



The Turtle Speaks

Gyah'-Wish Atak-ia

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Gathering of Little Turtles

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Editor/Design: William Swaim



The Gathering of Little Turtles continues to grow, highlighting another successful year!

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From the Chief | Billy Friend

Building a stronger future

Housing, Education, Healthcare, Jobs and Culture

Strong communities are not built overnight. They are built by investing in the basic foundations that allow families to succeed and future generations to thrive. For the Wyandotte Nation, four priorities remain at the center of our vision for the future: housing, education, healthcare, and jobs.

Before these four pillars, there is one principle that guides all of our work: our identity as Wyandotte people. Economic development alone does not define a strong Nation. A truly strong Nation ensures that every investment reflects our values, honors our ancestors, and preserves our culture for future generations.

Strong communities are not built overnight. They are built by investing in the basic foundations that allow families to succeed and future generations to thrive. For the Wyandotte Nation, four priorities remain at the center of our vision for the future: housing, education, healthcare, and jobs. Woven throughout each of these priorities is something equally important and that is our tribal culture. Our language, history, traditions, and values are not separate from these goals; they strengthen them and give them purpose.

Housing provides more than a roof over someone's head, it creates stability. Safe, affordable housing allows families to put down roots, strengthens neighborhoods, and gives children a secure environment where they can grow and succeed. Expanding housing opportunities is essential to attracting families back to our Nation and supporting those who choose to build their future here.

As we develop new neighborhoods and communities, we have an opportunity to incorporate Wyandotte design, public art, language, and gathering spaces that celebrate who we are. A home should not only provide shelter, but also foster a sense of belonging and cultural identity.

Education is the pathway to opportunity. By investing in early childhood education, supporting our students through scholarships and training, and preserving our language and culture, we are preparing the next generation of Wyandotte leaders. Equally important is our continued investment in the Wyandotte Public Schools and our partnerships with local colleges and universities. Strong public schools provide the foundation for lifelong learning, while local colleges create opportunities for students to pursue higher education, workforce training, and professional careers close to home.

When we invest in our educational institutions, we are investing not only in our tribal citizens but in the future workforce and leadership of our entire community. By integrating Wyandotte history, language, and culture into educational opportunities, we ensure that future generations understand where they came from while preparing for where they are going.

Healthcare is equally important to the strength of our Nation. Healthy citizens create healthy communities. Access to quality medical, dental, behavioral health, and preventative care improves quality of life, reduces long-term health challenges, and ensures that our elders, adults, and children receive the care they deserve. A strong healthcare system reflects our commitment to caring for one another. Our culture teaches us that wellness is about more than physical health it is about caring for the whole person: mind, body, and spirit. By embracing

traditional values, supporting cultural activities, and strengthening family connections, we can create a healthcare system that reflects both modern medicine and the wisdom of our ancestors.

Jobs and economic opportunity provide the means for families to prosper. Creating employment through tribal enterprises, supporting workforce development, and encouraging entrepreneurship allows citizens to achieve financial independence while strengthening the Nation's economy. Every new job creates opportunities not only for individuals but also for the community as a whole. As we grow our economy, we must also create opportunities for our citizens to share and preserve our culture through careers in education, cultural preservation, tourism, language revitalization, and the arts. Economic success and cultural preservation should go hand in hand.

These four priorities are deeply connected. Stable housing supports educational success. Education prepares individuals for meaningful careers. Good jobs allow families to afford quality housing and healthcare. Access to healthcare enables people to work, learn, and contribute to their communities. Culture strengthens each of these priorities by reminding us who we are, where we came from, and the responsibility we have to future generations.

The Wyandotte Nation remains committed to making investments that benefit not only today's citizens but also the generations that will follow. By focusing on housing, education, healthcare, and jobs and by weaving our tribal culture into every one of those efforts we are building more than programs. We are building stronger families, stronger communities, and a stronger Wyandotte Nation that honors its past while confidently embracing its future.

From the Second Chief Norman Hildebrand, Jr.



Time to say thanks after 15 years

Kweh Omateru,
Hello my friends and fellow Tribal Citizens, as everyone knows by now I decided not to run for another term as Second Chief of the Wyandotte Nation. I have thought about this for the last couple of years and decided it was time to turn it over to someone else.

I have enjoyed being Second Chief the last 15 years and representing the Wyandotte Nation all across the United States. I was on the National Congress of American Indians as an alternate area Vice-President and as area Vice-President representing 20 of the 38 federally-recognized Tribes

'The earth is the mother of all the people, and all people should have equal rights upon it.'

--Chief Joseph

in Eastern Oklahoma. I have met tribal leaders not only from all across Oklahoma, but also tribal leaders from Alaska to New York, and many of them I call friends.

I shook the hands of many members of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives as well as Governors and Mayors. I am proud to say that they know who the Wyandotte Nation is and

where we came from as well as our stance in Indian Country. This is not going to be a long letter and there will not be any history as I want to be sure there is plenty of room for the candidates to tell everyone about themselves.

I want to say a big TIZAMEH to the Wyandotte citizens for allowing me to be your Second Chief and allowing me to be a part of the

growth of the Wyandotte Nation. I want to thank Chief Bearskin for this opportunity, he was a great mentor as well as Chief Friend. I also want to thank Kim Harnar and all of the department heads for their patience while I learned the inter-workings of tribal government the last 15 years, and to all my friends at WТОK, thank you. Last but not least I want to thank my family for your support in this journey we were all on during my tenure as Second Chief.

The Citizens of the Wyandotte Nation TIZAMEH for all your support during this journey.

Chief Friend makes Journal Record's 'Power List'

Wyandotte Nation Chief Billy Friend is one of the Native American Leaders featured on the Journal Record's Power List. You can scroll down and click and read the terrific article on Chief Friend as well as any of the other great leaders featured on the list. Read the article on the Journal Record's website!

You can find a link to the original

article on our Facebook page or on our website (wyandotte-nation.org) under 'News.'

Excerpt from the article:

'Oklahoma's story cannot be told without Native American voices at the center of it. The 39 tribal nations that call this state home have shaped its culture, its economy, its laws and its identity in ways that

continue to grow in significance.

For the 2026 Power List: Native American Leaders, we set out to recognize some of the Oklahomans who are making that impact most visible — chiefs and governors leading sovereign nations, artists preserving culture, journalists amplifying Indigenous voices, politicians navigating the halls of Congress and executives building

enterprises that reach across the country and around the world.

These are leaders in every sense of the word. We are honored to recognize them and grateful to them for keeping Oklahoma's Native American culture alive and thriving.'

-Heather Warlick, editor, The Journal Record

PUBLIC NOTICE: ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTION

The Wyandotte Nation will hold its Annual Meeting and Election at the Bearskin Healthcare and Wellness Center in Wyandotte, Oklahoma, on Saturday, Sept. 12.

The following are the 2026 Candidates for Election:

- **Second Chief:** Keith Gray, Robert Nesvold
- **Board of Directors Member (1 Open Position):** Vivian Fink, Aubrey E. Hildebrand,

Gerald Ezell

• **Grievance Committee Members (2 Open Positions):** Anne Marie Roper, Reilly McLaughlin

The term of each position is four years. Current members shall hold their office until successors are duly elected and given their oath of office. In this newsletter, you will find a Q&A with each of the candidates. The candidates appear in the order

they filed for candidacy and how they will appear on the ballot.

NOTE: Because there are only two candidates for the Grievance Committee and two open positions, there will be no election for that position or candidate profiles.

The Election will begin at 9 am and be open until 11 am. Any voter in line at the polling place but unable to cast a ballot before 11 am will be allowed to finish vot-

ing. Each voter will be required to present a photo ID and Tribal Membership Card. If the Tribal Membership Card has a photo on it, this will satisfy both of these requirements.

At the Annual Meeting, each department will have tables set up in the gym to give tribal citizens an opportunity to learn more about various programs and services available at the Tribe.

ELECTION GUIDE: Meet the Candidates

Second Chief: Keith Gray

As Second Chief, you will work closely with the Chief and Board of Directors. Describe your approach to teamwork and building consensus when leadership is divided on an issue or funding decision.

My approach to teamwork is simple: listen first, stay humble, and remember that no single leader has all the answers. When the board faces a difficult policy issue or a split funding decision, my role is not to impose a personal agenda. Instead, I focus on building consensus by anchoring our discussions in real-world feedback; for example, I would consult closely with the program directors managing daily operations and utilize community needs assessments to ensure our spending directly aligns with what citizens actually care about. This approach brings a clear, objective perspective to the table and keeps our leadership team united in its purpose.

When we listen to our staff and use formal citizen input to guide us, leaders can come back to the table with a clear picture of what is both financially smart and genuinely needed. Focusing on the community naturally brings people together because it gives us all a shared goal.

How will you advocate for our tribal sovereignty when working with federal and state governments?

Before we can advocate for tribal sovereignty, we have to be completely clear about what it means. As a sovereign nation, that means we can make our own laws and be governed by them. We aren't just a group of people; we are a nation with the inherent right to decide who our citizens are, run our own courts, and manage our own lands and resources.

Since we are a tribe, the Federal Government is required to act in our best interest pursuant to its trust relationship. Something important to me is to create more tribal regulations, because tribal sovereignty only goes as far as the Tribe is willing to exercise it. We must stand firm and demand proper consultation with the federal government on any matter that affects us and ensure that they act in accordance with their trust responsibility. We also have to keep reminding the states around us that while we are located within their borders, we are not under their jurisdiction.



What is your vision for supporting our tribal language preservation programs and cultural revitalization efforts?

In recent years, the Wyandotte Nation has backed the Cultural Division with the funding needed to grow its staff and expand services for our citizens. My vision is to keep that momentum going. While we must always support adults and elders who are reconnecting with their heritage, our heaviest focus should be on our youth. When children grow up immersed in our culture, it becomes the core of who they are.

As Second Chief, I will bring the Cultural Division and the Education Department together to work hand-in-hand. I want to see our staff trained specifically in youth education, and I want us to develop a curriculum that reaches Wyandotte kids nationwide, ensuring the next generation carries our traditions forward.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Wyandotte Nation in the next 4 to 5 years, and how would your leadership address it?

We know we face real challenges ahead in areas like housing access and managing our resources. To meet these challenges effectively, leadership must always stay closely connected to what citizens are experiencing every day. My goal is to ensure we are always acting on direct, accurate feedback from our people.

To achieve this, I want to establish a regular, formal community needs assess-

Brief Bio

Larry Keith Gray is from the Bear Clan and a descendant of Chief Tarhe through the Zane family history.

Gray is a graduate of Seneca High School. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (B.S.B.A.) in Marketing and Management in 1991 from Missouri Southern State University (MSSU).

His professional background spans over 35 years of operational management experience. He has served on the Wyandotte Nation Board of Directors since 2022 and is a founding member of the Wa'dat Singers. In the retail sector, his career includes seven years as an Anthony's store manager in Oklahoma, 23 years as a Macy's Operations Manager, and five years as a Lowe's Department Supervisor.

He has been married to his wife, Michelle, for 28 years. Together, they have three children: Collin, Connor and Alicia.

ment. This will give Wyandotte citizens a clear, direct way to share their daily concerns and tell us what their priorities are. By embedding this citizen input directly into our governance, we ensure that our leadership stays fully aligned with the community when making critical funding decisions.

By listening directly to our community, we can build a smart strategic plan and put our resources exactly where they will do the most good for our people.

What is your long-term vision for the Tribe?

My vision for the Wyandotte Nation is total tribal sovereignty. Economic success is just our foundation; now, we must secure our future. As your leader, I will work to build true food sovereignty so we can feed our own people through any crisis. I will expand access to safe, quality housing across the Reservation and ensure every neighborhood is secure. By actively protecting and celebrating our culture, we will strengthen our community ties and ensure every citizen is deeply proud to be Wyandotte. Our economic growth

is strong, but true sovereignty is our ultimate goal.

What does it mean to you to be a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation?

Growing up, my experience was likely very similar to many of yours. Outside of my immediate family, I didn't realize that many of my friends, classmates, or neighbors were also Wyandotte. Because I grew up without a close connection to our language, history, or traditions, I often felt like an outsider to my own heritage.

Over the last decade, I made a conscious effort to reclaim my identity. As I began attending tribal events, I discovered something incredible: many of the people I had known my entire life—those I grew up with, went to school with, and went to church with—were Wyandotte too. I looked around and saw a community of people who shared that exact same history of once feeling disconnected.

Today, we are changing that narrative together. We are building a stronger community by learning our language and history as one, and by teaching each other our traditions, songs, and dances. To me, being a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation means understanding that our identity is defined by this shared connection and growth. As a leader, I want every citizen to know that they belong.

Why did you decide you wanted to be involved with Tribal leadership?

The Wyandotte Nation invested in my future, and I want to return that investment. As one of the first students to receive the Wyandotte Nation scholarship, I have always been grateful for the doors it opened for me. That support launched a 34-year career in management, where I built strong skills in leadership, communication, and solving complex problems while working closely with people from all walks of life.

I am eager to bring this hard work and experience to our Tribal leadership. I will make sure our operations are run with honesty, clear accountability, and a true commitment to our people. I am incredibly proud of our Wyandotte heritage, and my goal is to be a leader who listens closely, works hard, and makes balanced decisions that reflect our community's actual needs. Serving our Nation is more than a job to me—it is a true honor.

GRAY, Continued on Page 6

ELECTION GUIDE: Meet the Candidates

Second Chief: Rob Nesvold

As Second Chief, you will work closely with the Chief and Board of Directors. Describe your approach to teamwork and building consensus when leadership is divided on an issue or funding decision.

Teamwork starts with great leadership and we have a great leadership team at Wyandotte Nation. We're in a time of great economic and cultural growth, and I know it is a privilege to have a seat at the table as leaders continue working everyday to make the best decisions for our Nation as a whole. My years of experience on different advisory committees and in board positions, including the current Board of Directors, has taught me to look at all sides, research and seek clarity on topics I don't fully understand, and to listen to those around me as they express their thoughts.

At the end of the day or if I disagree it can't be swayed, I'm not afraid of saying no if I feel it would be harmful for the Tribe. However, if everyone else in the decision-making process votes for it, I will not undermine the decision and will do everything I can to help the process. The question should always be, what is the best for the Tribe as a whole. Not just me, or a specific group, but all citizens. Our decisions today will have benefits or consequences on the present and future tribal citizens.

How will you advocate for our tribal sovereignty when working with federal and state governments?

Wyandotte Nation's sovereignty is a key pillar that we've worked long and hard for as a Nation. It's a vital part of what makes Wyandotte Nation what it is today and makes me proud to be a citizen. I will work non-stop to ensure we maintain this independence and hold federal and state governments accountable on all aspects of our sovereignty, whether it is in the economic development or governmental side of the nation.

What is your vision for supporting our tribal language preservation programs and cultural revitalization efforts?

My vision for the tribal language preservation and cultural preservation efforts starts with the expansion of our current cultural center. I also feel like we need to expand both into our preschool program



as well as increase our opportunities for all citizens either in person or virtual. Showing and teaching our citizens of our heritage will help our Tribe expand and keep the stories and language of our ancestors alive. Because we are continuing to experience growth, it's more important than ever before to ensure our history is kept alive.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Wyandotte Nation in the next 4 to 5 years, and how would your leadership address it?

A few challenges I anticipate the Tribe facing in the next few years are rising health care costs for all of our citizens, lack of accountability and transparency from the federal government, and outgrowing our facilities due to our growing programs and outreach.

One way I would like to address these concerns is to look at current needs and develop a strategic plan that will ensure alignment and common goals across all departments and programs. Being proactive in our planning for facilities, staffing, and programs in the next 5 years will ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our citizens and community in the future.

We have great employees and programs already established for our citizens, so we need to make sure they have the facilities and resources they need. Additionally, if we were to create a Tribal Citizens Planning Committee to be

Brief Bio

Rob Nesvold has been married to his wife Angela for 34 years and they have 3 kids, Kortney, Sydney and Tanner. His family has lived in the Seneca area for generations.

Nesvold graduated from Seneca High School in 1987. He attended Missouri State University, graduating in 1991 with a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration with an emphasis in History and Public Law. He pursued a Master's degree in Public Administration before choosing to move back to Seneca and start his family.

He worked at Leggett and Platt in Carthage, MO from 1992-2024 and then took a new position at Digger Specialties where he currently works as a Crew Lead.

After the constitution of the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma was ratified in 1999, he was approached by Chief Bearskin to be on the Election Committee. He served as a member, vice chairman, and chairman for over 18 years. He has been serving as Council Person on the Wyandotte Nation Board of Directors since November 2021. Previously, he also served on the Seneca School Board for 12 years, Seneca City Council, and Region M Solid Waste Board of Directors.

part of this strategic planning process, citizens would have a voice in future plans and future board members and leaders would have a road map to guide future expansion.

I hope to see another increase to the Point C Tribal Benefits card for all citizens in an effort to help with rising costs of health care and keep appointments and prescriptions more affordable. Everyone in the US is impacted by this issue, and it's a blessing that Wyandotte Nation is able to provide this assistance, especially for our young families and elders. I feel like we are doing great things with this currently but I want to ensure it continues and grows with the needs of our tribal members in the future.

With interrupted and unreliable federal funding we need to continue to fight for our existing programs and contracts funded by the federal and state governments, and continue to strive for self-sufficiency through the continued expansion of our tribal businesses. We need to work closely with our government officials as well as continue to ensure our Tribe is in a good financial position to maintain these programs for the future if cutbacks occur.

What is your long-term vision for the Tribe?

My long-term vision is self-sufficiency. We need to keep expanding our economic development in areas that are prosperous and create more secure, well-paying jobs for our citizens and to continue to invest wisely and keep those investments diversified. I think we need to expand our cattle company to offset the rising costs and shortages to ensure food security for our citizens. We also need to continue to grow our education department at the preschool and through our scholarship programs. I believe the key to continue our great Tribe is through the pathways of our elders to be able to help provide for our children's children through prosperity and cultural preservation.

What does it mean to you to be a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation?

Being a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation is such a privilege to me. It is an honor to get to work for the betterment of the Tribe. My grandmother Artie Nesvold would be so proud of how far we have prospered and grown over the last 30 years. She was passionate about our family being on the Tribal Roll and would always tell me that when I had children of my own to get them on the roll. She always expressed that we were proud to be Wyandotte as a family. I think she knew one day we would be a strong Nation, I just don't think she ever would have dreamed where we are today. I am still to this day amazed how far we have grown from when I was a young boy to where we are today. Our elders had a dream of what we could be one day through hard work and determination. Our job now is to keep working everyday to keep their dream alive.

ELECTION GUIDE: Meet the Candidates

Board of Directors: Vivian Fink

What is your vision for supporting our tribal language preservation programs and cultural revitalization efforts?

I am so thankful for the people trying to bring our culture back to life for many of us that didn't know that much about it. I have learned so much and I'm still learning thanks to Kim Garcia and her support team. I'm looking forward to our new building projects and upcoming endeavors. Our younger children are blessed to have the opportunity to learn more about their culture. All of these events make me excited to see where our Tribe is going.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Wyandotte Nation in the next 4 to 5 years, and how would your leadership address it?

One of the biggest challenges I see for the Wyandotte Nation in the next 4-5 years is making sure our government keeps up with our growth. Growth is good but it also means we must keep improving our communication with citizens regarding long term planning. We have grown through economic development, new facilities, more employees, gaming, hotels and retail stores. Our reservation responsibilities have advanced with a great team of law enforcement. I've served on the board of directors for 36 years and that experience gives me the understanding of where we've been and where we can go. As a board of directors member, I am representing the citizens of Wyandotte Nation.

What is your long-term vision for the Tribe?

To provide additional health care for citizens due to rising costs along with more affordable housing for all Wyandotte citizens. The Wyandotte Nation is growing and these items will help to make our vision come to life by meeting the needs of citizens.

What does it mean to you to be a**citizen of the Wyandotte Nation?**

One of the greatest privileges I can think of is being a part of the people who traveled so far and fought so hard to get here and never gave up. I am humbled to have been a part of the leadership for such a remarkable group of people.

Why did you decide you wanted to be involved with Tribal leadership?

Chief Bearskin asked me to fill the position of a lady resigning and I accepted. During my tenure on the Board of Directors I realized what an opportunity it was to help our citizens and learn more about our Tribe. I have seen growth in our Nation, and to know I was part of the leadership, makes my yes answer to Chief Bearskin one I will never regret.

Who/what impacted you into becoming the person you are today?

I would have to give that credit to my parents. They set the example that you treat others fair and the way that you would want to be treated. You need to help your fellow man any way that you can and always be honest. Be yourself to everyone trying not to be judgmental

Brief Bio

Vivian Fink was born to Lester (Ton) and Anna Mae Griffin March 11, 1948, and has lived within 10 miles of where she was born her entire life. She has a brother, Vaughn Griffin of Wyandotte, and several nieces and nephews.

She has been married to Shannon for 60 years and they have two children, Scott, who works at Umicore, and Kristy, who is the Court Clerk for the Wyandotte Nation. She and Shannon have six grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

They owned and operated Automotive Maintenance Center in Seneca, Mo for 12 years after BF Goodrich closed. She was also employed at the Wyandotte Post Office for 15 years.

Fink said: 'I have proudly served on the Board of Directors for 36 years. It has been my privilege to serve as a Board Member and would love to continue serving the Wyandotte Nation citizens.'

because if not for the grace of God you could be in their circumstance. I hope to be half the person my parents were here on this earth.

If you could converse with a historical figure, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

I would choose Chief Bearskin. I would like to ask him if the present leadership has accomplished most of the things he strived to do. I personally feel like he would be proud of us. That is why we are doing our best for our citizens. Chief Friend and 2nd Chief Hildebrand have done an amazing job along with the Board of Directors in moving our Tribe forward. We hope to continue to do so in the future.

GRAY

Continued from Page 4

Who/what impacted you into becoming the person you are today?

I was fortunate to have a strong and loving start in life. My parents, Larry and Brenda (Elliott) Gray, instilled in me a deep work ethic and a constant drive to grow—they taught me never to settle for the status quo. They also modeled what it truly means to serve. My dad, who was a deacon, a school board member, and the Seneca postmaster, was known everywhere for his ready smile and easy laugh. Losing him too soon was incredibly painful, but it strengthened my resolve to honor his legacy by putting others first. My mother was someone who constantly looked at the big picture and planned new projects; from her, I learned that there is no obstacle too big to conquer.

Becoming a father clarified my purpose even more. When my oldest son, Collin, was in preschool, I joined the Royal Rangers and served as Commander for 15 years. Under the guidance of wise leaders—especially Don Higgenbotham—I learned what servant leadership looks like in practice. Don was more than a mentor; he became a dear friend and a grandfather figure to my son. His example encouraged me to deepen my commitment to building a strong, service-minded community both at home and at work.

I've also been deeply shaped by my sister, Kim Garcia. We share a passion for our heritage, and her leadership helped bring a wave of awareness, education, and pride in being Wyandotte to our entire family. Her influence fostered a real sense of belonging and strengthened our connection to who we are.

All of these experiences—family, faith, mentorship, and heritage—have guided me toward a life centered on service, growth, and community. They continue to anchor my choices and inspire me to give back to the nation we love.

Have News to share?

We would love to hear from you! Send your news to: wswaim@wyandotte-nation.org

ELECTION GUIDE: Meet the Candidates

Board of Directors: Aubrey Hildebrand

What is your vision for supporting our tribal language preservation programs and cultural revitalization efforts?

Our Tribe's strength comes from our People, we have to protect our culture that Chief Friend, the Tribal Council and many others within our Wyandotte Nation have built upon over the years! I want to work with the cultural center and staff to help every member understand where they came from and the importance on sharing our Elders stories onto the next generations.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Wyandotte Nation in the next 4 to 5 years, and how would your leadership address it?

Work closely with federal government on future programs for the Wyandotte Nation to help and protect our citizens. Strategically grow our businesses and find other opportunities to become more financially stable.

What is your long-term vision for the Tribe?

Continue the path we are on and try to be more self-sufficient! Chief Bearskin laid the foundation for us with his leadership and Chief Friend has built on that strong foundation.

I would like to grow our healthcare system for our citizens and possibly look at building a assisted living facility for our elders to help take care of them in their later years.

As we grow as a sovereign nation, so does our lands that we own. We need to be careful stewards and manage our lands while protecting our cultural sites and ensure environmental sustainability! I would like to see us branch out with other business ventures around our Wyandotte Nation, maybe a food establishment/ restaurant so all members and visitors can enjoy!

What does it mean to you to be a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation?

I am the Grandson of Alice Harris Hildebrand, and my Father is Sammy Ray Hildebrand. As a young child when I visited my grandma she would take us as kids to Wyandotte and hunt for water-crest and wild onions, she would take us around the area and talk to us about our heritage and remind us where we came



from! Years later after doing research about our family I had a newfound understanding on what our ancestors had to endure for us to be here and am proud to be Wyandotte!

Why did you decide you wanted to be involved with Tribal leadership?

I served in the Army Reserves for 20+ years, I was asked a few times to help serve with our color guard but that eventually folded. I talked to some of my cousins and decided the time was now that I give back and serve our Wyandotte Nation.

Who/what impacted you into becoming the person you are today?

My parents Sam and Dee Hildebrand but more importantly my wife Sharon Hildebrand who I have been married to for 34 years. They all have always supported my dreams throughout my Military career and civilian career.

If you could converse with a historical figure, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

My grandma Alice Hildebrand and Chief Bearskin. My grandma as we referred to as "Mom" was a good friend with Chief Bearskin. I met him at a couple events but the ones that stood out most was when he attended my Mom's 100th Birthday and of course her funeral a year later.

Mom was always excited to share news on what Chief Bearskin and the council

Brief Bio

Aubrey Hildebrand was born on April 13, 1965, to Sam and Dee Hildebrand and he is the grandson of the late Alice Hildebrand. On April 25, 1992, he married the love of his life, Sharon Hildebrand, and together they have three children and two granddaughters.

Hildebrand graduated from Claremore Sequoyah High School in 1983. That same year, he answered the call to serve his country by joining the United States Army. He served honorably in both the Army and Army Reserve from 1983 until 2005, retiring with the rank of Master Sergeant (E-8). Throughout his military career, he developed the leadership, discipline, and commitment to service that continues to guide him today.

He earned his college degree from Southern Nazarene University in 2000. Professionally, he has held numerous sales and leadership positions over the years. For the past 23 years, he worked in the dental industry, partnering with dental professionals and providing practical solutions that help dental practices operate efficiently and better serve their patients.

Hildebrand said: 'I firmly believe that strong communities are built through service, integrity, and respect for others. My experiences as a husband, father, grandfather, military veteran, college graduate, and business professional have prepared myself to listen thoughtfully, work collaboratively, and make decisions with the best interests of the Wyandotte Nation in mind.'

was working on. I wish they were here now so I could talk to them and ask what we could do better with protecting and advancing our sovereignty and culture. The Tribe has done an amazing job thus far but we can always improve and be better stewards for our future! I know that's what they would want!

NESVOLD

Continued from Page 5

Why did you decide you wanted to be involved with Tribal leadership?

At Missouri State University my advisor and I had several discussions about my Native American heritage and how passionate and proud of my heritage I was. This led me to choosing my major in public administration with a minor in history and public law. In hopes that one day I could use these to serve my Tribe. Several years later I received a call from my uncle Ted Nesvold, he said that Chief Bearskin would like to see me in his offices, to talk to me about serving my Tribe. Chief Bearskin asked me about a position on the election board. And it was hard to tell either one of these men no. But it was an honor to know that these men both believed in me to do what was best for the citizens of the Tribe.

Who/what impacted you into becoming the person you are today?

I've had several people in my life that have helped me become the person I am today. From my outstanding parents Charlie and Janet Nesvold, my grandparents Harold and Artie Nesvold as well as Charles and Emma Ellis, and my Uncle Ted Nesvold. They all preached hard work and to always do what is right, no matter the cost. They have shown the importance of family and our heritage as well as the benefits of serving others whether it was on a committee, at church, your place of work or just someone on the street that needed help.

My wife Angela, who I have been married to for 34 years and counting, has always been by my side. We have had our fair share of life challenges and even more celebrations and through it all I still love her more everyday and cannot imagine doing life without her.

I wouldn't be the man that I am today without any of these people.

ELECTION GUIDE: Meet the Candidates

Board of Directors: Gerald Ezell

What is your vision for supporting our tribal language preservation programs and cultural revitalization efforts?

My vision is to make certain that our language, traditions, and cultural identity remain a significant part of the Wyandotte Nation for future generations. Preserving them is not only about honoring our past and the ancestors who came before us, but also about strengthening the identity and resilience of our tribal citizens.

If elected, I would support continued investment in language revitalization programs for all ages and support the preservation of our history, ceremonies, and cultural knowledge by working with the tribal elders and ensuring we have meaningful ways for our younger generations to participate so they can become the caretakers of our culture. And I believe this should incorporate all Wyandotte Nation citizens nationwide.

My ultimate goal is to build a future where our language is spoken more often and our traditions remain strong. I want every tribal citizen to feel proud of and connected to the heritage of our great Wyandotte Nation.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Wyandotte Nation in the next 4 to 5 years, and how would your leadership address it?

Over the next 4 to 5 years, I believe the biggest challenges our Nation will face will be protecting our sovereignty and continuing the great work Chief Friend has done with diversifying our economy. While many are facing economic challenges in today's world, the Wyandotte Nation has continued to thrive because of the foresight that Chief Friend and the current leaders of the Nation had in diversifying our business portfolio. This has assisted in meeting the increased health care, housing, education, elder support and youth program needs of our fellow citizens.

My leadership style is based on listening and gathering input from our citizens, while respecting the perspectives of fellow leaders and always keeping the best interest of the Wyandotte Nation at the center of every decision. My goal would be to leave the Nation stronger, even more financially secure, and better prepared for the future generations.

**What is your long-term vision for the Tribe?**

My long-term vision for the Wyandotte Nation is to strengthen our future while protecting who we are as a people. I want to see our language and cultural traditions continue to grow and be passed on through strong connections between our elders and our youth, supported by education, cultural programs, and leadership opportunities.

I also believe it's important to improve communication and engagement with all tribal citizens, whether they live near the Nation or across the country, so everyone feels informed, heard, and connected to their government. Above all, I want the Wyandotte Nation to remain a strong, sovereign Nation that is respected for its leadership, financial responsibility, and commitment to its people. Every decision should be made with future generations in mind.

If given the opportunity, I will lead with integrity, listen to our citizens, work collaboratively with other leaders, and focus on strengthening and uniting the Nation for the future.

What does it mean to you to be a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation?

Being a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation is both an honor and a responsibility. It means carrying forward the strength, resilience, and legacy of our ancestors while protecting our sovereignty, culture, and identity for future generations.

Brief Bio

Gerald Ezell has been married to his wife Nancy for nearly 29 years. Together, they raised three children: Gabrielle, Kayla, and Smoke. The entire family currently works every day for the Wyandotte Nation and its citizens. He and Nancy are also extremely proud grandparents to two granddaughters, Maisyn and Eliza.

Ezell's career has been dedicated to serving others through the fire service. He began his career in 1987 in Neosho, Missouri as a volunteer firefighter and currently serves as Fire Chief for the City of Joplin. He first served the citizens of Joplin from 1990 until retirement in 2010. After retiring, he moved to a part-time position as the Fire Chief for the Diamond Area Fire Protection District, where he served until 2014. He then became Fire Chief for the City of Maumelle, Arkansas, before eventually returning to Joplin in February 2022 to continue serving the community he always called home.

By the time he retires from the fire service in February 2028, he will have devoted more than 40½ years to public service.

Ezell said: 'If elected to the Wyandotte Nation Board of Directors, I will bring decades of leadership, sound decision-making, and a servant's heart to every responsibility a Board Member carries.'

It also means supporting our elders, empowering our youth, and preserving our language and traditions to ensure our Nation continues to thrive and grow.

If elected, I will serve with integrity, listen to our citizens, and work collaboratively with other leaders while always focusing on the future of the Wyandotte Nation.

Why did you decide you wanted to be involved with Tribal leadership?

I decided to become involved in tribal leadership because I want to give back to the Wyandotte Nation and ensure that our Nation continues to grow and thrive for future generations. I believe leadership is about service, listening, and making decisions that benefit every citizen. I believe my leadership experience, my commitment to service and my willingness to work collaboratively will help support the Board in making sound decisions for the future.

Ultimately, I chose to run because I care about the Wyandotte Nation. I want to help build on the work that has been done up to this point and leave our citizens better prepared for the future.

Who/what impacted you into becoming the person you are today?

The people and experiences that have shaped me the most are my father and my time in the fire service.

My father instilled in me that a man is only as good as his word and the importance of a strong work ethic. From the fire service, I learned the meaning of service above self. Always putting others first, staying calm under pressure, and always showing up when people need you most.

Those lessons have shaped the way I live and the way I approach responsibility and leadership today.

If you could converse with a historical figure, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

If I had to choose one historical figure from the Wyandotte Nation to converse with, it would be Tarhe. I would love to sit down and discuss how he was able to make the decisions he made while protecting our people and preserving what remained of our lands, at a time of true uncertainty with the United States expanding. His way of using peaceful negotiation and diplomacy, very likely saved our Nation in my opinion. It would also be interesting to see what advice he would have for our leaders today.

Above everything else, his determination to see our Nation's heritage survive for future generations aligns with my goal to see our Wyandotte Nation remain a strong, sovereign Nation, guided by leadership and decisions that makes the long-term well-being of our people and future generations the top priority.

Gaming compact official; construction progressing in Kansas

July 14 marked an historic milestone for the Wyandotte Nation.

We are proud to announce that the Wyandotte Nation's Class III Gaming Compact has been published in the Federal Register and is now officially in effect.

Wyandotte Nation Chief Billy Friend said this achievement represents years of dedication, perseverance, and collaboration. "It reflects our commitment to strengthening the Nation's economic future. This is more than a legal milestone it is another step forward in fulfilling our responsibility to build a stronger future for generations to come."

This comes on the heels of excit-

ing progress continuing to be made on the new Crosswinds Casino project in Park City, Kansas. Every step forward brings the Tribe closer to creating a first-class destination that will provide new entertainment opportunities, create jobs, and strengthen the economic future of the Wyandotte Nation.

Chief Friend said, "the project represents our ongoing commitment to investing in our Nation, our citizens, and the communities where we operate. We appreciate the hard work of everyone involved and look forward to sharing more updates as construction continues."



Lost Creek Recycling Center expands, modernizes

The Wyandotte Nation's Lost Creek Recycling Center opened a tour for employees on Monday, June 22, after completing a three-year project to expand its facilities and modernize its capabilities. The Recycling Center, 4 Lost Creek Drive in Wyandotte, opened in 2013.

The Environmental Protection Agency awarded the Wyandotte Nation a Solid Waste for Infrastructure Grant for the project, which was designed to strengthen the Nation's recycling infrastructure, increase collection capacity, improve operational efficiency, and provide additional recycling opportunities for tribal citizens and the surrounding community. EPA Project Officer Jason Walker joined Wyandotte Nation staff for the tour.

"As the Tribe has continued to grow, we needed to grow too," said Kathy Welch, Environmental Program Manager for the Wyandotte Nation, during the tour.

The project includes the recently completed construction of a 1,750-square-foot addition to the existing recycling center, site improvements, upgraded lighting and ventilation, new recycling equipment, and additional public recycling collection bins.

In addition, Wyandotte Nation



PHOTOS: WILLIAM SWAIM | WYANDOTTE NATION

The Lost Creek Recycling Center recently completed a three-year project expanding its facilities.

Planning and Natural Resources Director Christen Lee said there is a covered collection area to make recycling more convenient and accessible year-round, and the grant will also fund an additional full-time Recycling Technician position to support daily recycling operations and expanded services.

Together, these improvements

will help the Wyandotte Nation divert more recyclable materials from landfills, reduce environmental impacts, and continue building a cleaner, healthier community through expanded recycling and environmental education efforts.

The Lost Creek Recycling Center will be holding a Tire Collection Event July 6-10. We accept car,

pickup, truck, school bus, and tractor tires (up to 48 and no rims). No large off-road equipment, forklift, or backhoe tires. NOTE: We do not take tires from the 4-state area tire shops or independent dealers.

For more information, contact Kathy Welch at (918) 678-6335 or Curtis Broderick at (918) 678-6352.

Tribe to purchase Peoria Ridge Golf Course

The Wyandotte Nation has entered into an agreement to purchase Peoria Ridge Golf Course in Miami, Oklahoma.

The acquisition represents a strategic expansion of the Tribe's hospitality and entertainment offerings, and reinforces its ongoing commitment to economic development and community investment in Northeast Oklahoma.

"This investment reflects our

continued focus on enhancing amenities for our guests while supporting recreation and tourism in our community," said Chief Billy Friend. "We are excited to preserve and build upon the legacy of this course for years to come."

The new ownership team is committed to preserving—and elevating—the standards that have made the course a regional favorite.

Peoria Ridge Golf Course, lo-

cated near Historic Route 66 and Interstate 44, has long served as a regional destination for golfers across Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri.

Additional updates regarding operations and memberships will be shared in the coming weeks.

For more information, follow the Wyandotte Tribe of Oklahoma on Facebook. The Wyandotte Tribe of Oklahoma (WTOK) is the feder-

ally chartered corporation of the Wyandotte Nation. The Tribe drives economic development through a diverse portfolio of businesses, including hospitality, gaming, retail, food and beverage, and technology services. These enterprises support tribal programs and services that enhance the quality of life for tribal citizens and surrounding communities.

TRIBAL CITIZEN NEWS

She's kind of a big deal

On May 19, Wyandotte tribal citizen Debbie Dry was inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame as part of the Springfield Thunder Softball team. From 1992 to 2010, the Springfield Thunder was one of the premier women's slow-pitch softball teams in Missouri.

Dry, who is a Grant Writer and BIA/Self Governance Coordinator for the Wyandotte Nation, said she had a hard time believing she was supposed to be there, until she saw her name on the program.

"I was honored to be remembered after all of these years. It was very much a surprise," Dry said. "I played with them in the late 90s, and won state one of those three years. The last year I played with them was in 2000, so it has been awhile."

In 19 seasons, the Thunder played in 18 state tournaments, placing in the top five in all of them. They were ASA state champions in 1992, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2008 and 2009. Additionally, the Thunder won the city league championship 13 times and placed second six times. They also played in four national tournaments, placing third in 2005 in Lawton, Okla., and fifth in 2009 in Springfield.

In addition to Dry, the roster over those years



also included Vicky McCracken, Mary Stratton, Shelley Evans, Donna Bruns, Lynda Nichols, Val Nichols, Phyllis Wolfram, Vicki Spivy, Pam Burney, Amy Smith, Sharon Latham, Amy Horst Strauss, Bev Dunlap, Carla Daniels, Patti Youngs, Chris Dicken, Susan Theroff, Wendy Hill, Jamie Dunn, Kelly Quigg, Gay McDonald, Janet Moore, Tina Hansen, Tiffany Wilson, Allyson Bice, Patty Porter, Staci



Wattie, Jessica Gorham, Morgan Hohenberger, Suzanne Powers, Stacy Beckley, Leslie Keeith and Susan Provance.

In 2012, Springfield Thunder was the first team to be inducted into the Springfield Softball Hall of Fame.

Have News to share?

We would love to hear from you! Send your news to:
wswaim@wyandotte-nation.org

TRIBAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Human Resources

*Submitted by Deana Howard,
Human Resources Director*

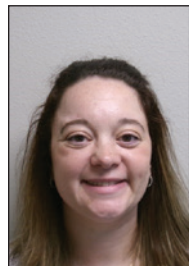
The Wyandotte Nation Cultural department would like to welcome tribal citizen Nathan Lee McAlister to our team as the new Cultural Educator. Nathan has a Bachelor's



McALISTER

in Art and a Bachelor's of Science in Art Education from Missouri Southern State University. Some of his hobbies include making and teaching art, playing fiddle, storm chasing, cooking, and traveling. Nathan enjoys spending time with family and friends and being outdoors. He is excited to work for the Tribe and to continue to expand the Cultural Programming the Tribe offers! Welcome!

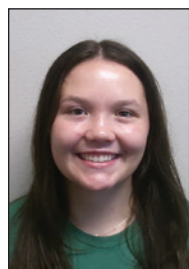
The Wyandotte Nation Family Services department would like to welcome tribal citizen Lauren Botts to the team as the new Legal Services Project Coordinator. Lauren has a Bachelor's degree in Business & Marketing from Rogers State University and also has 3.5 years' experience at the District Attorney's Office. Some



BOTTS

of Lauren's hobbies include reading, painting, and thrifting. In her spare time, Lauren enjoys spending time with her husband and three children as well as going on weekend adventures. We are excited to have Lauren join our team!

The Wyandotte Nation Education department would like to welcome tribal citizen Kirsten Bruegel as a new Infant Caregiver, Hailey Hemann as a new Infant Caregiver, Ella Oswald to the team as a new Childcare Assis-



BRUEGEL



HEMANN



OSWALD



GRAY



CONRAD

tant, Rebecca Gray as the new Early Childhood Nurse, and tribal citizen Susan Conrad to the team as a new Substitute.

Kirsten graduated from Seneca High School in 2022 then went on to wrestle at Avila University in Kansas City where she graduated with a Bachelor's in Kinesiology in May of 2026. She is a previous summer youth intern and has come back to join us full time. Some of Kirsten's hobbies include working out, caring for her house plants and tending her flower beds. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family, going on walks with her fiancé and going to the movies.

Hailey is a high school graduate with previous experience working at Turtle Tots. Hailey enjoys doing arts and crafts and spending time with her family and friends.

Ella graduated from Fairland High School and then went on to NEO where she earned her Associates degree. Some of Ella's hobbies include fishing and scrapbooking. She enjoys spending most of her time with her best friend fishing, shopping and eating.

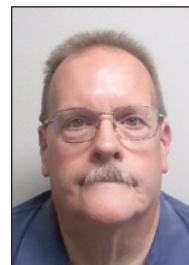
Rebecca brings many years of nursing experience with her. She has worked as a labor and delivery nurse and as a SANE nurse. Her background has strengthened her skills in communication, critical thinking, empathy, and being able to remain calm in stressful situations. Some of Rebecca's hobbies include spending

time with her farm animals, being outdoors, going on dates with her husband, and enjoying family activities with her children. In her spare time, Rebecca loves being with her husband and four children, family outings, going to church, and just being home on their farm.

Susan has a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Master's in Education with an emphasis in Native American Studies. Some of her hobbies include walking, reading, painting, and making scripture cards. She is also learning how to bead. In her spare time, Susan enjoys going to church and studying the Bible.

Welcome to the Wyandotte Nation team Kirsten, Hailey, Ella, Rebecca, and Susan!

The Wyandotte Nation Environmental Department would like to welcome Russ Lawson to the team as a new Environmental Recycling Technician. Some of Russ's hobbies include fishing with his grandkids and hunting elk, deer, and turkey. In his spare time, he enjoys working

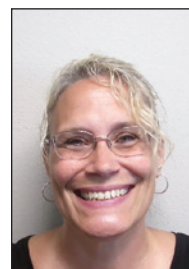


LAWSON

on vehicles, firearms, and making fishing lures. Welcome to the Wyandotte Nation family!



ALLEN



MCGREW

The Wyandotte Nation Facilities Department would like to welcome David Allen and Tina McGrew to the team as new Custodians. David brings custodial experience with him and will be a huge asset to have on our team. In his spare time, David enjoys racing, fishing, working on cars, watching the Oklahoma City Thunder and being with his family.

Tina is all about family and enjoys spending time

with her kids, grandkids and great grandkids.

We are thankful to have them on our team!

The Wyandotte Grounds Maintenance team would like to welcome



GAINES

Zackery Gaines to the team as a new Grounds Maintenance Specialist. Zackery attended a year of vocational schooling for diesel technology. Some of his hobbies include hunting, fishing, and riding 4x4s. In his spare time, he enjoys being with his family and being outdoors. We are excited to have Zackery join our team and we look forward to getting to see his work on the grounds!

The Wyandotte Nation Title VI department would like to welcome



FINK

Karen Fink as a new Sub. Karen attended Diamond R-V High School and then went on to Crowder College to earn her Associates of Art in General Studies. She then worked for Crowder College for 24 years where she then retired. Karen loves anything and everything about horses. She loves to chase her grandkids around and spend time with her family. In her spare time, she enjoys baseball, softball, football, and soccer games to cheer on her grand kids. Welcome to the Wyandotte Nation family!



RENFRO

The Bearskin Fitness Center would like to welcome Jace Renfro to the team as a Front Desk Sub, and Taylee Williams to the team as a new Part-time Fitness Front Desk Provider.

Continued on Page 12

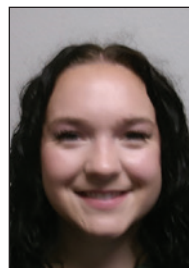
TRIBAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS

(HUMAN RESOURCES)

Continued from Page 11

Jace graduated this year from Seneca High School. Jace enjoys sports, hunting, fishing, and wrestling at NEO.

Taylee is a graduate from Fairland High School and she has also attended Northeast Tech. Some of her hobbies include crafting, fishing, and hanging out with friends. In her spare time, Taylee enjoys playing with her dogs and spending time with her friends and family.



WILLIAMS

We are excited for Jace and Taylee to join our team and wish them the best!

Family Services

Submitted by Dana Butterfield,
Family Services Director

Are you planning to attend The Gathering, the Annual Meeting and/or Pow-Wow this year? The Family Services staff always look forward to this time of year. We love seeing so many of our tribal citizens in Oklahoma for these events. Last year we had 508 tribal citizens register for the Annual Meeting, that was a record number. However, we anticipate that number to be exceeded this year! How many adult tribal citizens do you think will attend the 2026 Annual Meeting? Email your guesses to wnfs@wyandotte-nation.org BEFORE September 1st and the person who is closest, without going over will receive a prize!

The Gathering also continues to grow in attendance and if you have never participated in this event, you are definitely missing out. If you do plan to attend, be sure to register. This helps the Cultural team prepare for supplies and food. No need to register for the Annual Meeting or the Pow-Wow, but you might want to arrive early for both events to get a good seat.

Another reason to arrive early for the Annual Meeting is that it is an

election year. Voting will open at 9 am and you must be in line by 11 to be able to cast your ballot. As always, to vote and receive the meeting handouts, you must present your actual Wyandotte Nation Citizenship card or Membership card (pictures of cards will not be accepted). If your tribal card includes your photo this will be sufficient. If your card does not include a photo, you will also need to present a photo ID. So, check your wallet/purse to make sure you have your card with you, especially if you're traveling from out of the area.

The deadline for Tribal Enrollment Applications is August 15. Applications must be hand-delivered or post-marked by this date to be considered during this year's Annual Meeting. Each application must include an original state-certified long-form birth certificate (listing both parents' full names). As a reminder, the post office has changed their processes for stamping mail. If you are trying to beat the deadline, be sure to take your mail into the post office to have the item stamped for delivery. To encourage early enrollment, applicants who submit completed documentation before a child's first birthday will receive a commemorative blanket, a \$100 Walmart gift card and ribbon skirt or shirt provided by the Cultural Division. For enrollment questions, please contact Haylee Botts at 918-678-6377.

The Low-Income Heat Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is available for the summer cooling program from July 1st through September 30th. Wyandotte Nation citizens who reside within a 100-mile radius of the tribal headquarters, as well as, citizens who reside throughout the State of Oklahoma who meet income guidelines may be eligible for this program. Eligible families have the choice to apply for LIHEAP through the state they reside in (Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri) or with the Tribe. Eligible households may only use LIHEAP from one entity per fiscal year (10/1-09/30), but can receive heating, cooling and emergency assistance. For questions, please call Dana Butterfield at 918-678-6319.

We recently received notification that the Tribe has been approved for

Continued on Page 13



In 1989, October was officially designated as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. In the 37 years that have passed since then, time has been set aside to honor victims and lift up survivor's voices. October is a time to reflect upon the millions of people that are living in fear each day, and to come together as a community to support the people who are able to escape their offenders. Women, men, and children can all be impacted by domestic violence. For children, witnessing violence in their home can impact how they behave as adults and how they raise their own children someday. Despite the common belief, physical violence does not have to occur for someone to be a victim of domestic violence. Emotional, sexual, and financial forms of abuse may harm people just as much as physical abuse. If you or someone you know is experiencing harm in their relationship or from a family member, please contact the Victim Services hotline at 877-276-0669.



Wyandotte Nation offers a wide range of supportive services to native and non-native victims of crime within a 100 mile radius of tribal headquarters. Services include: advocacy, crisis intervention, groceries, clothing, emergency shelter, rental/utility assistance, legal expenses, court accompaniment, supervised visitation, and more.

TRIBAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS

(FAMILY SERVICES)

Continued from Page 12

a start-up grant from the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, to begin the process to administer child support. During this two-year start-up phase the Tribe will establish the necessary legal framework, policies and procedure, staffing structure, intergovernmental agreements and administrative systems required to operate a compliant Tribal Child Support program. We look forward to adding this resource locally for our tribal citizens and the community.

Other programs administered by the Family Services Department include:

- Youth Program
- Infant/Toddler Program
- Jr/Sr Expense Program
- Child Safety Seats
- Emergency Assistance
- Senior Energy
- Elder Assistance
- Indian Child Welfare Services
- Victim Services Program
- Motor Vehicle Tag Program

Additional information regarding these programs can be found on the Tribe's website or in the Services Brochure. Most of the assistance programs run on the Nation's fiscal year of October 1-September 30. Applications for the current fiscal year must be received or postmarked no later than September 30. Processing may take up to 30 days for reimbursements or direct payments. If you've signed up for direct deposit, make sure your bank information is current. Also, be sure to update your mailing address if it has changed. You can update your address as well as access program information and applications at:

www.wyandotte-nation.org/Services/FamilyServices/programs

We're honored to serve you. If you have questions or need assistance, please reach out. Our team is here and ready to help.

Wyandotte Nation Family Services, **wnfs@wyandotte-nation.org**

Family Services Front Desk:
918-678-6321

Indian Child Welfare, **wnICW@wyandotte-nation.org**

Willow House, **477vs@wyandotte-nation.org**

Victim Services Hotline: 877-276-0669

Education

*Submitted by Cristi Hudson,
Workforce Development Director*

Wyandotte Nation Child Development Center

The Wyandotte Nation Child Development Center is a Tribally Licensed 4-Star Childcare Facility. We provide a Preschool Program, Infant/Toddler Program, Before & After School Program, and Summer Program. Our center operates year-round in conjunction with the Wyandotte Public School System.

Our Preschool Program consists of two Preschool classrooms for children ages 3–4 and two Pre-K classrooms for children ages 4–5 who are preparing to transition into kindergarten. The Infant/Toddler Program includes three 2-Year-Old Toddler classrooms, two 1-Year-Old classrooms, and two Infant classrooms. The Before & After School Program operates concurrently with the Preschool Program and serves students up to age 12 who attend Wyandotte Public Schools as well as other local schools in the area.

During the school year, we enroll approximately 136 students within our Infant/Toddler and Preschool Programs. Our Before & After School Program provides an additional 60–70 placements for students attending the public school. Our Summer Program is one of our largest programs and generally serves 150–175 students ranging from 6 weeks to 12 years of age.

The goal of the Wyandotte Nation Child Development Center is to provide the highest quality childcare possible. We strive to build meaningful, lasting relationships with our students and their families so we can best serve each child as an individual. We take great pride in the care our staff provides and support our team members through ongoing training, resources, and the freedom to create unique learning environments where every child can thrive.

To enhance learning opportunities, we offer KUMON math, STEM activities, and beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, we will be introducing the Heggerty Literacy Program into our classrooms. These programs are designed to strengthen early math, literacy, problem-solving,



PHOTO: WILLIAM SWAIM | WYANDOTTE NATION

Preschool graduates sing during the May graduation ceremony at the Wyandotte High School gym. For more photos from the event, visit our Facebook page.

and critical thinking skills while helping prepare students for future academic success.

We are also committed to incorporating immersive educational experiences throughout our programs. Through hands-on learning opportunities, cultural engagement, interactive activities, language exposure, and real-world experiences, students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process and build confidence, creativity, and independence in a supportive environment.

We host a variety of family events and activities including Open House, Grandparent's Day, Family Night events, Halloween Carnival, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Family-Style Thanksgiving, holiday programs and parties, and more.

Throughout the year, we welcome community workers and volunteers into our center to help children become familiar with the many individuals who serve our communities. We also work closely with the Wyandotte Nation Cultural Department to integrate the teaching of Wyandotte language and traditions into our programs. Students participate in weekly language and cultural lessons as well as dance instruction. These experiences are showcased each spring during our Annual Leaford Bearskin

Memorial Preschool Pow-Wow.

Another major highlight of our school year is the Preschool Graduation Ceremony. During this special event, all preschool students are recognized, and our graduating students proudly wear caps and gowns as they prepare to move on to kindergarten.

Our Summer Program offers students a variety of fun and educational field trips including visits to zoos, aquariums, parks, splash pads, and other exciting destinations. These experiences allow children to enjoy their summer break while continuing to learn and thrive within a structured environment.

The 2026–2027 school year begins on August 11. We are currently accepting enrollment applications for our 2026–2027 Pre-K and Preschool classrooms, as well as our Infant/Toddler Programs.

To be eligible:

- Students must be 4 years old on or before September 1, 2026, for enrollment in our Pre-K classrooms.
- Students must be 3 years old on or before September 1, 2026, for enrollment in our Preschool classrooms.
- Students must be 2 years old on or before September 1, 2026, to enroll

Continued on Page 14

TRIBAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS

(EDUCATION)

Continued from Page 13

in our Toddler Program.

Applications for children of any age may be submitted to be added to our waiting lists.

Applications can be completed online at:

<https://wyandotte-nation.org/services/education/turtletots/>

Thank you for your interest in the Wyandotte Nation Child Development Center.

Wyandotte Nation Education Department

The Wyandotte Nation Education Department has just completed getting through all of the new participants in the scholarship programs. We would like to welcome all who applied and got their applications in before the deadline. The WN Education Department is currently working through registration for all of our current participants and getting them ready for the next school year. If you are a current participant and have not done so already, please remember to submit your grades for the completed term, and your course schedule for the upcoming fall term.

The Wyandotte Nation Education Department has several scholarship programs for members to apply for to receive assistance for school or job training. These scholarships can be used to help with the costs of Concurrent, Bachelors, Masters, Doctoral, and Vocational Training opportunities.

The WN Scholarship Programs are available for tribal members pursuing a Bachelors or Master's Degree. These two program have been increasing in participants every year. The Undergrad Scholarship Program assisted 200+ WN members this past school year, and prepare to have more participants apply this year. The Master Program assisted 30 WN members with scholarships.

The WN Education Department is now offering scholarships for members who are pursuing a Doctorate. The on-line submission is not yet available on the tribal website, but members are more than welcome to reach out to the Education Specialist for any questions or the application.

The WN Vocational Program assist

tribal members pursuing a more job-related training or who are enrolled in an on the job training program. This past year we have assisted 20 members with Vocational Training and are working with 10 more to get them the training needed for their career paths.

The WN Scholarship program has scholarships available for members in High School who are taking college courses. These scholarships helped eight tribal members cover some of the costs for enrolling into concurrent courses for this past school term.

To submit for an Undergraduate, Masters, Doctoral or Concurrent Scholarship application, you can log onto the tribal website at <https://wyandotte-nation.org/services/education/scholarships/>. For any questions that you may have please contact Evan at ehotulke@wyandotte-nation.org; or by calling his office at 918-678-6331.

Wyandotte Nation 477 Program (Workforce & Social Services)

The 477 Program, also known as Workforce & Social Services, is a federally-funded program that combines multiple services to better serve tribal citizens within our 100-mile service area. The program continues to support families and promote long-term self-sufficiency.

How to Apply:

Applicants must complete the 477 Application for Services. Participants do not have to be Wyandotte Nation citizens but must live within the service area and be members of a federally recognized tribe. Required documents include proof of tribal membership, proof of residency, and a Selective Service Registration Card (males ages 18–25).

Applications are available on the Wyandotte Nation website under the Services tab. For questions, contact (918) 678-3268 or wn477@wyandotte-nation.org. Additional documentation may be required depending on services requested.

Education, Employment & Training

The program provides scholarships, job training, and vocational support to help participants reach academic and employment goals. Current participants receiving educational support are submitting enrollment information for continued support in

the fall semester. Staff are continuing to process applications and preparing to distribute fall semester funding.

Childcare Subsidy

The Childcare Subsidy assists low-income families with childcare costs for children ages 0–12. The program currently supports approximately 130 children across the service area. Coming up in August, mailouts will be distributed to families due to Recertify in September for continued childcare services.

Community Outreach and Events

In June, our 477 Program collaborated with the Cultural and Family Services departments for their Family Night Honoring Men. The event was a huge success with inflatables and games for children and families as well as food and door prizes for all ages.

This month, in collaboration with the Nine Northeastern Oklahoma Tribes CCDF we are hosting two trainings on Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse that will be for area Law Enforcement, CCDF/477 Programs, ICW Programs, Courts, and area Tribal Child Care Facilities. The training is by invitation only and will feature a speaker from the Northern District of Oklahoma United States Attorney's Office. The training will cover what it means to be a Mandated Reporter and recognizing signs of child abuse.

Wyandotte Nation Library

Kweh! This summer at Wyandotte Nation Historical Library has been filled with learning, laughter, and plenty of great stories! We have had the pleasure of hosting daily library classes with our Turtle Tots Summer Program students, where they have enjoyed story time, crafts, hands-on activities, and literacy-based learning. We have also continued with our book clubs with the Bearskin Summer Youth program, giving older students opportunities to read, discuss books, and strengthen their love of reading.

One of our favorite summer activities has been our Buddy Reading program. During these visits, members of the Bearskin Summer Youth program come to the library to read with our Turtle Tot Summer program students, creating meaningful friend-

ships while encouraging literacy and confidence in our young readers. It has been wonderful to watch the older students become positive reading role models for the younger children.

We have had an incredible summer, and these programs have been a tremendous success. Seeing so many children excited about books and reading reminds us why these opportunities are so important.

As we prepare to welcome everyone back for the school year, we are looking forward to another exciting year at the library. We have some amazing and new programs on the horizon that we hope to share with our community soon. We can't wait to continue learning, reading, and growing together.

As always, we invite you to stop by the library to explore our growing collection of books, DVDs, and resources. Don't forget! We also offer access to the Oklahoma Virtual Library, where you can enjoy eBooks, audiobooks, and more from the comfort of home.

Library hours are Monday-Thursday 8 am to 4:30 pm and Friday 8 am to 3:30 pm.

To register as a library patron or to learn more about virtual access, visit us in person or check out our website at www.wyandotte-nation.org

For questions contact our librarian, Madeline Harnar, at mharnar@wyandotte-nation.org or call 918-678-6332.

Department Contacts:

Cristi Hudson – Workforce Development Director

918-678-6334 or chudson@wyandotte-nation.org

Sami Butterfield – Caseworker/Childcare Specialist

918-678-6330 or sbutterfield@wyandotte-nation.org

Lindsay Cooper – Early Childhood Program Coordinator

918-678-3267 or lcooper@wyandotte-nation.org

Madeline Harnar – Librarian

918-678-6332 or mharnar@wyandotte-nation.org

Evan Hotulke— Caseworker/Education/Employment Specialist

918-678-6331 or ehotulke@wyandotte-nation.org

Kasey Lewis – Intake Clerk

918-678-3268 or klewis@wyandotte-nation.org

TRIBAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Elders

Submitted by Brenda House, Elder Services Director

Greetings all,

It is hard to believe that the Gathering, Pow-Wow, Annual Meeting and Hog Fry are just a few weeks away! Looking forward to seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones!

The Northeast Oklahoma Caregiver Coalition is proud to announce the following events for our Elders 55 and Older:

- Seneca/Cayuga Health Fair, Friday, August 14 from 10 am-2

pm, Community Building, 24805 S 660 Rd, Grove, OK 74344 (Vendors, Bingo, Snow Cones, Incentives. Pulled Pork Sandwiches and Sides) Luau Theme.

- Community Bingo, Buffalo Run RV Park, Miami, OK Monday, August 24. Time and more information coming soon.

- Eastern Shawnee Dance/Ice Cream Social, Friday, August 28 from 2-4 pm. The Tree House, Seneca, MO (Moccasin Bend Band) – See the flyer for more!

- Picnic at the Fairgrounds Thursday, September 24, 10 am-2 pm .Miami, OK Fairgrounds. (Duke

Mason, Charlies Chicken, Ice Cream Truck, Incentives, Games) Theme is Celebrating 250 Years. Stars & Stripes.

- Northeast Tribal Health Fair, Friday, October 2, 9 am-1 pm. Miami, OK. More information coming soon.

- Delaware Tribe of Indians Health Fair, Thursday, October 15, 10 am-2 pm. Dewey, OK Fairgrounds. (Music Bingo, Vendors, Incentives, Catered by Dinks BBQ).

- Bearskin Health Fair, Located in both gymnasiums, Friday, October 30, 9 am- 1 pm. (Halloween Costume Contest, Fun Walk, Lions Club Health Screenings, Vendors, Games, Prizes, Duke Mason, Charlies Chicken, Jack's Ice Cream and much more).

Bearskin Health and Wellness Center provides Health Screenings the third Thursday of each month at 10:30 am at the Artie Nesvold Elders Center.

We have Foot Care the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month in the safe room. A signup sheet is available in the dining room for reservations.

CAREGIVER

Our Caregiver Support Group is the first Thursday of each month from 10:30 -11:30 am in the conference/safe room. Lunch provided following the meeting.

This group is for all current and former caregivers. It is also for grandparents raising grandchildren.

We are continuing to provide respite care vouchers for Caregivers to have a much-needed break.

SENIOR TURTLES GIFT SHOP

The Senior Turtles Gift Shop is open from 10 am - 2 pm Monday-Friday.

If anyone is interested in joining our Senior Turtles Gift Shop Group, please contact Brenda. The number for the gift shop is 918-678-6491.

We have a beading class every Wednesday morning starting at 9 am. Supplies are furnished. Participants make two like items, donate one to the gift shop and keep one for themselves.

The Senior Turtles Gift Shop Group is planning to do a cookbook. If anyone has recipes that they would like to share please contact

any of the group. We would also like to include traditional recipes.

It is always a pleasure serving the Wyandotte Nation Citizens. Please feel free to call us anytime.

DEPARTMENT STAFF:

Brenda House, Elder Services Director, 918- 678-6327.

Daniel Welch, Food Service Team Supervisor, 918-678-6390.

Seth Higginbotham, Kelli Snell, Susan Skaggs, Debbie Kleidon and Cat Robles, Food Service Team Members 918- 678-6328.

Menu, 918-678-6326.

Planning & Natural Resources

Compiled by Christen Lee, Environmental & Planning Director

The Planning and Natural Resource Department remained active throughout the second quarter of 2026, with Grant staff working alongside tribal departments to secure funding that advances projects designed the strengthen services for Wyandotte Nation citizens and the community.

Housing continued to be a major focus with the submission of a \$500,000 application to the Federal Home Loan Bank's Native American Housing Initiative to expand assistance for eligible tribal citizens needing essential home repairs and rehabilitation. If awarded, the program would provide funding to improve the safety, accessibility, and livability of owner-occupied homes.

The Grant staff also worked with the Family Services Department to pursue funding that would establish the Wyandotte Nation's own Child Support Program, while also developing and submitting applications to enhance diabetes services at the Bearskin Health Clinic, strengthen library programming through the "Stories Forward" initiative, and continue victim services programs.

In support of public safety, the department secured a \$27,500 grant

MEDICARE PART D EVENT

NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA CAREGIVER COALITION

DANCE & Ice Cream SOCIAL

FRIDAY AUGUST 28TH

2:00PM - 4:00PM

Enjoy an afternoon of great music, dancing & a delicious ice cream bar!

MUSIC BY: MOCCASIN BEND Country Band

FREE EVENT!

ICE CREAM BAR!

EASTERN SHAWNEE TRIBE TREEHOUSE

70500 E 128Rd
Wyandotte, OK 74370

Come for the music, stay for the good times!

FREE EVENT!

TRIBAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS

(PLANNING)

Continued from Page 15

from Marathon Petroleum to purchase a utility terrain vehicle and trailer for Emergency Management, bolstering response to severe weather and other emergencies.

The department also secured an \$87,448 Tribal Historical Preservation Officer grant to help support the Wyandotte Nation's ability to preserve and protect its cultural and historic resources. Staff also participated in a three-day ArcGIS training to enhance mapping and geographic information system capabilities that support planning, infrastructure, utilities, and other projects across the Nation.

Beyond grant development, Planning staff continued supporting several capital improvement projects, including ongoing work on the Bearskin Health and Wellness Facility expansion, infrastructure planning for future housing development north of Heritage Acres, improvements to the Wyandotte Nation Utilities website, and discussions with the U.S. Department of Transportation to explore future transportation partnerships benefitting the Wyandotte Nation community.

Another significant milestone this quarter was the completion of the Lost Creek Recycle Center expansion. Funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Solid

Waste Infrastructure for Recycling program, the project expands the Wyandotte Nation's recycling capacity and enhances services available to tribal citizens and the surrounding community. To celebrate the project's completion, the Wyandotte Nation hosted a ribbon-cutting and reception on June 22 with representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, tribal leadership, and tribal staff in attendance.

The Environmental Department also continues to provide recycling services, water quality programs, environmental education, and other initiatives that promote stewardship of the Wyandotte Nation's natural resources.

Looking ahead, the department is continuing to work on several major public safety funding opportunities that support law enforcement, tribal courts, and victim services while remaining committed to identifying new resources that strengthen tribal programs and improve quality of life for Wyandotte Nation citizens.



PHOTO: WILLIAM SWAIM | WYANDOTTE NATION
The 2026 Environmental Festival held May 7.

Planning Department Contacts:			
Christen Lee (Planning & Natural Resources Director)		918-678-6341	
Debbie Dry (Grant Writer/BIA /Self-Governance Coordinator)		918-678-6315	
David Groves (Grant Writer)		918-678-6309	

Wyandotte Nation Environmental Department			
Kathleen Welch	Environmental Department Manager	Contact for private well sampling or septic assessments	918-678-6335
John Gerhard	Environmental Technician II	Contact for private well sampling or septic assessments	918-678-6396
Ryan Haggard	Environmental Technician I	Contact for private well sampling	918-678-6345



Housing

Submitted by Valari Richards, Housing Director

Applications for the College Rental Assistance program are now currently available online. The deadline to submit applications and backup documentation for the fall semester funding is August 28. This program is available to help qualifying college students (nationwide) with rental/dorm assistance during the school year. To qualify, applicants must currently be on tribal scholarship through the Education Department, residing in dorm rooms or a rental unit, and must submit all required paperwork. The assistance for this program is limited to the first (25) qualifying applicants on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The splashpad expansion in Bear Park was completed in June 2026 and the splashpad is now open! The splashpad is open to the public daily

from 9 am – 9 pm until September 14.

The Housing Department currently offers rental and homeowner-ship housing, senior rental housing, sanitation facilities assistance for well/septic/rural water installation, down payment assistance, and college rental assistance. Applications for the current programs are available online, and each application has the qualifications for the program on the first page. If you are interested in or have questions about any of the programs listed above or on our website, please contact our office by phone at (918) 678-6336 or (918) 678-6339, or via email at vrichards@wyandotte-nation.org.

Department Staff:

Valari Richards, Housing Director
Jocelyn Metcalf, Housing Specialist
Levi Griffin/Paul Parker, Project Coordinators

Randy Qualls/Drew Lankford, Residential Maintenance Technicians

25th ANNUAL HEALTH FAIR!

✦ Focusing on ✦
MEDICARE PART D

When: OCTOBER 30, 2026

Time: 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

**Where: Bearskin Healthcare
& Wellness Center**



INCENTIVES GIVEN & DRAWN FOR THOSE 55+!

FUN & ACTIVITIES



Live Music & Dancing
featuring Duke Mason



1 Mile Fun Walk



Health Screenings



Costume Contest



Games



Lunch Provided!



Grab & Go Breakfast
(for Screening Participants)



Ice Cream Truck!

SPONSORED BY

Seneca-Cayuga Nation • Peoria Tribe of Indians
Eastern Shawnee Tribe • Quapaw Nation • Ottawa Tribe
Grand Gateway Area Agency on Aging • Amedisys
Good Shepherd Hospice • Senior Companions • Cherokee Nation

Important Numbers

Family Services / Enrollment

wnfs@wyandotte-nation.org

Dana Butterfield (918) 678-6319

Leeanna Radabaugh, (918) 678-6329

Haylee Botts, (918) 678-6377

Tags

Tiffany Garner (918) 678-6353

tgarner@wyandotte-nation.org

477 Victim Services

wn477@wyandotte-nation.org

Hotline: 877-276-0669

Chelsea King, (918) 678-3257

Indian Child Welfare

Tracy Coach (918) 678-6355

tcoach@wyandotte-nation.org

Human Resources

Deana Howard (918) 678-6320

dhoward@wyandotte-nation.org

Nutrition & Caregiver Services

Brenda House (918) 678-6327

bhouse@wyandotte-nation.org

Education / Library / Child Care

Cristi Hudson (918) 678-6334

chudson@wyandotte-nation.org

Environmental / Planning / Development

Christen Lee (918) 678-6341

clee@wyandotte-nation.org

Housing

Valari Richards (918) 678-6339

vrichards@wyandotte-nation.org

Police Department

Ronnie Gilmore (918) 678-6365

rgilmore@wntpd.com

Non-emergency: (918) 678-3100

police@wntpd.com

Cultural Division

Kim Garcia (918) 678-6317

kgarcia@wyandotte-nation.org

Sherri Clemons (918) 678-6344

sclemons@wyandotte-nation.org

Bearskin Healthcare & Wellness Center

Kelly Friend (918) 678-3259

kfriend@wyandotte-nation.org

Clinic Appointments

Nakia Elsloo (918) 678-3228

nelsloo@wyandotte-nation.org

Dental / Vision

Ashley Snider, (918) 678-3222

asnider@wyandotte-nation.org

Pharmacy (call-in only)

(918) 678-3244

Fitness Center

Sharon Bartley (918) 678-3231

sbartley@wyandotte-nation.org

Contract Health

Janet Webb (918) 678-3227

jwebb@wyandotte-nation.org

Diabetes Clinic

Donna Spaulding (918) 678-3258

dspaulding@wyandotte-nation.org

TRIBAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Healthcare & Wellness

Submitted by Kelly Friend, Director of Health Services

From Community Care to Community Celebration: Bearskin Healthcare & Wellness Center Continues to Grow

Bearskin Healthcare & Wellness Center has had a busy and exciting year. From training future health care providers to planning community events and expanding wellness opportunities, our team continues to focus on improving the health of Tribal citizens and the surrounding communities.

As fall approaches, Bearskin is preparing for flu season by offering a Flu Shot Clinic during the Wyandotte Nation Annual Meeting on September 12. Tribal citizens will have the opportunity to receive their annual flu vaccine in a convenient location. Staff members will be available to help complete the required paperwork and answer any questions, making the process as easy as possible.

Another exciting event is just around the corner. On Friday, October 30, Bearskin Healthcare & Wellness Center will host the 25th Annual Medicare Part D Health Fair from 9 am to 1 pm. This event has become a community tradition and brings together health care providers, community organizations, and families for a day focused on health and wellness.

The Health Fair would not be possible without the support of many valued partners, including the Quapaw Nation, Ottawa Tribe, Peoria Tribe, Eastern Shawnee Tribe, Seneca Cayuga Nation, Good Shepherd Hospice, and Grand Gateway. Their participation helps connect community members with important services and resources.

Visitors can receive free health screenings, learn about Medicare Part D, visit with health care professionals, and explore information from community organizations. Everyone is also invited to enjoy a complimentary breakfast and lunch, participate in the 1-mile Fun Walk, listen to live music, dance, and enter for prizes and other incentives. Whether someone comes for the screenings, the information, or the fun, there is something for everyone to enjoy.



New Fitness Center Gym nearing completion.

Bearskin also continues to invest in the future of rural health care through its partnership with the Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. Since last August, medical students have completed clinical rotations at Bearskin while working alongside Dr. Jequita Snyder and our nurse practitioners. These students gain valuable experience caring for patients in a rural Tribal community while learning about the unique challenges and rewards of rural medicine. Many have shared that they hope to return to communities like ours after completing their medical training.

Earlier this spring, Bearskin Fitness Center hosted its annual Superhero Fun Run and Strongwoman and Strongman Competition. The event brought together participants of all ages for a day of fitness, and community spirit. Competitors tested their strength in events such as the Atlas Stone Carry, Firetruck and Ambulance Pull, and Keg Toss. Families also enjoyed the 1-mile Fun Walk while cheering on friends and neighbors throughout the day.

The event also gave back to the community. Registration proceeds from the 5K race were donated to the Miami Animal Alliance to help

support its work caring for animals in the area. It was another example of how Bearskin encourages healthy living while supporting worthwhile causes.

Looking to the future, Bearskin Healthcare & Wellness Center is preparing to open expanded wellness facilities. Community members will soon enjoy a new fitness gym, a multipurpose room for exercise classes, basketball, pickleball, and other recreational activities. These new spaces will provide even more opportunities for people of all ages to stay active and improve their health.

As Bearskin continues to grow, our mission remains the same. We are committed to providing quality health care, promoting wellness, building strong partnerships, and serving our community with compassion. Every program, event, and service reflects our dedication to helping people live healthier lives.

We invite everyone to join us this fall at the Flu Shot Clinic during the Wyandotte Nation Annual Meeting on September 12 and at the 25th Annual Medicare Part D Health Fair on October 30. We look forward to seeing you and continuing to build a healthier community together.

CULTURAL DIVISION

Lacrosse Camp, Little Turtles, more events highlight busy summer

*Submitted by Kim Garcia
(Tetsi?tara?i), Cultural Preservation
Officer (Inyomarihu?te? Ahgħtasta?),
Wyandotte Nation Cultural Center &
Museum*

Kweh!

Our corner of the hill continues to be super busy. In May, we held our 3rd annual Honoring Women Social Dance. It's so good to see how much we've grown and learned. These songs and dances were a major part of our ancestors' lives and now we are reviving that for our people today. On Memorial Day, we honored Wyandotte Major William Gyami who fought in World War II and Korea. His family was able to be present and lay the wreath on his tombstone. Let us know if you have a family member who is a veteran buried in the Wyandotte Cemetery and would like to see them honored.

June is our busiest summer month. We started off with lacrosse camp. We bring in a group of coaches and players from Republic, MO and they teach our kids the basics of lacrosse. We end the camp with a game between



all the campers. We hosted our 3rd annual Firekeepers lacrosse tournament with teams from Republic, MO, Union High School out of Tulsa, OK, Owasso, OK, Northwest Arkansas, and Kirkwood, MO. This is a great time to get to see actual games being played as well as sharing with the teams some of our culture. We hosted our 2nd annual Family Night to honor men. Many of the departments came together to have a really fun night for the community. There was food, snacks, games, inflatables, a DJ, and even a



mechanical bull. We really enjoy when we can bring our people together to have fun. June 12-14, we hosted our Gathering of Little Turtles. This camp is geared towards Wyandottes ages 5 to 15. We had a blast this year! We visited the Creation Safari and saw many animals, learned about wampum, made art about pollinators, danced, and so much more! If you have littles, please consider bringing them to this event. It is great to see all of our kids growing and learning together.

On July 2, we hosted the Wyandotte Fireworks at the Pow-Wow grounds



with record numbers. The last week of July, we will be taking the interns to tour several Tribal Cultural Centers and Museums. This summer we've spent an evening each week with interns. They've learned beading, sewing, finger weaving, and they love to play Indian football. We've got a great group of kids this summer!

We are also in the process of planning for a new Cultural Complex. If you've visited us lately, you know that we're busting at the seams here.

Continued on Page 20

AUGUST

- 6, 13, 20, 27 Wa-dat Songs - 6:30 pm (In-Person)
- 10 Wyandotte Book Club - Noon, 7:30 pm (Zoom)
- 11 Wyandotte Beading - 6 pm (In-Person/ Zoom)
- 15 Advanced Moccasin Class - 9 am (In-Person)
- 19 Wa-dat Wednesday - Noon, 8 pm (Zoom)
- 21 Artisan/Fashion Showcase Deadline - Noon
- 25 Wyandotte History: Reading the Wampum - 8 pm (Zoom)

SEPTEMBER

- 3, 17, 24 Wa-dat Songs - 6 pm (In-Person)
- 7 Labor Day - Closed
- Kayak - 8 am, 1 pm (In-Person)
- 7-11 Annual Gathering
- 10 Social Night - 6 pm
- 11-13 35th Annual Wyandotte Nation Pow-Wow
- 12 Annual Meeting
- 25 Native American Day
- 29 Wyandotte History: Reading the Wampum - 8 pm (Zoom)
- 30 Orange Shirt Day

CULTURAL DIVISION

(CULTURAL)

Continued from Page 19

We've got a full staff of Wyandotte Citizens – the 2 latest being Torey Seigel as our Receptionist/Graphic Designer and Nathan McAlister as the Cultural Educator. We're sharing offices and working from the classroom and multi-purpose room. We've got big ideas but we're limited in what we can do. We need more space! We will be building new facilities near the pow-wow ground.

The deadline for the Fashion Show applications and Wyandotte Artisan Showcase entries is August 21, 2026 at noon. Also, we need more entries for our pollinator garden! Please submit your beaded flower and/or animal soon.

The Gathering will be September 7 – 11. Monday will be our kayak trip and pot luck lunch. Registration can be found on the Wyandotte Nation website.

As always, all of our events are posted on our social media. If you'd like to be involved as a volunteer for any of the events or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us at WNCCM.

This past year the Waⁿdat Language Program has seen tremendous progress among several return language learners as well as newcomers. Waⁿdat facilitators——Beci Wright, Alex Badley, & Darcy Allred——cannot say tižameh enough to all who have engaged in our language learning spaces! This past year we continued providing grammar-oriented classes for beginner and intermediate levels and introduced our first 8-month cycle of Waⁿdat Immersion-Style (WIS) sessions. These spaces have grown enormously in number and in quality of community participation. We hope to continue growing our efforts to deliver meaningful, useful, and most importantly, FUN Waⁿdat community activities in this journey to reawaken our language!

Currently, weekly offerings are on break until later this fall to give language learners a well-deserved break after several months of hard work. However, to prevent letting what we've learned slip too far away over the summer we've continued monthly Waⁿdat Wednesdays (more info below) as well as hosting wayete'yeh (sum-

Language Notes

mer) sessions for current Waⁿdat learners. Stay tuned for more updates and please reach out to Darcy Allred, wandatlanguage@wyandotte-nation.org if you have any questions about Waⁿdat Language Program offerings.

Waⁿdat Wednesdays

Join us every third Wednesday of the month at Wandat Wednesdays (online using ZOOM) to practice together. It's a yawahstih (great) way to build up vocabulary without having to worry about grammar. Waⁿdat Wednesdays are designed to be “stand-alone” sessions so you can attend when it is convenient for you. Waⁿdat Wednesdays are hosted on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 12 noon & 8 pm Central.

For July, the topic is ža?ta? my body, August's topic will be on placenames, and September we will not host Waⁿdat Wednesday due to its proximity to the WNCCM's annual

Gathering.

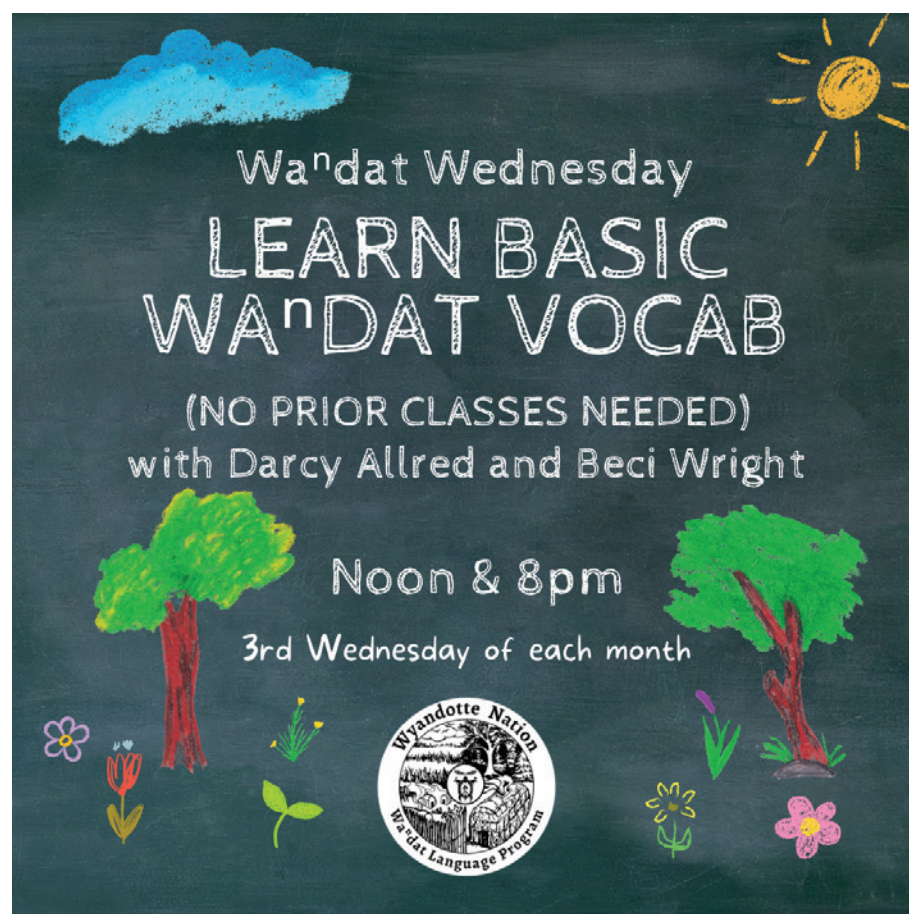
Waⁿdat Language Announcements:

- September 8 – 12th, WNCCM Gathering
 - o Daily language activities and learner support
 - o State of the Language presentation
- October, Waⁿdat Language Program weekly offerings resume
 - o Grammar classes
 - o Immersion-Style sessions
- Official Waⁿdat Language Program Logo (see image below)
 - o illustrated by Kari:žeras (Emily “Ruthy” Logan)
 - o each corner represents different stages of learning through Wyandotte cultural imagery: trees, field, village, and Longhouse

Continued on Page 21

OCTOBER

- 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Waⁿdat Songs - 6 pm (In-Person)
- 10 Water Drum Making Class - 9 am (In-Person)
- 12 Indigenous Peoples' Day - Closed
- 13 Wyandotte Beading - 6 pm (In-Person/Zoom)
- 21 Waⁿdat Wednesday - Noon, 8 pm (Zoom)
- 27 Wyandotte History: Reading the Wampum - 8 pm (Zoom)
- 31 Halloween



CULTURAL DIVISION

(LANGUAGE NOTES)

Continued from Page 20

Interested in learning our language?

We offer new cycles of Waⁿdat language learning sessions each fall season. If you would like to be notified when registration becomes available in 2026, please add your name to our mailing list and take a few minutes to tell us your learning preferences at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LangInterest> – Tižamēh!

Be sure to send any comments or suggestions, especially those on your language & culture wish list, to: wandatlanguag@wyandotte-nation.org

Language support courtesy of our Wyandotte Nation Linguist, Dr. Craig Koprís. All mistakes are our own. – Beci & Darcy

WYANDOTTE NAMES

Being gifted a traditional name in our Waⁿdat language connects us with our ancestors and highlights our com-



mitment to stand up for Wyandotte Nation. Waⁿdat names are the property of the Nation and in contemporary times are bestowed by our Chief after a tribal citizen successfully completes the application process, which has 3 parts: information form, references (3+), & attendance at a **Wyandotte Basics** class (offered on ZOOM, 2x a year). Following tradition, the recipient hears their name for the first time during the ceremony at the Pow Wow Grounds in September. The application process is closed for 2026, but we are accepting applications for 2027!

While you can start/submit an ap-

plication at any time of the year, new applications are reviewed October – May. Summer is reserved for working on finding names for those who have completed the entire application process by May 31st.

Note: As this is an intense time-consuming process, meeting the May 31st deadline does not guarantee a name will be bestowed that same year. To begin the process for 2027, you can start online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WNameApp>

If you have been gifted a traditional name in the past, please be sure to add it to our Directory at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WNames> so we can ensure it is not used by anyone else during your lifetime. (Over the years, records have been kept in several places and we don't want to accidentally overlook anyone!) Tižamēh!

Please send name questions & inquiries to bwright@wyandotte-nation.org.

Fall 2026 Language Classes

Beginners
TBD

Advanced Beginner
Mondays: 5 – 6 PM CT

Intermediate
Mondays: 7:30 – 8:30 PM CT

**Note: these classes are separate from Waⁿdat Wednesday and Speaking Immersion. Those are advertised separately!*



More info and registration at the Survey Monkey QR Code above

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

- 4 Wyandotte Book Club - 7 pm (Zoom)
- 5, 12, 19 Waⁿdat Songs - 6 pm (In-Person)
- 7 NAHM Social Dance - TBA
- 10 Wyandotte Beading - 6 pm (In-Person/Zoom)
- 11 Veterans' Day - Closed
- 14 Ring Brooch Class - 1 pm (In-Person)
- 15 Rock Your Mocs
- 18 Waⁿdat Wednesday - Noon, 8 pm (Zoom)
- 24 Wyandotte History: Reading the Wampum - 8 pm (Zoom)
- 25 Lunch and Learn - Noon (In-Person)
- 26-27 Thanksgiving Holiday - Closed



CULTURAL DIVISION

Gathering of Little Turtles



Update on the Wright Family Cemetery

By David Culver

Almost 15 years ago we began working with the Nation and local landowners to locate and clean the Wright Cemetery located on the original allotment of George Wright located on the Wyandotte Reservation (see the August 2011 newsletter).

During this initial work, we had great success in locating and working to clean and clear the ground. Growing up, I had heard stories of the cemetery and the people buried there from my grandmother, Gladys Powell, but I myself had never been until after my grandmother herself had passed. Work on the cemetery honored both our Wright relatives and her memory. Unfortunately, over the subsequent years, landowners changed and most denied access to maintain the grounds.

Recently things turned around when the Nation was contacted by representatives of the current land owners. A family representative met myself and Shelby Williams, Facilities Director, and Mike Martin, Grounds Maintenance Manager, to go over the property and establish a plan for maintenance. We located the cemetery, which had quickly declined when access to regular maintenance had stopped. Understanding the historical and personal importance, the family was kind enough to partner with Wyandotte Nation



and representatives of the Wright family: they granted access and cleared a road to assist with maintenance. I recently went with the Nation's Facilities and Grounds team as they installed fence posts for a planned perimeter fence.

This cemetery encompasses at least seven known graves, many of whom are original allottees of the Wright family. Recently several descendants were able to visit the cemetery and spend time with our relatives. Shirley Shockey, a matriarch in the Wright family and granddaughter of US Grant Wright (one of the known graves), stood next to her grandfather's monument, a powerful moment for her accompanying family members.

I want to say tižameh to Chief Friend for supporting this project and especially Mike Martin and Shelby Williams along with the Wyandotte Nation Facilities and Grounds staff. We are fortunate to have such dedicated and talented people working at Wyandotte Nation – another reason I will always be proud to be Wyandotte! On behalf of the Wright family: tižameh / thank you to all involved preserving our legacy and the old ones... protecting our past is a great way to prepare for the future.



CULTURAL DIVISION

For an overview of our people as the Jesuits saw us at contact (1615 – 1649)

Uses a scholarly voice so a reading buddy is recommended (so you can talk about it!)

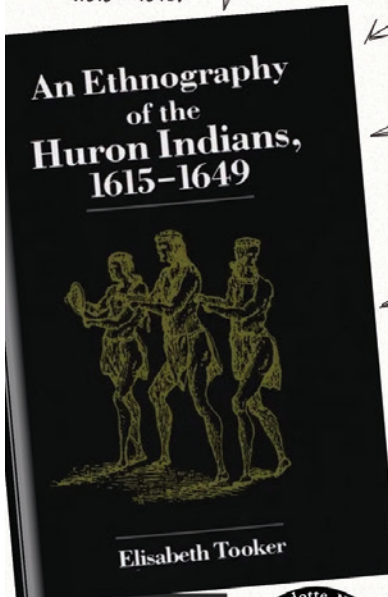
Covers our lives using the earliest available written history from the outsiders' perspective – from clothing, food, longhouse life to dreams, ceremonies, warfare and more

Will be a reference you will want to return to again and again

Deceptively short but packed with information – no fluff and the footnotes are key to getting Wyandot-specific observations

about e:žatqhšrihšas

Be amazed, surprised, confounded, informed. Join the Zoom reading group, to learn how our ancestors lived, what they believed, how they got along with their neighbors and each other, where they lived, how "war" changed, and more. Check out these books the "e:žatqhšrihšas (Research Reading Group) recommends" – because everything makes more sense when read in community! (especially since every author has an agenda so be sure to read with that in mind)





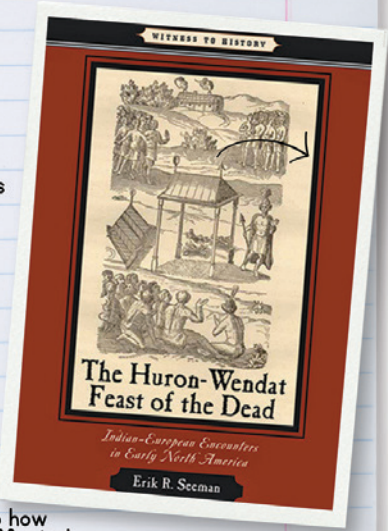
For a focused slice of our traditional ceremonial practice presented in a more conversational than academic voice

Compares and contrasts our death-ways with Catholic practices

Because the Feast of the Dead is hugely meaningful and amazed the Jesuits, they provided extensive accounts for us to examine

Gives a window into how Catholic conversion affected such a significant part of our lives and altered relationships within our communities

Connects to contemporary Wyandotte experiences through the 1999 Reburial (albeit superficially)



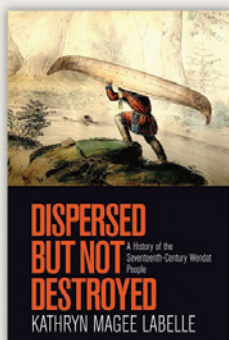


e:žatqhšrihšas
Reading Research Group
 2nd Thursday of Month
 In-Person: 1 PM at Artie Nesvold Elder Center
 Zoom: 7 PM
 Only open to citizens of Wyandotte Nation

Oct. 8th
 Intro - Chapter 2
Nov. 12th
 Chapters 3 - 4

Dec. 10th
 Chapters 5 - 6

Jan. 14th
 Chapters 7 - 8
Feb. 11th
 Chapters 9 - Ep



Interested?



Scan the QR for more information or to register.

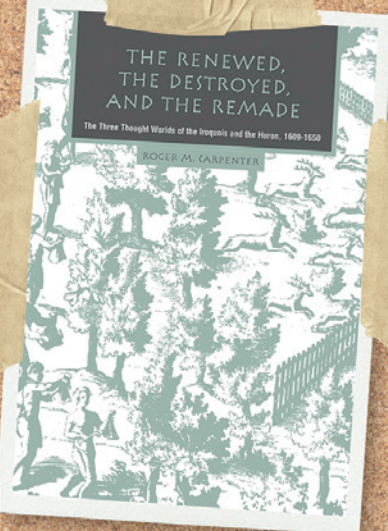
Dispersed But Not Destroyed

Contrasts the different trading/colonizing countries and how their technology influenced our relationships to each other, to the land, to other nations, and increased the lethality of war

Shows the consequences – especially imbalance – when our beaver relatives became a commodity and when alcohol entered the picture

For a comparison of our thought world with that of our Five (now Six) Nations cousins, during early contact: 1609 - 1650

Puts important pieces of our history into a human context so we understand the pressures our ancestors faced and survived





35TH ANNUAL WYANDOTTE NATION POW WOW

69701 E Hwy 60, Wyandotte, OK 74370

September 11-13, 2026

HEAD STAFF

Head Singer - Jade Roubedeaux
Host Northern Drum - White Eagle Singers
Head Man - Louie Sage
Head Lady - Mikah WhiteCloud
Head Gourd - Ketoowa Fish
Honor Guard - Lenape Honor Guard
M.C. - Wade Blevins
Head Arena Director - Chuck Bread &
Skylar Nucosee
Head Judge - Eric Hicks
Senior Princess - Veyda Marlow
Junior Princess - Neveah Cooper

SPECIALS

Head Man Men's Traditional Special
Head Lady All Mother's Special - All Categories
Veteran's Special
All Grandparent's Special

CATEGORIES & AGE DIVISIONS

Men

Fancy, Grass, Straight, Traditional

Women

Buckskin, Cloth, Fancy Shawl, Jingle Golden Age - 55+ (Northern & Southern)

Registration will close at
Grand Entry each session

Host Hotel - Indigo Sky Hotel 70220 US-60, Wyandotte, OK 74370 (888) 992 - 7591

Contestants must make two
Grand Entries and two Exhibitions

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY

6:30PM Gourd
8:00PM Grand Entry
Golden Age Men & Womens
49 Contest

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

12:00PM Gourd
1:30PM Grand Entry
Jr Boys & Jr Girls

SATURDAY EVENING

6:00PM Gourd
7:00PM Grand Entry
Tiny Tots
Jr & Sr Womens
Social & Stomp Dance

SUNDAY

12:00PM Gourd
1:30PM Grand Entry
Jr & Sr Mens

• 100K IN PRIZE MONEY •

Tiny Tots - 5 & under

Juniors - 6 - 16

Junior Adults - 17-34

Senior Adults - 35-54

Free Admission • For powwow and vendor information (918) 678 - 6367 • No Dogs Allowed
Not responsible for theft or accidents, absolutely no firearms, drugs or alcohol are allowed!