



THE CHICKASAW NATION

2025 VETERANS

SERVICES NEWSLETTER



CHOKMA!

The Chickasaw Nation extends our deepest gratitude and respect to our Chickasaw veterans. Your dedication and sacrifices have protected the values and freedoms that allow our tribe and communities to thrive.

Your commitment is an inspiration, and we remain steadfast in our support to ensure a range of valuable resources, services and opportunities are available to you and your families. Each year, the Veterans Services Newsletter shares information about available programs and features the experiences of Chickasaw servicemen and women, our modern-day warriors.

We thank you for your service and wish you continued health and blessings.

Sincerely,

Bill Anoatubby

Bill Anoatubby, Governor
The Chickasaw Nation

Chris Anoatubby

Chris Anoatubby, Lt. Governor
The Chickasaw Nation





SAVE THE DATE

9TH ANNUAL

CHICKASAW

VETERANS

CONFERENCE

JUNE 2026



“

*My favorite part is
meeting old friends again
and getting together.*

”

-DAVID ATKINS



CHICKASAW VETERANS

CONFERENCE

The annual Chickasaw Veterans Conference took place at the WinStar Convention Center on June 6, 2025. Veterans came together for fellowship, to hear from speakers and to learn more about available programs and services.

David Atkins, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran from Albuquerque, New Mexico, provided the invocation. “My favorite part is meeting old friends again and getting together,” Atkins said. “Every time we come back here, we can reflect on our time together.”

The keynote speaker was U.S. Marine Corps veteran Col. Jessica Owens, whose distinguished career spans more than 25 years of service. Veterans also received a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs update and mental health presentation.



Left: U.S. Marine Corps veteran David Atkins attending the 2025 Chickasaw Veterans Conference.
Above: U.S. Marine Corps veteran Col. Jessica Owens giving the keynote address for the 2025 Chickasaw Veterans Conference.

COL. B.D. PEARSON

DESIRE THAT BUILT DEDICATION

Col. Barry “B.D.” Pearson always knew he wanted to serve in the armed forces of the United States. This desire grew into a lifetime of dedication to the U.S. Marine Corps filled with defining moments.

While attending college, a Marine recruiter approached Pearson. Capt. Steve Chambers only spoke for five minutes before Pearson decided he was going into the Marines.

Pearson began taking a series of placement tests and was offered an aviation contract to attend flight school. He was hesitant at first but after some convincing, he accepted.

In June 1981, he completed his bachelor’s degree at California State University, Bakersfield. The next day he was sworn in as a second lieutenant.

After training in Virginia and Florida, Pearson received his wings and was transferred to California to begin training as a Cobra pilot. He went through more than three years of training before serving a deployment.

Pearson said, “Desire is the No. 1 characteristic in my book, because if you want it bad enough, you’ll work hard and make it happen.” Through his extensive training, Pearson used his desire to keep pushing through.

In 1985, he was deployed aboard a naval ship around Asia. One year later, he was with a second Marine unit off the coast of the Philippines. He helped aid U.S. citizens during the Philippine Revolution.

When his time was up in the Philippines, he returned to a flying squadron and deployed to Okinawa, Japan. There he met his wife, Julie Pearson, who was a lieutenant commander of the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps.

He spent two years assigned to a headquarters tour before deploying with another flying squadron back to Okinawa. While in Japan, he was notified he could no longer fly due to his hearing loss.



U.S. Marine Corps

Pearson did not allow his hearing to prevent him from serving his country. Back on U.S. soil, he began law school at Northwestern University. He finished his law degree in 1997, completed the Virginia Bar and began work on his master’s degree in national security studies at Georgetown University.

Pearson took his education to the Department of Defense before being invited to return to active duty for the Marines. He worked in strategic planning and was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Pearson was working in the Pentagon when he saw a news station describe a small plane that accidentally collided with the World Trade Center.

There were about 40 men and women in the room with him and half were pilots. “All the pilots were looking at each other saying ‘That’s not a small plane and that’s not an accident,’” Pearson said.

On his way to speak with a colleague about their next course of action, he decided to call his wife. He told her she needed to turn on the TV and see what was happening.

That was when he felt a plane hit the building.

He remembered the building swaying from the impact. Pearson and Lt. Col. John Godby began leading people out of the area. After getting everyone out, they heard calls for help in the direction of smoke.

Top: B.D. Pearson at the 2025 Chickasaw Veterans Conference.

Left (far): B.D. Pearson at the Al-Asad Oasis during his 2004 tour in Iraq.

Left (near): B.D. Pearson while leading the Marine Corps airfield at Al Taqaddum (TQ), Iraq in 2007.



“When you watch footage from 9/11, everybody at the Pentagon is running toward the damage. Nobody is running away. That’s what we do,” Pearson said.

Crawling on their stomachs to avoid smoke, they aided 21 people in the wreckage. Determined to leave no one behind, there were no deaths in the area Pearson cleared.

After 9/11, he was given the opportunity to lead the USMC planning team for the war on terrorism. He served in this position for 27 months. When the Marines needed additional people in Iraq, Pearson volunteered and was sent to Fallujah in 2004.

He was there for the first and second battles of Fallujah before returning to the Pentagon. There, he was promoted to colonel and given the position of chief service planner. As a reward for work well done, he was given the opportunity to pick his next orders.

“Marines were in combat, and I couldn’t bring myself to go anywhere except back to Iraq,” Pearson said.

Upon his request, he returned to Iraq. There he served with the Second Marine Aircraft Wing at Al-Asad Air Base. He was then appointed as the chief of staff for the Second Marine Aircraft Wing. The next year, he again deployed to Iraq where he led personnel from all four U.S. military services at Al Taqaddum Air Base.

In 2008, after more than 30 years of service, Pearson retired.

He moved back to North Carolina with his wife and now serves as director for the Carolina Classic Golf Tournament, which raises funds for the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation. This organization provides need-based scholarships to children of Marine and Navy corpsman who qualify.

Pearson has spent his life serving his country, and in retirement his dedication to the Marine Corps continues.



Above: B.D. Pearson with his wife, Julie.

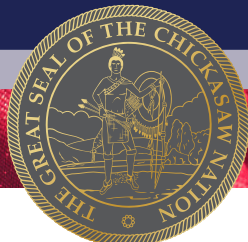
CHICKASAW

VETERANS WALL



The Chickasaw Veterans Wall pays tribute to Chickasaw citizens who have served in the U.S. military.

For more information or to complete a form online, scan QR code or visit **CHICKASAW.NET/VETERANSWALL**



CHICKASAW NATION VETERANS

The Chickasaw Nation serves more than
2,000 VETERANS.



The Chickasaw Warrior Society includes nearly
30 VETERANS
who were in the U.S. Coast Guard.



More than
200 INDIVIDUALS
were U.S. Marines.



The **U.S. Air Force** is where nearly
350 VETERANS served.



More than
900 VETERANS
were in the U.S. Army.



NEARLY 400
servicemen and women
were part of the U.S. Navy.



60+ VETERANS
served in *multiple branches.*



CHICKASAW WARRIOR SOCIETY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS



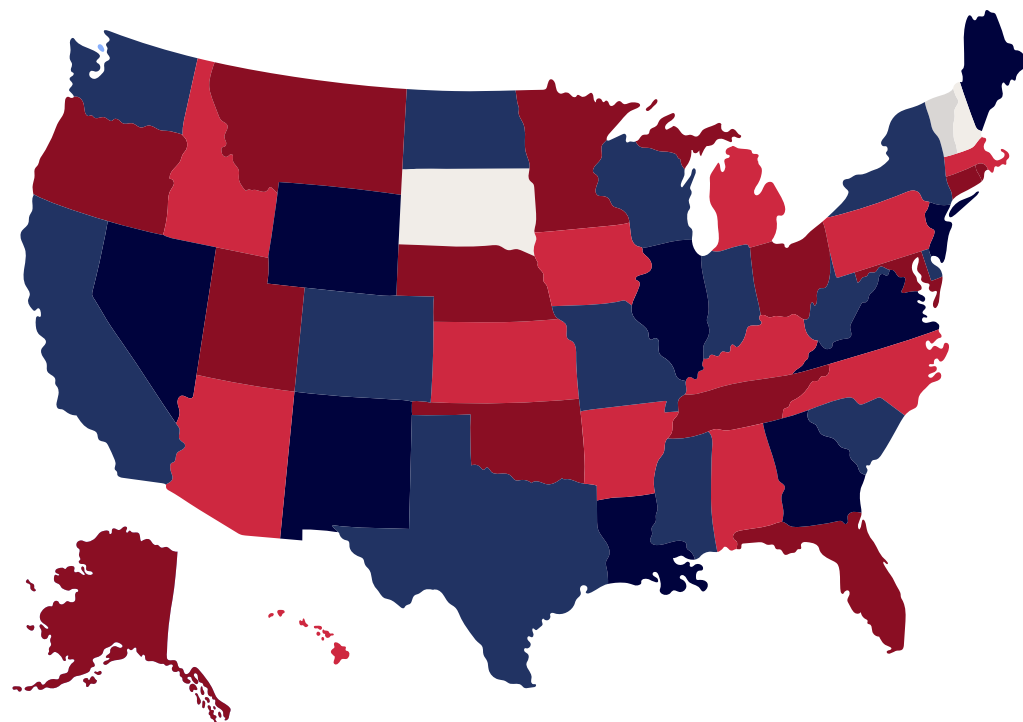
This year marks the 10th anniversary for the Chickasaw Warrior Society. Created to foster camaraderie between servicemen and women, the Chickasaw Warrior Society is available to Chickasaw veterans and active-duty military members.

"The Chickasaw Warrior Society makes you proud of being in the service. I cannot tell you how much it means to me," said U.S. Air Force veteran and Chickasaw Warrior Society member Larry Hogland.

Left: U.S. Air Force veteran Larry Hogland showing his Chickasaw warrior pride.

Nearly **2,200** Chickasaw veterans have been a part of the Chickasaw Warrior Society since inception in 2015.

Chickasaw Warrior Society members live in **47** states and Washington, D.C.



**BE A PART OF THE
CHICKASAW WARRIOR SOCIETY**

Information and applications are available
online at Chickasaw.net/WarriorSociety.

MARRIANNE WHISENHUNT

A FAMILY'S LEGACY OF SERVICE LEADS CHICKASAW WOMAN OVERSEAS

During 20 years of service with the United States Navy, Marianne Whisenhunt spent 17 years stationed overseas.

In the footsteps of her father who was a submariner, she joined the U.S. Navy before the start of the Gulf War. Her decision to enlist continued a family legacy of service in the U.S. armed forces.

"Almost everyone in my family has been in the service in one way or another," Whisenhunt said.

Her great uncle, George Aldrich, was one of 26 men selected to be a member of the Indian Guard of Honor at the World's Fair in New York in 1939. This guard was stationed at the fair for seven weeks and served as guards of honor for President Franklin D. Roosevelt, King George and Queen Elizabeth of England.

An image of her cousin, Chickasaw pilot Victor Nedd Looney, was used for a recruiting poster designed to appeal to First American men in 1941. He was a second lieutenant in the Air Corps.

Whisenhunt served as a cryptologic technician in the U.S. Navy. Her first station was in Australia at the Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt from 1991 to 1993. She was part of an all-female crew that assisted in discontinuing operations for the U.S. Navy at the station.

From there, she traveled to Japan to serve at the U.S. Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station (NCTS). "Our station was very small and in between two larger stations," Whisenhunt said. "I could see Mount Fuji from my living room window."

After leaving Japan, Whisenhunt traveled to Naples, Italy, where she spent nearly half of her career. While there, she served at three different stations between 1995 and 2004.

In Italy, she spent much of her spare time riding horses. She even had the unique opportunity of completing one of her reenlistments while sitting horseback on her own horse, Astro Nascente.

"My three places were work, home and the stables," Whisenhunt said. "Those were the only three places you could find me."

Whisenhunt also recalled the language barrier between her and her Italian instructor. Though they did not speak the same language, they were able to communicate through a shared understanding of their love for horseback riding.



I am very proud to have served and to have been accepted into the Warrior Society.

-MARRIANNE WHISENHUNT



U.S. Navy

She returned to the U.S. in 2004 and was stationed at the Navy Information Operations Command in Colorado, where she served until 2007.

Her final station was back overseas at the NCTS in Bahrain, an island off the coast of Saudi Arabia. This was a large multibase that housed military operations for multiple countries, including the U.S.

To positively impact and support our troops, the U.S. Navy provided entertainment through programs and special tours. Sailors and their families could take part in programs for recreation, fitness, events, movies, dining and more. Events included tours that brought artists, athletes and inspiring people to the base to provide entertainment to those stationed there.

Whisenhunt met many notable people from astronauts to celebrities while in Bahrain. She recalled meeting NASA astronauts including Neil Armstrong, the

U.S. Olympic bobsledding team, singer Jessica Simpson and actors from the movie "Avatar," including Sigourney Weaver.

In March 2011, Whisenhunt retired from the U.S. Navy. She now lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is a member of the Chickasaw Warrior Society.

"I am very proud to have served and to have been accepted into the Warrior Society," Whisenhunt said. "One thing about the military is that you have a built-in family. It is the same way with the Chickasaw Warrior Society."

***Top: Marianne Whisenhunt at the 2025 Chickasaw Veterans Conference.
Center (left): Marianne Whisenhunt's cousin, Chickasaw pilot Victor Nedd Looney.
Center (right): Marianne Whisenhunt in Italy with her horse, Astro Nascente.***



CHICKASAW VETERANS' TRIP

CHICKASAW VETERANS HONORED TO PLACE WREATH ON THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

A group of 19 Chickasaw veterans visited Washington, D.C., in November 2024, for the Chickasaw Elder Veterans' Trip. Governor Bill Anoatubby described this trip as an opportunity to show appreciation to the many Chickasaw citizens who have served in the U.S. armed forces.

Four branches of the U.S. military were represented, including the Marine Corps, Air Force, Army and Navy. The participants' dates of military service ranged from the early 1950s through the 1980s.

In Washington, D.C., they visited many landmarks and historical sites, including Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, the National Archives, many memorials and more. They were also given the opportunity to meet and enjoy fellowship with other Chickasaw veterans.

While seeing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, three Chickasaw veterans from the Vietnam era were given the honor of presenting a wreath to the memorial. These veterans included George DeGraff Jr. of the U.S. Army, Gary Tomshack of the U.S. Navy and Robert Lair of the U.S. Air Force.

The veterans also visited the many exhibits at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. A few of the artifacts within the museum were a flute and a bald eagle feather that were carried by Chickasaw astronaut John Herrington as he participated in the 2002 space mission on the space shuttle Endeavour.

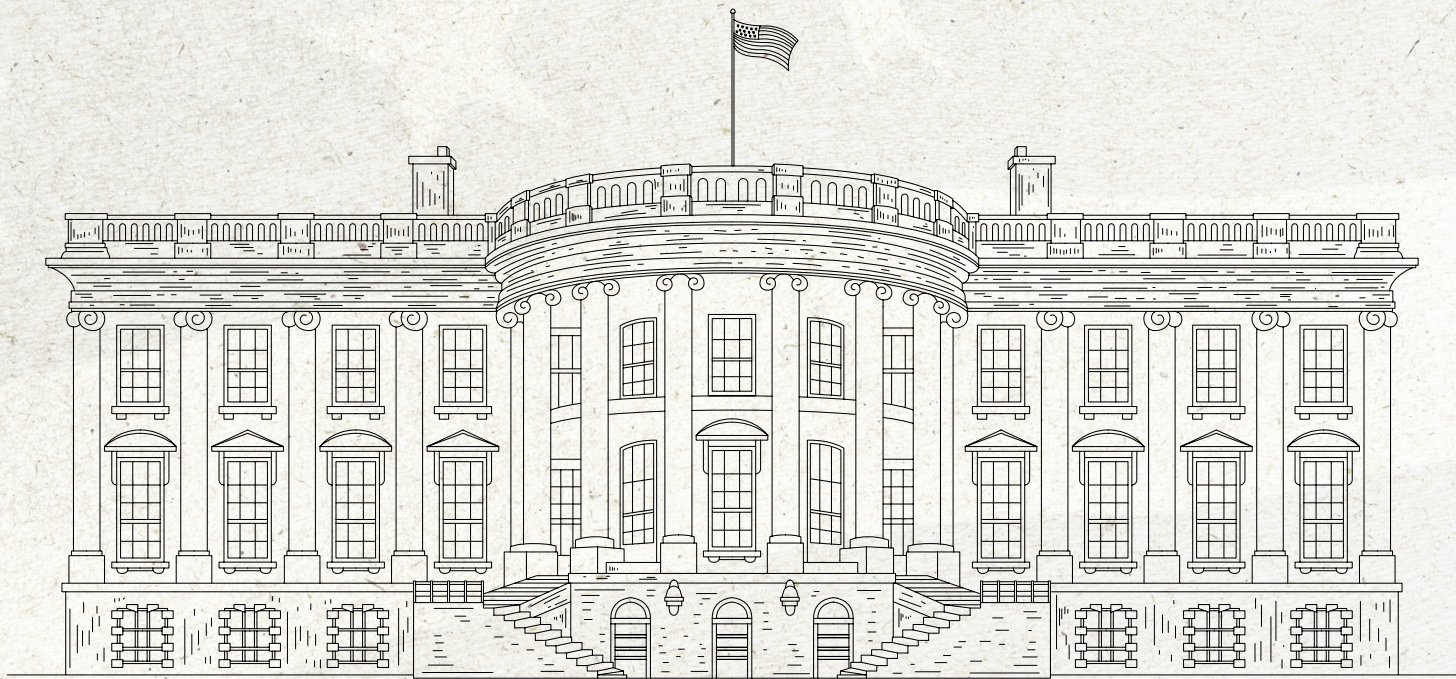


Top (center): Three Chickasaw elder veterans standing outside of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Pictured from left: Kenneth Harrington, Donald Harris and David Keel.

Top (right): Gary Tomshack on a tour of the U.S. Capitol.

Above: Three Chickasaw veterans present a Chickasaw Elder Veterans wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier inside Arlington National Cemetery. Pictured from left: Gary Tomshack, George DeGraff Jr. and Robert Lair.

Come along to WASHINGTON, DC!



Be a part of our Chickasaw Elder Veterans Trip and see historical parts of Washington, D.C. All veterans are invited to submit an application. Participants will be chosen through randomized drawing.
Learn more or apply by contacting the aging administration office at (580) 795-9790.

CHECK IN ON MENTAL WELLNESS

Through our many programs and resources, we provide opportunities to maintain and prioritize mental wellness for overall well-being.

Chikasha Anokfilli (Thinking Chickasaw) is the Chickasaw Nation’s mental health initiative. We ensure our citizens, including veterans, have access to mental health services while encouraging overall wellness. This program assists with intervention and prevention through therapy, workshops and counseling services.

The Chickasaw Nation also encourages any veterans who are struggling with mental wellness to reach out to the Veterans Crisis Line. Call **988** then dial **1**. Communicate by text at **838255**.

Learn more about resources available to you at Chickasaw.net/MentalHealth.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF AND YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS:

- ☐ Stay connected to others
- ☐ Explore new hobbies
- ☐ Spend time outdoors
- ☐ Schedule time for yourself
- ☐ Give yourself a treat
- ☐ Speak with a professional or try peer-to-peer counseling

VETERANS SERVICES AVAILABLE



CHICKASAW VETERANS JACKET

Veterans receive an exclusive jacket through the Chickasaw Veterans Jacket program. Eligibility includes those who are non-active duty with a discharge status other than dishonorable.

“Everything the Chickasaw Nation does for us veterans is very appreciated. The jacket I have is really nice,” U.S. Army veteran Gail Glase said. “It just makes me so proud. I love being Chickasaw and being a veteran.”

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

CHICKASAW WARRIOR SOCIETY PARKING

Chickasaw Warrior Society members are welcome to use reserved parking spaces located at tribal facilities and businesses. To indicate your member status, clearly display a Warrior Society car decal or license plate on your vehicle.

To receive a decal, call **(580) 272-2550**, email **Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net** or visit **Chickasaw.net/WarriorSociety**.

VETERANS TAG REIMBURSEMENT

Veterans can receive a tag reimbursement of up to \$50 for any regular or specialty U.S. car tag. To be eligible, veterans must verify Chickasaw citizenship, military service and the receipt of initial payment.

Applications are available online at **Chickasaw.net/VeteransCarTag**.

Veterans Services assists with:



HEALTH CARE



EDUCATION



MILITARY RECORDS



ACCESSING BENEFITS

HIRING PREFERENCE

Include your active or non-active military status with your application for employment to receive hiring preference through the Chickasaw Nation Human Resources Department.

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

VETERANS LODGE

The Chickasaw Veterans Lodge is open to all veterans and active-duty military. Spend time relaxing, meeting other veterans, attending events and receiving support from veterans services.

“The Veterans Lodge is very nice and I enjoy it,” said U.S. Army National Guard veteran Christopher Burris.

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



**Above: Christopher Burris of the
U.S. Army.**

**IT IS VERY FULFILLING TO KNOW THE TRIBE IS HERE
FOR US AS VETERANS AND CHICKASAW CITIZENS.**

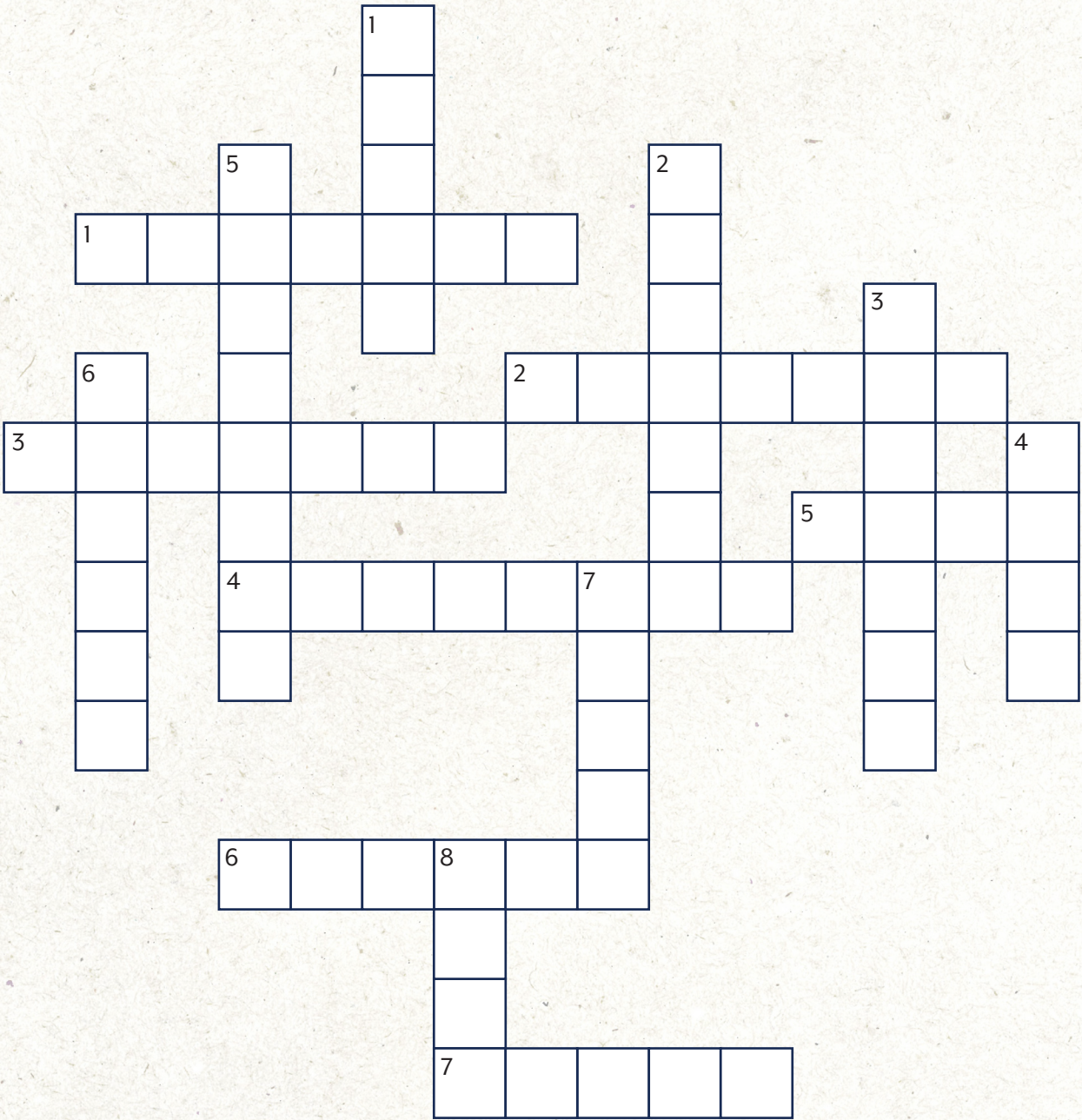
-CHRISTOPHER BURRIS

CHICKASAW HONOR GUARD

Join the Chickasaw Honor Guard and be a representative of the Chickasaw Nation. By partnering with local communities, the Chickasaw Honor Guard helps educate the public about the U.S. military through classroom visits and public speeches. This program also provides military honors at funerals and memorial services and posts colors through the year.

Apply at **Chickasaw.net/HonorGuard**. For additional information, contact **(580) 310-7930** or email **Veterans.Services@Chickasaw.net**.

Veterans NewsletterCROSSWORD



DOWN

- 1. Feeling or showing pride. (Ilahobbi, Ilifaya'chi, Ilifinhachi, Ilifoyo'chi)
- 2. The quality of being fair and reasonable. (Aialhika)
- 3. Chickasaw _____ Society (Tushka)
- 4. A person with admirable achievements for the good of others. (Moma imaiya)
- 5. The armed forces of the country. (Tushka chepota apila)
- 6. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines are specifications of _____. (Akaashapa)
- 7. To overcome despite fear. (Aaiklóha, Iknokwayyo)
- 8. A smaller group in a larger military operation. (Akaashampa')

ACROSS

- 1. An item/display used to honor someone. (Isht im palummi)
- 2. A person who has served in the military. (Tushka chepota sipokni)
- 3. To shield people from harm. (Apiisachi)
- 4. To keep in mind. (Nokfónkha)
- 5. America, land of the _____. (Talhoffi)
- 6. A sign used to communicate respect. (Ayukpachi)
- 7. A group of soldiers. (Tushka chepota)



the
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Nation

P.O. BOX 1548 | ADA, OK 74821

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