

# THE RESOURCE

Your Adoption & Foster Care Newsletter - May 2021



## FACEBOOK LIVE

Did you catch our 1<sup>st</sup> ever Facebook Live? No? Don't worry. You can watch it on our Facebook page!

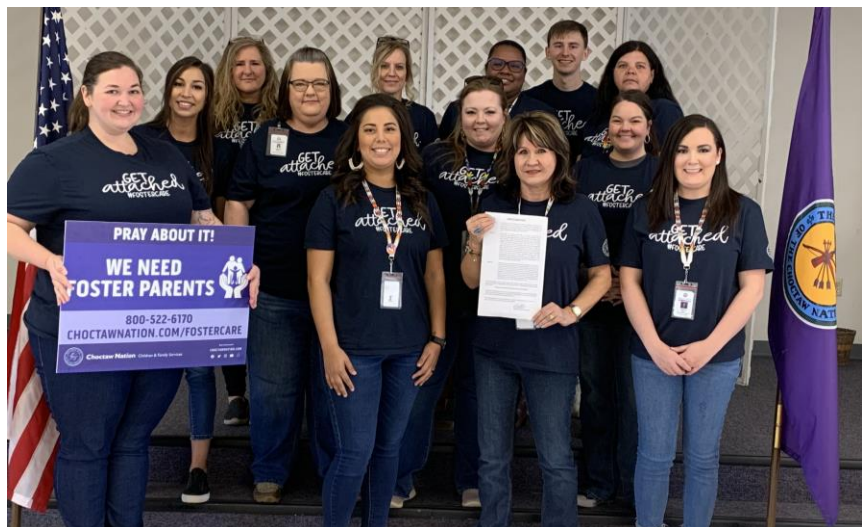
Ideas for our next Live event? Let us know. The more information we can get out there, the more potential homes we can reach.

*"Families don't have to match. You don't have to look like someone else to love them."*

Leigh Anne Tuohy

## FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH

Chief Batton has declared May to be Choctaw Nation Foster Care Awareness Month. In celebration of his proclamation, let us be the first to say yakoke! Thank you to everyone who has made the commitment to love and care for a child that is not their own; a child who has gone through exceptional trauma; a child who may not understand why they act out or can't control their anger. Thank you to your own family, to your children, your friends – the people in your bubble that support fostering. Yakoke.



Foster Care & Adoption Team (L-R) – 1<sup>st</sup> row: Julie, Kayla, Angela, Talyn; 2<sup>nd</sup> row: Ginavee, Sonya, Maigan, Kat; 3<sup>rd</sup> row: Twila, Kimberly, Ashley, Colton, Cynthia.

**Training?** What training? Policy requires 12 hours of annual foster care training before your reassessment is considered complete. Don't wait until the last minute to fill those credit hours! We are excited to announce we will be starting in-person trainings soon. Our first one is May 15<sup>th</sup>. More trainings will be coming!

In the meantime, check out the Children's Aid Society of Alabama's online webinars focusing on children in out of home care! You must register for access, but registration is free. Make sure to check with your specialist to ensure the books you choose will count towards credit. [www.childrensaid.org/onlinetraining](http://www.childrensaid.org/onlinetraining)



**"Not flesh of my flesh, nor bone of my bone, but still miraculously my own. Never forget for a single minute, you didn't grow under my heart, but in it." – Fleur Conkling Heyliger**

# May is National Foster Care Month

[childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth](http://childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth)



Child Welfare Information Gateway

Children's Bureau

## PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the future of our Tribal Nation rests with our children. We must invest in their futures, instill in them the values of family, faith, and culture, and ensure they have every opportunity to realize their full potential. The development of our children begins at home, and my Administration is fully committed to strengthening Tribal families.

WHEREAS, this month, we recognize that there are children in our towns and communities who may not have a family, or whose families may be experiencing great difficulty and hardship. We believe in standing beside these children, walking with them through their trials, and finding temporary safe families for each of them. Kindhearted Tribal Members embody this belief, dedicating their time and efforts in doing so. Currently there are 104 Tribal families across the state of Oklahoma who have opened their homes to 2,926 tribal children in custody. Of those 104 homes we are extremely grateful for our 54 Choctaw Nation licensed homes. During National Foster Care Month, we honor these Champions for Children, who opened their hearts to children who need a home, and who care for the most vulnerable among us. We also acknowledge the profound contributions of the individuals and organizations supporting foster and kinship caregivers, and those of the community providers and professionals who are helping children in foster care find safe and stable families.

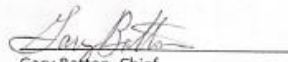
WHEREAS, children deserve stable family environments, and foster care provides a wonderful opportunity for selfless and compassionate men and women to nurture children while we work to help their family to ensure they can safely return home or find their forever home. This month, and always, we express our gratitude to all the Tribal families who generously open their doors to our Tribal children in need and provide them with love and support. We recommit to support our children by helping provide increased opportunities to recruit more Native Champions of Children to invest in the lives of our vulnerable young people, and we celebrate those who tirelessly serve our Tribal children in foster care.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation, acting under the power vested in me under the Constitution of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma do hereby proclaim May 2021 as

### Choctaw Nation's Foster Care Awareness Month

I call upon all Tribal Members to observe this month by taking time to help children and youth in foster care and to recognize the commitment of those who touch their lives, particularly celebrating their foster parents and other caregivers.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand to this instrument on this first day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-one.

  
Gary Batton, Chief  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Prior to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) being enacted in 1978; up to 35% of Native children were being removed from their homes. 85% were placed outside of their families and communities – despite willing and fit relatives being available.

[NICWA.org/about-ICWA](http://NICWA.org/about-ICWA)



Councilman James Frazier shows his support for Foster Parents.

**NATIVE CHILDREN ARE REMOVED FROM THEIR HOME 4X MORE THAN THEIR WHITE COUNTERPARTS - NICWA.ORG**

Choctaw children need stable, safe, temporary and loving homes that honor the Choctaw culture and keeps their traditions alive until the child(ren) can return home. Our foster families do an excellent job of making this happen. Yakoke for all your hard work!

National Foster Care Month  
**Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents**

[childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth](http://childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth)

Child Welfare Information Gateway Children's Bureau

Over 400 Choctaw children in out-of-home care. Only 54 are in Choctaw Nation Resource Homes.

*“Every child deserves a champion- an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”*

- Rita Pierson





*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

## No Takebacks

Recently, I packed an item to send back to Amazon. It's so easy to just tape up a box, stick a label on it, and send it packing. How many times have we wanted to do that with other things in our lives? Food order wrong? Send it back. Clothes don't work for the kiddos? Return it. Foster kid not working out with your family? Send them back.

Things I want in my family.  
 I want food and water.  
 Don't hit on me.  
 A house with running water and lights. I want love.  
 Mom and dad don't fight.  
 I want no drugs.  
 Don't kill my pets.  
 Help with school.  
 Nice clean clothes.  
 No lice. No bug in house.  
 Clean house.  
 Clean bed with covers.  
 Don't sell my toys. Treated fair.  
 Don't get drunk. TV in house.  
 Let me keep my games. School stuff. Nice shoes. My own comb.  
 Soap. Nice house and safe. A car and heater. Coat. Toothbrush.

Wait! What? No, of course you can't just send a child back. There is a lot of thought that goes into accepting a placement and more in asking for a child to be moved. Sometimes a child is not a perfect fit for your family. This is why it is important to be honest with yourself when filling out the Child's Needs List every time. Are you willing to take a child with a terminal illness? No - then mark it.

So often people feel judged for their feelings. This is one area where you should not shy away from letting your specialist know how you feel. First placement should be the best placement for a child in out-of-home care. The more moves a child experiences; the more chances they have of experiencing additional trauma.

There's a reason we've adopted "Pray About It" for our flyers. Pray for your children. Pray for those in foster care. Pray for child welfare. Pray to be led in the right direction when selecting behaviors and conditions you are willing to accept in a child.

The note on the left was written by an Oklahoma child in foster care. This is all they wanted in a family. As a Choctaw Nation Resource Home, you have the ability to provide so much more than the necessities. You are able to provide the love and comfort a child needs.



Did you know the **School of Choctaw Language** has a wealth of information waiting for you at your fingertips? You can learn the Chahta language, listen to stories told by Elders, or sing along to a Choctaw Hymn. Visit their website at <https://choctawschool.com/Home.aspx> to learn more about the Chahta language.

Click on the link to hear traditional Choctaw Hymn #41

<https://choctawschool.com/media/226804/09-Track%209.mp3>.

Want to sing along? Download the PDF

([https://choctawschool.com/media/227248/vba\\_isht\\_taloe\\_41\\_h\\_m.pdf](https://choctawschool.com/media/227248/vba_isht_taloe_41_h_m.pdf))



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## So hard to say goodbye...

Notice anyone missing from our contact info? We do 😞. Ginavee is moving on to bigger and better things. Please help us congratulate her as she pursues her dreams. Ginavee has been an amazing asset to foster care. She demonstrates compassion and true understanding of her families and coworkers. Her upbeat attitude will be missed. We wish her the best!



## Shout out to Adoptions!

The goal of children in out-of-home care is reunification. Unfortunately, reunification does not always occur. Choctaw Nation does not open adoption only homes. However, we do have a dedicated adoption team lead by manager, Kimberly Baca. Her unit focuses on helping legally free children find permanency. Kimberly, Cynthia, Talynn, and Twila work tirelessly to help Choctaw children find their permanent home. They work with OKDHS as well. Although we do not open adoption only homes, our resource homes are eligible to adopt should a child become legally free with no appropriate relative. Kimberly and her team work hard to find family members. The goal of out-of-home care is reunification – sometimes it just isn't with the child's parents. Yakoke to our adoptions team who work hard to find forever homes for Choctaw youth.

## Cardboard Kids are coming!

Have you seen any cardboard kids in your area? Wondering what they are doing? Foster Care has been working to cutout dozens of cardboard kids to place around the Choctaw Nation. Each child in a display represents approximately 80 Choctaw children in out-of-home care. Spread the word! Let your community know why the cardboard kids are there. Encourage them to follow the QR codes to our Facebook or website. Questions? Direct them to your specialist!

## Missing our faces? Want more of us?

Foster Care will be out and about in the communities again. Foster Care will have representatives at the Trail of Tears walk in Tuskahoma, Magnolia Farmers' Market in Durant; the Magnolia Festival in Durant, Reunion Days in Stigler, the Bigfoot Festival in Honobia and more! Come out and see us! We miss everyone's beautiful faces.