas town of Louisville bears his name, and the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Cultural Heritage Center highlights his impact in its gallery, "West of the Mississippi."

Vieux managed to make the most of the challenges the Potawatomi faced during that period. He was born in 1809 near the Great Lakes, survived the removal west as well as the hardships that followed while the Potawatomi attempted to gain footing as woodland people on the prairie. His life bookends dramatic and heartbreaking yet pivotal events in Potawatomi history.

## Westward expansion

When the Potawatomi finally made the final move to Kansas, Louis Vieux had his homestead on the banks of the Vermillion River and set up as not only the ferry operator across there — as he saw how many emigrants were moving through heading west — he also supplied a barn, hay and feed as well as supplies for the soldiers who were moving from Fort Riley to Fort Leavenworth.

According to the Kansas Historical Society, approximately 300,000 people passed through the state along the Oregon-California Trail. Because of the Potawatomi reservation's location, many Tribal members, including Vieux, took advantage of the economic opportunities the wagon trains could provide.



Louis Vieux

Vieux carefully chose the place where he settled because that's where the natural ford of the river was located. The reservation's location also served as one of the last chances for travelers to restock supplies before crossing the Rocky Mountains. Vieux often purchased items travelers no longer deemed necessary to resell for profit, continuing his family's trading legacy.

Without this location on the Oregon Trail, Vieux would not have enjoyed the successful ferry operation he eventually built.

## Business committee

In addition to entrepreneurial opportunities in Kansas, Vieux served on the Tribe's business committee and represented Potawatomi in Washington, D.C., on numerous occasions.

As the Potawatomi were being pressured to sign treaties, leaders like Vieux tried to negotiate what those treaties would entail. Often, treaties were negotiated to try and get the federal government to follow through on promises made in past treaties.

He also helped oversee and coordinate annuity payment processing by working with fellow Potawatomi to ensure all Tribal members received their funds, food and supplies. Annuity payments were delayed, and not everything that had been promised was successfully delivered. Continual pressure had to be applied to get the government to follow through on agreements they had already signed. Additional pressure was then necessary to get the government to negotiate further agreements.

## Citizenship

In the 1860s, a group of Potawatomi businessmen and leaders, including Vieux, saw the chance to become United States citizens and obtain land allotments as ways to provide permanence and stability.

Vieux understood both *Bodéwadmimwin* and English. He was articulate and used to communicating with everyone from Tribal leaders to government officials.

Vieux was the first signatory on the Treaty of 1861, which established the Citizen Band of Potawatomi, later named the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. The Citizen Band included those who wished to receive allotments and the chance to become U.S. citizens, whereas the Prairie Band included those who refused allotments, deciding rather to hold their land in common.

Some Citizen Band were able to achieve success through allotments, but others were not. Federal policies, like taxation and a lack of follow through on treaty obligations, negatively impacted many Citizen Potawatomi. Because of this, just six short years after signing the 1861 Treaty, Citizen Band leaders were looking for ways to save the Tribe and its people once more. The Treaty of 1867 provided an opportunity to sell Tribal lands in Kansas and purchase a new reservation in present-day Oklahoma. However, after obtaining the new reservation, not all made the move south. Numerous Citizen Potawatomi, including Vieux and fellow businessman and Tribal leader Joseph Napoleon Bourassa, stayed in Kansas.

Many of Vieux's children, however, made the journey to Indian Territory. They believed an opportunity existed that they would not have received if they stayed in Kansas.

Vieux passed away in 1872, the same year Potawatomi began moving to the Tribe's reservation in present-day Oklahoma. However, his descendants have continued his legacy of Tribal service and leadership in Kansas, Oklahoma and beyond, including Olympian Jim Thorpe, Vieux's grandson.

Although the Citizen Potawatomi headquarters have remained in Oklahoma for almost 150 years, the Nation's connection in northeastern Kansas continues today with Tribal resources, elder housing, events and more on Citizen Potawatomi land in Rossville, which is approximately 20 miles from Vieux's homestead. Learn more about his Tribal influence online at [potawatomiheritage.com](http://potawatomiheritage.com).

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](http://portal.potawatomi.org). Learn more about the Family Reunion Festival at [cpn.news/festival](http://cpn.news/festival), and find research resources online at [potawatomiheritage.com](http://potawatomiheritage.com). ✨

# Halloween event brings children, elders together

Betty Simecka has lived in Father Joe Murphy elder housing for 11 years now, and in all that time, there have never been children trick or treating the neighborhood — until now, anyway.

This year, CPN Rental Manager Reda Pitts met with Jerri Mayer, manager of CPN's After School Program, to ask how they could partner to bring some joy to elders, and one of the ideas they came up with was trick or treating.

"You talk about a beautiful soul," Mayer said about Pitts. "She just lit up the room. I just jumped on board and said if we can get it approved, we're there."

Once Pitts had approval, she informed the elders and let them know she could help if any wanted to participate but didn't feel they could afford to buy the candy.

The day before Halloween, 81 children walked through the fence of the After School Program and across to Father Joe Murphy, where about 44 elders waited with buckets of candy.



*Children in the CPN After School Program trick or treat at Father Joe Murphy.*

Throughout the neighborhood, children hugged elders, had conversations and passed out thank you cards they'd created.

Marilyn Morton, a retired nurse who went back to school to get her nursing degree in her 50s, talked about how impressed she was with the cards and how much time the kids must have put into them.

One of the girls told Morton she was an otter. (The After School Program has age groups divided into "dens" of animals, with otters being the youngest group). Morton explained that her animal is a horse, which represents freedom.

"That kind of stuff, they need to understand. It's not just the language. It's the manner in which you



*Betty Simecka gives candy to a trick or treater.*

Simecka decorated her porch with pumpkins, flowers, apples and other autumn items. A ceramic pumpkin served as her candy dish, and she wore a wide-brimmed black hat, which received compliments from several children.

"They were the most polite children," she said. "There was not one time I saw anybody doing anything that was disrespectful to our places or disrespectful to anybody, not even each other."

The children came in smaller groups, with teachers staying nearby to watch, and Simecka said it was organized well so that it wasn't overwhelming and she always had breaks to refill her candy bowl.



*CPN Rental Manager Reda Pitts, right, helps pass out candy to trick or treaters from the After School Program.*

live," Morton said, adding how valuable it is for the students to learn things like that from elders.

"Those kids have a lot to learn from us," she said, "and we have a whole lot to learn from them. It goes both ways."

Resident Shirley Deathrage was touched when one of the girls spoke Potawatomi to her.

"I gave her candy and she handed me this," Deathrage said, showing a hand-made card of purple construction paper. As the girl was walking away, Deathrage heard her say, "Migwetch," and she asked her to come back.

"She came back and I said, 'Honey, you keep that up. You keep trying to learn your language,'" she said, giving the girl another piece of candy.

Pitts said one resident, whom she was surprised wanted to participate, told her it was "the best thing to happen to us in a long time."

"It just fills my heart so much, and then Jerri said the kids are still talking about it and excited," Pitts said. She planned to take a group of elders to thank the children in person later.

She said it was heartwarming to see, especially for elders who don't have family nearby.

Simecka said she hopes the event happens again next year.

"It was just a pleasure having them there," she said. "The children always make you feel good, you know, and it's just kind of a boost."

Morton said throughout the event, she watched everyone's faces in the houses around her.

"They were just grinning, and you don't see that happening now," she said, explaining that between concerns over Social Security, what's going on in Washington, D.C., and the world in general, so many people are under stress or depressed. "But, you know, their whole faces lit up. It was amazing. And I think we need to do more of it."

Mayer said a fence is all that separates the elder housing from the After School Program playground, and she apologized to one resident who told Mayer she could hear the children when they played outside. The resident then told her that her grandchildren live far away, and she intentionally goes out on her patio to hear the laughter of the children.

Mayer hopes they can offer other experiences where elders can do more than just listen to laughter through the fence, whether that be events like trick or treating or finding ways for them to sit and play board games together.

"I hope that we can create those experiences, both for our younger ones who need that elder in their lives and for the elders who need the youth in their lives," she said. "I think both groups are benefiting from it."

For children with an interest in activities like beadwork or sewing, Mayer believes elders with those skills are a valuable source of knowledge.

"I would like for it to be a mentor kind of program. I think a lot of knowledge and skillsets are lost between the generations," she said.

For now, Mayer and Pitts have many ideas of ways they might continue to partner — whether that be creating cards for veterans, Christmas caroling or even a block party between generations — and Mayer is grateful to work at a place that values its children.

"CPN does an absolutely amazing job with supporting their youth, whether it's financially or with programs like partnering with other departments," she said.

Pitts said after a very successful trick or treat event, she plans to do it again next year and is also excited for more opportunities like it.

"I'd like to continue to do things to foster a relationship with the elders and the younger generation. I want that to grow. That's been my ultimate goal," Pitts said. ✨

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## 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](mailto:tribalrolls@potawatomi.org).



# OU announces updates to College of Nursing as CPN scholarship window opens

Nursing is among the most popular majors chosen by Citizen Potawatomi Nation tribal members pursuing higher education, and the University of Oklahoma recently announced updates to programs with its Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing.

One of the changes includes the addition of a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthesia track in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, which the university says comes at a time when Oklahoma faces a shortage of anesthesia providers.

“This new program will provide urgently needed nurse anesthetists for Oklahoma and is particularly important for our rural hospitals,” OU Dean of the Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing Melissa Craft, Ph.D., said.

In Oklahoma, 52 counties out of 77 lack an anesthesiologist, according to the Oklahoma Board of Nursing, and CRNAs make up more than 80 percent of anesthesia providers statewide and are also the primary anesthesia professionals in 75 counties.

The OU College of Nursing says it will accept all qualified applicants to its Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.

Rachel Watson, director of CPN’s Department of Education, said nursing was the second most popular major for Tribal members during the 2023-24 school year.

“It has been in the top 10 since the department was founded,” they said, adding that before the COVID-19 pandemic, it had been the top choice of major for Tribal citizens.

Since the department began collecting data in fall of 2016, 592 students who received CPN scholarships marked nursing as their major.

For Tribal members who may be interested in pursuing a nursing degree, or any other major, the spring application window opened Nov. 15 for the CPN College and University Scholarship.

The scholarship is non-competitive and available to all Tribal members who are either taking dual-enrollment classes or are pursuing an associate’s, bachelor’s or master’s degree. Doctoral degrees are funded on a case-by-case basis. It is available for the fall, spring and summer semesters.

Full-time students are awarded \$2,000, while part-time students can receive \$750.

To apply, Tribal members must have a GPA of 2.5 or better on a 4-point scale, be enrolled at an accredited not-for-profit institution, provide proof of full-time or part-time enrollment, and provide a zero-balance document if they want the check in their name.

Submit applications through [portal.potawatomi.org](https://portal.potawatomi.org). ❄️



# 2026 ELECTION NOTICE

## For Vice-Chairman, Secretary-Treasurer, and Legislators for Districts 5, 6, 7 and 8

### VICE-CHAIRMAN

Filing form and fee must be received by the Election Committee no later than 5 p.m. CST on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026. Candidates for Vice-Chairman must be at least 35 years old upon being sworn in on June 27, 2026, and must have physically resided in Oklahoma continuously for at least six months prior to the election. Each successful candidate for an Executive Office in the Citizen Potawatomi Nation must submit a completed personal information form containing their personal financial information to the Comptroller of the Currency, as required under the Standard Change of Control application form for National Banks, no later than seven (7) days after election results are certified.

### SECRETARY-TREASURER

Filing form and fee must be received by the Election Committee no later than 5 p.m. CST on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026. Candidates for Secretary-Treasurer must be at least 35 years old upon being sworn in on June 27, 2026, and must have physically resided in Oklahoma continuously for at least six months prior to the election. Each successful candidate for an Executive Office in the Citizen Potawatomi Nation must submit a completed personal information form containing their personal financial information to the Comptroller of the Currency, as required under the Standard Change of Control application form for National Banks, no later than seven (7) days after election results are certified.

### LEGISLATOR

Filing form and fee must be received by the Election Committee no later than 5 p.m. CST on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026. Candidates for Legislator must be at least 18 years old upon being sworn in on June 27, 2026, and must have physically resided within the district they would represent continuously for at least six months prior to the election.

### APPLICATIONS

AVAILABLE AFTER DEC. 10, 2025. TO REQUEST, EMAIL [ELECTIONS@POTAWATOMI.ORG](mailto:ELECTIONS@POTAWATOMI.ORG)

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## CDFIs: Attacked and Anchored

By Bobby “Trae” Trousdale,  
Grants and Finance Coordinator

At the end of October, your Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation (CPCDC) had the opportunity to attend the Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) 41st Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. OFN is an intermediary and organizer of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) across the United States. Institutions carrying this certification face unique challenges and opportunities when compared to traditional depositories such as banks. CDFIs can provide extra assistance, analyze financial documents and considerations differently, and carry more financial risk than a bank. Our CPN Tribal leaders established both institutions to support our people, creating a rare and unique approach to collective and individual economic development.

At OFN’s inaugural convening, less than \$25 million in assets were managed across Turtle Island by CDFIs. OFN shared this year that their members now manage more than \$40.1 billion in total assets. Among this impact and impressive amount are numerous Native CDFIs. In rural, urban and suburban settings, Indigenous people continue to be one of the most un-/under-banked demographics. Challenges navigating today’s diverse and intimidating financial services compound with historic exclusion from these systems, lack of education and financial literacy, and divestment from rural areas, as well as unjust redlining in many forms among communities of color, create a hostile environment where we must redress harm *and* envision bright futures. Focused on Indian Country specifically and blending capital and culture, Native CDFIs are the fastest growing subset of the industry and were continually referenced throughout the convening as exemplary organizations. Indigenous resilience and brilliance are apparent but remain challenged by misunderstandings of Native Nations’ sovereignty and our trust and treaty obligations with the United States that must be affirmed and exercised daily.

For fellow politicians and news nerds, you may have pieced together that OFN’s convening occurred in D.C. during a government shutdown *and* following a RIF (Reduction in Force — or a governmental pink slip) notification to all federal employees affiliated with the CDFI Fund. The CDFI Fund is/was the nonpartisan department established by Congress to administer a funding and certification process central to our understanding of the industry. The CDFI Fund is one of those rare bipartisan success stories that amplifies the U.S. government’s investment 8:1, meaning \$8 in private sector investment are unlocked for each \$1 of public funding spent according to former Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. Program areas for the fund include the CDFI Bond Guarantee Program, the Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) Program and New Markets Tax Credits Program — all of which have deployed to the benefit of CPN. Unfortunately, as you read this article, the CDFI Fund staff, in its entirety, may be relieved of duty as of Dec. 13, 2025, to align to this presidential administration’s priorities. CPCDC and our elected officials have been actively engaged in the advocacy work necessary in newest battlefield: bureaucracy.

Regardless, our work at Community Development — and at Native CDFIs across the country — continues. To quote an *Anishinabek* relative from OFN’s Native Gathering Day: “We will get through this...because we don’t have a choice!” We will continue to equip CPN’s economic development, we will continue to support Indigenous businesses, and we will continue to serve our Nation’s citizens and employees. CPCDC’s portfolio is the largest in Indian Country and we’re honored to serve our people nationwide. Additionally, other Native CDFIs that may also be able to assist in serving you exist in all but two of CPN’s legislative districts. From Anchorage to Bangor and Miami to Kalaheo, we encourage you to connect with your legislator to see what programs, services and connections in your local area we can, and would be happy to, make. ✨

# Veterans Report

Bozho (Hello),

Happy Thanksgiving and merry Christmas, CPN veterans and families!

A special announcement: Due to a conflict in dates, our CPN Veterans Organization's Christmas was moved to Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2025, at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Cultural Heritage Center Veterans' Memorial Room at 6 p.m. We enjoyed good food and prizes for CPN veterans and families.

We also participated in the Tecumseh Christmas Parade on Dec. 5.

Remember our CPN Veterans Organization's monthly meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. (or as soon as you can get there) and all CPN veterans and their families are welcome. Remember that a meal is served. You do not have to be a member to attend.

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 \*



**SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY!**

## Virtual Talking Circles

**By Citizen Potawatomi Nation Department of Education**

Every season, the Department of Education hosts a virtual talking circle. Initially born from the COVID-19 pandemic and intended to provide a place for students to connect virtually, the event has now grown to be inclusive of all Tribal members who wish to attend.

Talking circles are often part of traditional Potawatomi ceremonies. The department talking circles, however, are not ceremonial. The department invites speakers or presentations on a topic for 20 to 30 minutes, to support lifelong learning. Presentations are usually recorded and available for Tribal members to watch at [portal.potawatomi.org](http://portal.potawatomi.org). Those who wish to stay on are then invited to participate in an open talking circle with some basic prompts and topic suggestions.

Talking circles are a Potawatomi way to make sure everyone has space to say what is on their mind. In a talking circle, only one person speaks at a time. There is no interruption or agreement or disagreement. Only one person at a time has the floor to share their thoughts. If you don't

have anything to say, that is perfectly okay; you are empowered to say as much or as little as you'd like. Other participants will focus on active listening, unlike in other types of conversation where they might spend more time thinking of what to say next. What is shared in the talking circle is not meant to be shared outside of that space.

During a ceremony, everyone would be seated in a circle, and participants would pass around an eagle feather or other object to the left to indicate who is speaking. Since that is not possible in a video chat, the department makes and posts an order in the chat. Participants are not required to speak, but they should indicate when they would like to pass to be respectful of the space and everyone's time.

To be part of the next virtual talking circle, all you need to do is log in to your portal account and click the link under "Talking Circles." The Winter 2026 talking circle will be on Jan. 13 at 7:30 p.m. Central Time.

For more information, feel free to contact the Department of Education at [education@potawatomi.org](mailto:education@potawatomi.org) or 405-695-6028. \*



## *Mdamen* alum shares his experience about the program



Zachary Crumbo, 2025 *Mdamen* Leadership Program (MLP) alum, shared his impactful *Mdamen* experience with the *Hownikan*.

### **Finding identity**

Born in Utah and raised near the Grand Canyon, Crumbo knew about his Potawatomi heritage through his father. However, he was not connected with the people. He had paintings from his great-uncle Woody Crumbo, but connections were limited. The main connection he had was with a Citizen Potawatomi family friend, Danny Haskey.

Crumbo's father, a National Park Service river ranger, unexpectedly passed away in a backcountry canoe accident. After his father walked on, he felt inspired to learn more about his heritage.

He heard about *Mdamen* and the Potawatomi Leadership Program (PLP) through social media but

did not think it would apply to him. That changed after participating in one of the talking circles hosted by Citizen Potawatomi Nation Department of Education.

"The talking circle featured PLP alumni, and I was so moved by the stories of the young people who participated," Crumbo said. "Their words resonated deeply with me, and I immediately decided that I needed to be a part of something like that."

### ***Mdamen* experience**

Participating in *Mdamen* was a life-changing experience for him.

"It connected me with my heritage in a way that I had never dared to dream," Crumbo said. "I had felt like an imposter in my explorations of my identity, and *Mdamen* gave me the means to connect with the Tribe authentically and to forge real relationships with others just like me."

He described *Mdamen* as a practical and spiritual education — everything from Tribal enterprise to the traditional ways of handling eagle feathers. He also learned how to introduce himself in *Bodéwadmimwen* and explored his ancestry.

Crumbo feels inspired to live with purpose and pay the gift of knowledge he received forward to his family who were cut off from their heritage. He encourages others to apply as the time commitment is manageable and CPN's Department of Education staff are amazing.

"You'll meet Tribal leadership, hang out virtually with raptors and learn about your heritage. Whatever you are hoping to get from it, you'll receive that and so much more," Crumbo said.

Crumbo shared in his final reflection at the end of the 2025 *Mdamen* program:

"I always knew that I was Potawatomi, but I didn't know that I could say that part out loud. I asked, tentatively, 'you don't know me, but can I sit on the edge and watch in silence? I know I don't belong, but it would mean so much to me just to know a little bit.' I thought I'd be on this path alone.

I never imagined that I'd be answered with an embrace, with love, with 'we've been looking for you, where have you been?' I never dared to imagine the generosity of my people, that I'd be given such profound gifts of knowledge, community and family."

## Crumbo's artwork

For his *Mdamen* final, Crumbo created an image titled *Mskwangé*, the *Bodewadmi* word for red-winged blackbirds. These birds, known for their glossy black feathers with red-and-yellow shoulder markings, are found throughout North America and have an association with CPN because of the fire markings on the males' wings.

"I made this image because I've been surrounded by these birds in all the places I've lived, but didn't realize it, much like I've been surrounded by my Potawatomi relations without knowing," Crumbo told the *Hownikan*.

He is grateful for the opportunity to participate in *Mdamen* and for the connection it helped him form with his heritage.

## Mdamen application

Applications for the 2026 *Mdamen* Leadership Program closed Dec. 1. The program is open to Tribal members ages 18 and older and offers an opportunity to connect with your Tribal identity and fellow citizens, as well as learn about the government, culture, and economic development of the Nation.

To learn more about the *Mdamen* Leadership Program, visit [portal.potawatomi.org](http://portal.potawatomi.org). \*

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# House of Hope Color Fun Run

The CPN House of Hope held their annual Color Fun Run in October to kick off National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The run was held on Saturday, Oct. 11 at the CPN Festival grounds, and staff at the House of Hope used the opportunity to educate the community on domestic violence. This was the fourth year the organization successfully put together the event. This year, there were over 400 people in attendance. Each year the number of participants has doubled, bringing much needed information to the community.

The 1K race allowed participants to hear from staff about what domestic violence is, who is affected, and



what services can be provided to help victims with safety and prevent future abuse. Survivor speaker Tara Currin, of Oklahoma City, spoke about her experience with relationship abuse and how it nearly took her life. Ms. Currin's words were alarming but impactful.

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



# CPN EAGLE AVIARY RELEASES TWO GOLDEN EAGLES



“

**One day of freedom is better  
than a lifetime of captivity.”**

Jennifer Randell

”

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation Eagle Aviary released two golden eagles near White Sulphur Springs, Montana. They are the first golden eagles hatched in captivity and released into the wild by a Native American aviary.

## **An aviary milestone**

The aviary received its U.S. Fish and Wildlife permit and opened its doors in June 2012. Aviary Managers Jennifer Randell and Bree Dunham were inspired to start the aviary when their family was honored with a golden eagle feather, presented to them after their mother unexpectedly walked on. This special gift set them on a new path, and they went to Tribal leadership with the idea of starting an aviary together.

“That one traditional material gift changed our life,” Randell said. “That’s why it’s so important that our Tribal members have access to eagle feathers.”

Home to 16 eagles, the aviary has 13 bald eagles and three golden eagles. The aviary has successfully released two bald eagles in Oklahoma, one rehabilitated in 2013 and one that hatched at the aviary in 2017. The two golden eagles released in the fall mark a milestone for the CPN Eagle Aviary.



Golden eagles *Dokmeté* (Peace Within) and *Wzawnemki* (Yellow Thunder) began nesting in the fall of 2024 and laid two eggs by March 2025. The golden eaglets hatched on May 6 and 7, 2025, in the middle of a spring thunderstorm. The first hatched was a female and the second was a male.

“They hatched within 12 hours of each other, which is really unusual, and it gave them a better chance of survival as they were close to each other in size,” Randell said.

The aviary managers took measures to ensure the eaglets did not imprint on humans.

“We kept them in the back of the facility, so visitors could not see them. We went as far as to put up extra shades



to limit human interaction for the first six to eight weeks of their lives,” Randell told the *Hownikan*. “It was hard not to go in the enclosure and see those babies. Fortunately, we had cameras to monitor them, that way we were completely hands off. We took all the precautions we could and let the parents do what they naturally do.”

The eaglets were completely parent-raised, and *Dokmeté* and *Wzawnemki* did an amazing job raising the eaglets on their own.

The golden eagles were given Potawatomi names: *Mnotagwzékwe* (She Brings the Good News) and *Nëmkis* (Little Thunder). Their names symbolize thunder and lightning, which is especially meaningful as the eagles both hatched and departed from the aviary during thunderstorms.

“Thunder is when spring arrives and nature wakes up,” Randell told the *Hownikan*. “With their mother’s name being Yellow Thunder and the eaglets hatching in the spring, we had a sense of the direction we wanted to take their names. We also wanted something connected to lightning or to the idea of ‘she brings the light.’ In *Bodéwadmi*, we came to *Mnotagwzékwe* with *Nëmkis*.”

“We wanted the names to reflect the idea that they bring the good news because we are releasing them to the wild. We will soon be fully permitted to release any eagles hatched at our facility,” Dunham said.

## Preparation and release

The aviary took special care to ensure the eagles’ safety and comfort during the long road trip to Montana. They lined kennels with cardboard and outdoor carpet for padding, then covered them with blankets to keep the eagles calm. The eagles also had a full meal the evening before the trip, so they were not released on an empty stomach.

Dr. Mattie Yates and RVT Jill Watson traveled to the aviary from WildCare Oklahoma to perform wellness checks on the eagles. *Mnotagwzékwe* weighed 12 pounds, and *Nëmkis* weighed seven pounds. They made sure the eagles were in good shape to be released and placed tail guards on the eagles prior to departure to protect their feathers during transport.

As Randell and Dunham loaded the kennels into the vehicle, the *De’Wegen Kwek* (Women’s Drum) sang a traveling song while rain and thunder echoed around them.

“The eagles handled the long road trip well. Eagles usually go to sleep in the car, so they were quiet during the drive. We did hear the eagles rouse, which meant they were comfortable with their environment,” Randell said.

The aviary has a long-standing connection with Rob Domenech, executive director and founder of Raptor View Research Institute, who installed telemetry on a bald eagle for the CPN aviary’s first bald eagle release in 2013. Continuing that partnership, the aviary coordinated with Domenech for the telemetry installation and release site for the golden eagles. Montana was chosen for its suitable habitat and large golden eagle population.

“Montana is golden eagle country. We hope these golden eagles learn from the other golden eagles in the area, which is why we released them close to one of the main migratory paths during peak migration,” Domenech said.

Domenech, with the help of Bryan Bedrosian and Step Wilson from Teton Raptor Center, banded and fitted the eagles with GPS telemetry to track movement, location, altitude and temperature.

On Sunday, Oct. 19, the team traveled to the release site, a mountaintop near White Sulphur Springs,



Montana. They set the kennels on the mountainside as Kelli Mosteller, “Eagle Auntie” and executive director of the First Americans Museum, joined Randell and Dunham in naming the eagles to the four directions.

“We wanted to be intentional with the naming ceremony. We said their names and blew the eagle whistle to the Creator in all four directions. We also left a prayer bundle with one of their mom’s feathers and one of their dad’s feathers tied to it,” Dunham said.

Randell and Dunham opened the kennel doors at the same time. After a moment of hesitation, *Nēmki*s exited his kennel and flew with the wind. *Mnotagwékwe* followed, exiting her kennel and flying up to the mountaintop. She

paused to take in the sights around her before lifting one wing, then the other, and flying against the wind.

The team watched silently as the wind carried the golden eagles over the valleys.

“Once they came out of the kennels, they knew what to do and it was amazing seeing them soar over the valleys,” Mosteller told the *Hownikan*. “I was honored to go get the mom and dad of these two from being injured in the wild and it was an honor to take their children back to the wild and be a part of naming them.”

### Culture and the future

Eagles are sacred to Potawatomi people because they fly so high that they carry messages and prayers to the Creator.

Randell emphasized the responsibility and importance of releasing eagles.

“They are our messengers, and we thanked them as we released them because they will be taking care of us now,” Randell told the *Hownikan*. “One day of freedom is better than a lifetime of captivity.”

“The golden eagle population is declining drastically. If we can offset that trend or contribute to growing the golden eagle population, it is our responsibility to do that.” Dunham continued, “But thinking of seven generations, what if seven generations from now, there were no golden eagles? Standing on that mountain the day of the release and absorbing all that, I feel it is important to do what we can by releasing these golden eagles.”

Since their release, the eagles have traveled separately throughout Montana and parts of Wyoming. Telemetry reports show they are thriving.

“They are following the migratory paths of golden eagles. These eagles are doing great and beating the odds,” Domenech said.

The aviary managers hope to release more eagles in the future and are excited to see the parents of the two released eagles already singing and carrying nesting material.

### Heartfelt thanks

Randell and Dunham expressed heartfelt thanks to everyone who played a part in this sacred event.

They are thankful for Tribal leadership’s support, the continued partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Rob Domenech of Raptor View Research, Teton Raptor Center, WildCare Oklahoma and a community of individuals that supported them through this process.

“This isn’t just us doing this; it’s our community and Tribal resources,” Randell said. “These eagles have been prayed for and there have been sweats and fasts for them. We couldn’t do it without our Tribal leaders and cultural teachers. We will forever be grateful.”



# From the executives



## John "Rocky" Barrett Tribal Chairman

*Bozho, nikan, (Hello, my friend),*

As I often do in these end-of-year columns, I want to again encourage you to take in the joy of the holiday season with friends and family. This is what it is all about, having a family and loved ones to spend time with. Cherish these times, break out a family photo album and teach the younger relatives

about those who have walked on. Tell their stories so the next generation understands what came before them to better understand the world they will soon be a full part of. Those generations who came before us fought, struggled and planned ahead in hopes of better days for us. We owe it to them to tell their stories.

In that vein, our Tribe is once again facing a rising attack along with many of our fellow Tribal governments. Many of you have likely heard of, or possibly participated in, these so called "prediction markets" that are now simply mobile sports betting in all but name. As many at the recent National Congress of American Indians conference summarized, they are a direct threat to a vital economic tool Tribes have used to build up our economies. We've done this despite gaming being one of the most highly regulated industries in this country, exceeding the revenues that were simply unthinkable prior to the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988.

Please know that your Tribe is indeed focused on how to address this threat alongside our allies in Tribal gaming.

Finally, as many have heard, the CPN legislature formally voted to join the Potawatomi Confederation. The Confederation, while in existence for a couple years now, is slowly gathering an organizational structure, currently managed by the host of the previous year's Gathering of Potawatomi Nations. That means this year, Gun Lake Pottawatomi are helping organize. Next year after the Gathering of Potawatomi Nations, Forest County Potawatomi will take over the organizational duties.

We are still in the initial phases, but I am hopeful of what will come as we partner where we can on shared issues with the other Potawatomi tribal governments and First Nations. I want to thank those who have been patient as your elected officials weighed the decision to join and our staff work with the governmental staff at the other tribes to get it up and running.

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



*Legislator Mark Johnson, Tribal Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett and Legislator Rande Payne*



## Linda Capps Vice-Chairman

Bozho (Hello),

The Native Children’s Research Exchange (NCRE) brings together scholars, researchers and professionals studying and working with child and adolescent development in American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities. The group comes together twice a year to openly exchange

information and ideas, build mutual relationships, mentor new scholars, and distribute research information on Native child and adolescent development.

NCRE was founded in 2008 with funding from the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD). The first conference was held in 2008, and another took place in 2009. Since that time, conferences have been funded by The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). From 2015 to present, NCRE has received additional support from the Tribal Early Childhood Research Center (TRC). The importance of NCRE keeps additional funding alive due to the priorities and development of scientifically and culturally grounded theories for Native child development research from birth through emerging adulthood.



Legislator Mark Johnson, Vice-Chairman Linda Capps and Legislator Rande Payne



Tribal Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett and Vice-Chairman Linda Capps with the group at the NCRE meeting in Tulsa.

Several months ago, CPN Tribal member Ashley B. Cole, Ph.D., associate professor of department of psychology at Oklahoma State University, invited the Chairman and me to speak at an NCRE meeting in Tulsa in November. We were encouraged to speak about CPN’s programs dealing with children, which include the Child Development Center and After School Program, Indian Child Welfare and the Women Infants and Children Program.

It was an enlightening experience to have the opportunity to talk about the Nation. A bonus to me on that day is Dr. Ashley Cole and a participant for the program, Jessica McCormick (also a Tribal member), are my nieces. It was a lovely experience.

Earlier in November, I was blessed to have the opportunity to attend Mark Johnson and Rande Payne’s District 7 and 8 meeting in Visalia, California. It had been nine long years since I had attended one of their meetings. Over time, I have gotten to know many people from California, and it was so good to go back. A surprise from my past was Danna Barron, who had graduated from Tecumseh (Oklahoma) High School years ago, where my late husband and I taught. I was very pleased to see Danna and to meet her husband.

Mark and Rande always do a great job with their meetings. They are experts at creating an atmosphere where people like to join in the conversation. An attendee whom we have known for many years was Mary Bolland. She attended my church in Bethel, Oklahoma, several months ago and, to my surprise, is the sister of one of our church deacons. It goes to show us that we must not forget that many of our Tribal members have roots in Oklahoma.

Migwetch (Thank you),

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

# From the legislature



## Steve Livingston District 1

Bozho, (Hello),

### Finding Grace and Gratitude in Community

As we move into the holiday season, I want to take a moment to reflect on grace, forgiveness and community. Whether or not you celebrate, this season reminds us what matters most — family, friends and the connections that hold us together.

Many people reached out after reading the Chairman's October update, and I want to address those concerns. I know that when something like that is written, it can leave people wondering what's really going on. What I can say is this: I've always tried to approach this role with honesty, humility and respect. I care deeply about our Nation and the people who make it all possible

every day. We might not always agree, but I believe disagreement doesn't have to mean disrespect.

The way the Chairman described me and my time in Shawnee doesn't quite reflect what took place, but I'd rather not use this space to go back and forth. If you'd like to know more or get to know me better, I welcome the conversation. Understanding comes through listening and dialogue, and I've always tried to be open and accessible. You can find my vote record here: [cpndistrict1.com/vote-record](http://cpndistrict1.com/vote-record).

I trust our community to decide what kind of person I am. If you ever have doubts, I encourage you to call and get to know me. The person you see in public is the same person I am in private — someone who truly cares about our people, wants the best for our Nation and tries to lead with integrity. Despite the personal attacks, I forgive the Chairman and wish him good health, peace and continued success. Extending that grace feels like the right thing to do — and it's something I hope we all carry into this season.



District 1 gathering at the Illinois State Museum



Neshnabékwéwék - Cathy Wight, Sharon Hoogstraten, Peggy Kinder, Maryellen Godinez, and Laura Hewuse

Now, I'd like to shift to something positive — because there's a lot of good happening in our community. By the time this is published, we'll have held our first District 1 meeting at Harvard's Peabody Museum. In October, we also launched a community-led beading project with about 20 Tribal citizens creating a panel to gift to the Cultural Heritage Center next June. You can read more about it here: [cpndistrict1.com/beading-project](http://cpndistrict1.com/beading-project).

On Oct. 17, District 1 citizen Kevin Roberts organized a wonderful gathering at the Illinois State Museum, and I thank him for taking the lead in bringing people together. I also want to thank his friend and curator, Brooke Morgan, for spending the day with us.

We started with a behind-the-scenes tour of the ISM Research & Collections Center, seeing Great Lakes tribal artifacts, taxidermied animals and other collections up

close. We ate lunch at Café Moxo, shared stories and got to know one another. We wrapped up the afternoon visiting a beautiful beadwork exhibit and, more importantly, District 1 citizen Sharon Hoogstraten's "Dancing for Our Tribe" photography exhibit, which brilliantly captures the spirit and pride of Potawatomi people across all our communities.

That day reminded me what community truly is — coming together, sharing stories and finding joy in our shared identity as *Bodwéwadmik*. I'll keep working to create opportunities for us to gather, but real community happens when citizens like Kevin take the lead and make it happen.

As we close out the year, my hope for all of us is that we continue finding grace and gratitude — in our families, our friendships and one another. Thank you for letting me serve you and for the opportunity to get to know you and your families. I wish you all a blessed and joyful new year.

(View more photos: [guestcam.co/guest/0kWNwGSyXN](https://guestcam.co/guest/0kWNwGSyXN) / Access Code: CPND1-1017)

Steve Livingston | Legislator, District 1 | [steve.livingston@potawatomi.org](mailto:steve.livingston@potawatomi.org)



## Eva Marie Carney District 2

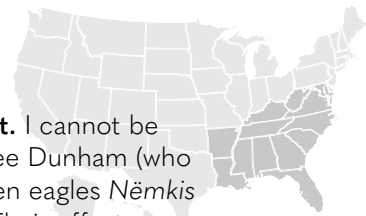
*Bozho, nikanek* (Hello, friends),

**Celebrating Recent Golden Eagles' Montana Release and Flight.** I cannot be any prouder of our Nation, my friends Jennifer Randell and Bree Dunham (who direct our Eagle Aviary), and all who supported their raising of golden eagles *Nēmkiš* (Little Thunder) and *Mnotagwzékwe* (She Brings the Good News). Their efforts culminated in October 2025 with the release into the wild of these two golden eagles. I love how our Nation is working every day to preserve the sacred bond between eagles and our people. You can watch a beautiful video of the eagles' release at [cpn.news/eaglerelease](https://cpn.news/eaglerelease).

**Migwetch (Thank you)** to everyone who attended our 2025 District 2 Fall

Feast. We began with a CPN history presentation by District 4 Legislator Jon Boursaw (Bourassa and Ogee families). Lyle Simmons (Peltier family) then provided expert instruction on making soft-sole, center-seam *mkesinen* (moccasin). The basic pattern Lyle taught from is available at [cpn.news/moccasin](https://cpn.news/moccasin); our hides came from Centralia Fur and Hide at [cpn.news/centraliafurhide](https://cpn.news/centraliafurhide). Other materials used were felt, a Sharpie pen and chalk (for making the pattern), scissors (for cutting the felt and leather), an awl or ice pick (to make holes for stitching), and sinew and a leather needle (for stitching using whip and running stitches). I have posted to Facebook many photos of attendees at work on their *mkesinen*. For those who attended, please share photos of your finished moccasins!

Heidi Stone (Melott family) planned and oversaw the bustling children's craft table. I provided our four medicines (cedar, sage, sweetgrass and tobacco), and tobacco ties were gifted to everyone, thanks to Brent Korzeniewski (Lewis family) and his parents George and Kathleen. We honored Kathy Upchurch (Toupin family) as our wisest attendee, four-month-old Winona "Nona" (Pettifer family) as our youngest attendee, and Lyle Simmons for travelling over 1,100 miles to the meeting. I awarded gift cards to artists Kathryn Javins (Pettifer family), Mars Pursley (Tescier family), and Kimberly Pratt (Lewis family) and ended the day with a giveaway, to which Kim Pratt added her lovely pottery gifts.



## Tobacco Ties

When asking someone for help — whether an elder, knowledge keeper or any Indigenous person who is sharing knowledge — we offer them tobacco. This includes circumstances such as someone sharing knowledge through public speaking, counseling, workshops, or even just asking a person to share advice or teachings. Always offer tobacco from your left hand, because it is closest to your heart. To make tobacco ties, cut fabric into a square, place tobacco in the middle, gather the fabric around it, and tie it off with string, yarn or ribbon. If you receive tobacco, go to a special, quiet place and give the tobacco to fire, water or Mother Earth.

Lyle, along with the always hardworking Bob and Karen Richey (LaFramboise and Hardin families), Steve Klein (Tescier family) and his grandchildren Leland, Zoey, Archer and Alistair, and my terrific husband Alan Cohen, all helped with set up and clean up. College student Leland Klein was able to troubleshoot some initial IT tics so that Jon could present his slides. *Migwetch* (Thank you), Leland! Everyone brought dishes to share, making for a delicious family lunch.

Our Fall Feasts are always terrific gatherings — and that is because so many folks contribute in so many ways. *Migwetch* to all — I am already looking forward to and planning for next year!

**Resource sharing: Potawatomi Feasting and Winter Stories.** Please remember that many useful resources are posted to my website, under the Heritage tab, including the cookbook I compiled in 2018, “Potawatomi Feasting.” You can view it at [cpn.news/potawatomifeasting](http://cpn.news/potawatomifeasting) To set the tone, the cookbook begins with the Thanksgiving prayer we say during District 2 Fall Feasts – perhaps you can use it at your family gatherings.

Also posted is the book “Winter Stories 2015.” This book [cpn.news/winterstories2015](http://cpn.news/winterstories2015) is filled with stories gathered from fellow Potawatomi, along with traditional stories I researched and included. Please note that our teaching is that our traditional stories that involve *Nanabozho* or *Wiske* are told only in the wintertime. This is the time when the earth and the spirits are asleep.

*Migwetch* (Thank you), for the honor of representing you. Happy holidays and New Year to all!

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



## Brenda Trevino District 3

*Bozho jayek* (Greetings all)!

As this issue of the *Hownikan* will be distributed during the holiday season, I wanted to ask us to look around for some small things we can do for others. It could be a specific kindness or an action. It could be daily, weekly or only on a specific occasion. Feeling a genuine act of kindness can completely change the trajectory of another person’s day.

Specific health concerns also go hand-in-hand with the holidays. If you can, invite someone to share time with you to let them know you care — it can alleviate stress and give joy! Check on a loved one or friend who lives alone. Drop by to see that friend who won’t be able to go home to see family. Even a phone call or message can bring a smile. You can be a blessing. Sending holiday cards is a practice of the past for most of us. I still display holiday cards on my window blinds each year and say a brief prayer for each friend/family/acquaintance who took the time to send them years ago. They really dress up the place!

I can’t let an issue go by without reminding District 3 members of the upcoming Meet-and-Greet in Corpus Christi on Jan. 10, 2026, at the YMCA. Address for the YMCA is 417 S. Upper Broadway Street. The room is reserved from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (program starts at 10:30 a.m.). This is the first of five meet-and-greet meetings through June, with a larger regional meeting in Waco on April 18. The save-the-date calendar for each of the monthly planned meetings in District 3 is also published in this issue of the *Hownikan*. Please RSVP and come one, come all!

### DISTRICT 3 SAVE THE DATE

Meeting calendar through June 2026

| Primary Date    | Alternate Date*   | Location       | Venue (starts at 10:30am)     | Meeting Size   |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Jan. 10, 2026   | Jan. 24, 2026     | Corpus Christi | Downtown YMCA                 | Meet-and-Greet |
| Feb. 21, 2026   | Feb. 22, 2026     | The Woodlands  | Kevin Brady Library           | Meet-and-Greet |
| March 7, 2026   | March 28, 2026    | Georgetown     | Georgetown Recreation Center  | Meet-and-Greet |
| April, 18, 2026 | April 25, 2026    | Waco           | Dewey Community Center        | Larger Meeting |
| May 16, 2026    | May 23, 2026      | Tyler          | Tyler Glass Recreation Center | Meet-and-Greet |
| June 13, 2026   | No Alternate Date | San Marcos     | San Marcos Activity Center    | Meet-and-Greet |

\*Alternate date used only in case of inclement weather.

**Please RSVP 7 days in advance to [brenda.trevino@potawatomi.org](mailto:brenda.trevino@potawatomi.org) or call 281-466-7427**

Next, I'm passing along a short list of potential support resources for those that may need a helping hand during the holidays or at any time. Local food pantries, churches, Meals on Wheels, Interfaith Ministries, United Way, St. Vincent de Paul and several websites such as catholiccharitiesusa.org, feedingamerica.org, modestneeds.org, operationhomefront.org (for military), 211.org and familypromise.org (for jobs) are found not only in District 3 but most are also across the country.

I give thanks to the Creator for each of you! May 2026 be happy and healthy!

*Chi migwetch* (Many thanks)!

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

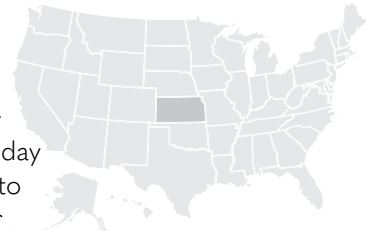
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## **Jon Boursaw District 4**

### **Holiday Greeting**

Peggy and I would like to sincerely wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope that your holiday season is safe and only filled with joy and happiness. I look forward to 2026 with great expectations and enthusiasm as I continue to foster awareness of the history and presence of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in Kansas, and my endeavor to connect with and serve CPN members throughout the state.



### **Closing Out 2025**

Since I was first elected to my position as the District 4 Legislator, I have remained rather busy, but nothing like the past couple of months in 2025. Here is what was on my calendar:

- Oct. 10 Attended the monthly potluck in Rossville. Not unusual as I regularly attend.
- Oct. 12 Invited to give my CPN History Presentation as part of the Sunday morning service at the St. David's Episcopal Church in Topeka. It appeared to be well received.
- Oct. 21 I met with four students at the Topeka West High School, at their invitation, for almost two hours discussing the removal of the Potawatomi from Indiana to Indian Territory (now Kansas), and the Potawatomi Trail of Death in particular. They are entering a nation-wide competition of historic events on video media. Only one student was Native American, and he was Prairie Band Potawatomi.
- Oct. 26 I hosted a District 4 meeting in Wichita at the Mid-America All Indian Center. Chairman Barrett and Vice-Chairman Capps attended. CPN Director of Public Information Kent Bush gave a presentation with slides on the latest Tribal construction projects in Shawnee, OK. Close to 50 attended.
- Nov. 1 I held another District 4 meeting in the CPN Community Center in Rossville with over 90 attendees. CPN Director of Education Rachel Watson gave a comprehensive presentation of the activities and programs that department offers.
- Nov. 4 I gave my CPN History Presentation to a Men's Dinner Club in Topeka, of which I am a member. It was an excellent opportunity to recognize Native American Heritage Month. Approximately 45 were in attendance.
- Nov. 7/8 At the invitation of Eva Carney, the District 2 Legislator, I flew to Washington, D.C., to give my CPN History Presentation at her district meeting in Arlington, VA.
- Nov. 13 Represented the Nation at a function at the Topeka Center for Advanced Learning & Careers attended by seniors from the local high schools.
- Nov. 14 Attended the November Elder's Potluck, a Thanksgiving Feast.
- Nov. 18 Attended the Olathe City Council Meeting to accept a proclamation from the Olathe Mayor acknowledging Native American Heritage Month.
- Nov. 23 The Best One!! I was invited to represent the CPN at the Kansas City Chiefs football game where they recognized Native American Heritage Month and the two Native American players on their team. One of those players is their center, Creed Humphrey, a CPN member from Shawnee, OK.

That is my schedule for October and November, I have no idea what December's schedule will have.

## Upcoming CPN Elders' Potlucks

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

Jan. 9    Soups    RSVP by the 6th

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

## Contact Information

If you are not receiving emails from me, it is because I do not have your current email address or what I have is incorrect. All you need to do is email me your email address.

Migwetch (Thank you),

Jon Boursaw | Wetase Mkoh (Brave Bear) | [jboursaw@potawatomi.org](mailto: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

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## Rande K. Payne District 6

*Bozho nikanek* (Hello friends),

The annual District 6 and 7 Heritage Festival is always enjoyable for me but is a lot of work. I couldn't do it by myself, so I would like to thank District 7 Representative Mark Johnson, my sisters Sharon Welch and Karen Walker, and my brother Terry Payne. Because we hold the event at my residence, it's a lot more involved than just showing up at a venue with everything set up, then driving away when it's over. It was a team effort!

Congratulations to our wisest in attendance, Mary Boland, from Visalia, California; farthest traveler, Danna Barron, from Spring Valley, California; and the future of our Tribe, Allora Allison, from Bakersfield, California. Mary and Danna are from the Melott family and Allora is from the Scully family. Allora's mother is Amy Allison.

Mary and Danna discovered they were related while attending the Festival several years ago. Now Danna stays with Mary when she comes up for Festival, and they make a weekend of it. A close second for farthest traveler was Sabrina Rodia from Gardnerville, Nevada. Sabrina and her husband Archie have made the trip several times.

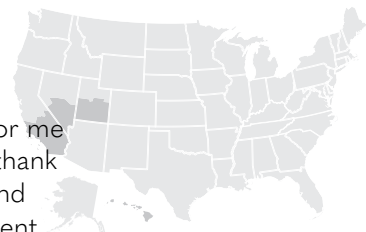
We were so happy that Chairman Rocky Barrett and Vice-Chairman Linda Capps were able to attend. Because of the government shutdown, flights were delayed or cancelled, so I contacted Ms. Capps to make sure they were going to be able to come. To my astonishment, she replied, "Yes, we just left Albuquerque, and we'll be there. We're driving out." If that's not determination, I don't know what is! It's a testament to their commitment to serving the people of our Tribe. Mark and I had planned on honoring them for their years of service with plaques of appreciation well before we knew



Mark Johnson, Rande Payne, Allora Allison, Vice-Chairman Linda Capps and Tribal Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett

they were driving out. Presenting them with their plaques was one of the most joyful experiences I've had as a representative of the Tribe. I greatly appreciate all they have done for our Nation. I also want to thank everyone who came to the Festival for expressing their appreciation as well. I know it meant a lot to them. I hope you enjoyed the question-and-answer time with Rocky and Linda as much as I did. I just want to say that I'm proud of how well everyone did playing Potawatomi trivia.

I also had the honor and privilege of naming Tribal member Jack Mitchell. Jack and his family drove from Bakersfield. The morning was beautiful and perfect for a ceremony. Jack is a Tescier descendant, as I am. We discovered that Jack's great-grandmother, Hattie Mitchell (Tescier), and my great-grandfather, John Tescier, were brother and sister. As we were announcing Jack's Potawatomi name (*Mbwaka-naganit* – He leads with Wisdom) to the





Gloria Hanson, Leslie Mitchell, Jesse Mitchell, Gwen Mitchell, Jack Mitchell and Rande Payne

four directions, I had a strong sense that Hattie and John were looking down on us with warm hearts.

In closing, it has been an honor serving as your representative. It hasn't always been easy, but I have done my best to serve to the best of my ability. I have enjoyed serving as your representative because I have enjoyed you, the people. I am up for election next year and I want to continue to represent the Potawatomi of District 6. If I am fortunate enough to be re-elected, it would be my last term.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season, happy Thanksgiving, merry Christmas and happy New Year!

Wisdom from the Word: "And Mary said: My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation." Luke: 46-47, 50

Igwiyen (Heartfelt thanks), jagenagenan (all my relations), nagech (later),

Rande K. Payne | Mnedo Gabo | rande.payne@potawatomi.org | 31150 Road 180 | Visalia, CA 93292-9585 | 559-999-5411



## Mark Johnson District 7

Bozho nikanek (Hello friends),

On Nov. 8, several District 7 members gathered at the fall Family Heritage Festival that was co-hosted by Rande Payne with District 6 members in Visalia, California. It was great to be in the company of our members and have a good lunch. Joining Rande and I for the meeting were Chairman Barrett and Vice-Chairman Capps. As always, it was a pleasure to have them join us to share with those gathered the latest news from Shawnee. Chairman Barrett covered topics ranging from the construction projects to the growth of our Tribe. Vice-Chairman Capps spoke in detail about the Tribe's Columbarium, making sure that everyone knows they will be welcomed home, if they choose to be cremated after they walk on. A good question and answer session followed. As per our custom, blankets and a bag were presented, with the wisest blanket

going to Mary Boland from Visalia, California, a Melott descendant, and the farthest traveled to Danna Barron from Spring Valley, California, also a Melott family member.

November is also Native American Heritage Month that was officially designated in 1990, when President George H.W. Bush signed a joint resolution declaring November as a time to recognize the contributions of Native Americans. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation's history is one of both deep cultural roots and remarkable endurance. Originally located in the Great Lakes region, our Tribe's way of life was drastically altered in the early 19th century. With the signing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the U.S. government initiated a policy of relocating Native tribes from their ancestral lands to make way for American expansion. The Potawatomi were forced to leave their homes in a tragic event known as the Potawatomi Trail of Death. This forced relocation in 1838 led to the deaths of untold numbers of Tribal members as they were marched from the Great Lakes region to what is now Kansas and, later, settled in present-day Shawnee, Oklahoma. Despite these hardships, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation have managed to preserve our culture and rebuild our community over the generations. Today, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation is approaching 40,000 enrolled members.



Mark Johnson, Rande Payne, Danna Barron, Vice-Chairman Linda Capps and Tribal Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett



Mark Johnson, Rande Payne, Mary Boland, Vice-Chairman Linda Capps and Tribal Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett

As we gather this holiday season, make sure you take the time to share your family history and stories. We owe it to our younger generations to keep the fire of our heritage burning brightly. Also, it is never too early to start planning your trip to the Family Festival in Shawnee next year, June 26-28, 2026. 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 legislator. 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 for which you are eligible. 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



## Dave Carney District 8

*Bozho, nikan* (Hello, friend),

We just wrapped up our 2025 Fall Feast in the Seattle area! This year's gathering was well attended (approximately 75) and was held at the Duwamish Long House. Our meal was prepared by Off the Rez and consisted of Indian fry bread tacos and kale salad. Desserts were brought by our own citizens and varied from homemade cupcakes with medicine wheel motif icing to Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

We started the meeting by reading off the Founding Family names and having attendees raise their hands if they belonged to an announced family (or two). We determined that we had at least ten or so folks that had never attended any CPN tribal gathering in the past — so this was a perfect opportunity to learn about the Nation's past and present. Teri Schwiethale of Port Angeles, Washington, made an excellent presentation on the Potawatomi

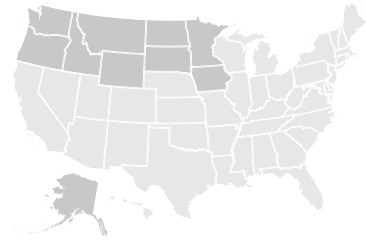
Trail of Death. Her passion for the subject was evident and she spoke about the historic forced removal from Indiana to Kansas. She also discussed the caravan and the website that she and other Potawatomi volunteers have been developing.

Veteran Robert White of Coos Bay, Oregon, presented CPN Military Service coins to veteran Marcus Thompson and George Sparks (active duty).

I gave a lengthy PowerPoint presentation about the Nation's history, government, enterprises, benefits and the Family Festival. Other topics included the Potawatomi Confederation and CPN Care — the Nation's telehealth program that is free to enrolled members and their spouses.

As is our tradition, we presented our prizes to the wisest, youngest and farthest traveled. Rececca Croy of Pocatello, Idaho, won a Pendleton travel mug for being our citizen who traveled the farthest to be there. Three-year-old Luna Trousdale captured everyone's heart as she was accompanied by her father to receive her Pendleton blanket. My friend, Joan Retinger, received the "Wisest" Potawatomi Pendleton blanket at age of 82.

A District 8 tradition is our Native themed art contest. There were some excellent pieces of Potawatomi art



Dave Carney, Veteran Robert White and Veteran Marcus Thompson (credit Mike Abella)



Teri Schwiethale presents on Trail of Death (credit Mike Abella)

entered, including a beaver skin traditional headdress, a lodge pole pine hand-carved chair with Native design upholstery and some great beading. However, the winner of the "fine arts" category was Zac Schwiet for some rock concert style poster prints with Anishnabe/Potawatomi themes (think Grateful Dead meets CPN). The winner of the "craft" category was Marcus Thompson with an amazing handcrafted eagle feather prayer fan. Marcus explained how a Lakota friend and mentor had taught him how to put this project together.

For our craft, Natalie Mitchell of Gresham, Oregon, instructed the group on making a paper canoe as a reminder of our historic past as Sheshe-bonak – the duck people who lived on and around the water.

Julie Jackson and Robert White had opened the meeting with a hand drum honor song provided

by our language director Justin Neely that was originally written by Don Perrot called, "Creator I Depend on You." They closed the meeting with another traditional song and were joined by several attendees.

As we head into the holiday season, I am feeling blessed to have such a fine and talented District 8 community.

Merry Christmas,

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



## Paul Wesselhöft District 9

Bozho, nikan (Hello, friend),

I was fortunate to win first place in poetry at Oklahoma City Writer's contest.

### Appalachian

Deep, dark, dusty,  
damp dungeons  
Are dug through dirt,  
Drilled through rock,  
Picked through black coal,  
Through green mountains.

Mines run miles,  
Run deep.  
Father, sons with lunch pails  
Leave home in the dark,  
Return in the dark.  
They descend into the bowels of the Earth  
For a paycheck and in search of black gold.

Armed guards,  
Stationed above ground,  
Below the earth, men, boys,  
With white, black faces, and black, black faces,  
Labor twelve-hour days  
Hewing rock in the heat,  
Dim light, dust, stifling air,  
And methane gases.

Men, boys becoming men,  
Wearing tattered overalls squeeze into railcars,  
Cap-strapped fire-lit lamps light the way  
Through dark damp tunnels.  
Carts, railcars roll on, time rolls on.  
Laborers with strong backs, strong wills,  
Shovel in one hand, blasting powder in the other,  
Work hard, fast, to feed a family.  
Picks in callused hands,  
Aching arms slam steel driven points  
Against walls of rock at forty cents  
For a long ton, a carload of twenty-two hundred pounds,  
Hoping one day they may be buried in the ground,  
Not in a cave, not with dark saliva and soot faces.  
Their blackened lungs, suffocating, suck air.

These jagged chunks of fuel ran the engines  
Of a nation for decades,  
Propelling ships, pulling locomotives,  
Framing factories, erecting skyscrapers,  
Lighting houses, and heating home furnaces.  
This black mineral rock kept us warm in winter,  
Waxed wealth, won wars, and forged  
a great industrial power.

I am the beneficiary of the worker's sweat and breath.  
God bless them and the memory  
Of too many who coughed to death.

Migwetch (Thank you),

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



# Walking On

## Christine Delores (Aker) Divine

Toupin Family



Christine Delores (Aker) Divine was born Nov. 6, 1932, in a house in Trousdale/Shawnee, Oklahoma, the daughter of Cloud Thrasher (Bill) and Lucille Mary (Trousdale) Aker.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 53 years, Lonnie Keith Divine; son, Rufus Keith Divine; grandson, Michael Patrick Berry; brother, Rufus Alexander Aker;

and a great-granddaughter, Randi Hashimoto Berry.

Surviving her are her children, Christie (Steve) Caldwell, Stanley (Teresa) Divine and Janice (George) Weaver; brother, Jack Delane Aker; five grandsons; eight great-grandsons; six great-granddaughters; and three great-great-granddaughters. She had several nieces and nephews.

She enjoyed her family, gardening and traveling. She worked in many different areas during her lifetime and ended her career as an administrative assistant at the Colorado Belle and Edgewater Hotels in Laughlin, Nevada.

She was proud of her Potawatomi heritage.

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## Lanell Kay Cottrell Bradfield

Bertrand/Higbee/Lareau Family



Lanell Kay Cottrell Bradfield, 66, passed away Thursday, Aug. 29, 2024, due to complications from a recent fall.

Lanell was born Jan. 25, 1958, to Clara Nell Hey Cottrell and Gilbert Cottrell in Springfield, Colorado. Lanell spent her early years with her family in the southeast corner of Colorado, and soon Gilbert moved

his young family to Canon City, Colorado. Lanell and her brother attended school in Canon City, and Lanell worked in the area. Lanell was an accomplished horsewoman as she competed in speed rodeo events for many years. Her ties to her family in southeast Colorado were strong and she visited frequently.

She married David Konkel and they were blessed with a daughter, Erin. Lanell and Erin ended back in Canon City to be near her parents. Lanell found love again with Lon Bradfield, and they married in 1995. They welcomed two more children, Megan and Marlon. As a young mother, Lanell was devoted to her family. She enjoyed shuffling the children around to their various hobbies and interests throughout their younger years. Lon and Lanell loved to hunt and made many trips to exotic locations. Lanell was featured in Cabela's magazines with her big game trophies from Africa to New Zealand and everywhere in between. She was incredibly tough, even fishing with the grizzlies in Alaska while being six months pregnant. As she grew older, Lanell spent time visiting family. She would call and text her many friends and family members, peppering them with her wit and recalling old times. So many people will miss her dearly.

She was preceded in death by her beloved father, Gilbert Cottrell, and brother, Gerald Cottrell.

Lanell was survived by her mother, Clara Nell Cottrell; husband, Lon Bradfield; children, Erin Crowther, Megan Bradfield, Marlon Bradfield; and two grandchildren, Cannon and Kinley.

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## Cynthia Gay (Bryan) Dougherty

Bourbonnais Family



Cynthia Gay (Bryan) Dougherty, 76, was called Home to be with her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on Aug. 25, 2025, in Phoenix, Arizona. She was born on Dec. 23, 1948, in Beeville, Texas, to Hollis Edward and Dorothy Nadine (Cape) Bryan.

Cindy was the granddaughter of Aurelia Thompson-Cape (Bourbonnais) and was proud of her Citizen Potawatomi Nation heritage, ensuring her children and grandchildren were enrolled in the Tribe.

After graduating from Mary Carroll High School, she married her first husband, Bob Benick, and traveled with him for work. Their journey led them to Page, Arizona, where Cindy became a born-again Christian — a moment she described as the Lord calling her to Himself.

Later, they moved to Phoenix and became active members of North Phoenix Baptist Church, serving on the Evangelism Team and partnering with Campus Crusade for Christ in city-wide outreach. In the late 1990s, Cindy and Bob returned to Texas.

In 2000, she married Robert "Bob" Dougherty and was confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church to honor his family's traditions. After his passing, Cindy returned to her Protestant roots and faithfully read her King James Bible each night.

Cindy lived in various places, including Beeville, Corpus Christi, and Phoenix, embracing a variety of roles — from teacher's aide to real estate agent. She brought heart and dedication to everything she did.

Cindy will be remembered for her joyful, contagious laugh, her elegant taste, and her love for her grandchildren. For the last 26 years, she was affectionately known as "Grand C" or "Fancy Grand C" — a devoted grandmother who made each grandchild feel deeply loved and celebrated.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Robert Dougherty; her parents; sister, Mary Bryan; and brother, Travis Bryan. She is survived by her sister, Vickie Bryan; her children, Bob (Shekinah), Kevin (Lisa), and Aaron (Emily) Benick; her grandchildren; and many beloved nieces, nephews, and friends.

A celebration of life was held on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, at River Hills Baptist Church in Robstown, Texas, and interment at Evergreen Cemetery in Skidmore.

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### Clara Nell Cottrell

Bertrand/Higbee/Lareau Family



Clara Nell Cottrell passed away July 31, 2025, in Pueblo, Colorado. She was born June 18, 1934, in Stonington, Colorado, to Edward and Helen Hey. She was the fourth of eight children.

Nell married Gilbert Cottrell in Clayton, New Mexico, in 1955. They welcomed a son, Gerold Cottrell, in 1956 in Lamar, Colorado, and then a daughter, Lanell

Bradfield, in 1958 in Springfield, Colorado. Gilbert and Nell moved their family from the southeast corner of Colorado to Canon City, where Nell was a homemaker and worked at Lasting Impressions until she retired. To the community she was known as Nell, but to her loved ones she was known as Nan. Nell was very crafty and had various hobbies, which included China painting, quilting and scrapbooking. She also loved to garden and maintain her yard. Nell was very proud of her Native American heritage and loved to go to gatherings and spend time with her family. She was a true treasure.

Nell is survived by her son-in-law, Lon Bradfield; grandchildren, Erin (Jed) Crowther, Marlon (Erika)

Bradfield, Megan Bradfield and Cassidy (Craig) Canal; and four beloved great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, Gilbert; son, Gerald Cottrell; and daughter, Lanell Bradfield.

A graveside service was held on Friday, Aug. 22, 2025, at Vilas Cemetery in Vilas, Colorado.

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### Robert Alva Higbee IV

Higbee Family



On July 26, 2025, Bob, Robert Alva Higbee IV, completed his earthly journey with spiritual valor, honor and courage as he walked the paths before him in faith and obedience to the Lord.

Bob was born in Elkins, West Virginia, to Robert Alva Higbee III and Patricia Yvonne Jenkins. After many moves, the family settled in Greensboro, North Carolina. He participated in church activities, scouting and basketball at Gilford

High School. He served two years in the Uruguay Paraguay Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1976, the family moved to Ely, Nevada, where Bob met Sister "C" Cotchaleovitch (Brenda) from the Nevada Las Vegas Mission. On Aug. 18, 1977, Bob and Brenda were married in the Provo, Utah, Temple. They settled down in Kingman, Arizona, in 1978. Bob worked in construction (insulation). They were blessed with the arrival of Christopher Robert and Andrew Lee to complete their family. Bob loved his family dearly and worked tirelessly for them. He was an example to his boys of faith, work and service, but they could be a bit dangerous in the kitchen making "Buckmisters." Bob went on to operate his own company, Higbee Insulation, for many years.

Bob served in many capacities in church: teaching classes and scouts and serving as bishop and second counselor in the Kingman Arizona Stake presidency. One of his most memorable callings was when he and Brenda served in the Peach Springs Branch and Supai Canyon, loving the members as they strengthened themselves and others.

Bob is preceded in death by his parents and his siblings, Barbara and Brad. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Brenda; sons, Chris and Drew; grandchildren, Ryan, Ember, Mason and Hank; sister, June; and extended family and friends.

Through his heritage, Bob is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Through his upbringing, he was a Southern gentleman. Forever loved, remembered, missed and blessed to be his family.

Interment will be in Shawnee, Oklahoma, at the CPN Columbarium.

**Janet (Howell) Whitecotton**  
Bertrand/Toupin Family



Janet (pronounced Jeanette) (Howell) Whitecotton, 95, passed from this life on Sept. 16, 2025, in Shawnee, Oklahoma. She was born June 17, 1930, in Shawnee, Oklahoma, to Corliss and Manilla (Chilson) Howell. She was the oldest of their five children and had three elder siblings on her mother's side. Janet married her husband, Bill Whitecotton, in June of 1948, and they spent 50 beautiful years together. They had three boys:

Tommy Ray Whitecotton, David Whitecotton and Richard Whitecotton.

Janet is preceded in death by her parents, Corliss and Manilla (Chilson) Howell; husband, Bill Whitecotton; and sons, Tommy Ray Whitecotton and Richard Whitecotton.

Janet is survived by her son, David (Margie) Whitecotton; daughter-in-law, Renee Whitecotton; ten grandchildren, Andrea Whitecotton, Jeff Whitecotton, Heather Newsom, Alicia (Andy) Borman, Justin (Tori) Whitecotton, Karen (David) Whitecotton, Amy (Brian) Scott, Rebecca (Benjamin) Stock, Erika (Russell) Kinder and Ryan Whitecotton; 16 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandson; and numerous other family members.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to cancer research at St. Jude's at [stjude.org](http://stjude.org), Wildcare Oklahoma at [wildcareoklahoma.org](http://wildcareoklahoma.org), or Saving Pets at Risk (SPAR) at [sparpets.org](http://sparpets.org).

**Rita Rae Groess**  
Bourbonnais Family



Rita Rae Groess, 91, of Lakewood, Colorado, passed away peacefully at home on Aug. 26, 2025, surrounded by family.

Born in Wamego, Kansas, Rita was the beloved daughter of Nettie and Robert Peddicord and the only sister among five older brothers. A proud Citizen Potawatomi Nation member and 35-year breast cancer survivor, she lived with strength, faith and spirited resilience.

Rita earned her Master of Science from Kansas State University and dedicated her life to teaching. As a math teacher, she was a pioneer in nurturing confidence in her students, especially young women, encouraging them to pursue studies in math and science.

She was especially proud of her Native American heritage and enjoyed attending many Potawatomi functions over the years, placing importance on passing down her honored heritage to both of her grandchildren.

In 1966, she married Erich Groess from Munich, Germany, and together they built a life full of love, travel and devotion to family. Rita was known for her warmth, legendary cooking, crocheting and sewing, love of football, and ability to make friends wherever she went.

She is survived by her husband of 59 years, Erich of Lakewood, Colorado; daughters, Heidi (Steve) Hart of Golden, Colorado, and Ursula Hedlund of Lakewood, Colorado; grandchildren Caly Hedlund of Lakewood, Colorado, and Connor Hart of Golden, Colorado; and many nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

Services were held Friday, Sept. 12, at Rockland Community Church in Golden, and we gathered at Golden Cemetery for burial on Monday, Sept. 15, finding peace in the promise that she is now at home with her Lord and Savior.

In Rita's honor, memorial gifts may be made to the Alzheimer's Association at [alz.org](http://alz.org).

**Irene Wapskineh-Wheeler**  
Willmet Family



Irene Wapskineh-Wheeler, daughter of Joseph Wapskineh (son of Josetta Pembogo) and Alice Whipple (daughter of Annie Willmet), was born July 20, 1927, in Shawnee, Oklahoma. She was fostered by Charlie and Margaret Rhodd and went to school and was one of the last three to graduate from Saint Mary's Academy, located at Sacred Heart Mission in Asher, Oklahoma, in 1944.

She was a nanny to the children of an Oklahoma City doctor, then became a nursing student/assistant at Saint Anthony's Hospital in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

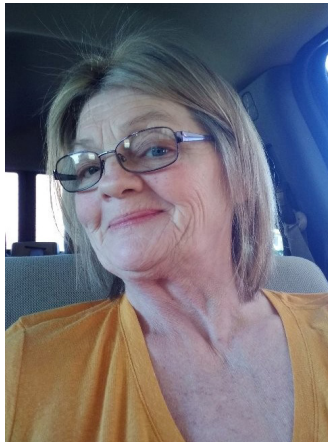
Irene married F. Wayne Wheeler on Feb. 18, 1950, at Sacred Heart Church in Asher, Oklahoma, and had five children. She and her husband participated in the construction of Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, from 1960 through 1962. She was a stay-at-home mother but was active in Saint Bernadette's Guild at Saint Joseph's Catholic Church in Norman, Oklahoma. She volunteered at the Red Cross, helping with blood drives and delivering blood throughout Oklahoma.

She was preceded in death by daughter, Marcia I. Wheeler-Pon; husband, F. Wayne Wheeler; and daughter, Roberta A. Wheeler-Teeter.

Irene walked on May 7, 2025, from her surviving family of son, David W. Wheeler; daughter, Jeanne M. Vaughn; daughter, Laura E. Wheeler; and grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren.

*Nmenwenmamen gi ngyenan:* (We love our mom)

**Sylvia Ann Walker**  
Bourbonnais Family



Sylvia Ann Walker, 63, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, passed away peacefully at home on Oct. 11, 2025. She was born on April 3, 1962, to Sid and Ruth Neal. Sylvia was a loving mother and caregiver who dedicated much of her life to raising and caring for children.

She was preceded in death by her daughter, Kristy Ooley, and mother, Ruth Vandiver.

She is survived by her cherished husband, Richard Walker; her children, Michael

Ooley, Robert Ooley, Eric Wornick, Mark Neal, Michelle Walker, Peyton Walker and Brooklynn Walker; and her many, many grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Sylvia was known for her fierce spirit and great sense of humor. She loved going to concerts and was a passionate and vibrant presence in the lives of those around her.

**Tammy Cheatwood Stewart**  
Willmetts Family



Tammy Cheatwood Stewart, born on Oct. 30, 1960, in Wichita, Kansas, passed away on Oct. 29, 2024, at St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

She is survived by her sister, Teri Brunson and her husband Bob; her brother, Randy Cheatwood and his wife Joy; her niece, Sarah Faith Lewis and her husband Nate; and her nephews, Lucas Cheatwood and his wife Courtney, and Chase Cheatwood

and his wife Amanda. Tammy was also a beloved great-aunt to Noah, Dean, Benjamin, Jensen and Lincoln. She was predeceased by her brother, Rick Cheatwood; and her parents, Fred and Sue Cheatwood.

Tammy was a proud member of the Broken Arrow High School Class of 1979. In her youth, she enjoyed playing softball and soccer. She had a special fondness for Tweety Bird, amassing a vast collection of memorabilia. Tammy dedicated 20 years of her life as a caregiver

to her parents, who both lived to the age of 85. She also cherished her time living in Orange Beach, Alabama, particularly the Pirates Cove area and marina where her brother worked for several years. Tammy had a special love for her outdoor cat, "Baby."

The family extends heartfelt thanks to Tammy's classmates who provided care and brought joy to her in her final days.

Services were under the direction of Floral Haven Funeral Home. A closed casket visitation was held on Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024, at Floral Haven Funeral Home, with a celebration of life funeral service on Nov. 6, 2024, at Sequoyah Creek Church, 2800 S. 1st Pl., Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

**Curtis Larry Ward**  
Higbee/Bertrand Family



Curtis Larry Ward was born Nov. 15, 1943, in Lexington, Oklahoma. He passed on Oct. 9, 2025, in Norman, Oklahoma. Larry was the youngest child of Anna Justine Higbee-Ward and Quannah Parker Ward. His siblings Joe, Peggy, Barbara, Freda and Don preceded him in death. Larry is survived by two sons, Darren and wife Heather, and Corey and wife Shelly; one grandson, Carson; and numerous nieces and nephews.

After graduating from Capitol Hill High School in 1962, Larry attended classes at OSU/OKC with an interest in electrical engineering. He eventually received vocational training in appliance repair and became a skilled technician working for Montgomery Ward, Sears and G.E. before starting his own service business. In 1989 Larry opened Ward's Home Appliance in Oklahoma City where he worked for the next 34 years.

Larry loved to learn and read. He was a history buff, loved anything to do with space exploration and had a mind for electronics and mechanics. He never made it to space but he was very proud that he learned to fly a plane. He dabbled in both CB and HAM radios and loved listening to his favorite music with the latest tech that he could buy.

Larry was quick to love and generous to a fault. He never had great wealth but would happily share what he had with someone in need. Larry will be missed dearly by all who loved him. A celebration of life was held on Oct. 26, at the Hallbrooke Clubhouse in Norman.

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# HOWNIKAN

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