



THE CHICKASAW NATION

# 2024 VETERANS

SERVICES NEWSLETTER





## CHOKMA!

The Chickasaw Nation is proud to support our military veterans through a range of dedicated programs, services and opportunities. Your courageous service and selfless sacrifices deserve our highest respect and deepest gratitude.

Through our Veterans Services Newsletter, we aim to honor, inform and connect Chickasaw veterans by sharing information about available resources and highlighting the experiences of Chickasaw servicemen and women who stand as our modern-day warriors.

We appreciate your service, and we are committed to serving you in return.

Sincerely,

*Bill Anoatubby*

**Bill Anoatubby, Governor**  
The Chickasaw Nation



*Chris Anoatubby*

**Chris Anoatubby, Lt. Governor**  
The Chickasaw Nation





# 8th Annual CHICKASAW VETERANS CONFERENCE

★ ★ ★ SAVE THE DATE - JUNE 2025 ★ ★ ★

“ This was my first Veterans Conference. The speakers have been great! I have a lot of military family and I will definitely encourage them to come next year. ”

– **Nichole James**, U.S. Air Force veteran, Texas  
(pictured to the right)



## CHICKASAW HONOR GUARD

SERVING FOR OUR OWN

The Chickasaw Honor Guard was established in 1993 by a group of Chickasaw veterans to conduct military honors at funerals and memorial services throughout Oklahoma. Many Chickasaw, First American and non-tribal affiliated families reach out for Chickasaw Honor Guard services. Honors are provided to veterans during their funeral or memorial at no cost to the family.

Chickasaw citizen and Marine Corps veteran, Thomas Faltysek, was inspired to join the Chickasaw Honor Guard after discovering his Chickasaw heritage and family military background.

“I didn’t find out I was Chickasaw until I was 54 years old,” Faltysek said. “To be able to go to these different events, whether it is a funeral or other event, it is an honor to be able to represent the tribe.”

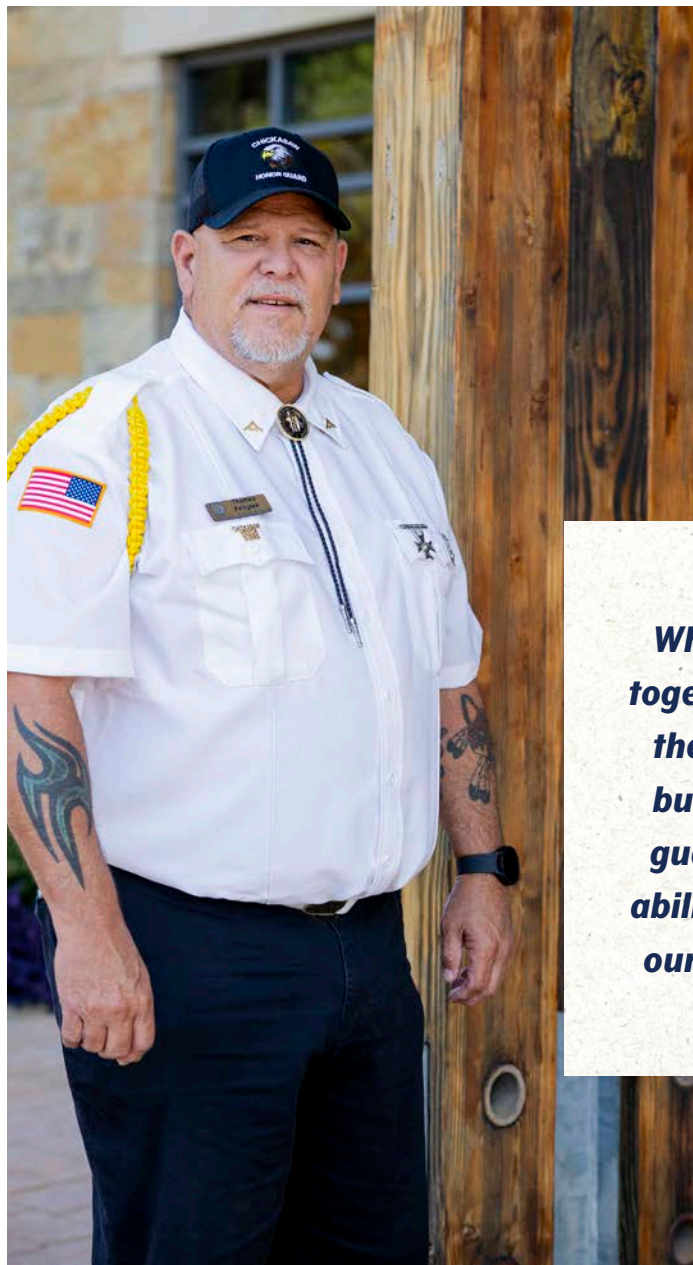
Other events the Chickasaw Honor Guard participate in include parades, powwows, ceremonies, various tribal functions and patriotic activities. They also post the colors throughout the year within the Chickasaw Nation and on a state and national level.

“We just came back from Washington, D.C., from the Daughters of the American Revolution conference for Indigenous education. We went to a banquet that night and got to bring the flags in,” Faltysek said.

When asked what he enjoys most being a part of the Chickasaw Honor Guard, Faltysek said it is the fellowship.

To join the Chickasaw Honor Guard or request honor guard services, visit [Chickasaw.net/HonorGuard](https://Chickasaw.net/HonorGuard) or contact them at (580) 310-7930 or [CNHG@Chickasaw.net](mailto:CNHG@Chickasaw.net).

Left: Thomas Faltysek, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran in his Chickasaw Honor Guard uniform.



“  
When veterans get together, they can tell their stories freely, but with the honor guard, we have the ability to give back to our fellow veterans.”

# GERALD GOODPASTER TURNAGE

## CHICKASAW WARRIOR CARRIES BANNERS OF FAMILY AND SERVICE FORWARD

In Duncan, Oklahoma, during the late 1960s, Gerald Goodpaster Turnage was born to U.S. service members, Heloise “Lois” Johnson Goodpaster (Chickasaw) and James Goodpaster. He carries forward a Chickasaw lineage and his family’s tradition of service.

“I come from a long history of military service to our country,” Turnage said.

In his youth, Turnage lost both of his parents, leaving him and his three brothers in the care of aunts and uncles until they were placed in the Hillcrest Children’s Home in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He lived there from age 6 to 13, when he was adopted by Vance and Juleen Turnage of Missouri.

“Once I was adopted, I was a pretty good kid,” Turnage said. “After you lose a set of parents and you’re orphaned, you have a different outlook on life.”

Turnage said being adopted has brought him to where he is today and has provided him a guiding light.

“From the moment I started living with them, my dad became my biggest cheerleader and source of encouragement,” Turnage said. “He was constantly on me to do the best I could with whatever I was doing. He has always been there for me.”

Turnage attended Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, for a year but found himself searching for more direction. That’s when Charles Adams, “Uncle Chuck,” a colonel and chaplain in the Army, sat down with Turnage and shared his knowledge about the military.

“Chuck had so much to say about what the different services did and suggested the Coast Guard,” Turnage said. “What they do is geared more toward helping people.”

Turnage joined the Coast Guard in Sept. 1988. The Coast Guard gave him structure, support, a close-knit band of brothers, as well as a set of skills and knowledge that would launch him into a lifetime of success.

After boot camp, Turnage was assigned to Guam. He spent time on different ships, including a 95-foot patrol boat and a 180-foot buoy tender. His main duty station was the Mariana section office.

“The Cape George, the 95-foot patrol boat, had 14 people on board,” Turnage said. “We were a small group, like brothers or family rather than just a number.”

He remembered how they would occasionally fish or have swim calls. Other times they might go to port into one of the Micronesian islands and all go into town.



**U.S. Coast Guard**



After Guam, Turnage was stationed in St. Louis and worked up and down the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. He spent time at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center becoming a fire-control technician focusing on the Mark 95. Then at the Portsmouth Shipyard, he helped ships get their equipment groomed and get back in shape.

On the Northland out of Portsmouth, Turnage worked fire-control systems and carried out drug interdiction, fishery patrols, as well as search and rescue. From there, he was sent to Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, an engineering support and training center in Yorktown, Virginia. He maintained equipment and helped teach the Mark 92 fire-control system.

“I really enjoyed my time in the Coast Guard. It didn’t matter if we were out in a hurricane or out on calm seas, it was just an enjoyment,” Turnage said.

After exiting the service in 1993, he moved to northern Missouri and began working at a hospital as an electrician. He worked up to developing, installing and maintaining electrical systems internationally for a manufacturing company.

With assistance from the Chickasaw Nation education programs, Turnage went on to earn his bachelor’s degree in business administration with a concentration in health care at Southern New Hampshire University.

Until recently, Turnage also served as a probation and parole officer for Missouri. As of August 2024, he transitioned to a new role as an instructor at a state technical school in Linn, Missouri.

**Top right (large): Gerald Turnage in his official U.S. Coast Guard portrait.**  
**Top right (small): Gerald Turnage with his wife, Barbara.**



Outside of work, Turnage and his wife Barbara are active in multiple veteran-serving groups, charities and programs.

Inspired by his counselor and to help with post-traumatic stress disorder anxiety, Turnage decided to get his own service dog. With the help of K9s on the Front Line, he picked out and trained Roxie, a Belgian Malinois.

When the time came for Roxie to have her own pups, the Turnages decided to give back to veterans across the country.

“Nine of the pups are with veterans and one of the pups is with a police department in North Dakota. The nine with veterans, six of those are service dogs,” Turnage said.

The Turnages are also members of the American Legion Riders, raise money for veteran-serving charities and scholarships, visit nursing homes, deliver Christmas gifts to children in hospitals and more.

“We donate so veterans can get the services they deserve. We do everything we can,” Turnage said.

To honor his father Vance who passed in July 2024, Turnage continues to offer a helping hand and guidance to all in need.

“The military gave me a way to be successful in my life. It gave me skills, which alongside my degree, have allowed me to start teaching. It has given me a different path in life. The military has taught me who I am, what I can do and it gave me purpose,” Turnage said.

“It’s not always what you think it’s going to be, but I’ve made the best out of what I’ve been given,” he said.



***The military has taught me who I am,  
what I can do and it gave me purpose.***



**Above: Gerald Turnage with service dog, Roxie.**

# CHICKASAW VETERANS WALL



The virtual Chickasaw Veterans Wall honors the lives of Chickasaw veterans and pays tribute to their military service. Chickasaw veterans and their families are invited to submit information to be included in the virtual wall. The virtual wall features a veteran’s photo, military branch and dates of service for both past and living veterans.

For more information or to complete a form online, visit

**CHICKASAW.NET/VETERANSWALL**



# PAULA TURNER-PALMER

## A MOTHER ANSWERS THE CALL OF DUTY

*I'm very proud and honored. When I joined the service, I figured it was my duty as a Chickasaw.*

Paula Turner-Palmer enlisted in the United States Army in March 1977 and served until August 1984.

Already in her mid-20s, Turner-Palmer was a mother when she made the decision to join the U.S. Army. Being raised by her stepfather, an Army veteran, she was inspired to join this branch after hearing him talk about it often. Her choice to serve came with consideration of her family. "The reason I waited is because I was already a mother and never thought about leaving my kids for a long period of time," Turner-Palmer said. Though she did eventually decide to enlist.

"For myself and my kids, I felt it was my duty," Turner-Palmer said. "As a Chickasaw, I felt that it was my duty to serve my country."

She completed her basic training at Fort McClellan in Anniston, Alabama, and was a part of one of the first groups of women to be trained with men for combat. Fort McClellan and Fort Jackson were the first bases to have women train with men in the same basic training units beginning in 1977. This move was a big step in equalizing the U.S. military standards for all.

"It was a good experience," Turner-Palmer recalled. "It was hard on a lot of women, I think because they were from big cities. I was from the country, so I did very well and it wasn't hard for me."

Turner-Palmer had experience with heavy lifting and had already fired a gun by the time she attended basic training. She was more prepared to meet these new requirements. "Some of the women, they had to cycle back through because they couldn't do it the first time. We would have a 25-mile hike, mostly uphill, carrying 85-pound backpacks, and we ran part of it, marched part of it and then leisurely walked part of it."

One of the highlights of training at Fort McClellan for Turner-Palmer and her peers was being able to train with other branches of the military. "We would go to class and might see Marines, might see Navy or Air Force. That base had all branches on it." She also recalled getting to share her experience with a friend who joined at the same time.



### U.S. Army

She was stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Harford County, Maryland, after her basic training. Turner-Palmer worked on repairing howitzers, which are artillery weapons with long-range capabilities.

After her service ended, she returned home to her family. One of her favorite jobs after exiting the military was as a student supervisor for groundskeeping at East Central University. She worked in this position for a few years and led students in maintaining the flowers, trees and greenery on campus. While working for the college, Turner-Palmer decided to return to school and earn her degree. "I thought, I can still keep my job and I can go to college so that's what I did," she said.

Turner-Palmer went on to complete a bachelor's degree and graduated from East Central University on the president's honor roll. Afterward, she began working for the Chickasaw Nation as a case manager for recovery resource services. She is now retired but continues to use her education by assisting her son in his business ventures. "My son owns a business now and I help him with his paperwork, spreadsheets and stuff like that."

Her legacy of service also continues through her granddaughter who is currently serving with the U.S. Air Force. Like Turner-Palmer, her journey with the U.S. military began after becoming a mother.

Turner-Palmer is a member of the Chickasaw Warrior Society where she is recognized for her military experience, can find camaraderie with other veterans and celebrates her Chickasaw heritage. "I'm very proud and honored. When I joined the service, I figured it was my duty as a Chickasaw," she said. "It just means a lot to me."

*Top right: Paula Turner-Palmer stands with Governor Bill Anoatubby at the 7th annual Chickasaw Veterans Conference on June 7, 2024.*





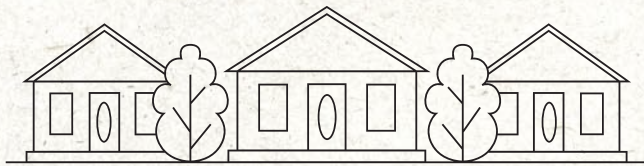
■ Above: Jamie Jones in her California Department of Veterans Affairs office.

## JAMIE JONES

### PROMOTED IN CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Chickasaw citizen Jamie Jones was named assistant deputy secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs in May 2024. In her new position, Jones works to engage with the veteran community through programs, honor the legacy of those who have passed through memorials and ensure they have a dignified resting place in state-owned cemeteries.

“I am honored that I’m charged with outreach to veterans through every moment that matters throughout their life and then ensuring that they’re in a final, honorable resting place,” Jones said. “I’m so thankful that they entrust this very important role to me.”



## VETERANS HOUSING

### *Construction is Complete*

Governor Anoatubby led a special dedication ceremony Aug. 14, 2024, for the Tashka Inchokka' veterans housing. Six new homes were completed in 2024 near Glenwood Park in Ada, Oklahoma. Each home features more than 1,000 square feet of living space with two bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen. They include a fenced yard and a driveway with two parking spaces. The homes were built to provide housing for veterans facing housing insecurity.







## CHICKASAW VETERANS' ANNUAL TRIP TO WASHINGTON, DC

Each year, the tribe sends a group of its warriors to the nation's capital to enjoy the sights, take part in Veterans Day memorial ceremonies and fellowship with other Chickasaws who served. This trip included warriors who represented four branches of the U.S. armed services including the Marine Corps, Air Force, Army and Navy.

Four Chickasaw Vietnam-era veterans presented a Chickasaw Elder Veterans wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. They included Emory, Texas, resident Randall Davis, an Army veteran; Houston resident Curtis Frazier, a Marine Corps veteran; Bullhead City, Arizona, resident Jimmy Rucker, an Army veteran; and Tulsa, Oklahoma, resident George Tabor, an Army veteran.

The trip took the warriors to memorials and monuments throughout the National Mall in Washington, D.C., including special ceremonies at the World War II Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Albuquerque, New Mexico, resident David Atkins, a Marine Corps

veteran, and Oklahoma City resident Dr. Don Carter, an Army veteran, presented a wreath during a ceremony attended by hundreds of fellow Vietnam veterans.

The gathering also provided opportunities for the elders to exchange stories of their military service and find the names of friends and fellow soldiers on the memorial wall. Dr. Carter acknowledged the names of several acquaintances honored on the wall and said visiting the iconic black granite memorial is not easy.

"It's one of the hardest things I've ever done. I choke up just thinking about it," said Dr. Carter, recalling his first visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

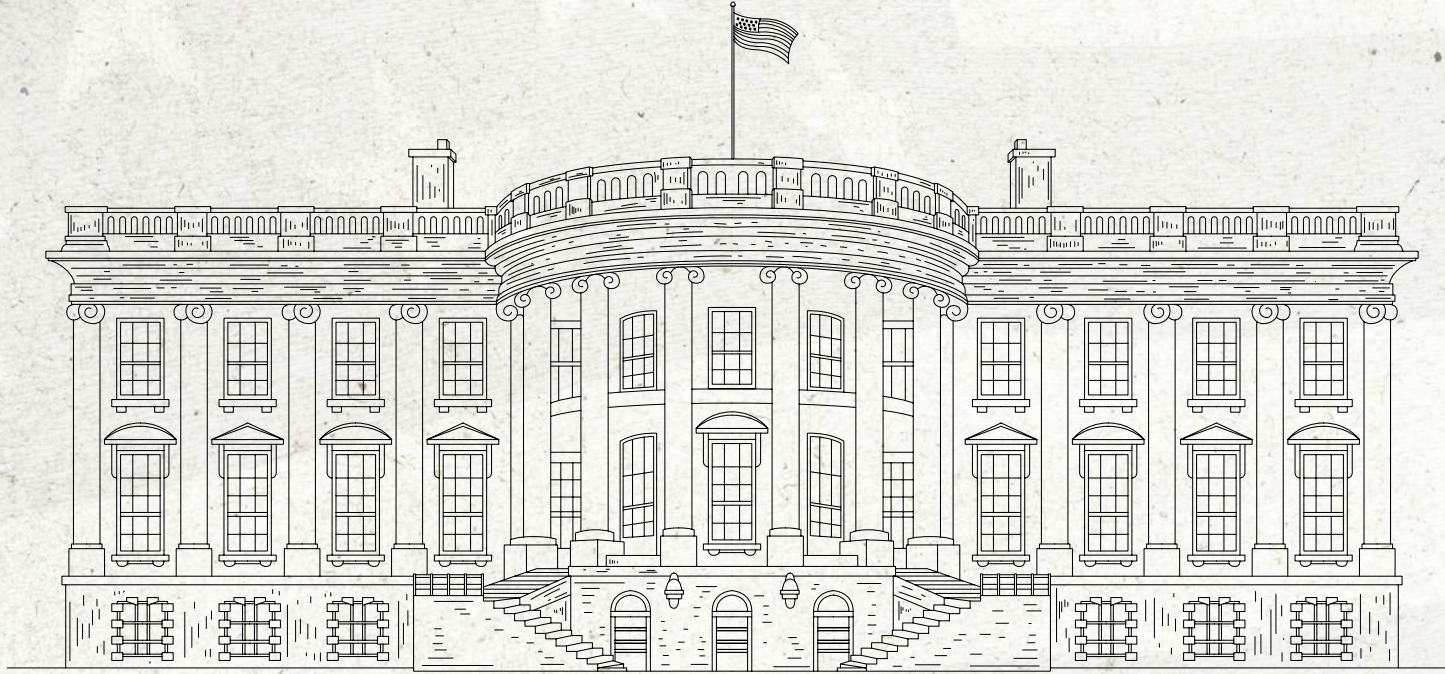
*Top left: George Tabor stands under the American flag while visiting the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery.*

*Top middle: Al Caldwell (right) and wife Belinda (left) with the Chickasaw Elder Veterans wreath presented at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.*

*Top right: Walter Jack (left) and Jim Rucker (right) pose in front of an aircraft while visiting the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.*



# Travel with us to WASHINGTON, D.C.



Join us on our next Chickasaw Elder Veterans Trip to explore Washington, D.C. Veterans are invited to complete an application to be entered into a random drawing.

Learn more or apply by contacting the aging administration office at (580) 795-9790.

***“The Chickasaw Nation guides who took us around were knowledgeable about where we were going, what we were doing and it was a very satisfying experience.”***

***-Joseph Moore, retired U.S. Navy***

In addition to the holiday memorial services, the veterans also toured the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Archives, the Lincoln Memorial, Union Station, the U.S. Capitol and other historic sites.

At the National Museum of the American Indian, the veterans explored a variety of exhibits describing the experiences and triumphs of First Americans throughout U.S. history. For many, a highlight was viewing the museum’s Chickasaw artifacts, which included a flute and bald eagle feather that traveled with Chickasaw astronaut John Herrington aboard space shuttle Endeavour during his 2002 flight to the International Space Station.



***Above: First row, left to right: George Tabor, Curtis Frazier, Gary Beavers, Roger Goodman, David Atkins, Don Carter, Al Caldwell, Carl Pershica, Charles Liddell. Second row: David Engle, Jim Rucker, David Milligan, Robert Lassiter, Larry Price, Randall Davis, Walter Jack.***



# VETERANS SERVICES AVAILABLE

## Veterans Services assist with:



HEALTH CARE

EDUCATION



MILITARY RECORDS

ACCESSING BENEFITS



## CHICKASAW WARRIOR SOCIETY

An organization of community and camaraderie, the Chickasaw Warrior Society brings together Chickasaw veterans and active-duty military members. The Warrior Society fosters relationships between service members and connects them with the Chickasaw Nation for exclusive benefits, information and events.



Applications are available online at [Chickasaw.net/WarriorSociety](http://Chickasaw.net/WarriorSociety).

## CHICKASAW WARRIOR SOCIETY PARKING

Members of the Chickasaw Warrior Society can utilize reserved parking spaces at tribal service facilities and select tribal businesses by displaying their Warrior Society car decal.

To learn more or apply, call (580) 272-2550, email [Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net](mailto:Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net) or visit [Chickasaw.net/WarriorSociety](http://Chickasaw.net/WarriorSociety).

## VETERANS TAG REIMBURSEMENT

Chickasaw veterans are eligible for a reimbursement of up to \$50 for their regular or specialty U.S. car tag. Verification of Chickasaw citizenship, military service and car tag receipt are needed to apply.

Applications are available online at [Chickasaw.net/VeteransCarTag](http://Chickasaw.net/VeteransCarTag).

## HIRING PREFERENCE

If you are seeking employment with the Chickasaw Nation or are already employed by the tribe, you will be given higher consideration in the hiring process.

To learn more, contact human resources at (580) 436-7259.



More services are available through the Chickasaw Nation Veterans Services.

To learn more, call (580) 272-2550, email [Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net](mailto:Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net), scan QR code or visit [Chickasaw.net/Veterans](http://Chickasaw.net/Veterans).

## VETERANS CONFERENCE

The annual Chickasaw Veterans Conference is an opportunity for veterans to connect with one another and learn more about available Chickasaw Nation programs and services. Veterans, active duty, National Guard and reserve service members are welcome to participate in keynote discussions, informative panels and special presentations.

For more information, visit [Chickasaw.net/VetConf](http://Chickasaw.net/VetConf).

## VETERANS LODGE

The Chickasaw Nation Veterans Lodge offers a comfortable space for veterans to enjoy fellowship and relaxation and to attend annual events hosted by the Chickasaw Nation.

**Open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., excluding Chickasaw Nation holidays.  
1909 Warrior Way • Ada, OK 74820**

## CHICKASAW VETERANS JACKET

An exclusive benefit for our Chickasaw veterans is the Chickasaw Veterans Jacket Program. To receive this special jacket, you will need to be non-active duty and have discharge status.

To learn more, contact veterans services at (580) 272-2550 or [Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net](mailto:Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net).



# *Military Word* UNSCRAMBLE

imalamit aiya **NIISOMS** \_\_\_\_\_

holitoplichi **EDATDOINCI** \_\_\_\_\_

ayukpachi **LUTSAE** \_\_\_\_\_

atonichi **OTCMMI** \_\_\_\_\_

isht iloktunichi **AMDEL** \_\_\_\_\_

kupitunni **LANREEG** \_\_\_\_\_

achunachi **VEPRREESE** \_\_\_\_\_

aiholitopaka **GRLOY** \_\_\_\_\_

yakni tashaiyi **TNOANI** \_\_\_\_\_

Tushka chepota sipokni **EVNTRAE** \_\_\_\_\_

Tushka **WORRARI** \_\_\_\_\_

Tushka chepota apila **MRTLYIA** \_\_\_\_\_





*the*  
**Chickasaw**  
**Nation**

P.O. BOX 1548 | ADA, OK 74821

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