



# Notes from the Chief

*What I'm working on for You*

Osiyo -

Each Labor Day weekend, the Cherokee Nation capital city of Tahlequah bustles with more than 100,000 visitors, and in 2018 we plan to have the biggest and best Cherokee National Holiday ever. This will be our 66th annual homecoming celebration, and, as always, it has something of interest for everyone, from history to modern art to traditional Cherokee games.

The Cherokee National Holiday commemorates the signing of the Cherokee Nation Constitution in 1839 as well as the Act of Union signed on Sept. 6, 1839. The new Constitution and Act re-established the tribe's government in Indian Territory after the forced removal from our original homelands in the Southeast. This festival is a celebration of both who we are as a people and our sovereign rights as a tribal government.

Seeing a record-breaking crowd this year will be especially significant because the theme of the holiday homecoming is "Family: A Bridge to the Future, a Link to the Past." That idea is one that resonates with all of us. Within our Cherokee communities, one of the deepest-held traditions is respect for the importance of family and the bonds and responsibilities that come with traditional Cherokee values surrounding those relationships.

These values are passed down from generation to generation of Cherokee people and remain as important today as they have ever been. It is the reason Deputy Chief S. Joe Crittenden and I work so hard. It is critical that we continue developing the kinds of programs and services that make Cherokee families stronger and healthier. The strength of our families has been the key to our success for generations and will continue to be the foundation for all future achievements at the Cherokee Nation.

Graphic designer Dan Mink, a Cherokee National Treasure, highlights the family theme in this year's commemorative National Holiday artwork. His design features the seven Cherokee clans, the 14

counties of the Cherokee Nation's jurisdiction, our four cardinal directions, the three unique federally recognized tribes of the Cherokee and 66 interlocking hands, which symbolize the link from the past to the future.

This year, we are again proud to host a wide array of educational and entertaining public events, including the intertribal powwow, one of the largest and most popular tribal dances in America. Again this year, visitors will enjoy a parade, a fiddler's contest, gospel singing, arts and food vendors, a car show, children's events, and a variety of both modern and traditional sporting competitions.

The annual State of the Nation address, typically given on the lawn of the Capitol Square, will be held under the new Cherokee Peace Pavilion on Sept. 1, shortly after the downtown parade. The recently dedicated space is a replica of the structure our ancestors used in the 19th century when they first arrived and began to rebuild the Cherokee government in Indian Territory. In 1843, Principal Chief John Ross hosted an international tribal peace gathering very near where the current pavilion now stands. This marks the 175th anniversary of that event.

As we honor our heritage and culture, we know Cherokee National Holiday is about coming home for many attendees. Our friends and family return home to celebrate and reconnect in meaningful ways. Special thanks must be given to the hundreds of Cherokee Nation employees and volunteers who work hard to ensure this annual homecoming remains a remarkable and welcoming experience. From my family to yours, I hope you join us and enjoy a memorable Cherokee National Holiday over Labor Day weekend.

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