



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You



Osiyo -

The month of May is annually Foster Care Awareness Month across the globe, and at Cherokee Nation, we continue to recognize and celebrate the essential role strong families play in creating a secure foundation in our communities. A safe family home provides the love, identity, self-esteem and support our Cherokee children need to grow into healthy and happy adults.

At Cherokee Nation, we continue to address the issues that have the biggest impacts on our people, including educational opportunities, health care coverage, homeownership and career development. These can affect generations of Cherokees and improve lives. One area we still are in dire need is foster and adoptive families for our Indian Child Welfare program. Our children ensure the continued existence of Cherokee values and heritage. They are our future.

Sadly, across the country, more than 1,550 Cherokee youth are in need of a safe, secure and stable home environment with qualified foster families. Sometimes these beautiful and innocent children simply need a temporary place until family reunification can occur. Other times we need higher degrees of permanency, including the lifetime commitment of adoption.

Right now, we have 108 families certified as Cherokee Nation foster families that are providing care to Cherokee children. Every foster opportunity is a success story for Cherokee Nation. Last year we created a specific family leave policy at Cherokee Nation for employees who foster. I am proud that about 15 staffers have utilized this program in the past 12 months.

Cherokee Nation is lucky to have such dedicated individuals within our ICW department. They look for creative ways to collaborate with state- and faith-based partners to the benefit our tribe. I know they work diligently every day to ensure the protection of our children within our tribal communities.

As Cherokee people, we believe we share in child-rearing practices in accordance with our Cherokee

cultural values that children are our most precious resource and they ensure our continued existence as a tribe.

I urge Cherokee Nation citizens, agencies and organizations to keep collaborating to raise awareness for the need of foster families for Cherokee children. And I encourage all those who can to consider becoming a foster parent. Visit www.cherokeekids.org for more information.

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