



# HOWNIIKAN

Gtegangises | May 2022

Top photo: *Mnokme* (spring) shows its colors as milkweed plants blossom near the CPN Eagle Aviary.

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## Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium announces tribes' impact on Oklahoma's economy

### Tribes' economic impact exceeds \$15.5 billion in 2019



CPN Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett, far right, joins other tribal leaders and members of the Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium for the announcement.

Native American tribes in Oklahoma had a nearly \$15.6 billion impact on the state in 2019, according to a new study released in March.

It found that the tribes directly employ more than 54,000 people and support a total of 113,442 jobs for tribal citizens and non-citizens, accounting for more than \$5.4 billion in wages and benefits to Oklahoma workers in 2019.

"This study shows just how important tribes are to Oklahoma's economy," said Neal McCaleb, Chickasaw Nation Ambassador to the United States. "We are helping create sustainable economies through our many valuable jobs as well as making other substantial and impactful investments into our broader communities. This is our home and we look forward to continued growth — growth that benefits all Oklahomans."

This study, sponsored through the Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium, was released during a press conference at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City on Wednesday, March 23. In 2019, the Consortium sponsored a similar study. The new report shows a significant increase of more than \$2.6 billion in economic activity between fiscal years 2017 and 2019.

"Tribes are economic drivers as well as constant and reliable partners," said Victor Flores, President, Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium and Director of Tribal Services, REDW, LLC. "Unlike corporations that move based on economic conditions, our tribes are here to stay," he said. "Oklahoma is home, and we will continue to reinvest in our communities through job creation, critical service delivery and infrastructure development. Oklahoma is stronger when we all work together."

"I'm very proud of the economic impact number in the state of Oklahoma," said Tribal Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett. "What magnifies that is the fact that these Tribal governments are mostly rural and we can't leave. It's fairly easy to make money in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, it's real hard to make money in rural Oklahoma. So, the impact those dollars have in the rural parts of our state keeps the economy alive."

One of the most impactful contributions by the 38 federally recognized tribes has been in health care, particularly in rural and underserved Oklahoma communities. Tribal health care operates more than 45 facilities, providing care in most locations to both Native American and non-Native Oklahomans.

When health care is provided to Native Americans at tribal health facilities, the entire cost of care is paid by the federal government, resulting in savings to the state. In 2019, tribes paid \$232 million in Medicaid expenditures, saving the state \$86 million by requiring no state matching funds.

"Tribally owned and federal health centers across the state provide life-saving treatment and improved quality of life to Native and non-Native citizens," said Nicolas Barton, Executive Director, Southern Plains Tribal Health Board. "In 2019 alone, there were 3.5 million patient visits at tribal health facilities in Oklahoma," he said. "By maintaining the health care safety net in rural areas, tribes are strengthening Oklahoma's entire health care infrastructure and ensuring many healthy generations to come."

Through gaming compacts between Oklahoma-based tribes and the state, tribal nations submit a percentage of their Class III gaming revenues for the exclusive right to operate casinos in the

state. Oklahoma sends the first \$250,000 of these fees to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Of the remaining funds, 88 percent is earmarked for public education supporting all Oklahomans.

The tribes have invested heavily to support local communities and efforts. Oklahoma tribes have paid more than \$1.8 billion in exclusivity fees since 2006. More than \$1.5 billion has been earmarked for public education. In 2019, Native nations paid an additional \$84 million to support Oklahoma schools, municipalities and other community initiatives.

"It is impossible to overstate the positive impact Oklahoma's tribal nations have had, and continue to have, on our state," said Matthew L. Morgan, Chairman, Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association. "Through our gaming industry, we employ more than 75,000 people, mostly in rural communities. We build roads and hospitals, invest in our public schools and universities and create programs to serve those who need assistance," he said. "We are proud of our past, excited about things happening right now, and determined to leave the next generation an industry — and an Oklahoma — that they can take pride in."

Kyle Dean, associate professor of economics and director of the Center for Native American and Urban Studies at Oklahoma City University, analyzed data from 16 tribal Nations based in Oklahoma and prepared the study.

The Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium's mission is to advance tribal economics and strengthen tribal finance within the state of Oklahoma.

More information can be found at [oknativeimpact.com](http://oknativeimpact.com).

# New Fire dance teams bring the heat to Shawnee

As Citizen Potawatomi Nation's new professional basketball team, the Potawatomi Fire, plays its debut season with The Basketball League, three dance teams packed with local talent perform by their sides. From the junior Sparklers, aged 9 to 12, to the Fire Girls, the team's professional dance entertainment group, the dancers bring high energy, shimmer and charm to the arena.

Tribal member and Toupin family descendant Piper Whitecotton is a member of the Heat, the Fire's high school aged hip-hop dance team.

Whitecotton, a junior at Bethel High School and pre-engineering student at Gordon Cooper Technology Center, began dancing when she was just 2 years old. Now, she trains and competes in a variety of styles through DreamCatcher's Dance Company in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and cheers for her high school's football and basketball teams.

"My mom was a dancer and so were my aunts. They always loved dancing growing up and thought I would enjoy it too," she told the *Hownikan* in a recent interview.

She began in ballet — her first performance was to *Que Sera Sera* in a pink ballet tutu — but as she got older, Whitecotton expanded her training to include hip-hop, jazz and contemporary styles.

Contemporary dance is a particular favorite of Whitecotton's, especially for solo dances.

"It's kind of like soft and then hard-hitting," she said. "I usually try to do the hard hitting songs that have softer parts so that I can transition and just try to do it all."

She also enjoys taking on new characters for dances, especially ones with scary storylines and intense movement — quite different from her usual happy and light personality.

## New opportunities

Whitecotton heard about the Fire dance teams through her studio director, Aonisty Parks, who is also the Entertainment Director for the Potawatomi Fire. Whitecotton's father, Justin Whitecotton, works for the Tribe as the Electrical Department Director, and encouraged her to consider auditioning.

Parks told the *Hownikan* that she's excited for dancers to have access to opportunities that have not been readily available in the area until now.

"If you're a dancer in this area, yes, you are going to be somewhat limited after you are 18 as to what you are able to do. And so to be able to have this opportunity to perform every single week is like over the moon," she said.



*Aonisty Parks, owner and director of DreamCatcher's Dance Company, serves as Entertainment Director for the Potawatomi Fire.*

Fire dance also provides new and exciting opportunities for younger dancers through the Sparklers and Heat teams, paving the way for dancers of all ages in the area for years to come.

"It's way bigger than a dance competition," Whitecotton said. "The older dancers actually get paid. So it's almost like I'm professional. And if people see that, or come to a game, I can interact and just know more people and get more involved so that I have more connections for the future."

The Heat performed during the second quarter at the Fire's first home game at FireLake Arena on March 19, Whitecotton's first performance with the team.

From the moment the music came on — Charlie Boy's *I Look Good* — she was the picture of professional. Her movement settled right in the pocket of the rhythm, cool flows totally collected and accents punched with clarity and style. Confidence radiated as she led the team out of a column at center



*Tribal member Piper Whitecotton trains and competes with DreamCatcher's Dance Company. (Photo provided)*



*The Heat dance team performs during the second quarter at the Potawatomi Fire's first home game.*

court into their final formation. Her expressions and energy were dynamic, engaging the crowd anew every second. As the last beat hit, Whitecotton death dropped to the ground, one leg tucked behind her and the other extended, arms outstretched. The announcer boomed, "theeee HEAT!" Whitecotton smiled.

The dance was complicated, Whitecotton told the *Hownikan* after her performance, but she felt like her team pulled it off successfully.

"You have to be all together, so you don't have to just know the moves, but you have to know when you're supposed to do them, and you have to make sure not to hit anybody. ... It's a lot of teamwork, a lot of routines, formations, timing, musicality," she said.

"I keep saying it, but it's just really fun and makes me smile. We're all dancing on the side when a song comes on, and singing along and having fun together enjoying each other's company."

Also performing at the first home game were the Fire Girls. They led the players out onto the court with

sharp chassés and glittering pompoms, accentuating the entire evening with snappy jazz and pom dances. During the third quarter, they took the court for a kick line performance, drawing cheers from the crowd.

## Community

The ability to provide quality opportunities for local dancers like Whitecotton to hone their passion and skill motivates Parks, who has dreamt of being a dance instructor since she was a young dancer herself. She also feels a strong sense of responsibility as a role model for her dancers and to impact the community positively through her work.

"I like to think that being a mentor to them is just my biggest job ever," she said. "I'm so excited for the opportunities, but I'm also excited for the ways that we can give back to the community. I just feel like there's so much responsibility that we have now. Yes, we have this great privilege, but it comes with responsibility."

Whitecotton is especially excited for the impact the Fire will have on the Tribe and glad to be along for the ride.

"I think it's a big deal that (the Tribe) got their own basketball team, to bring more attention and more money that they can use to support their family members and community," she said. "And, you know, with COVID, you're going to need more money to get through everything, as well as just having fun again after everything everyone's gone through. That's a big part of it."

The Potawatomi Fire is an expansion team of The Basketball League. They played their first home game at FireLake Arena on March 19, defeating the Little Rock Lightning 123-93. Follow the Fire on their website at [potawatomifire.com](http://potawatomifire.com) and on social media at @PotawatomiFire. Follow the Fire Dance Teams at @FireDanceTeamOK, and find DreamCatcher's Dance Company at [dreamcatchersdance.com](http://dreamcatchersdance.com). ♡

# ARE YOU GRADUATING IN MAY?

SEND THE FOLLOWING INFO TO [GRADUATION@POTAWATOMI.ORG](mailto:GRADUATION@POTAWATOMI.ORG) BY MAY 20 AT 5PM

FULL NAME, HOMETOWN, POTAWATOMI FAMILY NAME, HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE, AND DEGREE TYPE AND MAJOR

## Native fashion makes headlines, brings Indigenous beauty to forefront

In a time of fast fashion when customers often wear runway-inspired items a few times and discard them, many Indigenous designers and producers focus on creating unique pieces that stand the test of trends. Designer Leslie Deer prefers to make timeless pieces. For her brand, L.A. Deer Apparel, she utilizes classic silhouettes with the potential to outlast the life of the wearer.

“I consider what I do, the apparel that I make, an investment, and they should be things that would last you for a long time for many occasions, maybe even be handed down to another generation to be worn and shared and cherished,” she said.

She started her journey daydreaming about clothes she wanted to make herself while traveling across the country in the backseat with her parents.

“It seemed like so far-fetched to actually be able to think about creating or designing your own clothes,” Deer said. “Because to me, those were all made like in big factories with manufacturers. ... But as time went on, I did start making my own dance regalia. And people would comment on it a lot and encouraged me to continue sewing.”

Now, she owns a successful apparel company. She has participated in fashion shows, won awards at prestigious Native art markets and dressed highly regarded Indigenous thinkers and artists, including Joy Harjo. The recognition affirms Deer’s life goals and decision to earn a second bachelor’s degree as a nontraditional student.

“It’s kind of like, ‘OK. I feel like I like what I’m doing, and apparently it’s working out OK so far,’” she said and laughed.

Deer works for Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s Cultural Heritage Center as the cultural activities coordinator, teaching classes on how to make accessories for regalia and everyday wear. She also hosts open cultural sewing classes. She encourages other Indigenous designers to push their brands forward and keep working, and reminds them of the time and commitment required to earn a living making their own clothes and accessories. However, the reward of seeing their work out in the world makes it worth it.

“Sometimes it gets hard, and sometimes it’s challenging, and sometimes you’re tired and you just want to stop, but don’t ever give up. If you have a dream, if you have a goal, if you have something that you want, don’t ever give up, and don’t let anyone ever change your perspective. Don’t let anyone ever dictate to you, ‘Your art should be like this,’” Deer said.

### Style, motifs

Deer feels that the designs for fabric and applique she creates keep her tribe’s Muscogee Nation motifs alive by incorporating them into wearable art. She said while Plains tribes’ motifs and patterns remain dominant, not many designers rely on southeastern tribes’ style. As a child, her exposure to Mound Builder artwork or its meaning was limited, and she learned most of what she knows as an adult.



CPN Cultural Heritage Center’s Leslie Deer teaches tribal members how to bead and sew as the cultural activities coordinator and runs her fashion business, L.A. Deer Apparel. (Photo by Bo Apitz)

“I felt like it was something that I had a responsibility to bring forward with me, bring it into the present day just so that it’s not forgotten. I feel like I’m kind of like bringing my ancestors along with me and bringing them into the present day and sharing what they did with everybody else,” Deer said.

Many of the Eastern Woodlands tribes, including Potawatomi, that worked and lived with French fur traders in the 1700s began using silk ribbons imported from France and creating ribbon applique as part of their everyday and ceremonial wear, such as ribbon skirts. Plains Cree tribal member Agnes Woodward designs ribbon skirts and made the outfit Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland wore for her swearing in ceremony in 2021.

She told the *Lakota Times*, “It’s about taking back the shame that I carried as a young girl. When I wear a ribbon skirt, I am asking people to notice that I am confident in who I am as an Indigenous person, and I am asking them to respect that.”

Today, many Native women across Turtle Island consider them beautiful and very fashionable pieces of their wardrobes, regardless of their tribal affiliation.

Other hip Native brands, such as The NTVS Clothing, embrace the look of throwback t-shirts, trucker hats and hoodies — always with a twist to pop culture. Deer believes all of it is a form of expression and makes a statement.

“I think that it’s important for representation. It’s another way to put ourselves out there. It’s another expression of artwork or another expression of our culture. It’s a way to be seen and for people to take an interest or learn more or understand parts of our culture. And I think that it’s great

all the support that Indigenous artists are receiving at this time,” she said.

### Cost, worth

Deer attends many Native art markets across the country to promote her line and sell her products, in addition to her website. While the prices across booths surprise some attendees, others understand the cost of purchasing handmade pieces. It takes Deer hours to cut all of the fabric for many of her dresses, and in a recent *Hownikan* interview, she pointed out her hands touch every piece she sells.

“I think that people are really surprised sometimes when they take a closer look and realize how much effort, how much thought, how much of someone’s heart has gone into something as far as even just coordinating colors for things that you do and all of the symmetry in it,” she said. “All the representation that is put out in our artwork is, I think, surprising sometimes to people, and it takes them taking a closer look to really begin to realize that.”

Many Indigenous beading artists make earring, barrettes, necklaces and hatbands not available anywhere else. As an apparel designer, Deer enjoys creating one-of-a-kind skirts and dresses and believes the exclusivity increases their worth.

“Have you ever put something on and it just changes the way you feel when you put it on? You feel like you stand up taller. You feel like it fits you right in the right places. You feel like it hangs right, and it just makes you feel important or special. And I think that that’s what apparel can do for us,” she said.

One of the most rewarding aspects of Deer’s fashion career includes seeing a garment’s new owner try it on for the first time.

“I like to explain to people looking at the apparel what the thought was with this garment, what the motifs represent, what I was thinking when I put this together. But the really fun thing is when people go into the dressing room and put it on and come out and look in the mirror. It’s like to see their faces sometimes, they just are like, ‘Whoa, I love this,’ or, ‘Oh, I want this. I got to have this,’” she said.

Deer hopes Native designers feel inspired by increased attention from outlets like *Vogue* as well as shows like *Reservation Dogs* and *Rutherford Falls*.

“There’s just no end to the creativity of our Indigenous people. And every day there’s something new out there, and it’s just all so amazing and impressive and just beautiful,” she said.

Find L.A. Deer Apparel online at [ladeerapparel.com](http://ladeerapparel.com) and on Instagram @la.deer. ♡

Many Indigenous designers, including Leslie Deer, use their tribe’s motifs and patterns in their apparel and accessories. (Photo by Christy Nicole Photography featuring Hauli Gray)



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## Philosophy inspires exploration, new ideas and curriculum

Citizen Potawatomi Nation tribal member Preston Stovall began his studies at Montana State University, unsure of his path forward. He explored many different topics but found philosophy strung them all together.

“I wanted to consume knowledge; I just wanted to know things. I wanted to try to understand as much as I could, so I was taking classes all over the place. And I kept coming back to philosophy. ... I felt as though there (were) sort of foundational roots that grow out of that discipline that maybe were a source for trying to get a handle on some of these other things,” Stovall said.

He graduated with his bachelor’s degree in philosophy from MSU in 2004 and then attended Texas A&M University, earning a master’s in philosophy and advanced international affairs in 2008. During that time, he also studied abroad at Oxford University in England. Finally, Stovall earned his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Pittsburgh in 2015.

He currently works as an assistant professor and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Hradec Králové and lives in the Czech Republic.

### Travels

As the son of an Army soldier, the Bowles family descendant lived in Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall and in Cairo, Egypt, during the first Gulf War in the early 90s. However, both sides of his family lived in Montana for a few generations, where the Stovalls eventually returned.

“I traveled a bunch as a kid, which was great. I really enjoyed the experience. And it’s one of the things that made it easier for me to come to the Czech Republic because I remember what it’s like being American overseas, and I think it’s good to get that experience,” he said.

After living in Kansas, Texas, Germany, New Jersey, Egypt, Washington, Montana, England, Texas (again) and Pennsylvania, Stovall accepted the opportunity as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Hradec Králové without hesitation. He has lived there since 2017.

“I jumped at the chance. It really looked like a good opportunity, and



Preston Stovall visits the Holy Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey. (Photo provided)

I knew some of the people here and the work they were doing. ... So when they said they were interested in hiring me, I basically said, ‘Well, I have my bag packed,’” he said.

### Research

With specialties in metaphysics, the philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language, Stovall attempts to understand human interaction and collective thinking on a deep level. He has worked since 2017 to apply his research to ideas concerning the social basis of rationality, and shared intentionality — the contextual meaning of thoughts/concepts themselves and the ability of humans to share mental states, respectively. In 2022, he published his first book on the topic, *The Single-Minded Animal: Shared Intentionality, Normativity, and the Foundations of Discursive Cognition*.

“(Shared intentionality is) characteristic of our form of life,” Stovall said. “By the first couple of days (after birth), we’re following emotions and eye-tracking. And by the first year, it’s developed

into a fairly sophisticated capacity to share emotions and perceptual states and interests with other people.”

His most recent research project focuses on social media and its effect on the mental states and thinking of youth. Stovall serves as a program manager and instructor for a project titled *Critical Thinking About Social Media* at the Center for Science, Technology, Ethics, and Society at Montana State University.

“There’s good evidence to think that social media is responsible for the rise of rates of depression that we’re seeing among young people. ... If you’re on the extreme end of social media use in terms of hours per week, but for young girls in particular, it looks like the rise we’re seeing in rates of depression and self-harm are influenced by social media use. Social media use also appears to be leading to an increase in political polarization, and it seems like we’ve really got to get on top of this,” Stovall said.

### Teaching

Next, Stovall plans to focus on teaching outside the university and

his assistant professorship at the University of Hradec Králové. He has also spoken and led short courses at primary schools in Pennsylvania, Montana and the Czech Republic. He wants to help students develop critical thinking skills earlier in life.

During a recent *Hownikan* interview, Stovall quoted Socrates: “The unexamined life isn’t worth living.”

“I hope (my students) take an appreciation of the kinds of wonder and complexity that can be found in both the significant and the mundane,” he said. “And then, as a result, I hope they live a more examined life. ... I think there’s something to be said for that. And I think that one of the things that philosophy can help inculcate is a sense of self-knowledge, self-reflection, examination.”

Stovall’s life has taken him around the globe and compelled him to study all levels of human thought, and he enjoys seeing where his journey leads him.

Find Preston Stovall’s work online at [cpn.news/stovall](http://cpn.news/stovall). 📌

### Citizen Potawatomi Nation • Request for Ballot • 2022 Election

Name \_\_\_\_\_ please print

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

I reside within the boundaries of CPN Legislative District No. \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Oklahoma residents should write Oklahoma in the blank above)**

Under penalty of perjury, I hereby declare this to be my legal signature and Citizen Potawatomi Nation tribal roll number.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Tribal Roll # \_\_\_\_\_  
**(If you do not know your roll number, call 800-880-9880 and ask for Tribal Rolls)**

**Must be postmarked no later than June 5, 2022**

#### Mail to

Citizen Potawatomi Nation Election Committee  
 P.O. Box 310, Tecumseh, OK 74873-9900



## REQUEST YOUR ABSENTEE BALLOT

Cut out and mail back to receive your absentee ballot.  
**Please only return one request for ballot.**



## District 7 election candidates

### Incumbent - Mark Johnson



**Please discuss the importance of voting in Tribal elections and being actively involved in your district. Discuss various ways you think you could increase voter turnout and/or participation in Tribal events.**

Voting has been a contentious subject for many people over the last few years.

What was once considered a hard-fought right for Native Americans, that wasn't necessarily solidified for us until the 1965 Voting Rights Act, has been twisted and turned by the national parties in such a way as to spread distrust in all voting systems. Fortunately for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, we have had the ability for all voting age members to participate in our Tribal elections for years, with the ability to vote in-person in Shawnee or through absentee mail-in ballots. I believe it is each members responsibility to participate in our Tribal electoral process, it is your way to have your voice heard, and elect members who share the values that you find important for you. As a Tribal Legislator, I have had the opportunity to hear from a lot of members about our voting system, most like our system, and some take issue with it for one main reason, "I didn't receive the ballot request form" which can almost always be traced back to not having your current address on file with the Tribe. In our highly mobile society, it is easy to forget to submit an address change form to the Tribal Rolls when

you move. We also have members who are concerned with the visibility of their personal information on the outside of the ballot request postcard and the absentee ballots, which is understandable. The Tribal Legislature takes these concerns seriously and we have been working with the Election Committee on ways to remove these concerns and still conduct a secure and fair election, and I believe some commonsense changes will be made in time for the 2023 Tribal election. Remember that you can always return these ballots and request forms to the Election Committee inside of a plain envelope if you wish, but you must make sure to fill in all requested information on the forms inside. We also can do a better job, in a transparent way, of explaining the election process to our members, both through the *HowNiKan* and during our District meetings. It is also important that you share an email address with your District Legislator, so that you can be included in the "remember to request your ballot" emails that we all send out, plus all other important information that we can share.

With voter turnout around 10% in District 7 in a normal year, we all need to do a better job reaching out to our members and keeping them engaged with the Tribe. I believe that most members are content with the direction of the Tribe and are happy with the benefits that are available to them. Unfortunately, this can also lead to them not bothering to vote which can lead to some real unintended consequences if too many don't vote.

The bottom line is that our Tribe doesn't work without our members being actively engaged, we need you to take an active interest in our heritage, history, language, culture and the things that matter to you and your family. Plan a trip to the District Gathering this fall or the Family Heritage Festival and visit home. I as your Elected representative to the Legislature with continue to work towards providing the highest quality resources and benefits to you and your family.

### Challenger - Browning Neddeau



**Please discuss the importance of voting in Tribal elections and being actively involved in your district. Discuss various ways you think you could increase voter turnout and/or participation in Tribal events.**

*Widoktadwen*/Community. *Mawjeshnowen*/Get together. What does *widoktadwen* mean to you? To me, it means togetherness. *Migwetch*/Thank you to the Tribal citizens who have been in community with me. I see and hear you. I invite you to view my community

involvement at: [browningneddeaucpd7.com/community-involvement](http://browningneddeaucpd7.com/community-involvement). You may notice my strong community involvement nationally, statewide, and locally permits me to build and sustain relationships throughout our Tribe.

Examples of my community involvement:

- Organize international virtual storytelling events.
- Create programming for national conferences.
- Present international, national, state, and local workshops on topics such as: Native nation building, cultural [mis] appropriation, seed stories, Ethnic Studies, and visual storytelling.
- Author an e-newsletter for District 7 Tribal citizens titled: "Ni Je Na Ginwa District 7 from Browning Neddeau." To be added to the e-newsletter mailing list, please email me at [bneddeau@gmail.com](mailto:bneddeau@gmail.com).
- Facilitate *mkesen*/moccasin-making workshops.
- Moderate the Facebook group "Ni Je Na Ginwa District 7 from Browning Neddeau."

- Collaborate with tribal leadership of various tribes such as: Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation, Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria, and Waccamaw Indian People.

- Serve on Waccamaw Education Task Force by invitation.

- Participate in powwows as a Southern Straight Dancer in California and Oklahoma.

- Founded Native American Gathering.

Being *widoktadwenek*/in the community is inexorably tied to being *Bodéwadmí ndaw*/Potawatomi Indian. When my father, Donald LeRoy Neddeau (*Posso*), walked on from pancreatic cancer this past October, it was *widoktadwen* that kept the fire burning. In our Potawatomi ways, I organized a four-day fire to help my father on his journey. I reached out via social media, telephone, and email to bring people to the fire. People arrived with stories.

Legislators are uniquely positioned to be *widoktadwenek*/in the community. To know and represent your community, you must be in the community and hear stories. When elected as the District 7 legislator, I promise to host two district *mawjeshnowen* each year in District

7, which is not the current practice in our district. The *mawjeshnowen* need to be accessible to the citizens to which I represent. We will come together to connect and tell stories. The future of our Tribe depends on the relationships and stories we share.

For the month of May, I am hosting three virtual *mawjeshnowen*. The *mawjeshnowen* advertisement in the May *Hownikan* includes a QR Code to register for the free events. Come join the space and build community with District 7 Tribal citizens. You may email me at [bneddeau@gmail.com](mailto:bneddeau@gmail.com) for additional information on the events or future opportunities to share space.

Increased voter turnout and participation in Tribal events happen when individuals feel a sense of belonging and purpose. I ask for your vote to build community, belongingness, and to keep our Potawatomi ways of knowing and doing alive. I look forward to being in *widoktadwen* with you, where belonging and purpose sing to our ancestors who worked so hard for us to be here. We will keep the fire burning, together. *Chi migwetch*/Many thanks. ♡



# Meet foster care parents Brit and Amber Hembree

When it comes to caring for area foster children, one Shawnee, Oklahoma, family makes community the priority. Brit and Amber Hembree provide guidance and support for children in their greatest time of need as foster parents through Citizen Potawatomi Nation's FireLodge Children and Family Services.

FireLodge serves as a local community resource for confidential services geared toward youth and families. They place an emphasis on Native Americans to enhance, enrich and develop cultural awareness in the areas of health and wellness.

"Foster parents play a critical role in the Indian Child Welfare team," said CPN Foster Care/Adoption Manager Kendra Lowden. "Not only are they providing physical care for Potawatomi children, they also show them love and nurturance while encouraging the relationships with important people in their lives."

The Hembrees both grew up in the area and have long-term ties to the community. Brit is a Tribal member and descendent of the Ogee family. Amber is an elementary school teacher and library media specialist.

When her friends went out of town a few years ago, Amber agreed to babysit their foster child. The experience led her to consider whether her own family could give back in the same way.

"I just kind of had a feeling of, 'Okay, I think we can do more,'" she said.

Amber also had a personal experience with foster care that made an impression on her. When she was younger, her family took in younger relatives who had tragically lost both parents in a short amount of time.

Amber's friend and neighbor encouraged her to reach out to Lowden, and she started the process to become a foster parent in 2020.

"That first conversation is important so that foster parents are educated about the process as well as how the child welfare system operates," Lowden said.

"(The friend) just really spoke highly of CPN and the way they do things and their caseworkers," Amber said. "We started the process and got our first placement in 2020."

The start of the coronavirus pandemic nearly upended those plans with the Hembrees receiving their first foster care placement the same week pandemic closures began. They found a way to make everything work.

"We took in a 4-year-old and a 5-year-old that spring break week. I think it was March 18," Amber said. "And then two days later, we found out schools were closed, daycares were



*Foster care parents Brit and Amber Hembree support area children as foster care parents through FireLodge Children and Family Services.*

closed, everything. So that was a very challenging five months, honestly."

While the Hembree family cared for the two children's day-to-day needs, the children's biological mother successfully completed all the court's requirements, and the children returned home.

"They went back to mom, and mom is doing amazing," Amber said. "We went and saw them in January, so we still keep in contact with them."

The visitation restrictions due to the pandemic were difficult for the children's biological mother, and Hembree said she empathized with what the family was experiencing.

"Whatever happened, happened in her past before we knew her, but now those kids are her life, and she is doing wonderful," she said.

Lowden said the Hembrees' strong support of family, cultural and community ties make them great foster parents.

"They are very connected to the Potawatomi community and know the importance of cultural and family connections for their foster children," Lowden said. "They have gone above and beyond to make sure all of their foster children have extra time to visit their parents, whether in person or virtually. This extra effort they make helps the children keep a strong relationship with their families."

Near the end of 2021, the Hembree family was able to accept another placement for a 5-year-old boy. The child quickly adapted to the family's routine from school to recreational activities, like camping.

For someone considering whether to foster, Amber advises the experience is rewarding despite the inevitable bumps.

She suggests having measured expectations and to prepare for both highs and lows.

"It is challenging and everybody told me that, and I said, 'I know it's going to be,' but you don't really know until you're actually living it," she said. "Just go in with realistic expectations."

Amber relies on her spiritual faith to weather the storms.

"I think people need patience and grace, mercy and prayer," she said. "Sometimes people hear foster care and people talking about being a foster family, it's kind of like there's some excitement and you think, 'Oh, that'd be really neat.' But (there are times when) it's hard."

Amber added that respite care is another option for someone who is unsure they will be able to keep up with full-time foster care. Respite care is offered so the full-time caregiver can take a break.

"It's a great way to still help and contribute to the lives of children in foster care if full-time foster care isn't something that a family is comfortable with or can't do at the time," she said.

Amber said staff at CPN have always been supportive and responsive.

"Kendra has always been very quick, if I have questions, to get back with me," Hembree said. "She's just very easy to visit with about stuff."

She said the consistency of having the same caseworker for the entire placement has made the process much easier for her family, something that high staff turnover at other agencies makes impossible.

"I'm in a Facebook group of (foster parents), and they say, 'We've had three different caseworkers in the last six months,'" Amber said. "So, it's nice to have one caseworker the whole time."

Despite the challenges, she finds the positive impact on young people in the community one of the most rewarding parts of the experience.

"I think being able to show them (support in) what is a really dark time and to know what it's like to have someone that really cares about them during those times that are hard," she said.

Amber has become more optimistic about child welfare after seeing the efficiency of CPN's Tribal court system. It lays out its expectations and makes sure parents understand their obligations, she said.

"(The biological mother) was doing everything she was supposed to be doing," Amber said. "We were taking those kids to the visit and seeing that the system is working the way it's supposed to work when the parents are trying, which is wonderful."

Hembree also appreciates the chance to stay in contact with the families she has met and relishes seeing the positive changes in their lives.

"Being able to build the relationship and keep it, I really enjoy still being able to go see (the children)," Amber said. "Being able to communicate with them and see how well they're doing. And just to know that we helped by being able to take care of them while mom was trying to get back on track. That's what makes it worthwhile."

Lowden said the entire Hembree family has played a role in serving area children, and that commitment means more family reunifications are possible.

"Brit and Amber's children have been amazing siblings and helped children feel welcome and loved," Lowden said. "Brit and Amber opened their home with the intention to support children's relationships with their birth families, and they have been very successful in doing so. I have loved getting to know their family over the last two years and feel very blessed to have people such as them to care for children in their most vulnerable time."

Lowden hopes more families consider helping FireLodge.

"We love to answer questions and get to know more about the families who are deciding to open their hearts and homes to children in need," Lowden said. "To be a foster parent, you must live in Oklahoma and be willing to support the reunification of children to their families."

Lowden said there is a desperate need right now for families willing to adopt older children and large sibling sets.

For more information about FireLodge Children and Family Services, call 405-275-3121 or visit [cpn.news/FireLodge](http://cpn.news/FireLodge) or Facebook. ♡

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## OVERDOSE AWARENESS COMMUNITY EVENT

MAY 19 | 6-8PM | CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTER

## Keeping the lights on

With three grocery stores, two casinos, two health care clinics, several restaurants, and many other enterprises and services, Citizen Potawatomi Nation always looks for ways to improve its electrical system and reduce power consumption. CPN tribal member and Toupin family descendant Justin Whitecotton leads the electrical department as its director, and each day brings new challenges and exciting opportunities.

“I have like four pages of to-do things sitting on my desk,” he said and laughed.

“It’s never boring. It’s always something, and it’s really fulfilling to be involved and have a lot of input in the way things go.”

Whitecotton has seen the Tribe expand and grow since he began as the director in 2019; projects include constructing Iron Horse Industrial Park, improved outdoor lighting at CPN businesses and adding an electrical substation. He enjoys seeing a bit of everything in one job.

“We’re always looking for better ways to do things. Keeping up with the construction projects and improving a few parking lot light projects to adding generators. We do everything electrical, from light bulbs to the substation,” Whitecotton said.

### Family to foreman

Growing up in Shawnee, Oklahoma, he began helping his father at 10 years old at residential construction sites. He owned his own electrical contracting company and mainly worked on houses. Whitecotton attended college for a brief period after graduating from Shawnee High School in 1995 but decided he wanted to work as an electrician as well.

Since then, he has followed jobs across the country for different businesses and owned his own. He has helped hospitals, lit homes, worked on the Grand Casino Hotel & Resort, wired industrial sites and much more.

“I did learn a lot from (my dad) about not just life lessons, but how to operate a successful business and some of that stuff, which has helped me a lot here. Because there’s really not a lot I haven’t seen,” Whitecotton said.

He learned everything on the job. His knowledge outpaced his father’s as he expanded his experience as a young



CPN Electrical Director Justin Whitecotton brings more than two decades of experience as an electrician to the Tribe.

professional, and Whitecotton taught him more when they worked together again in Whitecotton’s late 20s.

After living in Washington state, Tulsa, Oklahoma, and other parts of the country, returning to his hometown came at an unexpected time. He saw it as an excellent opportunity to lead the Tribe and help improve its self-sufficiency.

“Being from Shawnee, being a Tribal member, I was very familiar. Actually, my company did some contracting work for CPN, even before, like the corner store.

I wired all that — the police station, the eagle aviary, some of the buildings at the golf course, the sushi restaurant, the Grand. So I was fairly familiar with the workings,” Whitecotton said.

The department has focused on conserving energy and saving the Tribe money through rebate programs throughout the last three years. The work has resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings for CPN. One large project in 2020 included changing hundreds of outdoor lights at CPN businesses. The lamps shine brighter, last longer and consume less electricity.

“It’s not a real welcoming atmosphere if you go there and there’s parking lot lights out everywhere. Like the grocery store, you want to seem like you’re a well-maintained, welcoming facility. So we did all the parking lot lights all the way around FireLake Entertainment Center, FireLake Arena, FireLake Discount Foods, and I think we’ve had one out of 300 go bad in almost two years,” and it resulted in rebates of almost \$100,000, Whitecotton said.

### Unique projects

One of the department’s most exciting recent projects included equipping a new locker room at FireLake Arena for CPN’s professional basketball team, the Potawatomi Fire.

“We did all that internally. So in 10 years, it’ll be our electrical department that goes back and works on all that, which that is very unique, and you don’t usually perform the new construction and then all the maintenance,” Whitecotton said.

He also worked for a hospital group in Tulsa for a few years before coming to CPN. His time there included

one of the most rewarding jobs of his career — updating and improving the lighting in the neonatal care unit.

“I had to move all the newborns out one time to run some pipe and wire through the viewing area,” Whitecotton said. “But seeing all that, especially kids that have health problems and stuff, and you’re working on something that really meant a lot to them, to their families. It seemed a little more important than just wiring an office building or something like that.”

He finds providing an essential resource to many different types of businesses throughout his career rewarding, and he enjoys helping CPN’s more than 2,000 employees function on a day-to-day basis.

“We’d like to keep it that way, if we can keep things working and stay unobtrusive and just let everybody else do their job. And that way there’s no issues, no power loss, no lights out,” he said.

Whitecotton looks forward to new challenges in the future, as Citizen Potawatomi Nation expands and continues construction on healthcare facilities, offices and more. ♪

## Language update

By Justin Neely, CPN Language Department Director

*Bozho jayek*  
(Hello everyone),

It’s a busy time in the Language Department. We are getting geared up for the upcoming Family Reunion Festival. We are excited to finally get to see some of our relations after a very long but necessary break. Our drum group *Sengo Zibiwes* — Squirrel Creek Singers — have been practicing hard to be able to do not only our annual hand games but also do some of the songs at our annual dance. We also have been doing an intermediate language class every Monday and Thursday at 1 p.m. We are also recording the classes and doing them on Zoom.

We are also working with Google on a new program called Woolaroo. The way

this program works is you capture an image with your phone such as a tree. Then the program says the name for tree. With the initial offering, Google is going with about five or six languages. Potawatomi is one of these languages. I was given a list of the top 1,200 or so words that are Googled. Then once I translate these words, I will have to record the audio for these words.

We are also continuing work on a series of kids’ books. The first couple will be given out in the Festival bags. We will be putting out a web address to put your name down for books, and then we will then send the books out in bulk, three to five at a time, in order to keep costs down. When we are all said and done, we look to put out 12 different children’s books.

Our online dictionary recently passed the 10,000 word mark. If you haven’t

had a chance to check it out, please do at [potawatomidictionary.com](http://potawatomidictionary.com)

We have close to 70 percent of words with audio files and a number with images and even video clips on some words. You can also print out the dictionary in English to Potawatomi and Potawatomi to English.

We are wrapping up the second semester of our high school course. We have been redesigning the online course on a new learning management system platform, Tovuti. We are also wrapping up our first year of offering a 9-week Potawatomi class at Shawnee Middle School. Once we finish this, we will begin working on a new beginner adult course and then intermediate course to replace the courses we have on Moodle. We also still have our Moodle course, which is still going, and two different courses on

[memrise.com](http://memrise.com). We are also partnering with the CPN Department of Education to create a collegiate course that we hope to be able to roll out this coming fall.

We also have been working on a number of videos we have been posting on our two YouTube channels — one geared towards adult learners and one geared towards kids. We just wrapped up the first episode of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Whenever we make a public domain film, we make three versions: one with no captions, one with captions in Potawatomi and one with captions in English. Check out these two channels for tons of Potawatomi language content: [cpn.news/JN](http://cpn.news/JN) and [cpn.news/childrenyt](http://cpn.news/childrenyt).

*Iw*  
(End). ♪

# Reducing stigma in mental health treatment

Psychologist and licensed alcohol and drug counselor Dr. Julio Rojas is an advocate for his patients, and even more so when social stigma surrounds getting help for mental health.

“I think stigma is the way we view a person as less than or unworthy simply because of who they are, a condition they have or a circumstance in life,” he said.

## Stigma exists everywhere

Reducing the stigma surrounding mental health treatment is necessary to encourage people to seek treatment for themselves, Rojas said. Patients who seek help for their problems may immediately face judgment or bias, even from the medical community.

“They might say, ‘I’ve struggled with addiction,’ and then the provider might pivot with that one word and warn them that they better never try to get pain medicines from them,” he said.

If patients experience this type of reaction when they identify as being in recovery, or as someone who struggles with alcoholism or addiction, the patient’s trust can begin to erode.

Patients who do not trust their provider are less likely to seek treatment for their problems, he said. This can also lead to patients losing hope that there is a solution to the problem. Rojas recalled a patient who came in to get treatment, and continually apologized:

“I bet he told me ‘I’m sorry’ about 25 times. I said, ‘What are you sorry for?’ He said, ‘I’m sorry that I’m taking up your time. I’m sorry that my life is a mess.’ If he saw a physician, he probably never says, ‘I’m sorry, I have diabetes. I’m sorry, I have cardiovascular disease,’ but he’s been told by society that when you’re someone who struggles with drug addiction, you’re weak. You’re selfish. And unfortunately, before he developed the problem, he probably believed a lot of the things that society had taught him to believe.” Rojas said.

Fortunately, the patient took the first step by coming in for treatment. Rojas said he received the help he needed, but it was an example of how stigma hurts a person’s self-esteem and their ability to say, “I need help.” When patients don’t feel comfortable reaching out, they may become more isolated, which is very harmful for people with addiction or other mental health diagnoses.

Rojas said the problem is worse within communities that are already marginalized due to their race, socioeconomic status or disability. For example, if someone is a racial or ethnic minority and a member of the LGBTQ+ community, they can face compounded stigma, he said.

Compounded stigma can be defined as the additive and cumulative impact of being a member of one, or several, marginalized groups (e.g., racial/ethnic minority, LGBTQ+) and suffering from addiction, mental illness, and/or trauma, Rojas said. Each of these identifications carries its own stigma, therefore, it is a heavier burden to the person’s health and wellness. More importantly, it negatively impacts their ability to seek help, trust others, and care for their physical and mental health and well-being, he said.

## Helping loved ones

If people have a family member or loved one who needs mental health assistance, they should first set aside any bias they may have before starting a conversation, Rojas said.

“What do you think about someone with alcoholism? Why do you think what you think, and is that a helpful way to treat sick people? Is that a helpful way to talk to someone who’s hurting?” he asked.

Rojas also urges people to talk to someone who found success in recovery.

“There are a bunch of people who are successful in recovery, and they’re happy to tell you about their journey,” he said. “If you or family members who are in recovery can be more open about that, and talk about getting counseling and getting help, then that’s a sign of strength.”

Rojas also recommends reading books that emphasize the importance of kindness when talking to a loved one who suffers from addiction. One of his favorites is *Beyond Addiction: How Science and Kindness Help People Change*.

“How can we love people who are hurting and at the same time, help them get better?” he asked. “Sometimes we get angry about the behaviors of someone who’s using, or we get angry about feeling helpless to convince them or change them. In that frustration, we draw from our uglier side, a hurtful side.”

Rojas also urges people to focus on something other than addiction. A single conversation about something



Dr. Julio Rojas, psychologist and licensed drug and alcohol counselor

positive could be the catalyst that helps the person seek treatment.

“I’ve talked to many parents who have lost their children to addiction, and the common regret they have is that’s all they talked about,” Rojas said. “They didn’t talk about the goals that person had. Who knows how a conversation about a goal or a dream might turn into the first step towards sobriety?”

While Rojas does not currently treat children or teens, he still encourages parents to create open and honest communication about any family history of addiction or substance abuse.

“Family history itself doesn’t mean it’s going to happen. But if you have family history and then these problems come up later, you can talk about it,” Rojas said.

He said parents can look for opportunities to talk with children about mental health, such as when a high-profile person like a celebrity or athlete mentions it. He is hopeful people will begin to think about behavioral health the same way they think about a visit to the dentist or their primary care doctor.

## Stakes are high but help is there

Rojas hopes people will push through any doubts they might have about seeking help.

“When I’m sitting with a person, I know all the obstacles they had to overcome just to sit there in that moment. For some of them, it’s taken five or 10 years just to sit in that chair,” he said. “When I think about it from that perspective,

I don’t want to miss the opportunity to talk about hope, to talk about healing, to talk about possibility.”

Rojas said since the stakes are often high, affecting every aspect of a person’s life, this can be another barrier to seeking help.

“If you have mental illness, you may lose custody of your children. You may lose your civil liberty. There is a reason for that trepidation because we as a society do things to folks with mental illness, and it’s usually not helpful,” he said.

Rojas said some of his patients have been denied life insurance because of mental illness, have lost jobs or have been denied the opportunity to serve in the military.

Fortunately, many treatment options have shifted away from blaming the person seeking help, Rojas said. In the 1990s, patients were told they were reckless, dangerous or selfish for their addiction. This harsh approach is counter-productive, he said, and can push the patient away rather than draw them toward help.

He is also encouraged by the approach of treating all of a patient’s needs at once, rather than one at a time. Patients were told to maintain sobriety for one year before being treated for other issues. This method failed to acknowledge that the patient may have first started abusing substances to self-medicate depression, anxiety or other disorders. This resulted in fewer patients maintaining sobriety for a year.

Rojas said an integrated approach is the best way to treat the person by addressing issues that contribute to the patient’s risk of going back to using.

Above all, Rojas wants to encourage people to push through barriers and reach out for help.

“If you have struggled with picking up the phone or talking to someone about what’s going on in your mind and heart, what I would encourage is to resist the messages that our society has communicated: You’re not defective. You’re worthy. You can get better. There is help. There are people who want to help you,” he said.

For more information about CPN Behavioral Health Services, visit [cpn.news/bh](http://cpn.news/bh) or call 405-214-5101. ♡

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CONNECTED TO WHAT WAS HAPPENING NOT ONLY  
WITHIN CPN BUT OTHER NATIVE COMMUNITIES AS WELL.”

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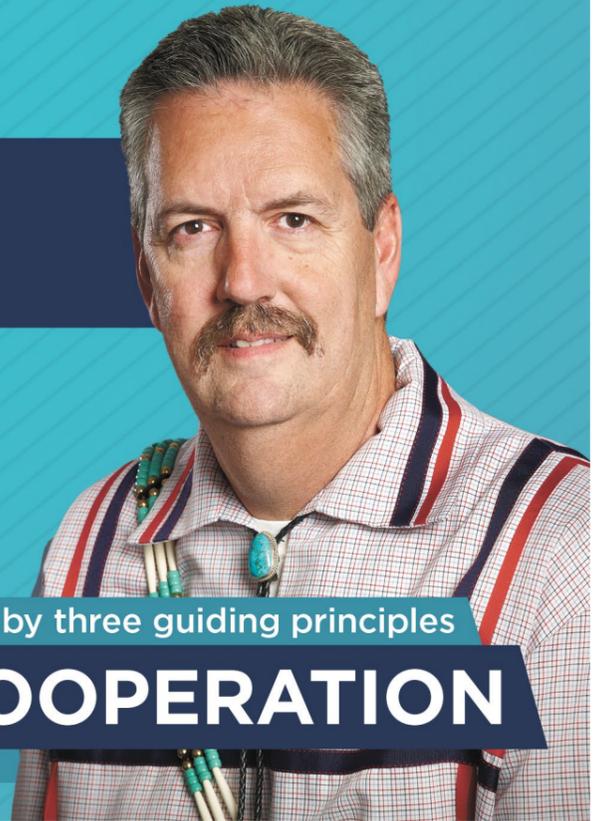
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## Margaret Zientek named Workforce and Social Services director

With her attention always on the needs of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and its members, Margaret Zientek has already hit the ground running as the new Workforce and Social Services department director.

“It’s wide open as to how far we can expand employment, training and related programs,” Zientek said. “I’m really excited where that could lead us. Taking on something brand new means you learn something brand new.”

The department’s previous director, Carol Clay-Levi, retired October 2021.

“I feel that we’ve grown, and we continue to grow,” Zientek said. “Some of those achievements that Carol and I have been able to make happen or have been an instrumental part in those changes nationally, are coming to fruition.”

Zientek is ready to meet the challenges that can accompany growth.

### Improving how services are delivered

That includes the effort to renegotiate the memorandum of agreement on Public Law 102-477. The federal legislation gives federally recognized tribes “the authority to integrate Federal employment, training and related services that they provide to tribal members,” according to [BIA.gov](https://www.bia.gov). However, tribal nations did not have an opportunity to provide input on the 2017 memorandum of agreement, resulting in re-implementation of many harmful practices that the tribes had originally sought to fix.

In remarks to the National Congress of American Indians 2021 general assembly, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris announced tribal governments would have a place at the table during the renegotiation process, the December 2021 *Hownikan* reported.

“This year, some of the things that we have been fighting for, advocating for and working hard to make happen on a national level are coming to a head,” Zientek said. “We have been

advocating and working to get that (MOA) corrected. It’s in the formation stage of how that will happen right now.”

She said the department considers how it can meet various needs from support for veterans, to encouraging safe and healthy families. Tribal workforce leaders like Zientek believe some changes are needed at the federal level.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, helps with residential winter heating and summer cooling costs. The program also includes an education component and weatherization. However, federal restrictions can sometimes complicate program administration.

“Our viewpoint is it’s the same people we’re serving with all of our workforce and social services. Why do I have to manage it separately?” she asked. “I can’t pay (employees) to do other jobs with other federal funds, when in actuality, they’re serving the same set of clients. We believe it makes sense at the Tribe that LIHEAP be included in 477.”

Zientek also identified another area that needs federal changes. When she and her staff noticed more clients with a history of felony convictions, they sought to expand the program.

“They are a client that needs an intensive service. They need more help to get on their feet and get jobs. We’re one of the few tribes in the nation that modeled our reentry connected to getting a job,” she said. “We expanded it, and we successfully received that grant within 477. We will be advocating it stays in 477 for us.”

Zientek also works to ensure the programs her department offers are ready to respond to the changing employment market in Oklahoma. Oklahoma’s growing cannabis industry has impacted some traditional service markets, such as retail and food service. People who are reluctant to work in those roles are rethinking their options, she said.

“I’m hoping to find more people willing to get that retraining or get their foot in their door at this great, wonderful



*Workforce and Social Services Director Margaret Zientek*

new opportunity and to recognize it’s there,” she said. “I hope to help put that in more people’s thoughts, that they can be proud of what they did.”

### Serving the community

Zientek and her staff also take time to celebrate the successes they’ve experienced. They just held their fourth annual community baby shower. More than 800 people attended this year’s event.

“This was a community event; it wasn’t just Citizen Potawatomi,” she said.

Partner agencies included the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Legacy Parenting, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and others. More than 30 vendors set up booths.

“The people who attended and the agencies who participated are already saying ‘Put me down for next year’ and asking ‘Where are we going to hold it next time?’”

### Investing in future Tribal leaders

Outside of Workforce and Social Services, one of Zientek’s favorite Tribal programs is the Potawatomi Leadership Program. It was born after Chairman

John “Rocky” Barrett and Vice-Chairman Linda Capps thought the Nation could do more to develop the next generation of Potawatomi leaders.

The PLP is held for six weeks in late June, during the Family Reunion Festival. The program selects eight to 10 Tribal members from around the country, bringing them to Shawnee to learn about CPN government, culture and economic development.

The participants stay at the Sharp House, a CPN property close to Tribal headquarters. Zientek jokes that she was not paying attention in a meeting when the need for a PLP housemother was being discussed, and then she was nominated for the position. She has been the housemother for about 15 years.

She said the experience shows participants how the Nation’s government works, how it provides vital services and CPN’s rich history.

“If you’re interested, you can come back and work (here). Take this knowledge back to your family and share it,” she said. “We have legislative meetings across the country. Come to your meeting, come to your regional meeting, but you now know what it is that we do and why we do it. And help us share that.”

She enjoys getting to know all the program participants while they’re in Shawnee and hearing updates from them after they’ve returned home.

“Those kids each year had something unique to speak about it,” she said. “I always enjoy visiting with the youth. I always have learned something new that I didn’t know or experience something.”

With her unique perspective, Zientek is looking forward to serving CPN as it continues its growth and helping youth prepare to lead the Nation in the coming years.

Learn more about Workforce and Social Services at [cpn.news/workforce](https://cpn.news/workforce). Read information and apply for the Potawatomi Leadership Program at [plp.potawatomi.org](https://plp.potawatomi.org). ♡



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## Kasie Nichols achieves professional credential, leadership opportunity

Citizen Potawatomi Nation Director of Self-Governance Kasie Nichols recently passed the credentialing exam to become a Certified Grants Management Specialist through the National Grants Management Association. The association also selected Nichols as one of seven CGMS holders to serve on the newly created National Grants Management Association Certification Council, which oversees and manages the CGMS credential program.

### CGMS

The CGMS credential is comprehensive in scope, requiring mastery over the entire lifecycle of grants management from seeking out funds to closeout.

“I’d never heard of anything that really tested the knowledge of that complete lifecycle, and in a credentialed way,” Nichols said.

She is one of approximately 200 people who have earned the CGMS credential.

“It was not easy,” she said. “Before I passed the test, I cracked open the book and thought, ‘If anybody passed this test, they really do have to be an expert in all things federal awards,’ because it is a lot of detail, and it is all on the test. It was overwhelming.”

The credential and council position are high honors, designating Nichols as one of the top experts in her field. She believes they bring distinctions for the Tribe as well.

In a recent interview, Nichols told the *Hounikan* that members of the NGMA and people pursuing the CGMS credential run the gamut of grants professionals, from federal officials and local nonprofit organizations to educational institutions and hospitals.

“Unfortunately, I get the sense that tribes are often unnoticed, probably due to the historic paternalistic relationship with the federal government,” she said. “We’re often underestimated as maybe not knowing as much as other forms of government, despite a lot of evidence to the contrary. We do everything that so many do, if not more.”

Nichols said she sees this kind of outlook not only in grants management but across professions. It is a pattern that bears witness to over a century of policy between the U.S. federal government and tribes in North America.

### History

Tribal reliance on grant funding follows from a long history of U.S. federal policy towards tribes throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The United States believed Natives lacked the ability to manage their own affairs. Euro-American reformers took it upon themselves to be the stewards and arbiters of the so-called “civilization” of Native tribes.

In the late 1800s, the U.S. federal government began moving towards allotment as a general policy for relations with Native tribes. The Citizen Potawatomi were an early test case for this policy after signing the Treaty of 1861; the Dawes Act of 1887 made allotment the rule of law. By dividing land held in common and conferring U.S. citizenship on Native individuals through these policies, the federal government sought to disintegrate tribalism and assimilate Native people into the dominant Euro-American social order.

Francis Paul Prucha writes in *The Great Father: the United States Government and the American Indians* that throughout the first few decades of the 20th century, the U.S. federal government greatly increased their bureaucratic interference in every aspect of tribal affairs in an attempt to conform them to their idea of effective social and economic models.

As the federal government felt the strain of such extensive management, and as it became evident that the desired “disappearance” of Native peoples into dominant society was not coming about, policy changed. The 1934 Indian Reorganization Act resulted in a return to tribal self-government across North America. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation adopted its constitution in accordance with this policy change in 1936.

However, another period of anti-tribalism followed in the 1940s-60s, known as the Termination Era, when the United States reversed self-governance policies. Activism of the Civil Rights Era contributed to yet another policy swing in the direction of tribal self-governance, this time in the form of the Indian Self-Determination Education and Assistance Act of 1975.

The ISDEAA laid out provisions for tribal governments to have more control over the administration of federal services and programs to their citizens through contracts formed with the federal government. These contracts essentially sourced employment within the federal programs to the tribes themselves, but the programs



Kasie Nichols

were still heavily regulated by federal requirements and funding. An amendment to the ISDEAA in 1994 authorized a new way to administer federal programs to tribes — compacts with federal agencies. These compacts “allow tribes to assume funding of, and control over, some federal programs, services, functions, or activities (PFSAs) that the DOI (Department of the Interior) otherwise would provide directly to tribes,” as outlined in a 2021 Congressional Research Service report.

Though policy cycled throughout the 20th century between intense government management and anti-tribalism on the one hand, and tribal self-governance on the other, critics note that self-governance has never entirely been on the tribes’ own terms. Programs and policies are still subject to federal oversight and held to Euro-American standards of society and economy — a lingering paternalism and power imbalance that impact tribes throughout the U.S. today.

### Grants and Self-Governance

CPN seeks to achieve self-sufficiency and sovereignty in every area. The Office of Self-Governance works to help the Tribe secure the resources needed to manage its own affairs. Self-Governance staff facilitates the Tribe’s contracts and compacts with the federal government, as well as expands compacts to new areas and programs and secures grant funding as needed.

Grants are a critical element in the Tribe’s ability to administer its services and expand its self-sufficiency. Even with

expanded provisions for tribal self-governance under the 1994 ISDEAA amendment, the funding available through compacts remains insufficient. Other programs, like CPN’s social service and justice programs, are not eligible for compact at all.

Most recently, the Tribe received a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Indian Health Service to expand the CPN Behavioral Health Department. Nichols said her office is currently evaluating a second round of facility funding from the IHS and will soon submit proposals for a Native American language grant and a justice program grant. From emergency management to economic development projects, grant funding plays a crucial role in the independence Citizen Potawatomi Nation has built. Nichols and the entire staff in the Office of Self-Governance work to compile the best balance of compacts, contracts and grants to continue to develop the Tribe’s self-sufficiency and stability for generations to come.

Despite the comprehensive expertise CPN and other tribes have developed through many decades of navigating the complex web of relations between tribes and the federal government, Nichols said that tribes remain vastly underestimated by their peers and the federal government regarding grants management.

“There’s an under-appreciation for what tribes can do, how our relationship really should work as a partnership and not as a kind of paternalistic relationship, because we really are capable and competent enough to do the work to benefit our Tribal citizens,” Nichols said.

In achieving the CGMS credential, a prestigious and rare accomplishment, Nichols has gained for the Tribe a formal recognition of its extensive knowledge and capability.

“It really puts us on par with other grant professionals,” she said, whether that be colleagues from the federal government, institutions of higher education, or state or local governments. “We’re on the same level, and we do share as much knowledge as they do.”

Nichols hopes more people learn about the CGMS program through the NGMA and pursue the credential, especially tribal professionals or members. She is excited to see how her credential and new role on the oversight council helps advance CPN and all of Indian Country.

Find out more about the National Grant Managements Association at [ngma.org](http://ngma.org).

# Mark Johnson

is a man of honor and integrity  
who is committed to serving others

## Vote Mark Johnson for District 7

# Tribal accounting recognized for excellence

For the 33rd consecutive year, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Accounting Department received the Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2020.

The prestigious award honors governments who achieve excellence in financial reporting through comprehensive and transparent accounting practices, according to the GFOA. The organization honored the Nation's annual financial report again.

The achievement speaks volumes about CPN, said CPN Chief Financial Officer Mary Chisholm.

"In a word, consistency," she said. "I've been with the Nation for 15 years, and since I've been here, the Nation has been attaining the award."

The annual report outlines financial assessments of the Tribe's government offices, enterprises, health care system and more. It contains nearly 150 pages of financial data regarding the Nation's basic financial statements, an independent auditor's report, management analysis, and information about CPN programs and services.

"It's a lot of due diligence to make sure that we check all the different criteria that this award looks at and make sure that we've addressed any issues that we might have had on a previous edition," Chisholm said.

She said the GFOA uses a very lengthy checklist on how financial data is to be



*CPN Chief Financial Officer Mary Chisholm*

presented for many different criteria. The report also addresses the relationships between Tribal government entities.

"There's so much going on (at CPN) that we have to take all of that into consideration every year," Chisholm said. "Each year we go through the list, and there may be two or three new items on there."

As the Nation continues to grow and diversify its enterprises, the process of putting together the annual report becomes more complicated. The FY2020 report also includes the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and management of ARPA funds.

"If we go into some new business, there's going to be new (reporting)

requirements for a program that we've never had before," Chisholm said.

The Nation is one of only four tribal governments who participate in the certificate program. Other candidates considered for the award include state and local governments and universities.

"It says a lot about the administration and the Nation as a whole because there's not that many Native American tribes that work toward this," Chisholm said. "That's something to be said, that we've been able to hold our own this long."

While other government entities may have received the award previously, Chisholm said she is not aware of another government that

has received the honor in this many consecutive years. She attributes this to the Nation's steady leadership.

"That comes back to not just consistency in the Nation itself, but also in the department," she said. "It's a point of pride. It definitely is."

Chisholm is not only proud of the work her department produces but how they perform.

"This is a team. We all are," she said. "We have to work together to get a good product, to get a good audit and to get a good report. It takes us all."

While the department is proud of this most recent achievement, they refuse to rest on their laurels.

"We are actively working on our 34th report," Chisholm said. "It's not really competitive, but we compete against ourselves. We want to continue that legacy."

The GFOA established the award in 1945 to encourage state and local governments to excel beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare annual comprehensive financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure and to recognize individual governments that succeed in achieving that goal.

For more information, visit [gfoa.org/awards](https://gfoa.org/awards). ♡

## Logsdon chosen for regional Federal Reserve Bank board

Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation Director Cindy Logsdon began 2022 with a new three-year appointment as a member of the Community Development Advisory Committee for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. The regional section of the Federal Reserve serves seven states — Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, and portions of Missouri and New Mexico.

According to the CDAC website, the board serves to provide "insights on community and economic development challenges faced by low to moderate-income communities."

As the leader of Pottawatomie County's only Native Community Development Financial Institution, Logsdon hears the daily financial concerns of CPN's larger community. This appointment allows her to take that knowledge to a regional scale.

"I think I'm excited because Native CDFIs are at the table, and the Native world is where you can influence policy. You can influence what's going on or even the priorities of the Federal Reserve branch and just have some input there," Logsdon said.

Board members from three Native CDFIs across the country now serve on Community Development Advisory Committees in Federal Reserve districts following the 2022 appointments. Logsdon feels encouraged by the inclusion she strives for as a leader.



*Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation Director Cindy Logsdon uses her skills on boards and community groups at every level.*

"I think that having a Native voice at the table is very valuable for our community. I'm honored that trust has been put upon me to represent our Native community," Logsdon said.

"It is beneficial, and it's intentional because if your voice isn't at the table, you're not going to be heard. So hopefully, that will be a real benefit (of my appointment)."

Logsdon serves on financial boards at every level, from local to national. She finds collaboration and a constant expansion of knowledge

help the entire group. Often, she advises her colleagues on ways to approach and work with tribes.

"I think a lot of times tribes are misunderstood and kind of unknown. If you haven't grown up in a community that has local tribes, I would hope that I would be able to convey that some tribes are very progressive and good stewards of the knowledge that we're given and looking out for generations to come," Logsdon said.

The advisory committee meets twice a year in person and each quarter online. They discuss similarities and differences in what they witness happening in their local areas, both financially and otherwise. The group includes professionals from banks and CDFIs as well as nonprofits, businesses and community services.

"It strengthens my network and takes it past my normal circles. But also, if there's a voice or there's an issue that I'm aware of with other boards that I sit on, I think there's a lot of synergy there. And if there's funding opportunities, if there is influence, if there's regulations that need to be changed that benefit the community, hopefully, that's why I'm there," Logsdon said.

Throughout her time with the CPCDC, she has noticed two significant issues that affect many of the clients she and the rest of the staff assist — lack of financial education and predatory lending. Logsdon hopes to discuss

these issues and more with the greater region on the Federal Reserve board.

"I think (a lack of) financial education in the school systems is a real problem. We need to have more financial education and a requirement from the state. And what about on the federal level? How can we use the connections that we have to flow down, I think, to put pressure on both sides of state government, if you will, to do what's right for Native Americans and low-income individuals?" she asked.

Other CPN leaders previously served on the board, including Vice-Chairman Linda Capps, and Logsdon considers her nomination to the same committee an honor. More than anything, she looks forward to learning from her peers' experiences and applying those lessons at the CPCDC.

"I want to leave this place at a better spot than when I found it," Logsdon said.

She began working with the CPCDC as its second employee in 2003. She oversees the organization's services, including credit counseling, assistance buying a home, financing a business and providing access to federal CDFI programs.

Read more about her appointment to the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City at [cpn.news/logsdonfed](https://cpn.news/logsdonfed). Find the CPCDC online at [cpcdc.org](https://cpcdc.org) and on Facebook. ♡

## New program puts students on technical school fast track

The U.S. Department of Education awards millions of dollars for the Native American Career and Technical Education Program each year. In 2021, Citizen Potawatomi Nation received funds as one of 39 federally recognized tribes, tribal organizations and Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools to advance educational and career opportunities for Indigenous peoples and their communities.

CPN Workforce and Social Services career advisors Norma Neely and Nicole Byrd assist program participants with everything from selecting a major to finding a position after graduation.

“We don’t provide a handout; we provide a hand up,” Byrd said. “And I’ve kind of told myself that motto every time I do anything with any client is just, ‘I’m giving them a hand up. This is helping them to create a better future for not only themselves but our community as a whole.’”

Using NACTEP funds, Workforce and Social Services pays participants to attend specific programs at technical institutes or vocational schools in the department’s six-county jurisdiction. They have agreements with Metro Technology Centers, Gordon Cooper Technology Center and Moore Norman Technology Center. Native Americans of any tribe who reside in Lincoln, Payne, Cleveland, Seminole, Pottawatomie or Oklahoma counties qualify to apply.

“The uniqueness [of this program] comes from the fact that this is only for technical centers. And we’re really putting a focus on boosting Native population in the technical centers. Each of the technical centers that we’ve talked to has a very, very small Native population,” Byrd said.

Following thorough research, the department selected a limited number of high-paying, high-yield jobs to support at each school. Those include aircraft mechanics and service technicians, radiologic technologies, heat and air, refrigeration, machinists, computer user support specialists, physical therapy assistants, licensed practical nursing and others. The research focused on anticipated demand in the next five to 10 years and the communities’ need to fill those positions.

“We really want them in careers,” Neely said. “We don’t want them to just get a job. We want it to be something that will enable their family to live nicely. ... And when you look at the programs that are offered, the approved programs, you’re going to see, these are ones that have a starting salary of at least \$17.40 an hour,” with the potential to increase in the next five years.

Currently, popular programs include aircraft mechanics, licensed practical nursing and CNC small machinery,



**Native and need help paying for school?**

The Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP) is a program designed to reduce barriers to education with Native American students enrolled in technical education programs.

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**FIND OUT MORE!**  
Contact Nicole Byrd at 405-878-3854 or [Nicole.byrd@potawatomi.org](mailto:Nicole.byrd@potawatomi.org)  
Citizen Potawatomi Nation Workforce & Social Services



many of which lack diversity. The program’s clients range from 17 to 40, and concurrent enrollment is available for those completing their high school diplomas.

“We have one high school student who I believe is almost on Gordon Cooper’s campus all day,” Byrd said. “He is a senior in high school, and I believe he finished almost all of his course requirements for high school. He’s working through his courses at Gordon Cooper really fast, faster than most high school students do.”

While Workforce clients attend classes and other program obligations, the department pays them minimum wage for their time in school. Byrd and Neely see it as an opportunity to help overcome a significant barrier that prevents people from earning a certification to obtain a better job and increase their pay.

“A lot of the times, this wouldn’t be an option for people because they would have to work full time in order to support their families. But this kind of gives them some reprieve where they don’t have to worry about money so much. They can just focus on school,” Byrd said.

“It is a little bit shocking, I think, whenever we tell people that, ‘Yeah, we’re going to pay you to go to

school.’ And I think everybody just thinks, ‘Wow, this is amazing.’”

If a Pell grant or other type of funding covers tuition, the NACTEP and Workforce help their clients in various other ways. That includes money for books, supplies, childcare, gas vouchers, tools and necessary clothing.

“We’re really excited that we get people that think, ‘Oh gosh, I really couldn’t go anywhere. I’m just going to have to make it, get by. I really can’t have a career because ... I’m a single mom, and I’ve got kids. And how could I do this?’ Well, that’s where Workforce comes in handy,” Neely said.

She and Byrd enjoy feeling as if they make a difference in people’s lives for the better. Two of their clients are single moms in LPN programs.

“They’re getting ready to graduate, and that’s really exciting because they’re creating a future. They both have kids, and they’re creating a future for those kids. And I think it’s really exciting that we’re getting to support them through their school, and we’re getting to help them with their kids,” Byrd said.

Some students know their goals and which program they want to pursue; however, Workforce guides

indecisive clients as well. Byrd and Neely discuss their options, schedule interest testing through the CPN Department of Education and more.

“If somebody said, ‘Well, gosh, I kind of like welding, but don’t they have to wear those big hats? I wonder if they’re hot, those face shields?’ Well, we could contact one of those people, and they would arrange a tour (at the technical institute). They would let them see it in action. ... A lot of times, you think you wouldn’t like something until you actually get out there and see it,” Neely said.

Following graduation, their clients automatically enter Workforce and Social Service’s adult employment program for assistance in finding a job using their new certificate and training.

“We’ll help them with resume writing if they need that. And there are several departments here that help with that. It doesn’t just stop with, ‘You get your certificate and goodbye.’ We really want to follow through because the goal is to have people in these jobs that pay well,” Neely said.

Workforce and Social Services hopes to serve 30 clients annually over the next five years for a total of 150 students and expand the program to more technological institutes. Byrd and Neely plan to build a waiting list for additional clients. They note that many programs follow different academic schedules, and the length of time on the waiting list varies.

Those in the program must maintain their grade point average and regularly attend class. Byrd and Neely frequently check in with their clients, hoping that many of them come to work for the Tribe after graduation.

“The Citizen Potawatomi are very happy that this is happening because they need employees. They need well-qualified employees, and many of those positions would work right into some jobs at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation,” Neely said.

She and Byrd agree they see no downsides to the program or applying — only possibility.

“No excuses. If you really want to have a career that will lead to a real fulfilling life, here’s your chance to do it. Work hard. Get this done. We can help you,” Neely said.

Visit the Workforce and Social Service Department webpage at [cpn.news/workforce](http://cpn.news/workforce). Find out more information about the Native American Career and Technical Education Program by emailing Nicole Byrd at [nicole.byrd@potawatomi.org](mailto:nicole.byrd@potawatomi.org) or call 405-878-3854. ♡



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# Being and doing Potawatomi

By Kevin Roberts,  
Bertrand family descendant

*Bodewadmi Ndaw*  
(I'm Potawatomi)

Some of you may recall the 1979 Steve Martin movie, *The Jerk*. There is a scene in the movie where he has just received the new phone book. He exclaims, "The new phone books are here, and there I am," pointing to his name. He states, "Now I'm somebody!" I share this as a related reference for the purpose of this topic.

I remember as a young boy how excited I was when my mother explained to me that we were Potawatomi. I remember my excitement years later when I received my Tribal ID card in 1989. It was official! I had a card that stated I was Potawatomi although I had known that for some time prior. However, I would share this information with all who would listen. "I am Potawatomi!" Most asked, "So what that does mean exactly?" What does it mean to be Potawatomi? Great question and one that has taken me on a terrific journey these past 30-plus years. A journey requiring dedication, self-awareness, a sincere commitment to learning and research, an appreciation of perspectives, establishing and nurturing relationships, and simply freeing myself from the years of conforming and norming within today's societal boundaries.

I am committed to our *Bodéwadmimwen* (Potawatomi language). I have been studying it for years and continue to leverage the abundant resources available through our outstanding Language Department in Shawnee, Oklahoma, headed up by Director Justin Neely. Most, if not all, has been remote learning

since I reside in Illinois, and the online access is very much appreciated. We are fortunate as a Tribal nation to have Justin Neely and his team!

Justin, along with Robert Collins, have both been instrumental in my journey. I appreciate the mentorship and friendship that has evolved. Both have taught me an absolute fact about our language. Our language is the bedrock of our people, culture and traditions. I realized early in my language journey that I was acquiring unexpected knowledge about our culture, traditions and our connection to *Segmekwé* (Mother Earth), and *Mamogosnan* (The Creator), and our sacred medicines (*Séma, Kishki, Wabshkebyek, Wishpemishkos*) and everything in between. Most things in nature are considered animate or alive. With this concept, you really appreciate what was important to our ancestors and how they viewed the earth as sacred. Our ancestors saw the earth and all its creations as relations. Not better or higher on the food chain but as equals. If a tree is treated in the same manner as a person, and likewise a grasshopper or deer is treated just like a person, it changes your perspective. Often I have read or heard our elders refer to "my brother the bear" or "my sister the river."

Where I am on my journey at present didn't happen overnight. Understanding what it means to be Potawatomi didn't happen when my mom shared with me that I was Potawatomi or when I received my Tribal ID card. It is a journey we all must take. The Potawatomi teachings and understanding that I continue to evolve have been so important and freeing for me. I have been able to fill voids I have experienced in my life's journey, grasp thoughts and beliefs I hold with better



Kevin Roberts

understanding and appreciation through the knowledge I have acquired and my doing. I honestly believe after 62 years, I have finally freed the Potawatomi that has always been within me.

In a recent class I was able to join via Zoom, Justin Neely addressed this very topic with our class. It was an "a-ha" moment for me indeed! Even though my journey continues, I believed I have arrived as a Potawatomi. With his permission, I have included his summary, which is key to each of us truly appreciating what it means when we say, "*Bodewadmi Ndaw!*"

## Being and doing Potawatomi

*Bodewadmi Zhechkewenen*  
— Potawatomi doing

*Yon Gdezheshmomenan* —  
Use our language

*Nimedín* — Dance

*Bgednen O Sema* — Offer/lay  
down tobacco

*Yon Mshkekiwen* — Use our medicine

*Mawjeshnon Bkan Bodewadmik* — Gather  
with different Potawatomi

Being Potawatomi is about  
living and incorporating  
Potawatomi in your daily life.

My journey has led me to a daily, sustained commitment of doing Potawatomi each and every day. It is an individual journey we each must take. I offer tobacco and prayer every morning while watching the sunrise and wildlife come to life around our lake. One area I have experienced personal growth in is my closeness with nature. My perspective has evolved to viewing nature and all the trees, plants and animals as equals to me as I have learned through my Potawatomi journey. I have combined two areas that have helped connect me to many of my Potawatomi friends and family. Those are my love for wildlife and photography. I have always spent countless hours in the outdoors hunting, fishing, hiking and just absorbing nature. Now that I am retired, I have more time to connect with nature and have combined my Potawatomi way of life with my love of wildlife photography. Daily, as part of practicing our language, I leverage social media to post my photos and include captions in *Bodewadmimwen* and English translations.

Hopefully this gives you one perspective on what it means to say, "*Bodewadmi Ndaw!*" 🍃

## Veterans report



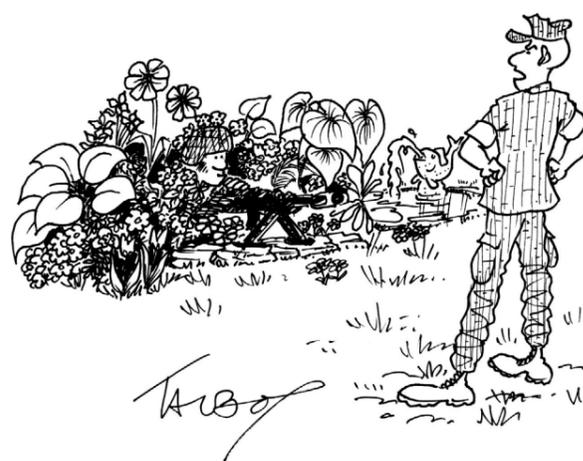
Bozho  
(Hello),

We have all been dealing with this coronavirus pandemic now for about two years, and it has changed our way of living quite a bit. Many of us have lost family and friends to the virus, and many have even had a case of the affliction. Needless to say, it will be remembered for many years to come. The quarantines, the precautions and various treatments with lots of information and misinformation and confusion by the experts and public in general. Many of the high-risk population, including veterans, are self-quarantining themselves as an extra precaution. The VA outlined five ways to access health virtually from your home in a recent blog post:

1. Mental health care through telehealth. If you are feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, or the pandemic is making your mental health symptoms worse, speaking with a mental health provider can help. You can meet with a mental health provider through VA

Video Connect, VA's secure video conferencing app. You can set up a video appointment from home, and there is no copay. For more information, contact your local VA medical center. If you need immediate mental health support, contact the Veterans Crisis Line by calling 1-800-273-8255 and pressing 1, or text 838255. It's free and confidential.

2. Switch from in-person appointments to video visits. Using VA Video Connect, you can meet with your VA care team over a secure video connection. You can use it to avoid COVID-19 or just for your own convenience. You have a choice.
3. Use the Annie App if you have vaccine side effects or you test positive. The Annie App for Veterans sends automated text messages that can help you learn about COVID-19, cope with stress related to the pandemic and support you if you are exposed or test positive. To learn more, visit the Annie App page on the VA App Store.
4. Find your VA COVID-19 test results and vaccine records on My HealtheVet. If you received a COVID-19 test or the COVID-19 vaccine at VA, you can use your my HealtheVet Premium account to find your test results or vaccination record online. If you don't have a My HealtheVet Premium account,



THE PURPOSE OF CAMOUFLAGE IS NOT TO  
SEE WHO CAN CREATE THE PRETTIEST YARD!

they are free. You can get one in person at a local VA facility or online. Contact your local VA health center.

5. Have your VA care team monitor your chronic condition or COVID-19 recovery. VA's Remote Patient Monitoring — Home Telehealth program lends a hand to help veterans manage chronic conditions, like diabetes or heart disease. Veterans measure their vital readings and symptoms and send them securely to their assigned RPM — HT Care

Coordinator for review. The care coordinator collaborates with the veteran's care team to help the veteran manage their care.

Veterans, you have many options for receiving health care during these trying times. Use them.

Remember, our monthly Citizen Potawatomi Nation Veterans Organization meetings are on the 4th Tuesday of each month. In May, it will be the 24th in the North Reunion Hall on CPN Powwow

Grounds in Shawnee, Oklahoma, at 6 p.m. (or as soon as you can get there). All CPN veterans and spouses and their families are welcome. You don't have to be a member to attend. Come check us out and visit.

*Migwetch*  
(Thank you),

Daryl Talbot, Commander  
[daryl.talbot75@outlook.com](mailto:daryl.talbot75@outlook.com)  
405-275-1054 🍃



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It has been my honor to serve as the District 7 Legislator since 2010. I am proud of my voting record and the work I've done on behalf of our members. I am asking for your continued trust and your vote in the upcoming election. Standing together, we are strong. Our Nation now has more than 37,000 members and through hard work, we have maintained a strong financial position and protected and expanded benefits that so many of our members depend on. I hope to continue this work on behalf of the members I represent in District 7.

**I CAN ONLY DO SO WITH THE VOTES OF THE MEMBERS IN DISTRICT 7  
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## Motivational speaker Mitch Factor urges self-care, positivity

Employees from Citizen Potawatomi Nation enterprises heard from an Indigenous motivational speaker and comedian about managing stress in their lives.

Oklahoma native Mitch Factor (Seminole/Menominee) spoke to CPN employees about the importance of self-care, maintaining a positive outlook and clear communication.

“I think helping people is where my heart is — and in dealing with stress,” he said.

Factor said stress causes people to experience a variety of emotions, from frustration to sadness to anger. It helps to identify these feelings and find healthy ways to cope with them. Often, people keep emotions inside, carrying the weight of those negative feelings and compounding the stress, he said.

Stress is harmful to the body, according to a report from the Mayo Clinic. Long-term stress can lead to depression, anxiety, heart disease, heart attacks, stroke, obesity and high blood pressure.

A 2020 report by the American Psychological Association said 78 percent of adults have experienced more stress due to the pandemic in addition to pre-pandemic stresses about finances, work, school, housing, food and healthcare.

Even with many pandemic restrictions relaxed, people may still be dealing with events that occurred during the pandemic and may not have fully processed those feelings, Factor said.



Motivational speaker Mitch Factor talks to CPN employees about managing stress.

“Every time I get done with the session, there’s always two or three people that come up and talk to me, and some of them say they feel like I’ve been talking to them directly,” he said. “I believe that nobody’s stuck in their ways and everyone can change for the better if they want to.”

Factor said he relates to the busy schedules people have today, filled with their children’s school activities, their jobs and time for themselves. Trying to meet too many commitments often leads to additional stress.

The father of three said it is easy to fall into routines without taking time to reflect and prioritize wellness. To reduce stress, Factor suggests spending

time outside of their normal roles, such as mother, husband or employee.

“Play with your kids, go fishing, do some crafting,” he said. “The goal is to create a healthy balance of all our roles.”

Factor suggests regular and clear communication with a spouse, children and others.

“Be clear about your expectations, your boundaries,” he said. “Spend your time (communicating and) preventing problems instead of trying to fix them.”

Dividing up household chores, encouraging family members to talk with each other in a respectful way and giving everyone time for a break can increase family harmony, he said.

Adopting a more physical lifestyle also alleviates stress, Factor said. He suggests having a regular wellness break by setting aside time during the day or week for relaxing activities.

“Don’t make excuses about being active,” he said. “Try new activities like yoga, walking, stretching. And experience your senses to the fullest. If there’s a smell, sound or taste or sight that helps you relax, then use it.”

He urges employers to remember that many employees may need time to care for themselves while they serve others.

“A part of the pandemic, the protocols, the (precautionary) steps we have to take, we continue to do those, but don’t let them be the focus of why we come to work,” he said. “It’s very important that we are well before we are able to help other people. We have to be helping ourselves.”

Raised in Shawnee, Oklahoma, Factor first pursued an entertainment career in stand-up comedy and the film and television industries. He has appeared at Bricktown’s Comedy Warehouse and Joker’s Comedy Club in Oklahoma City. His movie and television credits include *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Broken Chain*. He has also enjoyed a more than 30-year career in early childhood education, specifically in the Head Start program.

Learn more about stress as a result of the coronavirus pandemic from the American Psychological Association at [cpn.news/apa2020](https://cpn.news/apa2020).



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## Tribal Chairman – John “Rocky” Barrett



*Bozho nikan*  
(Hello, my friend),

I hope that many of you are making plans to attend our Family Reunion Festival. This is the first one we have had since the pandemic began, and we are looking forward to welcoming you. Things will be a little different this year. For instance, we will not have honored families, instead focusing on those who have walked on due to COVID-19. If you have lost a loved one due to COVID, please make sure you have submitted their information to Tribal Rolls so that we can honor them.

As I write this column, we are still working out the details of how these Tribal members will be honored. We have spoken about hosting a breakfast, doing a spirit plate meal, and honoring them with special songs during the powwow. The details will be worked out, and information will be available in the June *Hownikan*.

For those who have not been “home” in the past couple of years, the landscape and infrastructure will look slightly different. Some projects were funded by one-time funds from the U.S. government to help respond to the pandemic, and others were plans to expand our economic development so that we can continue to provide services and fund the Tribal government. Here are some of the things you’ll see when you visit:

### Food Distribution Center

We purchased the corner lot of Hardesty and Gordon Cooper, which had been home to Hardesty Grocery. The property was used as a food

distribution center throughout 2021. This purchase and the food distribution program were made possible due to the one-time allocation of funds through the CARES Act.

### FireLake Arena

FireLake Arena was built as an entertainment venue and has hosted numerous concerts. Because of the coronavirus, the number of artists touring dramatically decreased. Those who continue to tour have increased their fees considerably. Arena staff have worked diligently to bring in other events, including a robotics tournament, state wrestling tournaments and collegiate basketball tournaments. They even hosted the Kansas City BBQ Championship. To remain a contender for these events, we have made some arena upgrades, including a new basketball floor, a better video screen and locker rooms.

### Grand Casino

We have replaced the buffet with a food court and added

Grand House Brewing. You will also notice additional event space. These changes will help the Grand remain competitive in bringing in conferences and patrons from throughout the state.

### Infrastructure

Bridge upgrades across our jurisdiction are another important sign of progress that many have missed since 2020. Lost in the furor of the pandemic, our roads department completed two truss bridges over Deer Creek, on the north and east portions of the Grand Casino complex. Often in danger of central Oklahoma’s sudden flashfloods, these bridges provide our casino, healthcare complex and travel stop customers safe thoroughfares in our state’s most severe weather.

If you take a drive east from the FireLake complex, out towards the Eagle Aviary and Iron Horse Industrial Park on Hardesty Road, you’ll see an almost identical bridge over Squirrel Creek. This is the first in a multi-year project between

CPN, the state and county to widen Hardesty Road to support the growing manufacturing businesses at Iron Horse.

### Iron Horse

Finally, at Iron Horse Industrial Park, many of you will see the Tribe’s latest and most promising economic endeavor, Sovereign Pipe Technology. Rising from the former wheat fields, this anchor will make polyurethane steel pipes for municipal water and sewer systems. It is a tremendous project, and should the market cooperate, the factory should be up and running by the time you arrive.

I look forward to seeing you all, happy and healthy, as we honor those who have walked on or who cannot join us this year.

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

## Vice-Chairman – Linda Capps



*Bozho*  
(Hello),

I wrote an article approximately 10 years ago about the 1990s and some of the important events of that time. I would like to expand on that concept since we have so many new Tribal members — approximately 7,000. There were lots of exciting events that happened during the 1900s. During that time, the celebrated “per capita payment” emerged due to the settlement of land claims between our Tribe and the United States government. The three payments came at three different times — 1960: \$23.89, 1967: \$205.87, 1983: \$748.21. The payments were distributed to Tribal members that were enrolled as of June 29, 1961. The rolls were closed at that time unless a person was

1/8 degree Citizen Potawatomi Indian blood. (Tribal rolls did not re-open for enrollment again until 1989.) Whenever the first per capita check was distributed in 1960, there were 7,799 Tribal members that were eligible to receive the funds. Those that were under the age of 18 did not receive their check until their 18th birthday, at which time they had to apply. You may have heard a parent or grandparent speak of the per capita payment. It was trumped up more than it turned out to be, but it was exciting to speculate that it could be a monetary treasure. Many of you will remember the anticipation and how your relatives talked about the next per cap.

During the 1970s, the first Indian Self-Determination Act passed. This would eventually be very important to tribes all over the United States. In 1984, our Tribe entered into an agreement for high-stakes bingo, which proved to be an unsuccessful endeavor. The short-lived enterprise ended in 1985 due to poor management. Nevertheless, it was a valuable lesson in economics for our Tribe. From that point forward, negotiations and contractual agreements were meticulously developed. Also in 1984, the Citizen Band of Potawatomi Tax Commission was established.

The commission was vital to nation-building. It was valuable then, and it certainly is today. The tax revenue at that time was small, but developing the process for the Tribe to collect taxes on enterprises was a giant leap for the future. Today, our tax revenue is central to Tribal operations. It helps finance scholarships and other valuable services.

The Tribal court system was established in 1986. Up until that time, our Tribe had to share court facilities and a judge with several other tribes. During the year 1989, the Tribe purchased First Oklahoma Bank, N.A., a failing \$14 million bank in Shawnee. Today, with a dynamic president, competent board of directors and stable environment, First National Bank & Trust of Shawnee, Oklahoma, is a thriving one half-billion-dollar bank. The local, home-grown bank is alive and well with many plans for a bright future.

The Tribe began gaming upon the passage of the National Indian Gaming Act in 1988. Bingo was the game of the day until this act was passed. Initially, there was only room for a few gaming machines to be added to the bingo hall. In 2003, the building was expanded, and revenue from

the new gaming operation became vital to the progress of the Nation. In 1996, the Tribe established the housing authority and began the process of managing the first apartments of what we know as Father Murphy Housing. Also in 1996, the Tribe would gain a new name by the vote of the people. There was reluctance in the beginning; however, the new name Citizen Potawatomi Nation was selected by our Tribal people. I, personally, was very pleased, believing that we truly could become a great Nation.

The newly named Citizen Potawatomi Nation executed the self-governance compact with the IHS in 1997. This was another steppingstone to a more efficient and effective system for our government. Self-governance allows for Tribal government to self-rule by taking control of decision-making authority over federal programs and resources. Today, our Office of Self-Governance has flourished with competent, intelligent staff members that help negotiate contracts, compacts and grants for the Tribe. In 1998, self-governance was executed for other government programs in addition to IHS, including realty, Tribal Rolls, Tribal Court and the Indian Reservation Roads program (1999).

The Supreme Court ruling in 1998 ordered that the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma could not place land in trust within our Tribe’s jurisdiction (original reservation). This is known as the Collier decision. In the same year, KGFF was purchased, and CPN moved to the newly renovated headquarters complex that still houses governmental offices. In 1999, the Nation purchased the Belshe property for our Grand Casino and purchased the Knight farm, which added 1,057 acres to the Tribe’s contiguous land.

The annual Family Reunion Festival replaced the long-time intertribal powwow in the summer of 1999. It is the same family reunion that we look forward to each year on the last full weekend of June. I appreciate serving as your vice-chairman and cherish the opportunity to correspond with you in this article.

My best to each of you,

Linda Capps  
*Segenakwe*  
(Black Bird Woman)  
Vice-Chairman  
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The Citizen Potawatomi Nation is thrilled to announce the launch of CPN Care - a new telehealth benefit offering for you and your family. Starting this month, CPN members gain 24/7 access to doctors, counselors and more via phone, video or our new mobile app - at NO cost to you!

To sign up and activate your benefit, visit [potawatomi.org/cpn-care](http://potawatomi.org/cpn-care)

## District 1 – Alan Melot



*Bozho jayék*  
(Hello everyone),

Happy May! It has been such a great pleasure to get to know all of you, and it was such an honor to host my first district meeting in St. Louis. I look forward to seeing many of you at Family Reunion Festival in June. Make sure you find me and introduce yourself!

D1 is full of caring, great people! In that light, I've decided share this platform and invite different citizens from D1 to write as guests here in my column from time to time. I asked Kevin Roberts to contribute first, and I am delighted that he agreed. Kevin cares deeply about Potawatomi culture and the interests of D1 and our Nation. I have been

blessed to get to know him over the past several months. I hope you enjoy his contribution here and on page 14.

Again, I look forward to seeing you soon.

*Bama pi*  
(Until later),

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*Bozho nikanek mine*  
*Bodewadmi mezodanek*  
(Hello friends &  
Potawatomi family),

### St. Louis District meeting on March 19-20, 2022

We had 80 folks registered to attend the District 1 meeting in St. Louis. Absent unforeseen circumstances that kept a few away, over 55 folks enjoyed a wonderful weekend meeting in downtown St. Louis, Missouri.

We enjoyed beautiful spring weather with sunshine and temps in the 70s. On Saturday afternoon, folks had the opportunity to visit the Cahokia Mounds located just across the Mississippi



*CPN District 1 residents gather in St. Louis for a meeting, history presentation, food and fun.*

River in Collinsville, Illinois, or tour the newly renovated St. Louis Gateway Arch and Interpretative Museum.

Cahokia Mounds (State Park) are considered to be the largest and most complex archaeological site north of the great pre-Columbian sites in Mexico. It is the site of a pre-Columbian Native American city located directly across the Mississippi River from downtown St. Louis. The existing park contains 80 mounds and sits on 2,200 acres. However, the ancient city was much larger. At its apex around 1100 C.E., the city covered about 6 square miles and included about 120 manmade earthen mounds; its population may have briefly exceeded contemporaneous London, which at the time was approximately 14,000-18,000.

Gateway Arch and Interpretative Museum (National Park) sit on 91 acres. The Gateway Arch stands 630 feet high and is made of stainless steel. It was designed by Finnish American architect Eero Saarinen and completed in 1967. There is a small tram that you can ride to the top and peer out across Missouri to the west, and Illinois to the east from a very unique vantage point.

The adjoining museum covers 201 years of history about the westward expansion of the United States with an emphasis on St. Louis' paramount role in that era. It is located directly beneath the arch. Interactive story galleries guide visitors through time from the founding of St. Louis in 1764 to the building of the Gateway Arch in 1965. The museum describes the westward expansion period of the United States with more perspectives from the cultures involved. Significant interpretative displays and information are provided specific to the Indigenous cultures that existed in and around the area. This is a beautiful museum and is a must see if you ever visit St. Louis. In 2018, the Gateway Arch and Interpretative Museum were renovated at a cost of \$380 million.

Following the exciting afternoon adventures, district members joined District 1 Representative Alan Melot for dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Following a terrific meal, individual recognitions and fellowship, the group was afforded the opportunity to hear a presentation provided by CPN tribal member, Potawatomi historian and President of the Trail of Death

Association, George Godfrey, Ph.D. George's presentation was based on the history of the Trail of Death and was shared from the perspective of an individual having made the journey. George possesses a wealth of knowledge, and his presentation captivated an attentive audience throughout the evening. George has authored numerous books relating to his ancestry and the Potawatomi. You can google George Godfrey, Ph.D., and find several articles that have appeared in the *Hownikan* about him over the years as well as information on the many books he has authored.

Following Sunday morning's breakfast, hugs and goodbyes, members departed for home.

### June Family Festival, June 24-26, 2022

Reminder that Family Reunion Festival is going to be here before you know it. It is a great opportunity to get involved with many of the activities discussed relating to what it means to be Potawatomi. Hope to see you there!

*Bami Mine Gwabmen*  
(I will see you later on),

Kevin Roberts



*George Godfrey, Ph.D., Potawatomi historian*

## Hownikan

1601 S. Gordon Cooper Drive, Shawnee, Oklahoma

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Address changes should be sent to Tribal Rolls,

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## District 2 – Eva Marie Carney



Bozho nikanek  
(Hello friends),

### Short column!

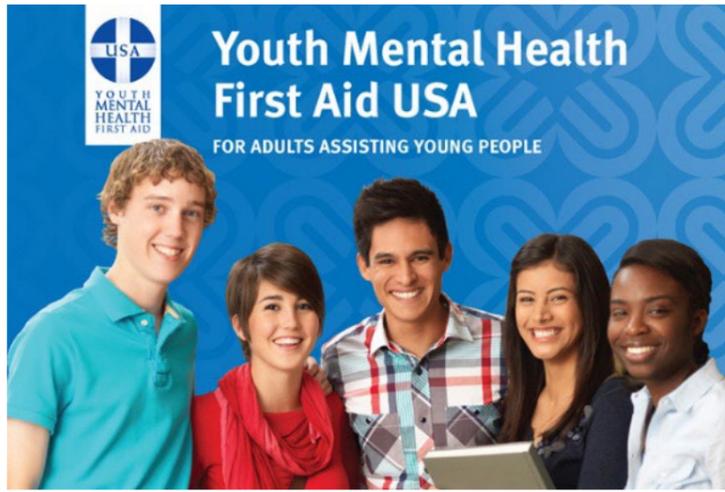
You may be saying to yourself, finally! Over the years, I have gotten feedback that my columns are LONG! I'll be writing more next month, after our District 2 meeting in Clearwater, Florida. For now, I am keeping it short.

### VAWA reauthorization, expansions celebrated

I help clients obtain protection under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in connection with my pro bono immigration law practice. In March, VAWA was reauthorized for another five years — a great relief to my clients. It also was strengthened and expanded in significant ways that benefit Native communities. I don't practice law in Indian Country but did note the extensive reporting of the new law. The National

Congress of American Indians (NCAI), among many others, celebrated the reauthorized VAWA's "historic tribal provisions" noting that they:

1. Reaffirm Tribal Nations' jurisdiction to prosecute non-Indian perpetrators of child violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking, stalking, crimes against tribal law enforcement and correctional officers, and obstruction of justice;
2. Establish an Alaska pilot project, which will allow a limited number of Alaska Native Villages to exercise special tribal criminal jurisdiction and civil jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators for the first time since the 1998 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Alaska v. Native Village of Venetie*;
3. Clarify that all Tribal Nations in Maine can exercise tribal jurisdiction under VAWA;
4. Ensure that non-Indian defendants must exhaust all tribal court remedies;
5. Reauthorize funding for and amend the Tribal Access Program, to ensure that all Tribal Nations can access national crime information systems for criminal justice and non-criminal justice purposes;
6. Make the 2010 Bureau of Prisons Tribal Prisoner Program permanent and allow Tribal Nations to place offenders in federal facilities that are sentenced to one year or more; and



7. Significantly increase resources for Tribal Nations to exercise special tribal criminal jurisdiction and establish a reimbursement program to cover tribal costs.

Hopefully these changes will amplify the ongoing efforts to address violence against women, children and elders in Native communities.

### Mental health first aid training

I recently completed a course called Mental Health First Aid and highly recommend it. Mental Health First Aid is a course that teaches you how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The training helps you identify, understand and respond to signs of addictions and mental illnesses. Both youth- and adult-focused classes are offered. According to the MHFA website: "Just as CPR helps you assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental

Health First Aid helps you assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. In the Mental Health First Aid course, you learn risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help."

Mental Health First Aid was created in 2001 by Betty Kitchener, a nurse specializing in health education, and Anthony Jorm, a mental health literacy professor. Kitchener and Jorm run Mental Health First Aid Australia, a national non-profit health promotion charity focused on training and research. Mental Health First Aid USA adapted the program of Mental Health First Aid Australia. Here in the states, the training program is offered by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing and the Missouri Department of Mental Health. You can find out more, and find an online course, at [cpn.news/MHFA](http://cpn.news/MHFA).

### Channel Kindness Project

It sure seems that we can all use a little more kindness in our lives. I was just introduced to the Channel Kindness Project, which provides support for youth mental health. It offers a safe space for young people to tell their stories of kindness, resilience and community as well as a "Channel Kindness" curriculum for educators. I love the project's goal: "By highlighting the people and organizations that are doing good in their communities, Channel Kindness' audience is inspired to create a kinder and braver world, one story at a time." You can find out more at [cpn.news/channelkind](http://cpn.news/channelkind).

### Communication

Please keep in touch by phone or online via email or a Facebook message. We have about 250 District 2 folks participating on a private FB page — message me on FB if you'd like to join us. I look forward to hearing from you and to helping you, as needed, and celebrating with you, whenever possible! *Jagenagenan* (all my relatives).

*Migwetch* (thank you) for the honor of representing you.

Eva Marie Carney  
*Ojindiskwe* (Blue Bird Woman)  
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## District 3 – Bob Whistler



Bozho nikanek  
(Hello friends),

### ITBC Winner

District 3 Tribal member Kaylee Almand, currently a junior at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas, majoring in Wildlife and Ecosystem Sciences, applied for and won one of two internships with the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) at Yellowstone National Park. She will serve in that position this summer. ITBC is a collection of 69 federally-recognized tribes from 19 different states whose mission is to restore the

bison to Indian Country. Their goal is to restore our historical, cultural, traditional and spiritual relationships for generations. In addition to Kaylee's major, she is an artificial insemination team (AIT) member, where she spends time on whitetail deer ranches in Texas working with injured and/or sick deer. Her deep interest in our wildlife along with her college studies made her an ideal candidate for this internship. Her duties will include working on the Bison Conservation Transfer Program to relocate bison to various Nations. She will work beside National Parks staff in caring for, handling and testing bison held within the park facility. Yellowstone Park recently had many bison suffering from brucellosis, which is an infection that can be transferred from the bison to humans. The tribal interns will learn low-stress bison handling techniques and USDA regulations for marking and tracking individuals in ways that allow their interstate transfers, along with monitoring bison-sustainable habitats. Kaylee will be working on a very humanitarian project, and I am



Cloth tobacco patches

sure she will cherish the time spent and the experience gained, since her ultimate goal is to become a wildlife veterinarian.

### Uncle Gregory

Each first Sunday of the month at 1 p.m., Uncle Gregory, an Apache elder, is on a Zoom call hosted by the Indigenous Institute of the Americas. The program generally lasts about one and a half to two hours. To join the call simply go to Zoom on the internet and dial 962-

322-8350. The password or code is "iia." Uncle Gregory was born in Arizona and came to Texas in the 1970s. He covers a variety of subjects on the culture and history of our peoples throughout the Americas. If you have the time, I suggest you dial in to listen and learn.

In the March meeting, he covered powwow etiquette. The discussion covered the types of dances, along with what to do if in the arena and someone drops

an eagle feather. He advised that if you come upon a dropped feather, it is not to be picked up. You should turn and dance around the feather to protect it until a veteran group of four arrives to perform the ceremony to recover the feather. This is the same policy in our Nation. Should a child run there and attempt to pick up the feather, instead of shouting, "Stop," or "Do not pick up the feather," you should be gentle and teach the child. The procedure Uncle Gregory recommends is that you take the child's hand and have them dance around the feather saying, "Follow me," or "Dance with me." He was in total agreement that when in the arena, you are on sacred ground involved in a ceremony, and pets may not be brought into the arena. He went on to say that if you are not familiar with what is going on, rather than just trying to jump in and follow the others, you should remain out of the circle so you may look and learn.

### Tobacco

The protocol of asking for your Potawatomi name calls for a gift of tobacco. Generally, pipe

tobacco is preferred. As a gift, it would normally be a small amount wrapped in a cloth pouch. I am including a photo of what I use for small tobacco gifts along with a photo of how a regular pouch has been wrapped for gifting. As you can see, the basic gift may be about half the size of a cork from a bottle. For a regular tobacco pouch purchase, you would be able to get half a dozen or more small gift bundles made. As a side note, those living on the East Coast had the climate to grow a wild type of tobacco much like what we see today. In Texas, there is a plant that was used as tobacco by the Native Americans living here that is called mullein. It is a green plant with very small yellow flowers. In addition to standing in for wild tobacco from other areas, it could be used as a demulcent. Demulcents create a soothing anti-inflammatory coating in the chest and throat to alleviate congestion elements.

#### YouTube

While I do not use Facebook as a regular thing, I do receive notices in my email about something posted on Facebook. Often that posting is something that is on YouTube and will remain there for some time. Just for the heck of it, I decided to go to YouTube and then put in the word Potawatomi. To my surprise, I found that this area has so much in the way of information on our culture, heritage and current happenings. For example, this year at Family Reunion Festival, they may decide to hold a class on making moccasins. YouTube has a short 12 or 13-minute course on how to make pucker toe moccasins. If you are going to Festival, you might want to just check this out as good knowledge to take to that class. There are other items involving the Language Department programs as well as copies of editorials on what our Nation may be doing that were carried in the Shawnee newspaper. I bring this up as

another source of information and training on our Nation.

#### Gathering

At the 2022 Gathering of Potawatomi Nations this year, you will be in the area where the black ash tree is grown. The wood from this tree has been used to make very fine baskets by the Abnaki, Ojibwa, Malecite, Meskwaki, Mohawk, Potawatomi, Penobscot and other tribes. The wood from this tree was also used to make pipe stems, flutes, and traditional lacrosse sticks. The tree is very unique in that the branches sprout directly across from each other on opposite sides of the tree. Leaves follow a similar pattern with an end leaf and then compound leaflets directly across from each other on opposite sides of the stem. Each leaf has from five to 11 leaflets. For the last 20 years, this tree has started to become endangered because of the emerald ash borer. The borer was discovered in 2002 in the Detroit, Michigan, area. It is an exotic Asian beetle that they believe arrived in packaging material on a cargo ship. Currently, it has migrated and may be found in Ontario, Ohio, Indiana, Maryland, Illinois, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Indiana, Wisconsin, Missouri, Virginia, Minnesota and New York. Various parts of the tree were used for medicinal purposes by our ancestors for fevers, sores, itching scalp and as an appetite stimulant. The Gun Lake Potawatomi Pigeon family has made baskets for years of black ash and brought them to Gathering. The basket I have pictured was purchased at our 2008 Gathering visit at Walpole Island, Canada. I received the bracelet in Wisconsin in 2017. There may come a time in the future when these baskets will only be known in stories because of the demise of the black ash tree. The basket may cost you \$25 or a bit more for a small basket. You may not get to another Gathering for years, so you may consider investing in

one this year. They are signed on their bottom generally in copper-colored ink for authenticity.

Before leaving Gathering, while there, you may want to look for some cedar and sweetgrass. We do have cedar in Texas, but it is not the wonderful flat cedar found in the Great Lakes area. I especially secure this to be used by the female Potawatomi I ask to bless the facilities we use for any event. If by chance you use the regular four elements of sweetgrass, tobacco, cedar and sage, Michigan is the place to get both the sweetgrass and cedar because that is where both are grown. You may also look for our wild rice while there. My District 2 counterpart Eva Marie Carney has a great recipe for a wild rice casserole, which I suspect she will share. I have a copy of the recipe from her, so you may also contact me.

#### Mdamen

For well over the time of my tenure as an elected district representative, we have had the Potawatomi Leadership Program for students each year. The group consists of just graduated high school seniors and/or freshmen college students. The size of the group ranges between eight and 10 participants from around our Nation. They are brought into Shawnee each summer for approximately six weeks to learn about the workings of our Nation through exposure with various departments staff. During the past two years, the program was not held due to COVID-19. In the early spring of this year, Tesia Zientek and her staff in the Education Department created the *Mdamen* program, which was announced in the *Hownikan*, on social media and through the education portal. It is an extension of the PLP, except it is available for participation of all age groups. The program lasts for seven weeks, meeting on Thursdays for two and a half hours. This year's program had 29 participants from all over the Nation, from basically all walks of life. I had the



*Black ash basket and cuff purchased at Potawatomi Gatherings across North America.*

opportunity to sit in on the last session via Zoom and was very impressed with the presentations made. Including this last session, the group over the course of the program had the opportunity to hear from our Chairman John "Rocky" Barrett, Vice-Chairman Linda Capps, Dr. Kelli Mosteller, Jennifer Randell, George Wright, Bree Dunham and many more of the experts we have running our Nation. The participants had the opportunity to ask questions and in the final session gave reflections on their journey. During the final hour of each session, the participants broke out into small groups to talk about what they had learned and work on some complex topics that had surfaced. The word *mdamen* is the reference to corn in our language, but the literal translation is "that miraculous seeds." Corn is one of the Three Sisters we talk about. Our ancestors planted it as the shade for the squash grown below, and the pole or post to allow the beans to also grow upon. The language department found use of the name *Mdamen* as a cultural connection for the seed of information that was to be given to the participants in this year's program. This program is planned to be offered again next spring. It is a great way to learn more about how our Nation op-

erates, and I think you will find participating very worthwhile.

#### Medicare

For any Medicare patients who were moved from a hospital to a rehabilitation center and found their Medicare policy for hospitalization no longer covered their expenses, there has been a change. What may have happened is that the hospital records showing where you were changed from "inpatient" to "observation" status. As a result, you may have received invoices for thousands of dollars for your rehab stay. The Federal Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit has ruled that Medicare is responsible for those bills and must handle their share of the expense. Medicare must accept your appeal if you were denied coverage. I suggest you go to the Medicare site and ask for their booklet on Medicare Appeals. The federal court found that Medicare's lack of appeals procedures in this area violates the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution.

This month I have covered a variety of areas, and I am fortunate and proud to bring information to you on the activities of our citizens. There are many of you who may have received an award or milestone that I believe would be of interest to others in our Nation. Please let your district representative know of these achievements so recognition may be given. I am grateful to serve as your district representative and will be your voice. So, contact me for any areas relative to our Nation where you may have a question.

*Nagech*  
(Later),

Bob Whistler  
*Bmashi* (He Soars)  
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[cpndistrict3.com](http://cpndistrict3.com)

## District 4 – Jon Boursaw



*Bozho*  
(Hello),

#### Two instances where Kansas officials made painful remarks about Native Americans

The first instance occurred back in February when

Randy Watson, Commissioner of the Kansas State Board of Education, made the following statement: "It's always fascinating. I had some cousins from California; they were petrified of tornadoes. They'd come visit us, you know, in the summer. They're like, 'Are we going to get killed by a tornado?' I'd say, 'Don't worry about that, but you got to worry about the Indians raiding the town at any time.' And they really thought that." After his statement became public, the Kansas governor asked for his resignation, but the Board of Education members rejected that request and gave Watson a 30-day suspension without pay instead.

The second instance occurred in late March on the day that Kansas State Rep. Ponka-We

Victors-Cozad became the first Native American lawmaker to preside over the Kansas House of Representatives. When Victors-Cozad used a gavel to quiet the House, Rep. John Wheeler turned around and asked her whether she used a tomahawk rather than a gavel to quiet the House. Wheeler said he was joking but immediately apologized when some lawmakers voiced disapproval.

The Chairman of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Joseph Rupnick, has been quite vocal about his concerns over these instances and the lack of any meaningful disciplinary action in either case. I have sent Chairman Rupnick an email expressing our support and letting him know that we are equally concerned about how our Citizen Potawatomi Nation

youth in Kansas are being educated. We have over 570 enrolled youth between the ages of 5 and 18 living in Kansas.

The following is Rupnick's Letter to the editor which appeared in the Topeka Capital-Journal on Sunday, April 3rd:

#### ***We face a defining moment after leaders made dangerous remarks about Indian tribes in Kansas***

*How we educate our children is how we shape the future. The words we say, the lessons we teach, the actions we take — and those we don't — all guide the learning experiences of our youths.*

*And as our children grow, they will use what they've learned to decide who they will be and how they will shape our society.*

*Education Commissioner Randy Watson's remarks about our state's Indian tribes — and the weak slap on the wrist he received from the Kansas State Board of Education — sent a message to students that racist language is tolerated.*

*That message was reinforced when state Rep. John Wheeler, R-Garden City, degraded a historic moment as state Rep. Ponka-We Victors-Cozad, D-Wichita, became the first Native American lawmaker to preside over the Kansas House of Representatives.*

*Rep. Wheeler, Commissioner Watson and the Kansas State Board of Education members all failed to understand that their behavior perpetuates anti-Native American racism that plagues our state and traumatizes our youths.*

*It's time to end anti-Indigenous mockery in our government and in our schools, and push for greater equity in our curricula.*

*Native tribes have been in Kansas since before its colonization, and our land and culture are the foundation of our society. But it is not enough for us to merely exist in a country built on Native American land and in a state that's home to four federally recognized Indian tribes. We must continue to relentlessly advocate for representation and inclusion at our schools.*

*The words of Commissioner Watson and Rep. Wheeler, and the unsettling natural delivery of their racist remarks, were akin to the mockery of Indian mascots at schools or the "tomahawk chop" celebrated at Kansas City Chiefs games and at school sporting events.*

*By emboldening those behaviors and visuals, our state is failing our Native youths, who have a suicide rate that is 2.5 times higher than the overall national average.*

*If we want to improve the future for our children, we have to acknowledge their needs and fight for them to learn in an inclusive environment free of caricatures of their families, parodies of their traditions, and words that diminish their worth.*

*Native language and history have to be integrated in our education system in order to dispel discriminatory myths about Native Americans and instill respect for our culture.*

*In doing so, we'll help educate our youths — and some adults, as it turns out — about our state's diverse history and that of our country.*

## 2022 CPN Family Reunion Festival

Plans are well underway to hold the Family Reunion Festival as scheduled. The dates are Friday, June 24 to Sunday, June 26. A decision has been made not to recognize honored families this year, but rather to recognize those Tribal members who walked on as victims of COVID.

## Upcoming CPN elders potlucks

The dates for the next two Elder Potlucks held in CPN Community Center in Rossville are:

**May 13:** Mexican RSVP by the 10th

**June 10:** BBQ Burgers and Hot Dogs RSVP by the 7th

Come join us and bring your favorite side dish or dessert. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Tracy or Brenda at 785-584-6171.

## Joint meeting for Districts 1 and 4

District 1 Legislator Alan Melot and I have decided to hold a joint meeting in the Kansas City area in the fall. The date and location have not been finalized. I'll keep you posted.

## Honored to serve you

It is an honor to serve you as your district legislator. I appreciate hearing from CPN members in Kansas, whether in the form of a letter, email, phone call or in the office. Please let me know how I can be of assistance to you. 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 send me your email address, and I will enter you into my District 4 information file. My contact information is listed below.

*Migwetch*  
(Thank you),

Jon Boursaw,  
*Wetase Mkoh* (Brave Bear)  
Legislator, District 4  
2007 SW Gage Blvd.  
Topeka, KS 66604  
785-861-7272 office  
785-608-1982 cell  
[jon.boursaw@potawatomi.org](mailto:jon.boursaw@potawatomi.org)  
Office hours:  
9-11 a.m. Tuesdays  
3-5 p.m. Thursdays  
Other times: please call

## District 5 – Gene Lambert



*Bozho*  
(Hello),

Oh my goodness, where to start.

We had our first District 5 meeting in what I thought was two years. It was quickly pointed out by Connie Giffin and agreed on by the members it had been three years.

It was wonderful to see everyone together again! I was so grateful and a little emotional at the same time. The excitement



*Gene Lambert with traveled furthest, Leanne Haworth.*

carried over from the night before as I tried to anticipate the day's activities — so much so that I had very little sleep and tried to function as if it were the first day of school when I would lay awake and wonder if I could handle the first grade. As it goes, I did and we did.

Maybe you all remember a storm thrashing our meeting at Schnepf Farms a few years back. In Arizona, you simply cannot anticipate the weather anymore. This year's meeting was quite the reverse. It hit almost 100 degrees, and when I arrived at 8 a.m., I became suddenly aware the patio at the Goldfield Ghost Town was not going to work. We had a backup, thanks to Goldfield owner Cowboy Dan and his technical people. "Gene," Cowboy Dan said, "You must choose now, inside or out, because we cannot change you over once your meeting starts."

I try to plan District 5 meetings at different venues that cater to families. Then there is the pandemic issue we had, and many people still have concerns. It is my belief the young will carry on for our Nation if they enjoy the meetings. If there are bad memories or they are boring, that probably won't happen. So I always have a kids' table for backup supplies.

We used to meet in February many years ago, but February and March are the most desired timeframes here, making the cost double. It simply became prohibitive. We then started meeting on Sundays when Chairman John Barrett had meetings with the Native Nations in Tucson in April.

Saying to myself, "I really need to start rethinking hotels," I



*Gene Lambert and Larry Watson holding the CPN flag.*

put the question to our CPN members, citing how much easier it would be to control or manage. Not one person in the room of over 100 thought that was a good idea. Guess we go forward, ensuring we have a back up in case it is outside and for the families in our group.

We did have a great meeting, and everyone was so excited about seeing each other, the room was constantly buzzing.

We were fortunate enough to have Bob Schoose, the Mayor of Goldfield Ghost Town, tell the old west stories about the Native communities and the fights that occurred over the gold and the Superstition Wilderness Area Thunder Gods.

Scott Holzmeister has moved to Tucson and is now one of the CPN District 5 members. Scott had been working with District 4 Legislator Jon Boursaw in Kansas on the Native American mass grave sites and spoke to us about their research and what they were finding. When asked, he spoke without hesitation, and everyone listened intently. Thank you, Scott, for allowing us to share your knowledge



*Gene Lambert with wisest, Charles Esch.*

as we normally only have the opportunity to read about it.

We have had many changes, and I shared the different and/or additional benefits to all as a reminder of what is available to members outside the jurisdiction, meaning outside Oklahoma. The CPN medical program was of strong interest as well as education. The new expansion of the housing benefits followed.

Let's get to the good part here. Our wisest this year was Charles Esch; the youngest by a couple of months was a beautiful baby boy, Jesse Watkins, son of Ashley Watkins; and the person who traveled the furthest distance was Leanne Haworth from California.

Kathleen Lawson won drawings of the CPN flag, Larry Watson and Brenda Roza won two train rides, and finally, Joy Esch won two mine tours.

A special thanks to Cowboy Dan for the best and most congenial service we have ever had. Not one complaint, and everyone loved the steaks and chicken. Thanks to Candise and Larry Watson for their assistance in the photos as we would not have had them otherwise, and a special thanks to Lorri Ketterman and Joy Esch for their help on the sign in table.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you, and until we meet again, stay safe and healthy because we love you. It won't be so far in between next time.

Remember, if you have questions about anything regarding your benefits as a CPN member, do not hesitate to contact me. That is why I am here.

*Migwetch*  
(Thank you),

Eunice Imogene Lambert  
Butterfly Woman  
Legislator, District 5  
270 E Hunt Highway, Ste 229  
San Tan Valley, AZ 85143  
480-228-6569  
[euniceilambert@gmail.com](mailto:euniceilambert@gmail.com)

**FOLLOW US ONLINE!**



## District 7 – Mark Johnson



*Bozho nikanek*  
(Hello friends),

I was looking through some old pictures and realized that this spring marks 50 years since my first trip to Shawnee, Oklahoma, with my father in 1972. As a young person who was born and

raised in California, it was a trip that started to solidify what it meant to be a Potawatomi and the struggles that our families who migrated to other parts of this country in the 1930s went through. Listening to my father and his brother Charlie talk while we drove across Kansas, they told of the hardships that the family faced in the late 1920s in Shawnee and how the home allotments were put up for auction to pay for the family move to California in 1932. As we visited Louis Vieux's, his great-grandfather, gravesite, I heard stories that his grandmother Sophia talked about how life was in Kansas before the move to Oklahoma. When we finally arrived in Shawnee, I was overcome with the feeling of being home; it is a feeling that has never left me, and I feel every time I visit.

My father told me the stories of growing up on the banks of the North Canadian River during the hot summers, how the family would gather on Sunday afternoon, and as we walked through the old pecan trees on his grandmother's allotment, how he and the other kids would play among the trees after walking home from school. Then, my father knelt down and gathered a few pecans that were under a tree and put them in his pocket. When we returned home to California, my father took the pecans and placed them in the ground in front of our house. To this day, if you were to drive past the home where I was raised, there stands a beautiful pecan tree that was a reminder to my father about his home in Oklahoma, and that made him smile.

The reason behind telling this story is that I would like you to experience the same connection with our homeland that I was fortunate to experience. I would ask that you make time to come to the Family Reunion Festival and learn about our Nation and your history. It is always the last full weekend in June. This year's dates are June 24th to June 26th. I know you will feel at home also, and while you are there, maybe pick up a pecan or two and put them in your pocket. In July of each year, all the Potawatomi tribes gather. This year's 2022 Potawatomi Gathering is at the Hannahville Indian Community in Michigan from July 25th to July 30th. Please join us.

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

*Migwetch*  
(Thank you),

Mark Johnson  
*Wisk Mtek* (Strong as a Tree)  
Legislator, District 7  
1565 Shaw Ave., Suite 202  
Clovis, CA 93611  
559-351-0078 cell  
[mark.johnson@potawatomi.org](mailto:mark.johnson@potawatomi.org)

## District 8 – Dave Carney



*Bohzo nikan*  
(Hello friend),

With the pandemic hopefully becoming more manageable, it looks like 2022 may finally allow our District 8 community to rejoin our fellow Potawatomi from across the country in celebrations and gatherings.

Close to home, we've got our May 28 District 8 Cookout in Olympia, Washington. Please see the attached invitation for more details!

This year also sees the return of our Citizen Potawatomi Family Reunion Festival in June. If you haven't done so, I highly encourage you to attend. Those of us far from Oklahoma often miss the opportunity to see the employees, facilities and settings that are part of the Nation's

everyday existence. Family Reunion Festival — especially after such a long absence — is an excellent opportunity to see where our ancestors rebuilt once removed from the Great Lakes and Kansas. Seeing the Cultural Heritage Center, being in the powwow arena as the drums are played and visiting with distant family — they truly give one the sense of a community.

One of the things I enjoy the most about a pilgrimage to the Nation is seeing progress in new or upgraded buildings to house our people, various enterprises or Tribal health care clinics. Another favorite that is a must-see is our Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center. CHC Director Kelli Mosteller, Ph.D., and her staff have done an absolutely amazing job of creating a fresh and engaging experience for Tribal members to learn about our traditions, history and our place in the world.

Plan to spend some quiet time there learning about what makes us distinctly Citizen Potawatomi.

Many may be at Festival for the first time or the first time in a long while. One question that I often get is about appropriate dress for the dancing on Saturday night. The idea is to wear respectful

clothes because we are honoring our Tribal members that have come before us. This means no shorts, no open-toe shoes (like flip flops) and no bare arms. Ideally, women would wear regalia or a dress or skirt of some kind and a shawl. Men would wear regalia or long pants and a ribbon shirt.

There are many opportunities prior to the Saturday night dance to either buy or make a piece of regalia that can be worn and enjoyed for years to come.

In addition to culture, competitions, dancing and comradery, the Nation votes on legislative positions and budgets. Voting takes place in person and, of course, by absentee ballot for District 8 members. While District 8's legislative seat isn't on the ballot this year, Tribal members across the country are eligible to vote on the budget, so please do so and participate in your democracy.

If you are unsure of attending or would like more information on

these topics or others, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

As always, it is an honor to be your legislator,

Dave Carney  
*Kagasghi* (Raven)  
Legislator, District 8  
520 Lilly Road, Building 1  
Olympia, WA 98506  
360-259-4027  
[dcarney@potawatomi.org](mailto:dcarney@potawatomi.org)

## CPN District 8 Meeting

**SATURDAY, MAY 28 | NOON TO 3PM**

**REGIONAL ATHLETIC COMPLEX - SHELTER C**  
8345 Steilacoom Rd SE, Olympia, WA 98513

**Come cook-out with us!**  
All food provided (bring a dessert to share)  
Art contest | prizes for youngest & wisest | updates & speakers  
Lots of parking and play structure for kids in line of sight

**RSVP BY MAY 20**  
to [dcarney@potawatomi.org](mailto:dcarney@potawatomi.org)  
(please include number of people attending)



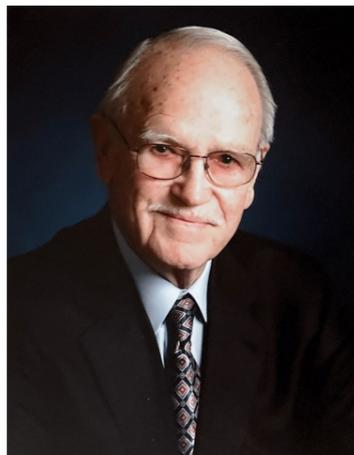


## CITIZEN POTAWATOMI NATION TRIBAL ROLLS

The Tribal Rolls Department is responsible for determining eligibility for Tribal enrollment, burial insurance, and Tribal ID cards, and assists with genealogical and historical research. The department is also responsible for maintaining and updating the computer membership list, utilizing Tribal membership information for various types of census data, and creating the voter eligibility lists in the direction of the Secretary-Treasurer for the CPN Election Commission's Secretary-Treasurer.

**TO ENROLL OR UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION**
**Visit [portal.potawatomi.org](http://portal.potawatomi.org)**

## Alva Donald Melot Melot Family



Alva Donald Melot of Tecumseh, Oklahoma, went peacefully to be with the Lord on April 11, 2022, at the age of 103. He was born on Jan. 13, 1919, to Vernon and Mary (Tinney) Melot in Wanette, Oklahoma, in a one-room house on his father's Potawatomi allotment. As a young boy, Alva moved with his family to Tecumseh, Oklahoma, where he remained a lifelong resident. He graduated from Tecumseh High School in 1937. He then went on to graduate from the University of Oklahoma with his master's in education. Alva was dedicated to education, shown by his willingness to hitchhike to campus every single week.

After meeting the love of his life, whom he taught, he married Betty Jean Branson on Sept. 22, 1948, in Purcell, Oklahoma. They were happily married for 53 years. They had three children: Judi, Pierre and Michelle Melot.

Alva spent over 40 years as a teacher, coach, principal and superintendent. In his spare time, he mowed school property, painted whatever needed paint, dug water lines, performed repairs, and attended thousands of school sporting and musical events, graduations, recognitions and celebrations of all kinds. He was a member of the Tecumseh Historical Society as well as an active and involved member of the Tecumseh Alumni Association. He never missed an Alumni Banquet until 2019. He was a member of Broadway United Methodist Church since the late 1950s. Alva took great pride in his Potawatomi and French heritage. He enjoyed traveling with his wife, Betty, and together they went to over 20 countries.

Alva's life was dedicated to his family and to helping others. From words of advice to monetary offerings and anything in between, he was always willing and ready to help those around him.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty Melot; his parents, Vernon and Mary Melot; two brothers, Glenn and Raymond Melot; and sister, Ella Melot.

Those left to cherish his memory are his three children, Judi Melot of Oklahoma City, Pierre Melot and his companion Susan Bradley of Norman, and Michelle and Jeff Sigman of Tecumseh; his grandchildren,

Nicole Elyse Emmons of Oklahoma City, Jennifer Terese Melot of Washington, DC, and Alex Melot Sigman and wife Lindsay Sigman of Shawnee; as well as many loving friends and extended family.

Visitation was held on Friday, April 14, 2022, followed by a celebration of life service on Saturday, April 16, 2022, at the Tecumseh Alumni Building. He was buried at Tecumseh Cemetery.

Share memories and sign the online guest book at [cooperfuneral.com](http://cooperfuneral.com).

## Martin Steinmetz Wickens/Beaubien Family



Martin Raymond Steinmetz of Bristow, Oklahoma, passed away at the age of 70 on March 30, 2022, after a brave fight with cancer. He was born Oct. 5, 1951, in Corpus Christi, Texas, to Harold and Rita Steinmetz.

He moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to attend the University of Tulsa Law School and graduated on May 5, 1990. He was sworn into the Supreme Court of the United States and the Supreme Court of Oklahoma on Sept. 19, 1990, and served with the Federal Department of the Interior of Oklahoma as a solicitor until his retirement on Dec. 31, 2019, having served the citizens of Oklahoma for 30 years.

He lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for many years and retired to a cattle ranch in Bristow, where he lived until his passing.

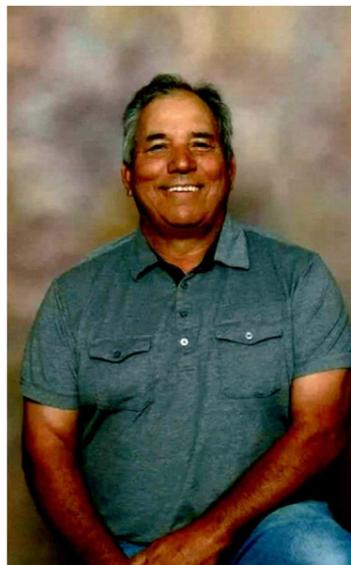
He was very proud of his Potawatomi heritage, a descendant of Carrie Rhodd and Lee Wickens. He worked for the benefit of the Tribe in many ways. He also contributed to many charities with his time, money and legal expertise.

He is preceded in death by his father, Harold L. Steinmetz; and survived by his mother, Rita I. Steinmetz of Corpus Christi, Texas; his sisters, Teresa M. Templer of Middleburg, Florida, and Leann E. Steinmetz of Corpus Christi; his brothers, Dennis J. Steinmetz and sister-in-law Jane Steinmetz of Poway, California, and Beck J. Aguilar of Corpus Christi. He is also survived by his eight nieces and nephews, Robin Templer, Cheryl Merritt, Pamela Tune, Kimberly Templer, Brittany Dean, Devin Aguilar, Katie Aguilar and James Steinmetz; eight great nieces

and nephews, Justin Templer, Ashley Loftus, Jordan Jackson, Kayla Merritt, Clayton Ross, Trent Bennett, Trista Bennett and Auria Walden; and two great-great nieces, Adalynn Loftus and Parker Loftus.

He was well known in the Tulsa and Bristow communities. He was loved and will be missed by all his family and friends.

## Thomas Edward Bruno Bruno Family



Thomas Edward Bruno, 70, of Camp Verde, Arizona, entered the kingdom of Heaven on Nov. 30, 2021. Tom was born April 18, 1951, in Phoenix, Arizona, to Mike and Era Mae (Perry) Bruno. He was their 11th child of 12 children. He lived life to the fullest. He loved the outdoors and being in the woods and the mountains. Tom was a journeyman electrician who loved working on big commercial jobs. Tom graduated from Tolleson, Arizona Union High School's class of 1970, where he excelled as a running back in football and was loved and respected by all his classmates. Tom was especially proud of his Potawatomi heritage. That's maybe why he loved to hunt quail and fish for trout in the Arizona desert. The four-wheeler was like a sidekick to Tom. He and his brother Carl loved to blaze trails across the desert for years with Tom in the lead and Carl behind him; they knew all the trails in the Camp Verde area because they had made most of them. Tom had four children, 12 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Mike and Era Mae Bruno; his siblings, Francis Lackey, Bill (Chief) Bruno, Carl Bruno, Zona Gail Smith, Davie Bruno, Stella Bruno and Ronnie Bruno; and three brothers-in-law, Junior Lackey, Daniel Halterman and Monty Smith. He is survived by Leon and Veta Bruno, Anthony Bruno, Barbara and Billy Brown, Louise Halterman, and sister-in-law, Glenna Sue Bruno; his four children, Angela and Willie Williams, Kenny Colbert, Lora Roscoe Owsley, and Holly Hommel; and many nieces and nephews and friends. Tom was loved by many and will be deeply missed by all his family and friends. To him, we all say *bama pi* (later).

## Mary Ruth Green Gossett Bourassa Family



Mary Ruth "Wabmimi" Green Gossett, born Dec. 14, 1945, to George and Lillian Green in Slaton, Texas, passed on April 21, 2022, in Nashville, Tennessee.

A survivor of the 1970 Lubbock Tornado, she received not one, but two college degrees in medical technology (1969) and computer programming (1982) in her lifetime. After many years of service, she retired from Texas Tech University — her alma mater — in 2017.

A proud *Neshmabekwé*, Mary Ruth fiercely advocated for marginalized communities, and as an active member of Lubbock PFLAG, hosted, led and sponsored myriad events in her home.

In addition to her political involvement, registering voters

and marching many a mile for the causes she believed in, she cared deeply for the communities she found herself part of and in proximity to.

She led an energetic and dynamic life. A self-trained artist, she mastered a variety of painting techniques, which she applied generously to the walls and furniture of her own, colorful family home. She followed in a long line of *Bodwewadmikwé* artists, just as her mother and her grandmother before her.

An expert gardener, her lush plots regularly attracted the attention of a great many bees and other pollinators. Her extensive knowledge of plants and wildlife undergirded a long commitment to the environment and its protection.

Though the acrylic paints sit on their shelf, untouched since her hands placed them there, the flowers in her garden have bloomed in the days since she walked on. Mary Ruth's impact lives on through the hundreds of lives she's touched, her children, grandchild and many friends — just as it does through those pink, white and yellow flowers that bob in the gentle, Tennessee breeze and the bees who land upon their stem.

She leaves behind son, Charles Green; daughter, Courtney Wilkerson; and grandchild, Kabl Wilkerson.



*Hau ndenwémagnek*  
Ho my relatives

*Ébyé yak shote gnom*  
We have come here today

*Éwi nesh myé yak ode wdenwéma*  
To lay our brother to rest

*Ngom she éпам sét ode*  
Today he walks

*Ga wje zhyé wat gi gambojek*  
Among those who have passed on

*I yé i ébgednoyak ode ngemwen*  
That is why we offer this song

*Émno shketot wa je zhyat ibe shpensegok*  
That his journey will go well where he goes above

*Iw énaj moyan*  
That's all I have to say

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

By Don Perrot

### Stephen R. Peltier Peltier Family

Stephen R. Peltier, 65, passed away at Birchwood Terrace Healthcare in Burlington, Vermont, during the late evening hours of Feb. 28, 2015, following an upper respiratory illness. Steve was born in Shawnee, Oklahoma, on Oct. 28, 1949, to Gerald L. and Virginia R. Peltier. He graduated from Burlington High School in 1969, and after a brief stint in the U.S. Navy, moved back to Oklahoma for a number of years. He returned to Vermont in 1985 and worked a number of jobs around the area, his favorite being Velan Valve. Steve is survived by siblings, Michael Peltier and Catherine, Dan and Dawn Peltier, and their daughter, Kate; and Laurie Peltier and her son, Scott. No viewings were scheduled, and a springtime burial ceremony was planned at the convenience of his family. Arrangements were by Stephen C. Gregory & Son of South Burlington.

### Thomas Andrew Mitchell Milot/Beaubien Family



Thomas Andrew Mitchell was born Aug. 14, 1934, in Wanette, Oklahoma, to Agnes Louise and Andrew Augustus Mitchell. He graduated in 1954 from Central High School in Oklahoma City. He met Marie Stucker in 1957. He took his grandfather to Dr. Hayes for an appointment at the office where Marie worked. He asked for her phone number, and on June 28, 1958, they were married. They lived the majority of their lives in Del City, Oklahoma. Tom worked for the Oklahoma City Water Department for more than 50 years, retiring on April 1, 2008. He loved fishing and tinkering in the garage, and he loved his family.

He was preceded in death by his father and mother; and a brother, Kenneth Hey. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Marie; his sons, Steve Mitchell and wife Vickie, David Mitchell, and daughter Deanna Berry and

husband Ron; grandchildren, Stephanie, Tiffany, Maylee, Gentry and Pierce; a great-grandchild, Brycen, and one more on the way; and his sister and brother-in-law, Mary and Jack Shaw. Services were held Jan. 31, 2022, at the Wanette Cemetery under the direction of John M. Ireland & Son Funeral Home in Moore.

### Robert Ellsworth Precure Beaubien Family



Robert "Bob" Ellsworth Precure passed away peacefully on Friday, March 18, 2022, in Oklahoma City.

Bob was born on July 14, 1930, in Choctaw, Oklahoma, to Robert Boaz and Rena Mae (Wickens) Precure. He graduated high school from Muleshoe High School in Muleshoe, Texas, in 1948. Bob lettered in track, baseball and boxing, and he was an all-around natural athlete. Bob was a radio man in the Navy, and he would continue to tap out Morse code his entire life. He attended the New Mexico Military Institute and graduated from Oklahoma City University where he played baseball. At OCU, he met the love of his life, Kathryn Ann Jones, and they were married on Feb. 26, 1956. They were married 59 years, until Kathy's death in 2015.

Bob was in the grocery business at Precure's Grocery in the Britton, Oklahoma, area for many years. After retiring from Sears Roebuck & Co., he took on a new job working with his sons and daughter at Primary Structure in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Bob was blessed with so many abilities. He had a great ear for music and a beautiful singing voice. He was a natural competitor in all things and was unbelievably good at all of them.

Bob is survived by his six children, Mary (Dan) Waters, Cindy (Steven) Swann, Rob (Angie) Precure, Rick (Claudia) Precure, Lynda Barnes and Amy (Shannan) Stewart; his 16 grandchildren, Sara, Susan, Becca,

Lizzie, Annie, Katy, Molly, Emily, Paige, Cole, Kaitlyn, Jimmy, Drew, Ethan, Evan and Erin; and 10 great-grandchildren. Preceding him in death were his loving wife, his parents, his brother Don and his son-in-law David.

He was a wonderful and loving Dad and PawPaw. He loved to have fun, and he was not shy about sharing how much God blessed his life.

### Don Mulanax Levier Family



Donald (Don) Ray Mulanax "Paso," age 64, of Emmett, Kansas, died peacefully at his home surrounded by loved ones on Saturday, March 5, 2022. He was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer six months prior. He was born Aug. 24, 1957, in Topeka, Kansas, to Irvan Mulanax and Regina Hanrahan Safarik. He grew up in Topeka, Delia and St. Marys communities and graduated from St. Marys High School in 1975. He was a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and was very proud of his Native heritage.

Don worked at St. Marys Lumber Co. for many years and was the Emmett city manager before he made his dream a reality as the owner/operator of Dry Creekbed Saloon in Emmett in 2013.

Don loved live music, playing different instruments and was hailed as the greatest prankster. He loved showing off new gadgets, "junk" he got at garage sales or off a clearance rack. He was a loyal friend, loving husband, father and Papa. His favorite role was being Papa to all his grandchildren who adored him.

Don married Connie Sue Keller Jeanneret on Dec. 17, 1983. With this union, he gained toddler twins, a son John and daughter Erin, whom he loved as his own. A son Levi was born in 1985. Connie preceded him in death in 2012, and Levi preceded him in death in 2017.

Don married Mandy Babb on Jan. 1, 2017. She survives him of the home. He gained two more children and more grandchildren, whom he loved unconditionally.

Don was preceded in death by his father, Irvan Mulanax, in 2010; stepmother, Janet Sue Thompson Mulanax, in 1995; stepfather, Delbert Safarik, in 1998; and infant brother, Robert Duane Mulanax, in 1955.

He is survived by his mother, Regina Safarik, Topeka, Kansas; his children, John Jeanneret and Erin Jeanneret Lacey (Matt Ross), Emmett, Kansas, Hunter Ramage, Mayetta, Kansas, and Harleigh Ramage Mathe, Hoyt, Kansas; his grandchildren, Jayden "Slick," Emma "Babe," Landon "Pando," Lilee "Lils," Donovan "Bubs," Kohlter, Isabella, Kasen and Jax; his beloved granddog, D.O.G; his brothers, Richard Mulanax, Wamego, Kansas, Mark Mulanax (Anna), Topeka, Kansas, Gary Mulanax (Shelly), Hoyt, Kansas, Chris Mulanax (Dave), San Francisco, California, D.J. Goss and Mike Goss, Topeka, Kansas, and Willie Goss, Everett, Washington; his sisters, Deb Bussart (Erv), Topeka, Kansas, and Janie Quiett (Kenny), Delia, Kansas; and many nieces and nephews.

Don was cremated and services were held Sunday, March 20, 2022, at 5 p.m. at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Community Building in Rossville, Kansas, with a dinner and smudge ceremony. And, because Don requested he go out with a bang, a short finale was held immediately after service at Dry Creekbed Saloon in Emmett, Kansas.

### Janice Ann Dorsey Bourassa Family



Janice Ann (Wier) Dorsey, 65, of Madison, Alabama, passed away peacefully in her home on April 3, 2022. Janice was born in Fort Worth, Texas, on Dec. 21, 1956, to Dee Wier and Mildred Schimmel. Ms. Dorsey was a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

Ms. Dorsey enjoyed a personal relationship with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; she could be found in daily prayer and reading her Bible. Ms. Dorsey's greatest joy in her later years was being a grandmother. She spent as much time with her grandchildren as possible and will always be remembered lovingly as "Nana."

Preceding her in death are her parents; stepfather, Harold Henry; brothers, Jim Turner, Jim Gilbert and Jerry, Kenneth and Doyle Wier; a son, Scott Jason Curts; and a daughter, Anna Marie Massey.

Survivors include sons, James Timothy Garner and Harold Allen Martin; daughter, Sabrina Rene Fisher; and nine grandchildren, Dillon and Paige Fisher, Tyler, Riley and Ryker Garner, Sophie Curts, Caroline Grimaldi, and Kaitlyn, Hailey, and Ashlyn (Massey) Martin.

Memorial services were held at Stumpff Funeral Home in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, on Saturday, April 16.

### John Harrison Garver Darling Family



John Harrison Garver, age 25, of West Jefferson, Ohio, passed away on Monday, March 28, 2022. John was an active member of the Jeep group "MOJO," formerly employed with Sutphen before starting his own off-road company called Salt Creek Offroad.

John is survived by his loving wife, Olivia Garver; son, Weston Garver; parents, Lewis and Susan Garver; father and mother-in-law, Frank and Kimberly; his grandparents, Marvin and Rita Walker; grandmothers, Andrea Mast and Carole Reed; brother, Chris (Andrea) Garver; sister, Danielle Garver; fur baby, Razzie; and many loving relatives and friends.

Following John's wishes, he was an organ donor, and memorial contributions may be made to LifeLine of Ohio.

## Submitting obituaries

To submit an obituary, please send a word document with **no more than 300 words**, a 300dpi photo and a contact phone number to

hownikan@potawatomi.org

## CPN burial assistance through Tribal Rolls

The \$2,000 CPN Burial Assistance Fund is automatically available to all enrolled CPN members. You may fill out a burial assistance fund form if you would like for us to keep it on file in case of any change in resolutions.

**Please note:** Once a CPN tribal member has passed, the Tribal Rolls office must be notified in order for CPN to provide burial funding. Information and instructions for the burial process will be sent to the next of kin and will be discussed then.

For more information, please call Tribal Rolls at 405-878-5835 or email [tribalrolls@potawatomi.org](mailto:tribalrolls@potawatomi.org).