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GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

YSG GWY AWP Official News Publication of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma November 2025

Newly crowned Miss and Jr. Miss Keetoowah to represent the next two years

Introducing Miss Keetoowah Grayci Spradlin and Jr. Miss Keetoowah J'Leeanna Ramsey



2025 Miss Keetoowah Grayci Spradlin

LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- The United Keetoowah Band would like to announce its new Miss Keetoowah Grayci Spradlin and Jr. Miss Keetoowah J'Leeanna Ramsey to represent as young ambassadors of the tribe.

Meet the girls who will be representing UKB:

My name is Grayci Spradlin, and I am the 2025–2027 Miss Keetoowah. Over the past two years, I have had the opportunity of representing as the 2023–2025 Jr. Miss Keetoowah, and I'm excited to continue this journey as Miss Keetoowah.

I am 18 years old and live in the Tahlequah District. I'm currently a senior at Tahlequah High School and also attend ICTC on the Tahlequah campus, where I'm working toward getting my CMA and certification in Phlebotomy. My parents are JB and Krissy Spradlin, and I'm the youngest of three children.

As Miss Keetoowah, I hope to advocate for the importance of Indian Child Welfare (ICW) and help give back to my community by helping organize events for Native children currently in the system.

Jr. Miss Keetoowah J'Leeanna



2025 Jr. Miss Keetoowah J'Leeanna Ramsey

"J'Lee" Ramsey. I am 13 years old and currently in the 8th grade at Maryetta Public School, where I am taking all honors classes this year. I proudly come from the Tahlequah District and belong to the Wolf Clan. I am the daughter of Jerrad and Tycilla Ramsey, the granddaughter of Rodney and Sandra Smith, Juanita Proctor, Robert Ramsey III, and Darla Chandler, and the great-granddaughter of Woodrow Proctor, Dianne Guthrie, Robert and Mona Ramsey, and Linda Chandler. I have two brothers, Jaelon and Jre'Sun.

Alongside my studies, I am involved in the Service and Leadership Club and Gifted and Talented programs. I participate in many sports, including softball—where my team was the ORES State Runner-Up in 2025—cross country, where we were ORES State Runner-Up in both 2024 and 2025, basketball, track, and archery, in which I helped my team win the ORES State Championship for the past two years. Outside of school, I also play travel softball for Vision Elite 14U and AAU basketball for B2B.

It is an honor to represent my family, my school, my community, and my tribe!

IHS Funding Paves the Way for UKB Tribal Health System Growth with Direct Patient Care

On September 16, 2025, Chief Jeff Wacoche marked a momentous milestone for the Tribe by signing a historic agreement with the Indian Health Service. The agreement expands the UKB Tribal Health System beyond its well-established Behavioral Health and Purchased & Referred Care programs to include direct patient care under the Hospitals and Health Clinics Program.

"This agreement is historic as it secures funding and line authority from the Indian Health Service to operate the UKB Tribal Health System beyond our fantastic Behavioral Health and Contract Health programs," said Chief Wacoche. "We've worked for years to secure this agreement, and we continue to plan strategically and execute for our Keetoowah People. This agreement was the next critical step in that endeavor."

Previously, the Purchased & Referred Care program served only enrolled UKB Members. Under the new Hospitals and Health Clinics funding, the UKB Tribal Health System can now provide services to any Native person enrolled in a federally recognized Tribe, significantly broadening access to care across the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation.

"This agreement gives us the ability to grow our capacity and strengthen access to care across the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation," Chief Wacoche added. "We have providers on staff in Behavioral Health who will help us phase in clinical services, and this expansion will also create new jobs and economic opportunities. We ask our members to be patient as we move forward together

on our own terms. We'll share additional information as it becomes available."

Healthcare has long been a cornerstone of Tribal sovereignty. By expanding its ability to deliver direct patient care, the UKB reinforces its right to self-determination while ensuring that Keetoowahs and Native people across the reservation can access the services they need to live healthier, stronger lives.

Chief Wacoche expressed gratitude to the IHS leadership, saying, "I thank Secretary Kennedy and the entire leadership team at IHS for their focus on the health needs of the UKB and the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation. I am proud to work with colleagues committed to advancing accessible high-quality health care for Indian country."

UKB-administered health programs have already demonstrated significant success. Echota Behavioral Health is widely recognized in the Tulsa and Cherokee communities as a leading provider, consistently ranked for quality care. Since its launch on January 1, 2025, the UKB's Purchased and Referred Care program has served over 1,000 patients, underscoring both the demand for expanded services and the Tribe's growing capacity to meet the health needs of its people.

With this historic agreement, the UKB Tribal Health System takes a confident step forward, building on a strong foundation and looking ahead to a future where high-quality healthcare is accessible to more Native people across the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation.



ORES Division-3 State Champions: Kenwood Lady Indians

Kenwood softball makes incredible return to the ORES to claim their first state title.

LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

KENWOOD, Okla- Returning after their second season, the Kenwood Lady Indians Softball Team has claimed their first title for the Oklahoma Rural Elementary Schools (ORES) Division 3 state championship.

"We went into the state tournament as one," Head Coach Doo Foreman said. "I always praise the Lord before the game and after, whether we make good plays or bad plays, win or lose. We always put God first."

The Kenwood Lady Indians State Champions Softball Team is coached by Doo Foreman and Stephanie Campbell. This was their first year as softball coaches for Kenwood. This year Kenwood Public School celebrates its 100th year, under the leadership of Superintendent Jerod Phillips. The state title is a monumental achievement in school history, in just the second season of softball.

"I loved watching these girls grow in the game from the beginning to the end," Assistant Coach Campbell stated. "They knew when to laugh

and when to be serious, they had a goal set and had their eyes on that goal."

The state champions team had a record of 24-1, losing against the Zion Lady Hornets in the Kenwood Festival.

"The one loss was definitely an eye opener for us," Foreman said. "A couple weeks later we played them again beating them one game, then they beat us. But other than that, they had fun playing ball."

The record this year did not compare to last year, the team went undefeated all season until the state championships. The coaches knew from this, that all eyes were on Kenwood.

Going into the state championship games, Kenwood had a total of six games in one day. Their first game started at 10 a.m. and the finals were played at 10 p.m.

"It was well worth it at the end, and we had a great fan base" both coaches said.

In that fan base was Mr. Phillips as he stated, "we're all proud of the

team and the community got behind them. They had a great season."

After winning the state championships, the team was happy but happier to go home as State Champ Bianca O'Field stated.

State Champ Ceegyn Sapp added, "I want to thank our fans for supporting us, if we ever messed up, they would encourage us to get back up and cheer us on. It was great seeing them stay with us since the first game."

Kenwood Public School is represented by multiple tribes, the United

Keetoowah Band is proud to have two state champs Willow Billey and Les Mouse.



Chief Wacoche and Saline District Rep Smoke with the ORES Div. 3 State Champs, the Kenwood Lady Indians.



Chief Jeff Wacoche and Saline District Rep Charles Smoke with UKB State Champs Les Mouse and Willow Billey.



ORES Div. 3 State Champs, the Kenwood Lady Indians.



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November Edition



Chief's
Corner

JEFF WACOCHE
Principal Chief
jwacoche@ukb-nsn.gov

Wado to everyone who made this year's **Celebration** such a success. I am so proud we were able to celebrate 75 years since constitutional ratification and celebrating Keetoowah history since time immemorial. Each year, I leave the weekend reminded of the strength and unity of our Keetoowah People. The energy, the stories, and the pride in who we are – all of it fills my heart. None of it happens without months of work from our staff and the many volunteers who give their time to make the weekend run smoothly. From administration staff, John Hair Cultural Center team members, Lighthorse, vendors, and countless volunteers who helped – thank you. You made us proud.

Our work to **defend and protect Keetoowah rights** continues – in Washington, D.C., and at every level of government. We remain steadfast

in ensuring that the United Keetoowah Band is treated with the respect and recognition our sovereignty deserves. Whether it's advocating for fair treatment in legislation, protecting our land and economic rights, or securing needed health care funding, we will not stop standing up for the future of our people.

A recent highlight was finalizing our new agreement with the **Indian Health Service for Hospitals and Health Clinics funding**. This marks a historic step forward for the UKB Health System – expanding care beyond Behavioral Health and Con-

tract Health to direct patient care. It's the result of years of advocacy, and it will mean better services for more Keetoowah families. We've proven time and again that when we move with integrity and purpose, progress follows.

And finally, I want to take a moment to recognize **Blaine Bailey**, whose music continues to make our Keetoowah People proud. Many of you have seen him perform, and we're proud of his participation on *The Road* – a new CBS series executive-produced by Blake Shelton. Blaine's songs are grounded in Keetoowah life and values, and his new album *Indian Country* carries that spirit even further. He's showing the world what it means to be Keetoowah – rooted in tradition, driven by purpose, and always finding strength in where we come from.

Chief Jeff Wacoche



We Are HIRING

Please visit our UKB website at:
www.ukb-nsn.gov for all opening positions!

Apply Now

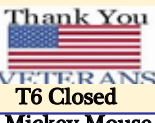
Applications can be found at
www.ukb-nsn.gov/employment

Send your applications to:
UKB Federal Programs Building at 18300 W. Keetoowah Circle, Tahlequah, OK, 74464. If mailing please address your envelope with ATTN: Human Resources. Completed and scanned applications will be accepted.

LUNCH SERVED MONDAY - THURSDAY 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM, ALL MEALS MUST BE PICKED UP BY 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM
BREAKFAST SERVED FRIDAY 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM, ALL MEALS MUST BE PICKED UP BY 10:00 AM – 10:30 AM
\$1.00 FOR EACH TO GO MEAL...ALL MEALS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE*



November

NOVEMBER 2025 UKB TITLE VI - JIM PROCTOR ELDER NUTRITION CENTER MENU						
UKB 55+, SPOUSES = FREE, CDIB 55+ & SPOUSE MUST CONTRIBUTE TO COST OF MEAL \$1.00 EACH MEAL, GUEST \$5.00/Child 0-12 \$3.00						
“As a Nation, we remember and celebrate Veterans Day, to honor the military						
November 2025 Veterans”						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Jim Proctor Elder Community Center 918-871-2747 918-871-2860	Inclement Weather Policy If weather is bad there will be no home delivered meals due to safety of our driver.	“Red Chrysanthemum” 		“Yellow Topaz” 	“Full Beaver Moon” 	1 UKB Regular Council Meeting 10 AM UKB Justice Center ALL SAINTS DAY
2 Daylight Savings Ends 	3 Jellyfish Day Goulash Mixed Vegetables Garlic Toast Fruit	4 Election Day Homemade Chili Hominy Cornbread Pineapple Cake	5 Bonfire Night Baked Potato Soup Ham/Cheese Sandwich Crackers Fresh Fruit	6 Dog Film Festival Chicken Dumpling Green Beans Corn Casserole Fruit Salad	7 Hug A Bear Day Biscuits/Gravy Bacon, Eggs Hash Browns Juice, Fruit	8 Talk Money Day 
9 Art Museum Day 	10 Veterans Appreciation BBQ Pulled Pork on Bun, Baked Beans Potato Salad Pickle, Pumpkin Pie	11 Veterans Day 	12 Soup for the Soul Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Carrots, Hot Roll Pumpkin Walnut Cake	13 Sadie Hawkins Day Brown Beans Fried Potatoes Cornbread Fruit Salad	14 Nat. Pickle Day TITLE VI CLOSED EMPLOYEE THANKSGIVING	15 Am. Recycles Day 
16 Nat. Button Day 	17 Take A Hike Day Turkey w/Meat Sauce Italian Green Beans Garlic Roll, Dessert	18 Mickey Mouse Steak Fajitas Corn on Cob Sweet Potato Fresh Pineapple	19 Have a Bad Day Turkey N Dressing Mashed Potatoes w/ Gravy, Green Beans Roll, Pumpkin Pie	20 Use Lee Stuff Day November Birthday Cheeseburgers French Fries Cake/Ice Cream	21 World Hello Day CLOSED KITCHEN CLEANING DAY	22 Go for a Ride 
23 Stir-up Sunday PLEASE CHECK ON YOUR ELDER'S 	24 Nat. Fairy Bread Hamburger Stew Hominy Commodity Cheese Cornbread, Melons	25 Gazpacho Soup Chicken Wings/Dip Cucumber/Tomato Salad, Tater Kegs Fresh Fruit	26 National Cake Day Baked Potato w/Fixings, Salad, Broccoli/Cauliflower Crackers, Fruit	27 THANKSGIVING 	28 BLACK FRIDAY	29 Chocolates Day When Tahlequah Schools Are Closed – We May Be Closed Due to Weather

Please wear a mask, stay home if you feel sick! Thank you, Title VI Staff - 2% Milk, bread and fruit served daily

“Full Beaver Moon” on the November 5th - It's also the start of cold and flu season, so stay warm with a cozy fire!

“November is American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the tradition and languages in our communities”

This month brings blustery days with chilly nights! Enjoy your family on Thanksgiving with turkey, fall foods and pumpkin pie!

Chrysanthemum represents cheerfulness, a red one conveys “I love you”, white symbolizes truth or pure love, a yellow one indicates slight love!

“If trees show buds in November, the winter will last until May” “Ice in November brings mud in December”

“Barred Owls calling late in the fall signal a rough winter” “Flowers in bloom late in Autumn indicate a bad winter”

UKB Tribal Enrollment

18300 W. Keetoowah Circle Tahlequah, OK 74464 Open Monday-Friday | 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

As with other federally recognized tribes, the United Keetoowah Band has its unique process to determine membership. Visit ukb-nsn.gov/membership for Enrollment documents and a brief FAQ section of the most common questions about UKB membership. Find forms for Membership Applications, CDIB Instructions, Update Your Information and UKB Relinquishment.

For additional questions, or if you are a member who has lost your en-rollment card, call the UKB Enrollment Office Registrar Amanda Stopp at 918-871-2797. Questions concerning history, cultural practices, cloth-ing, language or ceremonies are better suited for our John Hair Cultural Center and Museum. Visit ukb-nsn.gov/john-hair-cultural-center-muse-um or call 918-871-2866.

Celebration Quilt Show Successful

Marilyn Craig, Museum Marketing Coordinator

TAHLEQUAH - The John Hair Cultural Center and Keetoowah Museum staff held their first quilt show during the 75th Annual Keetoowah Celebration. It was a successful event, with a steady stream of visitors and there was a lot of interest cultivated by having the show.

To enter the show, you had to be an exclusive Keetoowah member, and each entry cost \$5. Contestants could enter up to two entries in each of the four categories: Mini Quilt –small scale quilts under twenty-four” x 24”, Contemporary /Art Quilt, Collaborative/Community Quilt, and Traditional Quilt. \$1,325 was available in cash prizes, which paid \$100 for first place, \$75 for second and \$50 for third. The Best of Show Award was \$200, and the People’s Choice winner earned \$225.

In the Mini Quilt category, Never Give Up Keetoowah won first place. The techniques used include paper pieced and embroidery. “This quilt was inspired by the sacred fire. “To me the fire represents survival, identity, and the unbroken spirit of our people. This quilt honors that flame: a living presence that cannot be extinguished, reminding us of who we are, where we come from, and the strength we carry forward as Keetoowah people,” said winner Toni Workman.

In the Contemporary/Art Quilt category, Rainbow Chroma took the top prize for \$100. and won Best of Show, with an additional \$200 cash prize for that win. Toni Workman made the quilt, and she said, “I was extremely intrigued by this circle quilt pattern. It took me about a year to start it because I was so intimidated. I made it for my daughter, who likes all things rainbow.”

Second place went to Double Bear Claw. Quilt-maker Lena Deere said, “I picked the bear claw because I believe in the strength of the bear.” Third place in the Contemporary/Art Quilt category was Butterfly Quilt by Betty Holcomb. “It’s a good way to preserve vintage hankies our elders used back in the 50s and 60s. This quilt was hand-pieced and appliqued by hand and hand quilted,” said Holcomb.

“The Butterfly Quilt was the most popular with our visitors at the show. People had the opportunity to vote for their favorite quilt, and Betty Holcomb is one of our featured Keetoowah quilters. I was happy to see so many people show up in support for her,” said Kyndal Aimerson, museum assistant and show organizer.

Vanelope’s Blankie was the winning entry for the Collaborative Quilt. Tribal member Toni Workman, along with her six-year-old daughter, Hannah Workman created the quilt. The Collaborative/Community Quilt is a quilt created by two or more individuals, other family members, or community groups. It emphasizes collective effort and inter-generational work.

The quilt story is, “A quilt that Hannah and I (her mother) made for her favorite stuffed rabbit.



Betty Holcomb stands beside her “Butterfly Quilt.” This quilt was hand pieced, appliqued and hand quilted. This quilt won the “People’s Choice” award for the show.



Hannah Workman, 6, stands beside her Collaboration Quilt, that she made with her mom, which won 1st place in that category.



Toni Workman stands beside her *Rainbow Chroma*, which won first in the Contemporary /Art Quilt category and “Best in Show.”



Toni Workman won two more prizes in the Mini Quilt category. *Never Give Up Keetoowah* (on right) won first place, and *Purple Melody* won second place.

This is Hannah’s first quilt project. She selected her fabrics and the block layout and did all the piecing herself. We both worked on the quilting and binding together. She is six years old,” said Workman.

In the Traditional Quilt category, quilts titled Hannah’s Fairytales and Sister’s Star, won first and second respectively. Toni Workman made both quilts. The story on Hannah’s Fairytales is “I worked on this quilt for two and a half years. We tried to find fabrics for all of Hannah’s favorite princesses. The books are paper-pieced, and the rest of the quilt is my design. I had a goal to meet a certain size for it to fit her big girl bed,” said Toni. “On Sister’s Star, it is a traditional Lonestar pattern. It will have two sister quilts eventually made with the same fabrics in different places that I will give to by sisters, hence Sister’s Star,” Workman said.

Museum staff served cookies and lemonade, tea, and coffee to the visitors. At the end of the day, the winner of the beautiful floral star quilt raffle was announced, as Dalton Thompson, a current student at NSU.

When asked about future quilt shows, Kyndal



Lena Deere stands beside her quilt *Double Bear Claw*, which won 2nd place in the Contemporary/Art Quilt category.

Aimerson said, “Yes, there will be a second show. We started this event to gather attention for our Keetoowah quiltmakers. Next year we have more Keetoowah’s who plan to participate, and we can establish it as an annual event.”

UKB Title VI Program attends National Tribal Health Conference

LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- The staff of the United Keetoowah Band Title VI program attended the National Tribal Health Conference at Chandler, Arizona in September.

Title VI Director Rebecca Dreadfulwater said they received a Public Health Grant for the program which allowed them to attend this conference. She was able to take her staff Roman Jay Ridge, Ronald Holden and Tara O’Field.

The event was held at the Wild Horse Pass Event Center. The event theme was “Culture is Medicine, Community is Healing.” The focus was Indian Health Service, Honoring our Roots, Medicare, Cancer, Public Health, Mental Health and Healthy Heart.

“There was a lot of sessions, I attended the ones that interested me, and the others went to sessions that interested them,” Dreadfulwater said.

The sessions that Becky and her staff went to that was offered were National Tribal Behavioral Health Listening Session, The Power of Partnership: Disaster Preparedness Plans and Indigenous Food Security, Indian Health Service, Special Diabetes Program, Honoring Our Roots, Creating Pathways for Indigenous Students in Precision

Medicine, Healthy Nation, Nourishing Traditions and many others.

“One session I did go to was behavior health for dementia, because we’ve had cases in the past with some of our elders,” Dreadfulwater said.

Included at the event attendees had cultural night, exhibit night, cultural celebrations, free health screenings and an elder lounge. Dreadfulwater said the conference was exciting and that



Title VI Staff pictured L-R: Roman Jay Ridge, Ronald Holden, Rebecca Dreadfulwater and Tara O’Field

she was ready to start her public education program at Title VI.

“We have two treadmills, a weight scale, blood pressure kits and we will start a walking program whether it’s to the wellness center or around the circle,” Dreadfulwater said. “I hope this gets our elders involved, because that is something the grant wanted us to do.”



The theme of the conference was, “Culture is Medicine, Community is Healing”

Keetoowah Museum Briefs

Got Keetoowah Arts and Crafts?

The Keetoowah Museum Gift Shop continues to buy handmade items from Keetoowah tribal members. The shop has so many beautiful earrings, art prints and graphics, ribbon skirts, hats, wood carvings, miscellaneous beaded items, bracelets, dream catchers, walking sticks and canes, slate paintings, stickball sticks and balls, blowguns and darts, flutes, copper and leather gorgets, corn husk dolls, craft kits, and quilts. Right now, the gift shop would like to buy men’s and boy’s ribbon shirts in all sizes, as well as children’s and toddler’s clothing, aprons, rattles, shackles, moccasins, pipes, bolo ties, and baskets.

The Keetoowah Museum gift shop is open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday by appointment. For more information, find us on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. If you would like to sell your arts and crafts to the gift shop, artisans and artists need to set an appointment for Tuesday or Wednesday to meet with museum director Ernestine Berry. To make an appointment call 918-871-2866.

Attention T-shirt Collectors!

We have sold two-thirds of our 75th Keetoowah Celebration T-shirts, so get yours now! The shirts are black and are \$25 for sizes medium, large and XL, and \$27 for 2XL and 3XL. We have a limited number of 75th Celebration tumblers that would make great stocking stuffers. We still have Keetoowah by Blood and It’s a Good Day to Be Keetoowah shirts for sale. We also have Blaine Bailey shirts, caps, albums, and stickers available in the gift shop.

Save the Date!

The Keetoowah Christmas Arts and Crafts Show is set for Saturday, December 13 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the museum. Cookies, punch, and coffee will be served, and chili will be available to purchase.

The Tradition Keepers will be selling chances on a raffle of their donated items. The winners will be drawn at the end of the day at the Keetoowah Christmas Arts and Crafts Show. Look for updated information about the raffle on the TK and museum Facebook pages and on the tribe’s website.

UKB Education Department received a “My Little Library” grant

Twelve stands filled with age-appropriate books are placed around the UKB jurisdiction.

LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- The United Keetoowah Band Education Department has been awarded a “My Little Library” grant. This is a grant of age-appropriate books and Little Library Bookstands.

“I learned about this grant through some colleagues at San Jose State University,” Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah said. “They encouraged me to apply for it. The grant allowed us to get up to twelve stands and so we did.”

Twelve stands were delivered to the education center plus cases of books to fill them. These twelve stands can be found at the Henry Lee Doublehead Childcare Development Center in Tahlequah and Bell Schools. Other places to

find them will be at the field offices in Vian, Stilwell, Kenwood and places in the UKB jurisdiction.

“We decided to do a literacy challenge for students who can read the most books and write a short little report of maybe one to three paragraphs to turn in, then they’ll get points,” Hannah said. “Towards the end of the semester, we will add up the points to give boxes of prizes to the students with the most points.”

The challenge started in October, Dr. Hannah hopes to tally points at each area participating in this by Thanksgiving or before the fall semester ends.

“I am just trying to encourage students to read and get something out of it,” Hannah said. “If this works out then I hope to continue in the spring semester.”



Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah and Intake Specialist Amber Dry loaded up one Little Library Bookstand.



Students from Bell Schools were excited to receive one of the Little Library Bookstands.



Children from Henry Lee Doublehead Childcare Development Center pick out their first books.

Native American Youth Face Type II Diabetes Rates Up to 64 Times Higher Than Non-Native Peers

ELYSE WILD, Native News Online

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- Native American youth have Type II diabetes at a rate up to 64 times their non-Native peers. That’s according to a systematic review published last week in Diabetologia, a peer-reviewed medical journal on diabetes.

The review extracted data from 49 studies conducted between 1978 and 2019 on the prevalence of type II diabetes in the Aboriginal, First Nation and American Indian/Alaska Native populations. It included data from at least 15 distinct Native American studies across multiple regions, including the Great Plains, Navajo Nation, Cherokee Nation, Northern Plains Indians, and various Indian Health Service reservations.

Youth from the Akimel O’odham & Tohono O’odham and Gila River Indian Communities showed the highest prevalence of Type II diabetes at 6.4%

Young Native women bear the highest burden of the disease, with AI/AN female youth having diabetes at rates 77% higher than their male counterparts.

Native youth also experience worse outcomes with diabetes, suffering higher mortality rates compared to non-Indigenous youth, even with similar age at diagnosis and disease duration, pointing to gaps in healthcare accessibility.

Diabetes in AI/AN youth has only worsened in the past four decades. Across Native communities included in the review, the disease has risen 3-8 times since 1980.



Native youth also experience worse outcomes with diabetes, with a mortality rates compared to non-Indigenous youth, (photo/Canva Pro)

The review noted that a handful of the studies included used data from the Indian Health Service records, which may have resulted in the prevalence of the disease being underestimated due to barriers in access to care.

UKB

STILWELL

SUB - OFFICE



STILWELL OFFICE HOURS

MON-FRI: 8:00-11:00

MON-THURS

AFTERNOON HOURS: 2:00-5:00

CLOSED AT 11:00 ON FRIDAY

PHONE: 918-696-871-2814

EMAIL: MBALLARD@UKB-NSN.GOV

FLINT DISTRICT

REP. FRANKIE STILL

918-507-1822

GOINGSNAKE DISTRICT

REP. WILLIE CHRISTIE

918-822-3803



Goingsnake District

Sub-office

HOURS: MON-THUR, 8:30-12:30

1:00-4:00

FRI. 8:30-12:30

UKB KANSAS COMMUNITY BUILDING

280 S HWY 10, KANSAS, OK

CONTACT:

TERRIE TURTLE, 918-871-5038

RECAP: 75TH Annual Keetoowah Celebration “Inherently Sovereign”

Winners of the activities which took place at the celebration.

LANI HANSEN, Senior Reporter

TAHLEQUAH, Okla- The 75th Annual Keetoowah Celebration was a success, and the United Keetoowah Band appreciates everyone who came out and participated in the activities offered.

Congratulations to all our winners this year at the celebration.

Cornhole

1st Place: Cameron Kingfisher/Kaleb Kingfisher
2ND Place: Buzzy Scott/David Walker

Volleyball

1st Place: Native Mob
2nd Place: Can You Dig It

Marbles

1st Place: Jerad Davis/Jerrod Fields
2nd Place: Phil King/Aaron Kingfisher
3rd Place: Leon Mouse/Elijah Snell
4th Place: Elmer Panther/Camiden Tanner

Turtle Race

1st Place: “K-Pop” - Lakya B.
2nd Place: “Big Betty” - Livia M.
3rd Place: “Zoey” - Lyric M.
4th Place: “Biggie Smalls” - Harmony W.
5th Place: “Mystery” - Gabe D.
6th Place: “Roomie” - Kandice B.

Horseshoes

1st Place: Kyle Bark/Derrick Campos

Stickball

1st Place: Sun Chiefs
2nd Place: Sour Patch Kids

Car/Bike/Truck Show

Chief’s Choice/People’s Choice/Best of Show

Jan Ingram

Princesses Choice

Derek Hawk

Best of Show Motorcycle

Forrest Smoke

Best of Street Motorcycle

Sam Radcliff

Modified Cars

1974-1999

1st Place: Richard Ingram

1900-1959

1st Place: Caylan Godwin

2nd Place: Henry Sapp

Original Car

2000-present

1st Place: Derek Hawk

2nd Place: Kenneth Blossom

Modified Truck

1900-1959

1st Place: Jan Ingram

1974-1999

1st Place: David Bluebird

Original Truck

2000-present

1st Place: Curtis Fourkiller

2nd Place: Jordan Reed



Chief Jeff Wacoche presents his state of the nation address.



Outgoing Miss Keetoowah Delia Smith and Tribal Council



2025 Miss Keetoowah Grayci Spradlin and Jr. Miss Keetoowah J'Leeanna Ramsey



Inherently Sovereign was this year's theme, thank you to our Echota Behavioral Health on presenting this display.



Chief Wacoche participated in the 4man golf tournament



Echota Behavioral Health brings turtle races for kids



Truck show winner



Saved By Grace was the entertainment for the years celebration.

UKB Proudly Celebrates Blaine Bailey’s Musical Journey

The United Keetoowah Band proudly celebrates the success of singer, songwriter, and UKB Member Blaine Bailey on his debut appearance on The Road, a new show executive-produced by country music star Blake Shelton. The UKB congratulates Blaine on this exciting milestone and looks forward to seeing what the future holds for him and his music.

Bailey’s music is deeply rooted in Keetoowah culture. Drawing inspiration from his upbringing with Keetoowah elders just outside Tahlequah, Oklahoma, he captures the spirit of what it means to be Keetoowah and shares it with the world.

In 2021, Bailey released the album Lost City, a tribute to his birthplace and Keetoowah upbringing.

His 2024 album, Home, blends storytelling with a blues-driven sound, exploring themes of introspection, self-discovery, and the search for a sense of place.

As a proud Member of the United Keetoowah Band, Blaine continues to represent his people on a national stage, serving as a source of inspiration for future generations of Keetoowah youth.

Blaine’s music, including his newest album Indian Country, continues to showcase his artistry and Keetoowah roots. The UKB celebrates his accomplishments and his time on The Road and looks forward to seeing what the future holds for Blaine and his music.



ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS WELCOMES NEW COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE



Native Country, (Thursday, October 16, 2025) – The Association on American Indian Affairs, the oldest national Native nonprofit, proudly welcomes Trista Vaughn, a citizen of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, as the new Communications Associate.

Trista will support the Association’s Become an Ally Program, helping to expand public understanding of Native Nations and their diverse cultures through strategic storytelling and digital engagement. Through various media channels, she will help foster allyship, inspire dialogue, and encourage collective action on issues impacting Native Country.

Trista brings years of experience in digital engagement, journalism, and community outreach. She previously served as the Digital Engagement Manager for the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), where she developed campaigns highlighting Native excellence in STEM and helped elevate national initiatives that empower Indigenous students and professionals. Trista also serves as the Community Engagement and Cultural Coordinator for

Crosswinds News and Talking Circle, a Native-owned media platform dedicated to amplifying Native stories, perspectives, and sovereignty.

“I’ve always believed that storytelling is one of our strongest tools for connection and healing,” said Trista. “Joining the Association allows me to continue that work uplifting our communities, preserving our cultures, and ensuring our people’s stories are told with accuracy, integrity, and heart.”

A proud citizen of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians and descendant of the Hualapai and Chickasaw Nations, Trista was born and raised in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. She holds a B.A. in Media Studies (Public Relations) and an M.A. in Communication from Northeastern State University.

“Trista’s creativity, professional-

ism, and commitment to community-driven storytelling are a perfect fit for our mission,” said Shannon O’Loughlin, citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and Chief Executive and Attorney for the Association. “Her work will uplift the power of our voices to protect sovereignty, preserve culture, and inspire the next generation of leaders. We’re excited to welcome her voice and vision to the team.”

Trista joins the team with a deep passion for amplifying Native voices and creating space for authentic storytelling across Native Country. Trista’s role will focus on elevating the Association’s communication strategies, expanding outreach to Native Nations and allies, and ensuring that every story the organization shares continues to center Native knowledge, values, and sovereignty.

Marking a new chapter: EBCI holds Inauguration for Dinilawigi (Tribal Council) and School Board

SCOTT MCKIE B.P., One Feather Asst. Editor

CHEROKEE, N.C. – Working together and unity were two of the themes as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) held an inauguration for the 2025-27 Dinilawigi (Tribal Council) and two members of the Cherokee School Board. The event was held at the Charles George Memorial Arena in Cherokee, N.C. on the morning of Monday, Oct. 6.

Shawn Crowe, an EBCI tribal member, emceed the event and noted, “The Eastern Band of Cherokee have been here for thousands and thousands of years, and our culture and our history is as strong as any Indian tribe in this country. When I’m asked to stand at these events, I am honored, I am privileged because I am Cherokee. I am a part of the people.”

He added, “We always talk about change in every election – ‘we need change, we need change’. Most people are afraid of change. But, you talk about the big companies that stay the same, they will always fail because they stay the same. You have to change. Change is inevitable. We have to embrace it.”

The following took the Oath of Office from Cherokee Chief Supreme Court Justice Bradley Letts as the 76th EBCI Dinilawigi: Kolanvyi (Big Cove) Rep. Lavita Hill, Kolanvyi Rep. Venita K. Wolfe, Tsisqwohi (Birdtown) Rep. Jim Owle, Tsisqwohi Rep. Boyd Owle, Aniwo dihi (Painttown) Rep. Michael Stamper, Aniwo dihi Rep. Shannon Swimmer, Tuti yi/Tsalagi Gadugi (Snowbird/Cherokee County) Rep. Adam Wachacha, Tuti yi/Tsalagi Gadugi Rep. Michael Smoker, Wayohi (Wolf town) Rep. Bo Crowe, Wayohi Rep. Mike Parker, Elawodi (Yellowhill) Rep. Shennelle Feather, and Elawodi Rep. David Wolfe.

Crowe spoke of the four women elected to this Dinilawigi. “We went for a couple years where we had no females on our Tribal Council. Well, today that changes...that is a great thing because in our history of the Beloved Women and the women of our tribe, they had a say in war council. They had a say in the councils that met. And, what’s the one thing that women can do that men can never do is bring life into this world. That’s why the women were so honored and remembered in our Cherokee people. So, it’s a good thing that we have some females now on our Tribal Council.

Our women have a voice as well and as strong as the men.”

Two women also took their Oath of Office for the Cherokee School Board including Melanie Lambert, Tsisqwohi School Board representative, and Roberta “Berdie” Toineeta, Wayohi School Board representative.

EBCI Ugvwiyuhi (Principal Chief) Michell Hicks said he is looking forward to working with the newly sworn-in leaders. “Today really does mark a new chapter with the Eastern Band. As we inaugurate our new Council members and welcome our new School Board members, we renew our commitment to serve our people, to serve and protect people, to serve with accountability, and truly to serve with a purpose – a purpose of making sure that community always comes first, that our people always come first. As we make those calls, as we make those decisions, we have to keep that in mind.”

He went on to say, “We know the challenges before us are real – from protecting our sovereignty and strengthening our economy, to

ensuring our children have the best education possible, to caring for our elders and preserving our culture.”

Speaking directly to the Dinilawigi representatives, Ugvwiyuhi Hicks commented, “I look forward to working with you. May we always be mindful of the trust our people have placed in us, the trust they’ve placed in you to do the right thing at any given moment. I want to assure you, it’s not going to be easy. The task we have ahead with our fiscal resources, protecting who we are, the daily lives of our people, it’s not easy. You’re going to have long days. You’re going to have difficult days. You’re going to have a lot of travel in front of you because we can’t fight the battle here. We have to go to Raleigh. We have to go to D.C. We can’t do it in Cherokee, North Carolina. That’s not the way it works anymore.”

In speaking to the School Board representatives, he said, “You have the responsibility to help guide our young people...helping them build the skills and pride and strength they’ll need to become the next generation of leaders. Today is a commitment to lead with wisdom, to listen with respect, and to act in courage. Together, we will continue to strengthen the foundation that we have because that’s all we’re given. And, it’s our responsibility to build from that foundation to protect our tribe and protect what makes us Tsalagi, and ensure that our people thrive in the future.”

Taline Ugvwiyu (Vice Chief) Alan B. Ensley commented, “I’ve been involved in Tribal Council for a number of years and it’s a great honor to be here and to know you’re here representing your communities. It’s going to be hard for the sitting Council to move forward with the times that we’re in right now. But, I want to say that it really flatters me to be just a small part of the 76th Tribal Council of this tribe.”

He served many years as the Elawodi representative and noted, “I want to congratulate you. It’s a wonderful experience to sit on Tribal Council and I hope everybody here realizes the struggles and fights that you have representing your communities. Regardless of your own views on any subject matter, you’ve got to represent what your community asks of you to give.”

Taline Ugvwiyu Ensley ended with, “I look forward to working with all of you.”

Monday’s event was opened with the posting of the colors by the Steve Youngdeer American Legion Post 143 Color Guard. That was followed by an opening prayer by Matthew Tooni, an EBCI tribal member and Cherokee second language learner.

During the program, the Aniyvwi yahi Dancers performed the Cherokee Corn Dance and the Cherokee Ant Dance, and the Dadiwonisi language program performed two songs in the Cherokee language.

The closing prayer was offered by Scott Chekelelee, an EBCI tribal member.

Following the Inauguration, the Dinilawigi went to the Cherokee Tribal Council House, and Taline Ugvwiyuhi opened the first meeting. Rep. Jim Owle was selected as the Dinilawigi Chairman and Rep. David Wolfe was selected as the Dinilawigi Vice Chairman. The following positions were also selected: Indian Clerk – EBCI Beloved Woman Myrtle Driver Johnson, English Clerk – Michelle Thompson, Interpreter – Sally Arch, and Doorman – Bobby Taylor.



The 76th Dinilawigi (Tribal Council) of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians was sworn into office on the morning of Monday, Oct. 6 at the Charles George Memorial Arena in Cherokee, N.C. The Dinilawigi representatives are shown outside of the Cherokee Tribal Council House after their first meeting following the inauguration. Shown, left to right, back row – Wayohi (Wolf town) Rep. Bo Crowe, Wayohi Rep. Mike Parker; fourth row – Aniwo dihi (Paint town) Rep. Michael Stamper, Tuti yi/Tsalagi Gadugi (Snowbird/Cherokee Co.) Rep. Michael Smoker; third row – Tsisqwohi (Bird town) Rep. Jim Owle (who was selected as the Dinilawigi chairman), Tuti yi/Tsalagi Gadugi Rep. Adam Wachacha; second row – Elawodi (Yellowhill) Rep. Shennelle Feather, Tsisqwohi Rep. Boyd Owle, Elawodi Rep. David Wolfe (who was selected as the Dinilawigi vice chairman); front row – Kolanvyi (Big Cove) Rep. Lavita Hill, Kolanvyi Rep. Venita Wolfe, and Aniwo dihi Rep. Shannon Swimmer. (SCOTT MCKIE B.P./One Feather photo)



Taking the Oath of Office for the Cherokee School Board were Melanie Lambert, Tsisqwohi School Board representative, and Roberta “Berdie” Toineeta, Wayohi School Board representative.



Uweluga Swimmer, an EBCI tribal member, does the Cherokee Ant Dance with the Aniyvwi yahi Dancers during Monday’s event.



Cooweescoowee District Rep Cliff W. Wofford with EBCI Chief Michell Hicks and Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Chief Cyrus Ben at Eastern Band of Cherokee's Inauguration.



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