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GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

YSG GWY A&P Official News Publication of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma February 2025

Dept. of Interior Solicitor's Office Releases M-Opinion Reaffirming the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians' Jurisdiction on the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation

Historic Announcement Affirms UKB is Successor in Interest on the Cherokee Reservation

By: Troy Littledeer | @troylittledeer

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. —The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma (UKB) has praised the U.S. Department of the Interior for officially reaffirming its jurisdiction over the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation. In a Memorandum Opinion, Solicitor Robert T. Anderson, the chief legal officer for the Department of the Interior, has concluded that the rights over the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation, once held by the historic Cherokee Nation, are now equally shared by both the UKB and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (CNO).

This determination by the Department of the Interior is expected to dispel any misinformation regarding the relationship between the CNO and UKB, stating clearly that both are equal successors to the historic Cherokee Nation, functioning as independent sovereigns.

UKB Chief Jeff Wacoche described the decision as "a victory for righteousness and justice," emphasizing the end of unnecessary tribal antagonism. "I thank the Department of Interior for this determination, placing our Tribe on a renewed path towards prosperity," Wacoche said, also recognizing the tireless efforts of the UKB community and supporters.

UKB Assistant Chief Amos Ketcher echoed this sentiment, stating, "Our Keetoowah ancestors are smiling down on us today," and highlighted the collective effort to reclaim jurisdiction as a new avenue for prosperity for future generations.

UKB Secretary Caleb Grimmett-Smith noted the decision as a significant step toward securing opportunities and safety for tribal members, saying, "This reaffirmation of the UKB's jurisdiction over the Cherokee Reservation is a leap towards our realization of both."



Photo credit: courtesy photo.

UKB Treasurer Sonya Gourd spoke of the UKB's resilience, likening their struggle to that of David against Goliath, and expressed relief and optimism about the future now that their rights have been acknowledged.

Victoria Holland, the UKB's Congressional Delegate, emphasized the need for collaboration, saying, "This determination mirrors what my future colleagues in Congress know to be true: that the UKB is every bit as much Cherokee Indian as the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma." Holland called for a collaborative approach to address common issues, walking forward as equal stewards of the reservation.

Klint Cowan, the attorney general for UKB, praised the Department of the Interior for its thorough review and courage in affirming the UKB's jurisdiction. "From a legal and historical perspective, the DOI got this right," Cowan said, hoping this would end myths about the relationship between the CNO and UKB, affirming their status as equal sovereigns.

The UKB's announcement calls for reconciliation and cooperation with the CNO to enhance public safety and welfare on the reservation, urging CNO citizens to push their elected officials towards a cooperative rather than hostile path.

"May God continue to bless the whole of the Cherokee People," concluded the UKB's statement, expressing hope for a unified and prosperous future for all Cherokees.

UKB Council Sworn in



By Staff Reports | @UKBMedia

TAHLEQUAH, OKLA., — The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma tribe embraces a new era of optimism as newly elected tribal officials were sworn into office on January 4, 2025, at the Tribal Inauguration held at the UKB's Venue in Tahlequah.

UKB Delegate to Congress designate Victoria Holland served as the master of ceremonies for the event. Holland acknowledged the community and honored guests that gathered to celebrate Chief Jeff Wacoche, Assistant Chief Amos Ketcher, Treasurer Sonja Gourd, Secretary Caleb Grimmett-Smith, and the newly inaugurated members of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Council.

The UKB Color Guard presented the colors while UKB Media's Lani Hansen performed the National Anthem in Cherokee on a day that's focus was on securing the tribe's sovereign rights. Judge Charles Tripp administered the oaths of office, with chosen family members holding the Bible as each councilor took their oaths.

"The Keetoowah people have always understood that our strength lies in our unity, our principles, and our commitment to each other," New Chief Jeff Wacoche said. "As we gather here today, let us remember that our history is filled with trials, triumphs, and, above all, an unbreakable spirit."

Wacoche previously served as

assistant chief before January 4.

Those sworn in with Wacoche were newly elected Assistant Chief Amos Ketcher, incumbent Treasurer Sonja Gourd, Secretary Caleb Grimmett-Smith, who replaced Joyce Fourkiller-Hawk, and the members of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Council:

- Representative Cliff Wofford, Cooweescoowee District
- Representative Frankie Still, Flint District
- Representative Willie Christie, Goingsnake District
- Representative Janelle Adair, Illinois District
- Representative Tishaleta Guevara, Delaware District
- Representative Charles Smoke, Saline District
- Representative Donald Adair, Sequoyah District
- Representative Sammy Allen, Tahlequah District

No one filed for Canadian District. The seat that was formerly held by Eddie Sacks. Sacks passed away in June of 2024.

Assistant Chief Amos Ketcher called the inauguration ceremony, "a commitment to our shared heritage, our collective struggles, and the path forward for the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians," as he focused in on housing; education; public safety, including the Lighthouse Police Department; efficient audits; health care; and the shifting of the Purchased and Referred Care program from the Cherokee Nation to the UKB.

"As we look to the future, our mission to serve our people remains unchanged," Ketcher said.

The UKB Tribal Council Meetings are the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 AM. Follow the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma on Facebook for the most current information.

The UKB officially launches the PRC Program



Caleen Bolin, is the point of contact whenever patients need to be referred to providers.

By LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- The United Keetoowah Band recently announced its Purchased and Referred Care Program, commonly known as Contract Health Services to provide services for UKB members.

After receiving funding allocations from the Indian Health Service (IHS), the launch of the program is a momentous occasion. It marks the beginning of a new era in which the tribe can offer tailored, responsive and culturally attuned health services to the tribal members. The program is a promise of improved accessibility and quality in healthcare delivery.

Under the Indian Self-Determination Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), PRC is a medical referral program for specialty care services that are not available in an IHS or tribally operated program. It is important to know that all UKB members will continue to be eligible for direct patient care services at any IHS or Cherokee Nation Health Services facility, as well as any other tribally operated health facility that services all tribes under

ISDEAA.

With the new program, UKB will be utilized when a provider from an IHS or tribally operated health facility refers an eligible patient for specialty care or for other necessary medical services not offered or otherwise accessible. The following guidance is provided, which is standard PRC program protocols: Information for referring providers - Point of Contact: Caleen Bolin - Phone: 918-871-2833 - Fax: 918-414-4006 - Email: ukbprc@ukb-nsn.gov.

The PRC Program will provide services such as Inpatient Hospital Stay & Physician Charges, Outpatient services, Physician Fees & Medical Specialist Fees, Dental Services – advanced or oral surgery, Medical and Surgical Supplies, Optometry Services, Patient Travel Reimburses (Priority I Care Only), Medical Emergencies, Pharmacy Services and Dental Services.

PRC is neither an entitlement program nor insurance plan and is to be considered the payer of last resort. Purchased and Referred Care (PRC) includes resources for the provision of medical services outside the scope of the direct care program.



Ronny Livers, PRC Program's Account Representative.

Due to limitations of PRC resources, funds must be managed in accordance with established medical priorities. PRC resources are used for referred services, "referrals," and emergency services.

In order to be eligible for the program, you must meet the requirements: 1. Eligibility is limited to exclusive UKB tribal members only, and 2. Must reside on a permanent basis within the UKB PRC Service Delivery Area, which includes the following counties: Adair, Cherokee, Craig, Delaware, Nowata, Rogers, Sequoyah, and Washington Counties, and the portions of Mayes, McIntosh, Muskogee, Ottawa, Tulsa, and Wagoner Counties in Oklahoma that are within the geographic boundaries of the UKB's Tribal Districts.

The following are also eligible: Exclusive UKB member that is a full-time boarding school, college, vocational, or other academic students who are temporarily living away from the Service Delivery Area specifically for the purpose of education. Exclusive UKB member who is temporarily away from the service Delivery Area due to travel, employment, etc. Exclusive UKB children placed in foster care away from the service Delivery Area by order of a court of competent authority and who were eligible for PRC at the time of the court order shall continue to be eligible. A non-Indian pregnant woman carrying the child of an exclusive UKB member is eligible for PRC care during pregnancy and for 6 weeks postpartum for OB-related care. Non-Indian adopted children, stepchildren, and foster children of an otherwise eligible exclusive UKB parent.

"We are excited to have this program within the tribe and see it grow as we plan to add more staff," Bolin said.

Information about the PRC Program can be found on the website at <https://www.ukb-nsn.gov/prc-program>, or contact 918-871-2833.



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A New Year, A New Chapter for the Keetoowah People

By: UKB Chief Jeff Wacoche
Siyo,

Happy New Year! As we step into 2025, I want to share my heartfelt wishes for health, happiness, and success for you and your families. This year is full of promise for our United Keetoowah Band, and together, we will work toward a brighter, stronger future for our tribe and community.

I want to extend a warm welcome to our incoming Tribal Council. I am excited to work alongside each of you as we continue to build on the progress of those who came before us. By setting aside personal differences and focusing on the goal of bettering our tribe, we can create a legacy of opportunity, resilience, and unity for future generations.

Our top priority remains providing opportunities for Keetoowah citizens. We believe that when we rise together, we create stronger relationships within our tribe and with those outside of it, while steadfastly preserving our sovereignty as a Tribal Nation. Let's continue to walk the path of progress hand in hand, lifting one another up as we grow.

This month, we celebrated the inauguration of our Tribal Council. I want to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to making the event so special.

Thank you to the team at Echota Behavioral Health for your hard work in planning the ceremony. We are also grateful to Local Bank for your sup-



Chief Chat

JEFF WACOCHÉ
Principal Chief
jwacoche@ukb-nsn.gov

port and to Justin Phillips for providing the delicious catering. Specifically, I would like to thank Marquana Fourkiller, Caleb Grimm-Smith, Jennifer Leep, Jennifer Cole-Robinson, Delia Smith, and Grayci Spradlin. Special recognition goes to our drum singers, Drowning Creek; The Girty Family; our Honor Guard: Hominy Litteldave and Seneca Macintosh; and Mvhayv Locust for helping us honor our culture and heritage. Your contributions made this event a beautiful celebration of who we are as a people.

One of the most exciting developments as we enter 2025 is the launch of our Purchased and Referred Care (PRC) program, also known as Contract Health. This new program allows us to provide better, more accessible healthcare for our tribal members.

Thanks to funding from the Indian Health Service, the PRC program is now available for specialty care services that are not offered at IHS or tribally operated facilities. Keetoowah citizens will continue to receive direct patient care at IHS and Cherokee Nation Health Services facilities, but now, when referrals for specialty care are needed, our PRC program will step in to support those services.

For more information, please visit

our website at UKB-NSN.gov, call Calen Bolin in our PRC office at 918-871-2833, or email us at ukbprc@ukb-nsn.gov. Updates will also be shared on our Facebook page, so be sure to follow us there.

This year, we will see many exciting announcements as our businesses continue to grow and create new opportunities. Keep an eye on the tribal website for job postings, new facility openings, and business acquisitions including the recent purchase of Oklahoma Station on Highway 82 near the banks of Lake Tenkiller. Tribal preference will continue to guide our efforts as we expand employment opportunities for Keetoowah citizens.

Assistant Chief Amos Ketcher and I are committed to working closely with our Tribal Council members and officers to serve you. Our focus is not just on governance, it is on service and strengthening the bonds that make us a tribal nation. We encourage you to be active in tribal government and in your community. By helping one another in our day-to-day lives, we can rekindle the spirit of unity that has carried us through generations.

As we honor our traditions, let us also embrace the tools and technology that will help us thrive in the future. Together, we can build a Keetoowah Nation that is strong, prosperous, and united for years to come.

Wado,

Chief Jeff Wacoche

Native Fable Movie Production Stars UKB Members in Short Film

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- The United Keetoowah Band is full of talent, as Housing Inspector Marcus Thompson and Cooweescoowee District Representative Clifford Wofford have been sparing time in front of the camera.

Thompson and Wofford, both have had their fair share of being seen on recent films like "Tulsa King." Thompson was also a background actor in the 2023 Western/Thriller movie "Killers of the Flower Moon." They both have helped with several short films in the local area.

Recently, Thompson and Wofford have been using their acting skills with Native Fable Movie Productions under the direction of Christopher Coursey. Native Fable is an independent film and video content production based out of Tahlequah.

The latest project that was filmed was for "Bison Quest." This short film is based on a group of Native friends who go back in time of bison hunting, as they wake up in a field.

"Chris had talked to me about this short film a while ago, and I told him it sounded like a good idea," Thompson said.

Not going into too many details about the film, "Bison Quest" will be shown in the future to be seen on a streaming device. "Bison Quest" is starring Bodee Jimmerson, Marcus Thompson, Michael Sloan, Casey Riggs, Clifford Wofford and Christopher Coursey.

Native Fable Movie Production can be found on Facebook, for its latest updates.



Cast of "Bison Quest" pictured L-R: Bodee Jimmerson, Michael Sloan, Clifford Wofford, Casey Riggs, Christopher Coursey and Marcus Thompson



UKB representatives in "Bison Quest" Clifford Wofford, Bodee Jimmerson, Michael Sloan and Marcus Thompson



Marcus Thompson and Michael Sloan review script while on break.



Clifford Wofford being filmed as the "Chief" in the short film.

BOOK SWAP

EVERY 3RD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

9am-4pm

New books, old books come and browse

— UKB EDUCATION CENTER —

Stay warm during the winter, with firewood from the UKB Environmental Wood Program

The Wood Program offers free firewood to exclusive UKB members in all districts.



Colton Nofire, Brandon Eagle, Solid Waste Manager Robert Downing, David Collins, Stuart Washington and Director Merinda Reamy

By LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- The United Keetoowah Band Environmental Wood Program continues to bring service to the people as we are in the middle of winter season.

The program which began four years ago, has seen a bit of a growth and maintains staying busy all year long. The program consists of four woodcutters on staff David Collins, Brandon Eagle, Colton Nofire and Stuart Washington, directed under Merinda Reamy.

“These guys start cutting wood during the summer,” Reamy said. “We get calls from tribal and non-tribal members after storms to come out and clean out downed trees.”

The wood program does not come out and cut trees down, they only report to those who have trees down or around the yard. Summer-time is when the woodcutters start stocking up for the winter.

The staff began delivering firewood in December to 74 tribal members totaling out to 222 ricks of wood. With the first snowstorm of 2025, in three and a half days they delivered to 42 members totaling out to 126 ricks.

“I do appreciate the following staff for helping during a busy week getting ready for the snowstorm: HP staff Curtis Hummingbird, Buck Nofire and Todd Downing,” Reamy said. “Also, we want to thank Adam Chuculate the Director of Maintenance for letting us borrow his trailer.”

The UKB Environmental Wood Program offers free firewood to exclusive UKB members in all districts. If you need firewood, please contact



The wood staff restock by cutting/splitting the wood.



Woodcutter Brandon Eagle uses a tool to help split the wood.



The Wood Program donated firewood to a local small movie set, which will feature UKB Housing Inspector Marcus Thompson and Cooweescoowee District Rep Cliff Wofford.

your district representative for an application or contact Merinda Reamy at 918-871-2764.

Dondi Adkins Teaches Fry Bread Class

“Make your food with good feelings, because all those good feelings are going into the food and everybody getting your bread feels good. That’s why mom or grandma’s food is so good. It really is the love that makes it great,” Dondi Adkins

Marilyn Craig, Museum Marketing Coordinator

Dondi Adkins has been making frybread for several decades. She shared her knowledge with UKB employees at a recent “Lunch and Learn” at the John Hair Culture Center and Keetoowah Museum. Dondi said she had started making frybread when she was 16 or 17. Her dad had passed away and her mom, UKB Tradition Keeper Betty Holcomb, worked to provide for her five daughters. “As the oldest, I helped cook and take care of the girls when mom was at work,” she began. We were stair steps, with about two years between us – she was strict, but a good, nurturing strict. She’s always been a good mom,” she said.

Adkins said that she really got into making frybread when she got married at twenty. Her husband was Otoe, Delaware and Quapaw. “They make their frybread different. What’s the difference in a Cherokee made Indian taco and an Otoe one? One thing is grease. They use lard. And a lot of it. Deep fried bread is a little bit lighter and fluffier and Cherokee bread is a little bit denser.

I think it’s about the same amount of baking powder. But It’s not just salt in the bread taste. I guess it’s the little bit of sugar and little bit of milk they add. My mother-in-law said sugar is what makes your bread a little browner and crispier.”

She said her mother-in-law was a full-blood lady and when they moved to Red Rock, she thought she knew everything about making bread, until she had to cook with her for a funeral feast. “That’s when I found out there was so much more to making bread than just mixing your dough. I made bread for about two hundred people before the funeral and that’s a lot of bread. That’s about twenty pounds of flour,” she said.

“The first time I had to help my Aunt Blondie; we were cooking for a funeral feast. When you start making bread with those women there, you start on the bottom. That means you are the bread cooker and that means you stand there by the grease and flip the bread, take it out and put it into your basket. I was taking the bread out and I was just tossing it into the basket. I was about ready to pick one out and throw it down into the



Dondi Adkins, (right) ladles out dough for frybread. (left) Raelie Grayson, Ann Guinn, Pretty Sky Wilden, Shirley Sam, and Janelle Adair.



Mouthwatering, golden, brown fry bread!

basket again and she basically kind of slapped my hand and told me, ‘You do not throw food.’

“My aunt said this bread is to be made with love, because this is going to feed people who are mourning, and we must have all kinds of good feelings into this bread. You do not throw my bread. She said when you’re making bread, don’t go in with negative feelings, because your bad feelings are going to your meal, which will make bread turn out poorly. Make your food with good feelings, because all those good feelings are going into the food and everybody getting your bread feels good. That’s why mom or grandma’s food is so good. It really is the love that makes it great,” Dondi concluded.

Giduwa Cherokee News

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Giduwa Cherokee News

P.O. Box 746, OK 74465.

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“Lunch and Learn” Cultural Revitalization Class Makes Frybread

“I’m really glad that this round of classes has included traditional cooking. I enjoy cooking and learning all the different ways people prepare traditional dishes!”-Toni Workman

The John Hair Cultural Center and Keetoowah Museum held a staff development, cultural revitalization session on how to make frybread. The session was one of a series of monthly cultural classes for employees. Ten UKB employees and five museum staff gathered in the classroom of the museum and then went outside where there were two six-foot tables which were set up with a medium-sized bowl of flour for each participant.

The class was taught by Keetoowah elder Dondi Adkins. She said that most people she knows use self-rising flour and a bit of salt and warm water. Some use regular flour and water. Though that is the standard for most, she likes to use warm milk for hers, and a small sprinkle of sugar. She said the sugar makes the bread a bit crispier.

Each participant worked their dough until it was a medium consistency and felt sticky, then they put the lid on their dough, so they could take it with them and cook it at home.

Adkins had already prepared a large bowl of dough, and had let the dough set, covered, overnight. She said letting the dough rest is a tip that she feels makes a difference. So, each person got a large ladle of her dough to add flour to and shape into a frybread.

Each person patted their frybread from left hand to right hand and back and forth until it was the size they wanted. Then, one or two at a time, they gently laid the bread into the hot grease. In a short time, the bread needed to be turned and, in a bit longer, the golden-brown bread was taken out of the grease.

Class members took their cooked bread down to the classroom and made an Indian Taco with all the fix ins. Museum employee, Kyndal Aimerson said, "It was interesting to see other ways of creating frybread, even though I have made it before, I still learned something new."

UKB Roads/Construction and Transit Director, Toni Workman said, “What really intrigued me was that if you leave your dough sitting out for a few hours it will make your frybread fluffier. I’ve been making frybread for years and I didn’t know that little trick!

I’m really glad that this round of classes has included traditional cooking. I enjoy cooking and learning all the different ways people prepare traditional dishes! And it’s just a good time getting to know your coworkers on a more personal level.”

Eating their own delicious Indian taco was a great way to end the class. These employee cultur-

al revitalization classes are funded by a Tribal Opioid Response grant from Echota Behavioral Health. The grant pays for cultural supplies and teachers for the monthly “Lunch and Learn” program for this fiscal year. The next cultural revitalization class will be Feb. 19, and the class will learn to make basket starts with Tradition Keeper Janelle Adair.

For more information, call Barbara Girty Foster on (918) 316-5352.



**Tribal Opioid
RESPONSE**
Healing our Nations Together



Dondi Adkins, (left) talks to the “Lunch and Learn” class as they stir frybread.(top of photo) Kyndal Aimerson, Rolanda Aimerson, Toni Workman, Ann Guinn, and Pretty Sky Wilden.



Keetoowah Maintenance Employee Shirley Sam shows off her frybread.



Museum employee Raelie Grayson with her cooked taco and dough.

Elders' Circle

Welcome to the new Keetoowah Elders’ Circle! This is a designated space for sharing information about the wisdom, knowledge, and experiences of our tribal elders. Please send us your elder family member highlights. We can recognize elder members’ birthdays, anniversaries, share funny family stories about the old days and favorite recipes, post family reunion announcements or new additions to the family. Send Elder stories and announcements to: media@ukb-nsn.gov.

Other Elder News:

Next Elder Committee Meeting will be held at UKB Title VI-Jim Proctor Elder Nutrition Center Tahlequah, OK
January 13 | 12:00 PM
Everyone Welcome!

Elder Committee Holds First Meeting of New Year

By LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

The UKB Elder Committee held their first meeting of the year on Monday, January 13, 2025, at noon at the Jim Proctor Elder Nutrition Center. Elders began gathering and eating lunch at 11:30 am and were served a great hot meal for a cold day – Bacon, Lettuce and Tomato sandwiches and potato soup. After lunch, the group moved into the activity room.

Elder Committee Chair Lois Fuller opened the meeting. Other elder committee officers in attendance included Sammy Still, Vice Chair; Barbara Girty Foster, Secretary; and Mary Girty, Treasurer. There was a couple dozen elders in attendance.

The UKB Elder Committee was established in 2007 at the request of late Chief George Wickliffe for the purpose of informing and advising the Chief and Council about elder issues and concerns. Former Chief John Hair was named Committee Chair along with Dora Grayson, Barbara Girty Foster and Lois Fuller making up the original committee. Committee members received small stipends to help with gas for elders to make it to the monthly meetings.

The Tribe also paid for elders to go on field trips representing the UKB at various events, but after the casino closed in 2013 the stipends ended so many elders were not able to attend. However, the committee has continued to meet voluntarily (except during the pandemic) and agreed to host fundraisers like selling tee shirts and raffles at Celebration to provide handmade condolence cards with a small monetary gift to the family.

Another program they are raising funding for is the opportunity for the committee and elder volunteers to attend the National Indian Council on Aging conference, held this year in Durant,

Oklahoma.

The National Indian Council on Aging was founded in 1976 by members of the National Tribal Chairmen’s Association that called for a national organization that focused on aging American Indians and Alaskan Natives. The mission of NICOA is to advocate for improved comprehensive health, social services, and economic well-being for American Indian and Alaska Native elders.

Chief Jeff Wacoche and Assistant Chief Amos Ketcher were in attendance and passed out information on the recent funding allocation to the tribe from Indian Health Services which has launched the Purchased and Referred Care (PRC) Program. For more information, please contact the tribe and ask for the PRC office.



Keetoowah Maintenance Employee Shirley Sam shows off her frybread.

The elders talked about options for fund raisers including a Valentine Drawing, Indian Taco Sale, and other fundraising activities. In the coming weeks, look for announcements on UKB’s Facebook page and website about upcoming elder fundraising and events.

The next quarterly meeting of the Elder Committee is scheduled for the third Monday in April, or April 21st and will be held at the Jim Proctor Elder Nutrition Center from noon-1 p.m. For more information, call Barbara Girty Foster at 918-871-2794.



Tribal elders discuss possible fundraisers and activities for the coming months

Driving Opportunity: UKB Federal Corporation Teams Up with CDLU Truck Driver Training School

By Jeremy Combs,
UKB Federal Corporation

The United Keetoowah Band Federal Corporation (UKBFC) is proud to support CDLU of Oklahoma Truck Driver Training School, a nationally recognized leader in CDL certification, as part of our ongoing commitment to empowering our community through education and career development. By providing access to our parking lot during times when weather conditions make CDLU's practice area unusable, UKBFC demonstrates its dedication to fostering partnerships within the community.

CDLU of Oklahoma has established itself as one of Oklahoma's top CDL training programs, boasting a 98% graduation rate. According to Trainer Garry Latty, 68% of students secure employment before graduation,

with the remainder finding jobs within three weeks of graduation. Known for its innovative pre-trip check method, CDLU has earned national recognition in just six years of operation.

Dr. Leslie Hannah, United Keetoowah Band (UKB) Education Director, further expresses the tribe's commitment to education is further reflected in its broader efforts. Dr. Hannah stated that United Keetoowah Band has partnered with three CDL schools, and since 2023 helped nine tribal citizens earn their CDL licenses, including Tribal Council Member Frankie Still. Notably, one student earned Arbuckle Truck Driving School's prestigious "Top Dawg" award.

"Simple gestures like collaborating with CDLU of Oklahoma to

facilitate their training reflect our dedication to fostering education and economic growth within our community," said Woody Anderson, Executive Director of the UKB Federal Corporation. "These partnerships are a prime example of what can be achieved when organizations unite with a shared purpose, and we encourage others to explore ways to contribute to impactful initiatives that strengthen the foundations of our Tribe and community."

UKB Chief Jeff Wacoche, the son of a truck driver, also visited the CDLU of Oklahoma training session to express the Tribe's support. "Truck drivers are the backbone of our nation's economy," Chief Wacoche said. "By working with schools like CDLU of Oklahoma, we're opening doors to rewarding careers for tribal

and non-tribal members alike, while addressing underrepresentation in the industry. With only 0.4% of CDL drivers having tribal affiliation, this collaboration represents progress toward greater inclusion."

With wages for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers ranging from \$35,300 to \$75,220 annually, CDL programs provide a clear path to financial stability and career fulfillment. The UKB Federal Corporation remains steadfast in its mission to create opportunities that uplift individuals and strengthen the community.

Those in Tahlequah and surrounding areas looking to earn a CDL license can find more information by contacting ICTC Adult Career Development Administrator Katey Blair at 918-348-7960.



Kinley Buckner recognized and congratulated



Kinley Buckner with David Hardin (Left) and Tom Woods (Photo by Troy Littledeer)

STILWELL, OKLA., — Kinley Buckner, was recently commended for being a part of DreamStar Connections by Oklahoma State Representative David Hardin (R) from the 86th district and Oklahoma State Senator Tom Woods (R) from the 4th district.

DreamStar is an organization that strives to teach leadership skills and build up self-esteem and character training in young adolescence in hope of empowering them for the future.

Buckner was recognized and congratulated for her participation in the DreamStar Co-Ed and her dedication to being a positive role-model for others.

DreamStar was founded in 2009.

Buckner is a UKB Member and the granddaughter of outgoing Sequoyah District Representative Levi Catron.




STILWELL OFFICE HOURS
MONDAY - FRIDAY
MORNING
*****8:00 - 11:00 AM*****
MONDAY - THURSDAY
AFTERNOON
*****2:00 - 5:00PM*****
******CLOSED FRIDAY AFTERNOON (AFTER 11:00 OFFICE IS CLOSED)******
STILWELL OFFICE - 918-871-2814
EMAIL - mballard@ukb-nsn.gov
TAHLEQUAH MAIN OFFICE - 918-871-2800
FRANKIE STILL (FLINT DISTRICT) 918-507-1822
WILLIE CHRISTIE (GOINGSNAKE) 918-822-3803
FOR HUMAN SERVICES CALL 918-871-2800
FOR HOUSING CALL 918-871-2773
TAG
EVERY WEDNESDAY
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM



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UNITED KEETOOWAH BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS

18300 W Keetoowah Circle, Tahlequah, OK -74464

P.O. Box 746, Tahlequah, OK - 74465 [Mailing]

Phone: (918) 871-2800 ♦ www.ukb-nsn.gov

January 22, 2025

COUNCIL

Jeff Wacoche

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Chief

Amos Ketcher

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Assistant Chief

Caleb Grimmatt-Smith

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Secretary

Sonja Gourd

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Treasure

Vacant

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Canadian District

Cliff Wofford

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Coowescoowee District

Tishaleta Smith-Guevara

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Delaware District

Frankie Still

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Flint District

Willie Christie

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Goingsnake District

Janelle Adair

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Illinois District

Charles Smoke

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Saline District

Donald Adair

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Sequoyah District

Sammy Allen

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Tahlequah District

Dear Cherokee Brothers and Sisters,

A new path lies before us on the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation.

On January 17, 2025, the United States Department of the Interior officially reaffirmed UKB jurisdiction on the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation. Through a Memorandum Opinion, Interior Solicitor Robert T. Anderson, (<https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/m37084-cherokee.pdf>) concludes that the rights over the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation once exercised by the historic Cherokee Nation continue today through both the UKB and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) equally.

It is my hope that this determination ends any misinformation about the relationship between the CNO and UKB. This is the truth: The UKB and CNO are equal successors to the historic Cherokee Nation, equal and independent sovereigns in every way.

This determination creates opportunity. From education to broadband, and to seating a Cherokee delegate in Congress, I am hopeful for a renewed relationship of collaboration between our Tribes.

While this is a moment of great victory for the Keetoowah Cherokee people and for the truth, we know challenges will unfortunately remain. I am clear eyed that the leadership of the CNO has often chosen to stand in the way of progress for the Keetoowah people, and I believe that destructive proclivity is not shared by CNO tribal members.

Now is the time for reconciliation. It is my hope that the elected officials of the CNO will come together in good faith to collaborate with the UKB to protect public safety and advance prosperity and welfare on the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation for the benefit of *all* Cherokee people.

To my CNO brothers and sisters: your voice is powerful. I call upon you to reach out to your leadership and encourage them to work with the UKB. Tell them to replace hostility with cooperation, division with unity, and conflict with partnership. Together, we can expel the spirit of division that has plagued us far too long and create a shared path forward for future generations.

May God continue to bless the whole of the Cherokee people.

Wado,

Jeff Wacoche

Chief – United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians

Call to Action:

Contact your elected officials in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma today and urge them to embrace cooperation with the UKB. Let them know you stand for unity and progress for all Cherokee people.