

NOV 2024

THE SHAWNEE JOURNAL



PSEKFIKISFWA
November "deer month"

YA'SASILAWIYAKWE

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS "WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO"



- NOV 4** MONTHLY BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETING
MIAMI, OK

- NOV 11** TRIBAL OFFICES CLOSED
IN OBSERVANCE OF VETERANS DAY

- NOV 15** AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

- NOV 28-29** TRIBAL OFFICES CLOSED
IN OBSERVANCE OF THANKSGIVING

- DEC 2** MONTHLY BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETING
MIAMI, OK

- DEC 7** CCDF CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS DRIVE-THRU
4:00-7:00 PM • MIAMI, OK

SLIP WINTER STORIES GATHERING
6:00 PM • MIAMI, OK

- DEC 24-25** TRIBAL OFFICES CLOSED
IN OBSERVANCE OF CHRISTMAS

- JAN 1** TRIBAL OFFICES CLOSED
IN OBSERVANCE OF NEW YEAR'S DAY

- JAN 6** MONTHLY BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETING
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- JAN 20** TRIBAL OFFICES CLOSED
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- FEB 1** DEADLINE: HIGHER EDUCATION AWARDS
WINTER/SPRING TERM*
FOR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY APPLICANTS. VO-TECH APPLICANTS
MAY APPLY ON A ROLLING BASIS

- FEB 3** MONTHLY BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETING
MIAMI, OK

To view all scheduled events and event details, visit shawnee-nsn.gov/calendar or scan here with your phone's camera:



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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

We recognize that digital communications via social media and the internet are not necessarily preferred by or accessible to every citizen of the Shawnee Tribe. As such, we will always strive to introduce new services & programs for citizens through *The Shawnee Journal* or other direct mailings to all Shawnee households before we broadcast them on the Shawnee Tribe website or social media.

FOLLOW US!

Follow the official Shawnee Tribe Facebook and YouTube accounts @saawanooki.

KNOW ANY SHAWNEES WHO'VE MOVED RECENTLY?

Let them know to update their address with our enrollment department so they continue receiving tribal news!

PIYEETAACIMOOWENEEFA "LITTLE NEWS MESSAGES"

Get Shawnee Tribe news and updates once a month by subscribing to our e-newsletter. Sign up at shawnee-nsn.gov/subscribe or scan here with your smartphone.



KIWIITAMAAKONAAKI HOKIMAAKI

MESSAGES FROM THE CHIEFS



**CHIEF
BEN BARNES**

Dear tribal citizens,

As Chief Ben Barnes of the Shawnee Tribe, I would like to emphasize the profound importance of participating in elections at every level: local, state, federal, and tribal. Voting is not merely a right; it is a fundamental responsibility and a powerful tool for change that shapes our communities, our governance, and, ultimately, our future.

Firstly, local elections are the bedrock of democracy. They directly impact our daily lives, influencing essential services such as education, public safety, and infrastructure. Local officials make decisions that affect our neighborhoods, from zoning laws to community programs. When we vote in these elections, we voice our opinions on issues that matter most to us and ensure that our needs and values are represented. Every vote counts, and a handful of ballots can often decide local races.

Moving to state elections, these contests have significant implications for the policies that govern our states. State legislators craft laws that affect health care, education funding, and environmental protections. They also have the power to influence how federal policies are implemented within our states. By voting, we support candidates who align with our vision for our communities and advocate for policies that promote our well-being and prosperity.

At the federal level, our voices are amplified on issues that resonate across the entire nation. Federal elections determine the direction of our country on critical issues such as civil rights, economic policy, and international relations. Voting for federal representatives ensures that our

concerns as tribal members, and as citizens, are heard in the halls of Congress. It is essential for us to elect leaders who respect and honor the sovereignty of tribal nations and advocate for policies that uplift Indigenous communities.

Finally, tribal elections are crucial in preserving our culture, identity, and self-determination. Tribal governance is unique, and exercising our right to vote within our tribes allows us to choose leaders who best understand our needs and aspirations. These elections are a direct expression of our sovereignty and our commitment to self-governance. By participating, we reinforce our community bonds and ensure that our tribal governments work effectively for our people.

Moreover, voting is an act of respect for those who fought and sacrificed for our rights. Throughout history, many have struggled for the right to vote, and we owe it to them and to future generations to honor their legacy by participating in the electoral process. Each time we cast our ballots, we affirm our commitment to democracy and our belief in the power of collective action.

In conclusion, voting in local, state, federal, and tribal elections is vital for building a future reflective of our values and aspirations. It empowers us, strengthens our communities, and protects our rights. As members of the Shawnee Tribe and as citizens, let us embrace our responsibility to vote and shape the world we wish to see. Together, we can create a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come.

Ben Barnes
Chief



**SECOND CHIEF
ROY
BALDRIDGE**

hato caaki wiyeeefa (Hello, everyone)—

First, I would like to say that I hope everyone is doing well. I am writing this report one week after our 2024 General Council meeting. At this year's meeting, several milestones were noted with the foremost being the retirement of Councilor Scott Secondine. Scott was the last of the Business Councilors elected in 2001 after our separation from the Cherokee Nation. I joined the council later that year due to a vacancy. During those early years, we met at the community building at White Oak and the old Big Cabin School. At the time, our Business Council received a stipend of \$10.00 per meeting, which many signed and returned to the tribe. This practice continued until our offices moved to Miami, Oklahoma. It was during the move to Miami that we hired our first tribal administrator who, along with an assistant and a secretary, officed in the Intertribal Building until our first building was built with a grant and funds received from the sale of the Big Cabin School to the Grand Gateway Council on Aging.

Today, we have several buildings in and near the City of Miami, which house nearly 60 employees providing services in the following areas: Behavioral & Mental Health, Burial Assistance, Child Care Assistance, Domestic Violence Victim Services, Elder Assistance Reimbursement, Education Assistance, Housing and Utility Assistance, Indian Child Welfare, School Clothing and Extracurricular Activity Assistance, Vehicle Tags and Workforce Reimbursement Assistance, and more.

Whereas in the beginning, our tribe depended upon federal grants to fund programs such as Child Care Assistance, today, we use our own funding for several programs that allow us to provide services to citizens from coast to coast.

At the General Council meeting, Shawnee Development President Chris Floyd gave a report on our casino expansion and plans for future diversification. In support of Chris, I say that they are doing an amazing job through their efforts. I say this because, in the past, I had the opportunity to speak with a tribal leader from a large tribe at an economic development conference. He reported that their success had taken several decades. Today, that tribe has multiple casinos and businesses in several states that provide the basis for solid programs for their citizens. They have also been expanding upon many cultural activities that promote language preservation and recognition to those citizens who went above and beyond in helping their people.

In the past, I have spoken about working to provide a future for our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc. My confession is that I first heard that concept in conversation with other tribal leaders and have had the opportunity to see the potential of following that path. A future that could belong to our descendants.

niyaawe (thank you),

Roy D. Baldrige
Second Chief



THE SHAWNEE TRIBE BUSINESS COUNCIL



**SECRETARY
CAROLYN
FOSTER**



**TREASURER
MARK
McDOWELL**



**SEAT 1
JOHN
SPARKMAN**



**SEAT 2
DIANA
McLEAN**



**SEAT 3
DREW
DIXON**



**SEAT 4
COREY
WINESBURG**



**SEAT 5
MONTY
COOMBES**



**SEAT 6
LEE
BLUEJACKET**



**SEAT 7
KENI
HOOD**



2024 ELECTION RESULTS & TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING WRAP-UP



The Shawnee Tribe's 2024 General Council & Election Weekend included a hawikeepicika kiskotaawe ("ribbon-cutting") and open house for the new Emma "Mock" Donaldson saawanwaatoweewika ("language house"), a community dinner and stomp dance, as well as the annual meeting of the Shawnee Tribal Council and Business Council election. Citizens had the opportunity to meet tribal service programs & administrative staff, collect raffle prizes, and hear reports on the past twelve months of happenings of the tribe.

2024 ELECTION

The absentee voting process began in April and closed on Thursday, September 19. Early in-person voting took place on Friday, September 20 from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and the polls were open on election day from 8:00 to 11:00 AM. Citizens who voted in person received a "niila nikitateniwe (I Voted)" sticker.

Business Council Election results were announced during the tribal council meeting by Election Committee Chairperson, Cindy Witherspoon. The results were uncontested. They are posted at the Shawnee governmental buildings for thirty days and will be permanently filed in the Shawnee Tribal Court Clerk's office. A copy of the Certified Consolidated Election Return has been mailed to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS

SECOND CHIEF

ROY BALDRIDGE (I)
UNOPPOSED

SECRETARY

JANA EDWARDS-JOHNSON 26%

CAROLYN FOSTER (I) 74%

BUSINESS COUNCIL SEAT 3

MORRIS BLUEJACKET 25%

GREGORY JONES 17%

DREW DIXON 35%

ELENA STAUBUS 23%

BUSINESS COUNCIL SEAT 4

COREY WINESBURG (I)
UNOPPOSED

LOOKING AHEAD

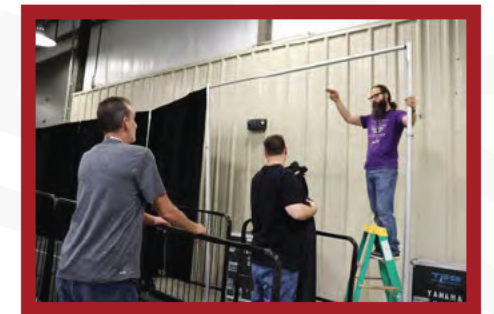
- The 2025 Annual General Council Meeting and Business Council Election is set for next **September 19-20** at the Craig County Fairgrounds & Community Center, Vinita, OK.
- The candidate filing period for the 2025 Business Council Election will run from May 5 to June 20.

A special thank you goes out to the Election Committee for their hard work, and to our cooks who provided a delicious meal on Friday evening before the Stomp Dance, Bowlin's BBQ for catering lunch after the tribal council meeting on Saturday, and our tribal staff for all their work setting up and breaking down the event venues. —niyaawe!

[Scan here to watch highlights from 2023-2024](#)



[Scan here to view photos on Facebook](#)



Shawnee Tribe staff set up for the Annual Meeting at the Craig County Fairgrounds & Community Center in Vinita, OK, on the Friday morning before the 2024 General Council Weekend events.



Ribbon cutting at the Emma "Mock" Donaldson saawanwaatoweewika. See page 20 for more information about the event and new facility.



A community dinner and stomp dance were held at the Miami Tribe Council House, with cooks serving meat gravy, corn soup, frybread, and pineapple upside-down cake.



The Shawnee Tribe Election Committee assisted with early voting and regular in-person voting on the morning of the 2024 Annual Meeting.



The 2024 annual meeting of the tribal council included Chief Barnes's State of the Nation address, financial updates, a report from Shawnee Development President Chris Floyd, a special presentation from Firaxis Games about their work on Tecumseh in *Civilization VII*, open forum, and a special acknowledgment of retiring Business Councilman Scott Secondine.



WEEMEYAKWE: WHERE WE COME FROM

REMEMBERING SHAWNEE LUMINARIES AT THE 2024 FIVE MOONS DANCE FESTIVAL



Over two days in late August, the tribe and the OU School of Dance produced the Five Moons Dance Festival, a remarkable celebration of Shawnee heritage and the timeless legacy of five Oklahoma Indian ballerinas—Yvonne Chouteau (Shawnee), Rosella Hightower (Choctaw), Moscelyne Larkin (Eastern Shawnee & Peoria), and Osage sisters Marjorie and Maria Tallchief.

Named after these iconic figures who revolutionized the dance and theatre world in the 20th century, the festival began in 2021 with a mission to uplift these women's stories. This year's event coincided with the 100th anniversary of OU's College of Fine Arts and was thus dedicated to honoring the achievements of Yvonne Chouteau, a trailblazing Shawnee ballerina and dance educator who co-founded the OU School of Dance and Oklahoma City Ballet alongside her husband, Miguel Terekhov, a Charrúa descendant from Uruguay.

Initial conversations with OU took place in mid-2023, and tribal leadership considered it crucial that Yvonne's immediate family be engaged in the festival plans so that the event stayed true to their wishes while celebrating their matriarch's rich legacy. After multiple discussions between the tribe, OU, and Yvonne's daughters, Christy Conway Terekhov and Liz Impallomeni Terekhov, several events at multiple venues were planned for August 24 & 25, the first weekend of OU's fall semester.

One of the major highlights was a Native art market showcasing artists from the Five Moons' tribal nations. Additionally, panel discussions were held, where Yvonne's daughters shared their memories and personal stories while Chickasaw composer Jerod Tate, who studied under Quapaw composer Louis Ballard, spoke about Ballard's profound influence and musical genius. Ballard, notably, composed the score for *The Four Moons*, a 1967 ballet production inspired by the lives of the ballerinas. This production gave rise to the group's moniker, the Five Moons. A third discussion featured four of the Five Moons tribal chiefs, including Chief Ben Barnes of the Shawnee Tribe. Their presence underscored the lasting importance of the Five Moons' legacies, both for the world of ballet and for their tribal communities.

Another pivotal event was a memorial stomp dance at the First Americans Museum (FAM) in Oklahoma City. This dance was organized to honor not only Yvonne Chouteau and the Five Moons but also our late tribal Chairman, James R. Squirrel, and Troy Little Axe, Sr. (Absentee Shawnee). James and Troy were longtime coordinators of OU's annual student stomp dance and were steadfastly committed to creating spaces for young Native students to connect and practice their cultural ways with each other. The event drew a significant turnout, and their contributions to their communities were remembered with gratitude. The dance was the first of its kind held at the museum, and there is hope that this partnership with FAM will continue with similar cultural gatherings in the future.

The second day of the festival continued with the spirit of honoring Yvonne, James, and Troy. During the festival ballet performance, dancers from OU, Oklahoma City Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre presented some of Yvonne's most beloved roles, including her variation from *The Four Moons*. Elisa Harkins (Cherokee/Muscogee) presented excerpts from her evening-length work *Radio III*. A particularly emotional finale piece brought Shawnee singers & dancers together on stage with students from the schools of dance founded by Yvonne and Miguel. The magnitude of the event, showcasing unity and pride in Yvonne's legacy, sealed the festival's vision and capped off months of tireless work, bringing this exciting celebration to life.

Yvonne Chouteau's legacy exemplifies the international respect and recognition that Shawnee people have garnered, and the 2024 Five Moons Dance Festival highlighted the importance of boosting visibility for our peoples' contributions to the arts, education, and community. As the curtain closed on the event, attendees were reminded of the indelible gifts Yvonne and the Five Moons gave their audiences and students that will continue to inspire future generations.

To view the 2024 Five Moons Dance Festival performance program booklet, videos, and more photos, visit the News & Community section of shawnee-nsn.gov or scan here with your phone's camera:



MAALAAKWAHI KE'NEEMEPE: LET'S LOOK CLOSER

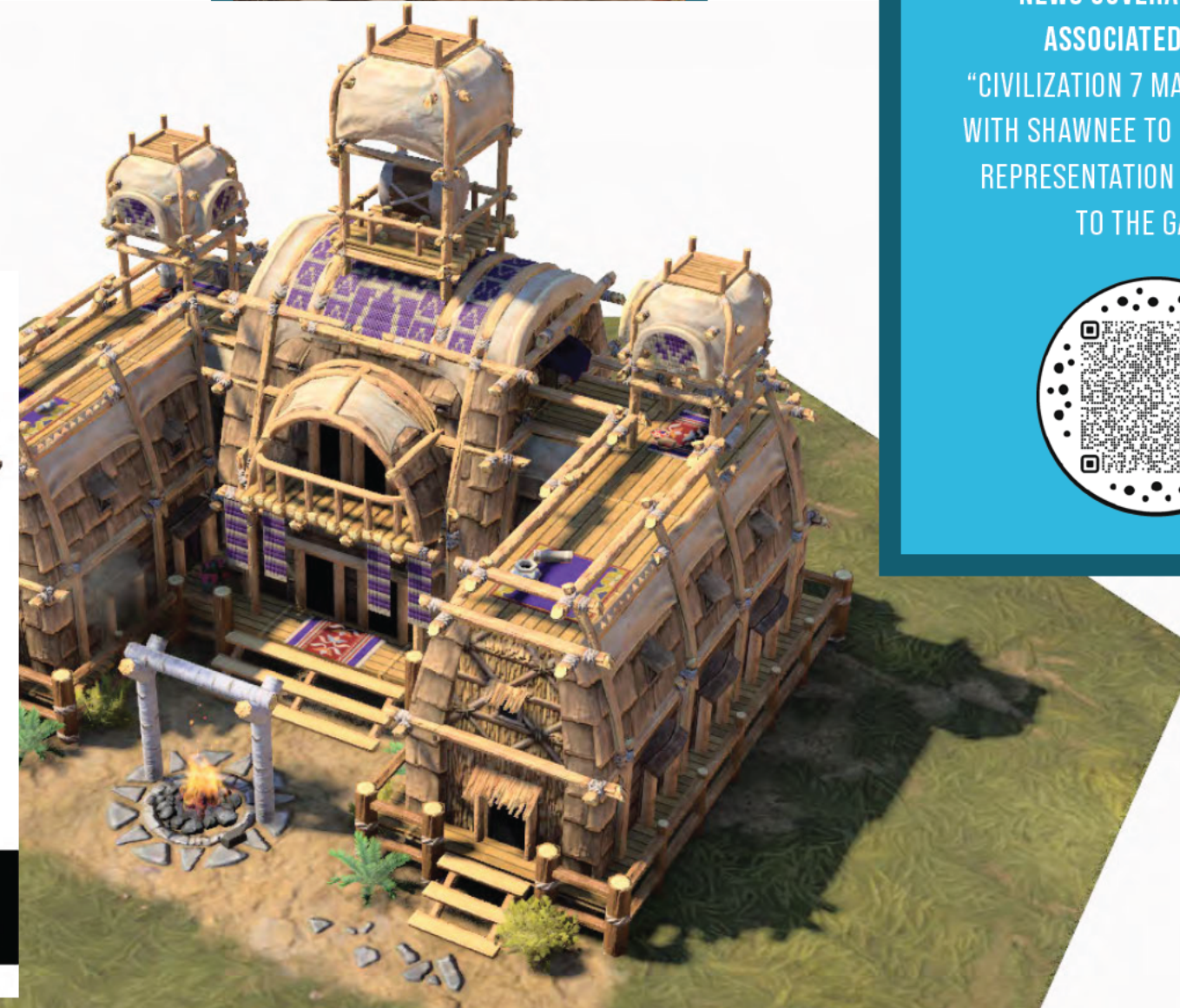
FIRST LOOK AT TECUMSEH IN SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION VII

During General Council weekend (September 20-21), the Shawnee Tribe hosted Firaxis Games' Pete Murray (Learning & Development Manager) and Lead Producer Andrew Frederiksen, developers of Sid Meier's *Civilization VII*, due to be released next February.

Murray and Frederiksen kicked off their Shawnee visit with attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the new Emma "Mock" Donaldson saawanwaatoweewika (Shawnee language house) on Friday, September 20, in Miami. They gave brief comments about the collaboration between Firaxis and the Shawnee Language Immersion Program (SLIP), Tecumseh's character and Shawnee assets in the upcoming *Civilization VII* game. Later that evening, Murray and Frederiksen joined tribal citizens, community members and staff for meat gravy & frybread and stomp dancing at the Miami Tribe Council House.

Murray and Frederiksen took stage Saturday morning to reveal and present the *Civilization VII* game to Shawnee citizens during the annual meeting of the tribal council at the Craig County Fairgrounds and Community Center in Vinita, OK. They spoke of how initial requests developed into an ongoing relationship they have working with the Shawnee Tribe, especially the SLIP staff. In addition to incorporating the Shawnee language into the game, they researched old family photographs, archaeological material, and consulted with cultural knowledge-keepers on content to share or not share.

Civilization VII had a table with promotional materials available for citizens during the annual meeting.



WATCH FIRAXIS GAMES PRESENTATION TO SHAWNEE CITIZENS DURING THE ANNUAL MEETING:

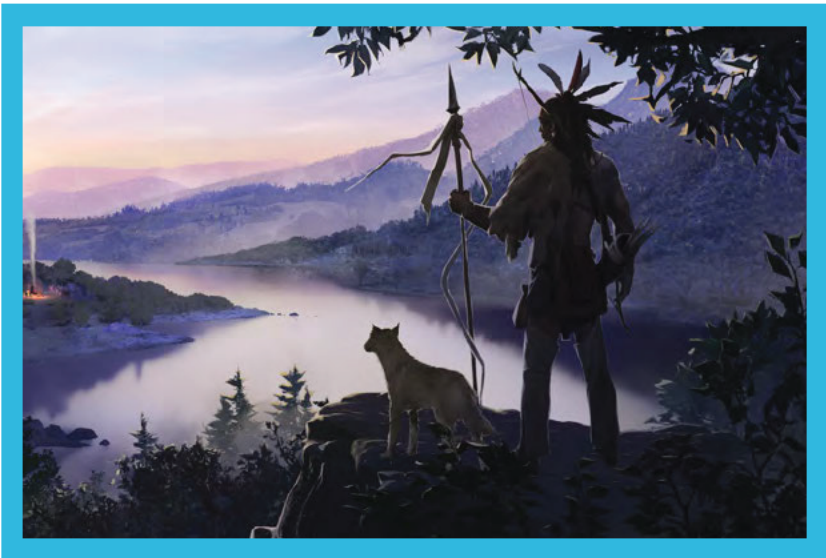


NEWS COVERAGE BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS: "CIVILIZATION 7 MAKERS WORKED WITH SHAWNEE TO BRING SINCERE REPRESENTATION OF THE TRIBE TO THE GAME"



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE





Saturday, October 5, was Tecumseh Memorial Day, a Shawnee national holiday set aside to reflect on Tecumseh's legacy and service to the Shawnee people & Indian Country at large. Tribal offices were closed Friday, October 4, so employees could engage in service projects in Ottawa and Texas counties.



TA'SAAWANWAATOWEEYAKWE: THE LANGUAGE CORNER / "WHERE WE SPEAK SHAWNEE"



Over the past few months, the Shawnee Language Immersion Program has been busier than ever! We hosted our first Shawnee language conference and our second annual language fair in July. All our keeke'kimiweecki (teachers) came together in person for the first time after multiple years of working virtually on Zoom. It was an amazing weekend of fostering community within the program and with the broader community. We had 25 entries for the language fair across the adult and children's categories filled with talent and creativity in saawanwaatoweewe (Shawnee language). Take a look at some of the winning projects on the following pages!



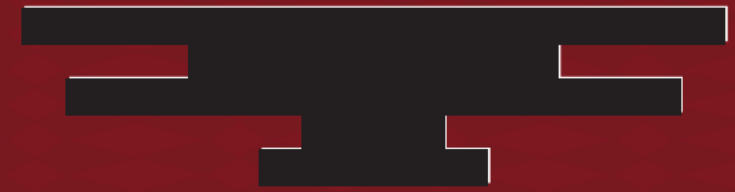
CATEGORY	WINNERS
KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 2	FIRST: JAYTEN HOOD SECOND: KAILAND HOOD THIRD (TIE): HENRY HOOD & CORI WORKMAN
GRADES 3-4	FIRST: CECILY BLANCHARD SECOND: RENLEE HOOD THIRD: AMIA SAPPINGTON
GRADES 5-6	FIRST: ELIAS KURTZ
GRADES 7-8	FIRST: MYA BLANCHARD
GRADES 9-12	FIRST: ELDISA ROACH SECOND: SAGE HOOD THIRD: ZOOEY HOOD
ADULT SLIP STUDENT	FIRST: BAILEY QUISHENBERRY SECOND: RYAN & ANDREA CONWAY THIRD: SUSAN JENNINGS
ADULT CLP / APPRENTICE	FIRST: MARGARET SEWELL SECOND: STEVE ROACH THIRD (3-WAY TIE): DANIEL CITY, MASON HUDSON & LINDSEY JENNINGS

— A SONG BY MARGARET SEWELL

CLP Margaret Sewell composed an original children's song with lyrics about learning to speak and count in Shawnee, which took home first place in its category at the language fair.



AN EXCERPT FROM MARGARET'S LYRICS:





[REDACTED] — A COMIC BY BAILEY QUSHENBERRY

SLIP student Bailey Quishenberry took first place in the adult student category with their original comic following a day in the life of a couple working in their garden.



“BIOGRAPHY OF JANE BOOTH” — A ZINE BY ELOISA ROACH

SLIP student Eloisa Roach created a zine relaying a story she learned researching old documents about Shawnees in Kansas.



“ENGINEERING DESIGN AND ASSEMBLY OF INDIAN FOOTBALL FIELD” — BY MASON HUDSON

SLIP apprentice Mason Hudson created these engineering design plans for assembling a [REDACTED]. Mason’s designs, a portion of which can be seen here, earned him a third-place win in his category, tied with fellow teachers Daniel Citty and Lindsey Jennings.



EUCHEE BUTTERFLY FARM FIELD TRIP

On September 7, SLIP students, CLPs and apprentices traveled to the Eucheé Butterfly Farm in Bixby, OK, to learn more about the farm and the pollinators they care for. Attendees also had a fun in-person opportunity to practice speaking saawanwaatoweewe with one another.



EMMA "MOCK" DONALDSON SAAWANWAATOWEEWIKA RIBBON CUTTING

On Friday, September 20, tribal citizens and community members gathered to celebrate the grand opening of the Shawnee Tribe's newest facility and cultural resource—the Emma "Mock" Donaldson saawanwaatoweeewika (Shawnee language house). A little more than ten minutes east of central Miami, OK, the facility boasts a large, open gathering space with high ceilings and a kitchenette, plenty of gravel lot parking and approximately eight acres of land for the Shawnee Language Immersion Program's future use. Off the back patio of the main building, the program is already working on what will eventually become a state-of-the-art audio recording studio.

The new facility is named for the late Ms. Emma "Mock" Donaldson (1921-2021). Mock was born in White Oak, OK and grew up in the area before eventually moving to raise her family in Sioux Falls, SD. She loved gardening, fishing, bowling and sewing, and she was one of the last remaining first-language speakers and among the oldest living Shawnees at the time of her passing. Two of Mock's children and many of her extended family members were in attendance at the ribbon cutting, where Chief Ben Barnes spoke about the language warriors, including Mock, who laid the foundations for what the Shawnee Language Immersion Program is now able to accomplish. Other honorary guests included the family of Troy Little Axe, Sr., representatives from Firaxis Games, who've recently worked with the tribe's language program on their in-game portrayal of historical leader Tecumseh in the forthcoming seventh edition of *Sid Meier's Civilization* video game franchise, and George "Fife" Blanchard, who works for the tribe as their first-language specialist. The ceremony's remarks concluded with heartfelt speeches from Mock's daughters, Barbara Donaldson and Darla Irvine.

The Shawnee Language Immersion Program team is looking forward to their future in the new facility named for such a remarkable Shawnee woman. While the facility is not generally open to the public during tribal business hours, Shawnee citizens and local community members should watch for upcoming events at the saawanwaatoweeewika, like the Winter Stories Gathering on Friday, December 7.



SLIP CLASSES RESUME IN JANUARY

Citizens of all three federally recognized Shawnee nations, their spouses and families, and Shawnee Tribe employees are eligible for enrollment. In addition to dialogue-based and immersion classes, SLIP will offer *mayaani kake'kimetiwe*. (parent/care-giver class).

For more information on our 2025 classes, check out shawnee-nsn.gov/slip, visit the tribe's official Facebook page (@saawanooki), and be sure you're subscribed to *piyeetaacimooweeneyefa*, the tribe's monthly e-mail newsletter.

Ready to register now? Email shawneelanguage@shawnee-tribe.com or call tribal headquarters at (918) 542-2441.

WINTER STORIES GATHERING – DECEMBER 7, 2024

AT THE EMMA "MOCK" DONALDSON
SAAWANWAATOWEEWIKA /
65225 E. 100 RD., MIAMI, OK 74354

Dinner* from 6:00-7:30 pm
Storytelling to follow


*Dinner will continue being served for those who arrive late

NOVEMBER 15th
IS AMERICA RECYCLES DAY!

no'ki kiisahawepe
"Let's use it again"


1  **Reusable Bags**
1 Reusable Bag = 1,500 Single-Use Plastic Bags



2  **Water Bottles**
1 Reusable Water Bottle = 167 Plastic Water Bottles





3  **Coffee Cups**
1 Reusable Coffee Cup = 500 Single-Use Coffee Cups



4  **Straws**
1 Reusable Straw = 540 Plastic Straws



5  **Towel**
1 Cloth Towel = 7,300 Paper Towels



halika koowesinakata
"Leave it better than you found it"



THE POWER OF OPPORTUNITY: CITIZEN SERVICES IN ACTION



ONE CITIZEN'S JOURNEY THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION, CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND HOMEOWNERSHIP

Shawnee tribal citizen Michael Cedrone lives in Texas, where he works as Head of Human Resources at GBC Food Services. Cedrone attributes his success to the tribe's educational, career and housing support programs. His professional journey began at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie, TX, managed by one of the tribe's business partners, Global Gaming Solutions (GGS), an extension of the Chickasaw Nation's Division of Commerce. Before embarking on a career in HR, he became the first in his family to achieve a college education.

Q: What differences have Shawnee Tribe citizen services made in your personal and professional development?

A: The Shawnee Tribe's commitment to education, career development, and community empowerment has profoundly enriched my life and fueled my drive to succeed. The Higher Education Awards program not only enabled me to earn an associate degree but also paved the way for me to complete a bachelor's degree in HR Management and a master's degree in organizational management and leadership. These programs go beyond just creating opportunities—they provide the tools and resources necessary for long-term success.

Q: How did your time spent working with Global Gaming Solutions impact you?

A: I began my professional journey with them in 2017, and I've had the privilege to connect with inspiring leaders, draw strength from their stories, and contribute to extraordinary organizations. Under the guidance of Jennifer Kaneshiro, the Chief Human Resources Officer of the Chickasaw Nation's Division of Commerce, I learned the values that guide the [Chickasaw] Nation and received mentorship that helped me grow and witness the profound impact of our collective efforts. The team members deepened my admiration for our mission, and it came back full circle when we, together, established initiatives like the construction of Golden Mesa Casino, creating new opportunities for the Shawnee Tribe's future.

Q: Where are you now, and how do you incorporate what you learned through your higher education and early career into your current role?

A: As Head of HR at GBC Food Services, founders Thien & Katie Aung have entrusted me with the profound responsibility of empowering and cultivating their most invaluable resource—their people. Thien & Katie are former refugees from the ongoing Burma civil war. Because of their journey, they've instilled resilience and determination into their organization, and I draw many parallels between their story & values and our tribe's history of displacement & principles of community support. We are not only supporting individuals—we are building a legacy of empowerment for under-recognized communities. Just as the Shawnee Tribe promotes strengthening the entire community, our initiatives at GBC aim to create sustainable opportunities for under-recognized groups, ensuring long-term growth for everyone involved.

Q: What message do you want to convey to the community?

A: From scholarships and educational grants that open doors to higher learning to career mentoring that guides us toward fulfilling careers, the Shawnee Tribe is committed to our holistic growth and well-being. What was once a distant dream for me—homeownership—is now within reach, thanks to their initiatives that support financial literacy and offer pathways to securing a stable future. The tribe's support has not only transformed my life but has also given me the strength and purpose to uplift others on their own journeys. To every member of our community: I encourage you to embrace the incredible programs and resources provided by our tribe. These are more than just opportunities; they are stepping stones to a brighter future. Let us honor the legacy of our ancestors by seizing these opportunities and creating a lasting impact for generations to come.



NOV

THE SHAWNEE JOURNAL

2024



SHAWNEE TRIBE
29 S HWY 69A
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74354 U.S.A.

PRE-SORT STANDARD
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ON INSTAGRAM



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AND @SHAWNNEECHIEF
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