



June 30, 2026

Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Cherokee Nation
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Dear Principal Chief Hoskin:

Pursuant to Executive Order 2026-03-CTH, the Principal Chief's Records Task Force respectfully submits this report concerning the preservation, management, reacquisition, and disclosure of records of the Office of Principal Chief.

The Task Force believes these records represent a critical component of Cherokee Nation's historical memory and an important expression of Cherokee sovereignty and self-governance.

This report contains findings, recommendations, and proposed actions intended to guide Cherokee Nation's preservation of executive records for future generations.

Respectfully Submitted,

Keith Austin, Chair

Molly Jarvis, Co-Chair



GWYᎠ DBᎠ
CHEROKEE NATION®

Report of the Principal Chief's Records Task Force

June 30, 2026

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Findings	4
Recommendations	4
Authority and Charge	5
Task Force Membership	5
Voting Members	5
Advisory Members	6
Administrative Support	6
Historical Background	6
Defining Principal Chiefs' Records	6
Principal Chiefs' Records as Records of Self-Government	7
Dispersal of Principal Chiefs' Records	7
Task Force Findings	8
Key Finding 1: Broad Support for Preservation	8
Key Finding 2: Records are Scattered and Unevenly Documented	8
Key Finding 3: No Comprehensive Approach to Modern Records Management	8
Inventory of Records	9
Advisory Member Input	11
Legal Review	13
Reacquisition Strategy	13
Future Records Management	14
Citizen Input	14
Recommendations	14
Recovering the Past	15
Preserving the Future	15
Conclusion	15
Appendices	16

Executive Summary

The Principal Chief's Records Task Force was established by Executive Order 2026-03-CTH on April 14, 2026, to examine the preservation, ownership, disclosure, reacquisition, and long-term management of records of the Office of Principal Chief. From April 30 to June 30, 2026, the Task Force met, reviewed historical materials, consulted former Principal Chiefs, gathered citizen input, and examined archival best practices. The Task Force considers these records an expression of Cherokee sovereignty and the documentary history of how the Cherokee people have governed themselves.

Findings

- A significant volume of records remains outside Cherokee Nation custody, scattered across university, federal and state governments, private, and family collections.
- Surviving records are unevenly inventoried and incompletely digitized; no comprehensive accounting exists.
- The Nation has no executive records management policy and inconsistent practices across administrations, placing current and future records at risk.
- Citizen support is overwhelming: of 1,622 survey responses, 88% rated preservation "very important" and 94% supported reacquiring externally held records.

Recommendations

- *Recovering the past:* continue locating outside-held records, expand digital infrastructure for digital repatriation, pursue a flexible multi-path recovery strategy, and create a durable statutory body to guide the effort.
- *Preserving the future:* adopt a Principal Chief Records Preservation Act modeled on the U.S. Presidential Records Act and framed around the office rather than the officeholder, expand digital preservation capacity, and expand oral history and executive exit-interview programs.

Though its charge centered on Principal Chiefs' records, the Task Force recognizes that many recommendations apply more broadly to preserving Cherokee Nation's governmental and cultural history.

Authority and Charge

Executive Order 2026-03-CTH established the Task Force to examine issues concerning the management, reacquisition, preservation, and disclosure of records generated by the Office of Principal Chief.

The Order directed the Task Force to:

- Confirm or revise the definition of “Records of the Principal Chief.”
- Build an inventory of the status of records of each Principal Chief, including where records are held, by whom, physical condition, digitization status, volume of undigitized materials, and available summaries/references.
- Recommend reacquisition strategies for records outside Cherokee Nation possession.
- Determine custody location and legal authority to hold the records.
- Summarize current law governing reacquisition, storage, and disclosure (e.g., Cherokee Nation FOIA), and identify changes needed.
- Recommend conditions/exclusions for public disclosure (e.g., time delays, privacy redactions).
- Propose guardrails to remove political bias in reacquisition/storage/disclosure.
- Solicit input from living former Principal Chiefs and a cross-section of stakeholders (officials, boards/commissions, academics, archivists), in a standardized format; enable citizen input via the Gadugi Portal.
- Recommend executive/legislative actions; consider adapting the Task Force to a durable statutory body.

The Task Force operated pursuant to the Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation.

Task Force Membership

Voting Members

Keith Austin, Chair

Molly Jarvis, Co-Chair

Jack Baker

Todd Enlow

Camerin Fite-James

Todd Hembree

Dr. Ross Mulcare

Advisory Members

Former Principal Chief Ross Swimmer

Former Principal Chief Joe Byrd

Former Principal Chief Chad Smith

Former Acting Principal Chief S. Joe Crittenden

Former Principal Chief Bill John Baker

Administrative Support

Trina Jones

Historical Background

Defining Principal Chiefs' Records

The Task Force adopts the following definition of Records of the Principal Chief for the purposes of this report and recommends its use in any subsequent policy or legislation.

***Records of the Principal Chief:** Any record in any form, including written, audio, and visual, and including both hard copy and digital format, created in connection with the work of a Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, from the inception of that office in 1827 through the present date, or by individuals working directly within his or her control and in the interests of his or her administration, excluding such records of a purely personal nature with no substantial nexus to the administration of the authority or responsibilities of the Office.*

This definition is intended to be deliberately broad regarding form and medium, capturing records regardless of whether they are written, recorded, or born-digital, while drawing a clear boundary around purely personal materials that bear no meaningful connection to the work of the Office. By tying the definition to the functions and responsibilities of the Office rather than to any particular format or custodian, the Task Force aims to ensure that the full documentary

record of each administration is preserved, while respecting the legitimate privacy interests attached to genuinely personal materials.

Principal Chiefs' Records as Records of Self-Government

Since the Office of Principal Chief was established in the Cherokee Constitution of 1827, Principal Chiefs have generated records of enduring historical and cultural significance. The Task Force recognizes that preservation of these records represents preservation of Cherokee sovereignty itself.

Throughout periods of removal, allotment, statehood, federal oversight, and modern self-determination, records of Cherokee leadership have documented the continuing exercise of Cherokee self-government.

The Task Force recognizes that the history of the Office of Principal Chief represents more than the evolution of a governmental office.

The Cherokee people possessed traditions of collective governance long before the adoption of the Cherokee Constitution of 1827. While governmental structures evolved over time, the underlying principle that Cherokee people govern their own affairs remains one of the defining characteristics of Cherokee society.

For this reason, the history of Cherokee government should not be viewed solely as political history. It is also cultural history.

The decisions made by Cherokee leaders, the institutions they built, the laws they enacted, and the methods by which Cherokee citizens participated in public life all reflect important aspects of Cherokee culture. The records of the Office of Principal Chief therefore document not only governmental actions but also the continuing cultural practice of Cherokee self-governance.

Preserving these records helps preserve the story of how Cherokee people have organized themselves as a nation and maintained their identity through changing historical circumstances.

Dispersal of Principal Chiefs' Records

Much of the documentary record of the Office of Principal Chief lies today outside Cherokee Nation custody, and that dispersal is itself a product of Cherokee history. For much of the Nation's existence there was no dedicated archives building, and records were treated as the personal property of the Chiefs who created them. These records were kept, inherited, and at times sold by their families rather than retained by the Nation.

The papers of Principal Chief John Ross illustrate the pattern. During the Civil War John Ross was escorted away with several wagons carrying the Cherokee national archives; the records were later returned by his family, but in the absence of any national repository they remained in private hands. After Oklahoma statehood, Ross's descendants sold the collection as personal papers, with portions going to Thomas Gilcrease and others to Penelope Johnson Allen, who dispersed them further. Later Chiefs' records met similar fates.

This history explains why so many records survive only in university, museum, federal and state governments, and family collections today, and why a deliberate strategy of inventory, reacquisition, and preservation is now required to reunite them as a coherent record of Cherokee self-governance.

Task Force Findings

Key Finding 1: Broad Support for Preservation

There is broad support for the preservation of Principal Chiefs' records, extending from the Cherokee citizenry as a whole to former holders of the office. Citizens overwhelmingly favor preservation and appropriate public access, and former Principal Chiefs likewise support these efforts.

Key Finding 2: Records are Scattered and Unevenly Documented

The historical records of the Principal Chiefs are dispersed and unevenly documented. Drawing on its preliminary inventory, along with the surveys and discussions conducted during its work, the Task Force found that these records are held across multiple repositories and private collections, that many of those collections remain only partially inventoried, and that digitization efforts to date are incomplete. As a result, no single, comprehensive accounting of the historical records of the Office currently exists, and access to them varies widely depending on where and how they are held.

Key Finding 3: No Comprehensive Approach to Modern Records Management

The Cherokee Nation currently lacks a modern, comprehensive records management approach for the records of the Office of Principal Chief. No overarching executive records policy exists, and electronic records management procedures vary significantly across the relevant offices. This gap puts both current and future Principal Chiefs' records at risk of loss or inconsistent capture. The Task Force finds that a deeper analysis of a records management framework is needed, one that ensures records of the Office of Principal Chief are systematically captured,

preserved, and made accessible going forward. As discussed in the Task Force's recommendations, this need is best addressed through legislation establishing a formal executive records policy.

Inventory of Records

As part of its work, the Task Force undertook a preliminary survey of the records of the Principal Chiefs, spanning from John Ross to the present administration. For each, the survey notes where the records are held and by which institution, their digitization status, and the extent or volume of the holdings. Where finding aids or other descriptive tools were identified, they are linked for reference.

This inventory is preliminary in scope. The Task Force recommends that a more thorough investigation be undertaken as work on this topic continues beyond the life of the Task Force, building on this survey as a foundation for systematic description and preservation planning.

Three Eras of Principal Chiefs' Records

The records of the Office of Principal Chief can be conceptually divided into three distinct eras: pre-statehood, the appointed chiefs era, and the modern era since 1971. Each of these eras reflect a different chapter of Cherokee self-governance and call for a different approach to preservation and recovery.

The Pre-Statehood Era

From the inception of the office under the Cherokee Constitution of 1827 through Oklahoma statehood in 1907, Principal Chiefs were chosen by the Cherokee people and led a fully self-governing nation. Records from this era are the oldest, the most historically significant, and the most widely scattered, having passed into family, university, museum, and government collections over the intervening century.

The Appointed Chiefs Era

While the Cherokee Nation has continuously existed, following Oklahoma statehood, the federal government restricted Cherokee self-governance, and for several decades Principal Chiefs were appointed by the United States rather than elected by Cherokee citizens. Records from this era reflect a constrained and externally directed office, and their volume and condition vary considerably from one appointment to the next.

The Modern Era

With the resumption of popular elections in 1971, Cherokee Nation reasserted its right to choose its own leadership, beginning the modern era of self-determination that continues through the present administration. Yet unlike the federal government, which has governed the disposition of

presidential records since the Presidential Records Act of 1978, Cherokee Nation has never adopted a comparable law for the records of its Principal Chiefs. As a result, modern records have been maintained through organic, ad-hoc procedures that have varied from one administration to the next, without consistent standards for what is kept, how it is preserved, or where it ultimately resides. Some of these records have found a permanent home with the Nation in the Cherokee Nation Archives, but many others have scattered into outside institutions and private hands, the same fate that befell the records of the historical and appointed eras.

Records Located Within Cherokee Nation

The Task Force identified significant collections of Principal Chiefs' records maintained within Cherokee Nation government systems and repositories, including:

- Executive correspondence
- Executive Orders
- Budget documents
- Press releases and speeches
- Audio and video recordings
- Photographs
- Administrative files
- Cherokee Nation Archives collections
- Records maintained by individual departments and programs

The Task Force also identified the existence of informal historical record collections within departments of the Cherokee Nation. This accumulated institutional knowledge and associated materials provide valuable insight into Cherokee Nation governmental history and may assist future inventory, preservation, and research efforts.

Records Located Outside Cherokee Nation

A significant volume of Principal Chiefs' records remains outside the Cherokee Nation's custody and control, dispersed across a range of external institutions and private holdings; a preliminary inventory of these records is provided in Appendix D. These institutions include:

- University collections
- Federal and State repositories
- Private collections
- Family estates

Tribal Council Legistar System

Legistar is a legislative management platform used by the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council to draft, track, and archive the work of the legislative branch. It manages the full lifecycle of legislation, from authoring and committee review through enactment, and maintains a searchable record of agendas, votes, and supporting documentation. As such, it stands as one of the most significant repositories of modern governmental records in the Nation.

Legistar is, first and foremost, a tool of the legislative branch, built to document the Council's proceedings rather than those of the executive branch. But because lawmaking depends on continual coordination between the branches, records of the Office of Principal Chief surface throughout the system as a byproduct of that cooperation. Among the materials it holds are:

- Legislative acts and resolutions
- Budget documents
- Executive communications and supporting memoranda
- Committee materials
- Historical legislative records

In this way Legistar serves a dual function. It is a legislative tool, but it is also a documentary record of the interaction between the branches, capturing executive communications, budget submissions, and related Chief's records as they pass into and through the legislative process.

The Task Force therefore recommends that Legistar be treated as a critical component of any comprehensive inventory of Principal Chiefs' records and incorporated into future preservation and archival planning. As the Nation plans for the long-term management of these records, including any audit of its digital preservation practices, the system should be evaluated against recognized digital archival standards such as file security, redundancy, format sustainability, and long-term accessibility.

Advisory Member Input

The Task Force sought input from all living former Principal Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation. The perspectives shared reflected experiences across multiple administrations and several decades of Cherokee Nation government. While viewpoints differed on some matters, several common themes emerged.

Preservation Over Politics

Advisory members emphasized that records should be preserved because they document the work of Cherokee Nation government and provide a historical record of its actions and decisions.

Advisory members noted that preservation efforts should focus on historical value rather than political considerations.

Defining the Record

Former Chiefs discussed the importance of clearly defining what constitutes a record of the Office of Principal Chief and distinguishing official government records from personal, campaign, or other non-governmental materials.

Transition Planning

Advisors noted that records management practices have varied among administrations. Discussion included the value of inventories, transfer procedures, and other measures to assist in the orderly transfer of records and institutional knowledge at the conclusion of an administration.

Digital Preservation

Several advisory members observed that many executive records now exist in electronic form. Former Chiefs discussed the challenges associated with preserving emails, electronic documents, text messages, social media content, and other digital records to ensure continued access over time.

Public Access and Accountability

Those consulted discussed the importance of maintaining public access to government records while balancing privacy, confidentiality, and other legal considerations.

Oral Histories

Advisory participants expressed support for the use of oral histories and executive exit interviews to preserve information, context, and institutional knowledge that may not be fully reflected in written records.

Reacquisition and Stewardship

Former Chiefs supported efforts to identify and preserve historically significant records that may exist outside Cherokee Nation custody, including through cooperative preservation and digitization efforts.

Summary

Advisory members emphasized the importance of preserving records of the Office of Principal Chief and discussed issues related to record definitions, preservation practices, transition planning, digital records, public access, oral histories, and stewardship of historical materials.

Advisory members also noted that these records document the continuing history of Cherokee Nation government. Advisory members observed that self-governance has long been an important part of Cherokee culture and that records of the Office of Principal Chief help document that history for future generations.

Legal Review

In the course of its work, the Task Force reviewed the Cherokee Nation Constitution and Legislative Acts, the Cherokee Nation Freedom of Information Act, existing records laws, federal archival standards, and the federal Presidential Records Act. Drawing on this review, the Task Force concludes that the Cherokee Nation should clearly define the ownership of executive records, custody requirements, disclosure timelines, privacy protections, and preservation responsibilities. The Task Force recommends that these elements be established through a comprehensive legislative act or acts.

Reacquisition Strategy

The Task Force recommends a flexible, multi-path approach to recovering records of the Office of Principal Chief. No single method is treated as superior; the right path depends on the record and who holds it, and several paths can run concurrently for the same collection. The goal is preservation and access, not one uniform form of ownership

Each path balances two kinds of control: physical control (where the originals reside) and intellectual control (the Nation's authority over access, description, reproduction, and use). All five secure intellectual control for the Cherokee Nation; they differ primarily in physical custody.

The Five Records Recovery Paths

- *Physical Repatriation* transfers both title and custody to Cherokee Nation.
- *Permanent Deposit* brings records into Cherokee Nation custody while title stays with the holder.
- *Strategic Acquisition* uses Cherokee Nation funds to purchase materials or strengthen leverage.
- *Shared Stewardship* leaves records in place but gives the Nation co-authority over their use, an emerging model with reform-minded institutions.
- *Digital Repatriation* delivers high-resolution surrogates with metadata and independent hosting rights.

Paths are concurrent, not ranked options: digital repatriation can and should begin immediately while negotiations toward deposit or repatriation continue in parallel, with relationships often maturing into fuller control over time.

Future Records Management

Through its findings, the Task Force identified significant gaps in the way records of the Office of Principal Chief are currently managed. There is no comprehensive executive records policy, no individual or office clearly tasked with the duty of capturing and preserving these records, and considerable variation in electronic records practices from one administration to the next. The digital platforms presently relied upon, including systems such as Legistar, have not been evaluated against recognized archival and preservation standards and may prove inadequate for long-term retention. Taken together, these gaps place both current and future records of the Office at risk of loss or inconsistent capture.

To address these issues, the Task Force recommends that the Cherokee Nation enact legislation establishing a formal records management policy for the Office of Principal Chief. Such an act would ensure that records management approaches remain consistent across administrations going forward and would assign clear responsibility for the capture, preservation, and accessibility of these records. Critically, the legislation should be framed around the Office of Principal Chief as an institution rather than any specific officeholder, so that the duty to preserve the documentary record endures regardless of who holds the office.

Citizen Input

Gadugi Portal Survey

A citizen survey was distributed via the Gadugi Portal and promoted via email and social media. It drew 1,622 responses. The results show clear, broad-based support for this ongoing work: 88% of respondents rated preservation of these records as very important and 94% said the same of reacquiring records held by outside institutions.

A full summary of the survey results is provided in Appendix C.

Recommendations

The Task Force's recommendations fall into two categories. The first addresses the recovery, reacquisition, and preservation of historical records currently scattered outside Cherokee Nation custody. The second concerns the establishment of updated records management policies to govern the creation, retention, and transfer of Principal Chiefs' records going forward.

Recovering the Past

- Continue research to locate records of the Principal Chiefs held in outside institutions, and to use appropriate measures for their physical return to the Cherokee Nation. Expand the Nation's digital infrastructure to enable the digital repatriation path for records recovery.
- Create, by legislative act, a durable body authorized by law to continue guiding this effort, with the standing to recommend or make administrative determinations regarding the reacquisition, storage, and disclosure of Cherokee Nation records.

Preserving the Future

- Adopt a Principal Chief Records Preservation Act, modeled on the United States Presidential Records Act of 1978 and adapted to Cherokee Nation needs, including formal procedures for the transfer of executive records between administrations.
- Expand the Nation's digital infrastructure to allow for the ongoing preservation of contemporary Principal Chiefs' records in digital form.
- Expand the Nation's oral history programs, including executive exit interviews to capture firsthand documentation of each administration before its close.

Conclusion

The Task Force concludes that the records of the Office of Principal Chief are more than administrative documents and more than a record of governmental activity.

They are the documentary history of how the Cherokee people have governed themselves.

They tell the story of a people who maintained systems of leadership, law, diplomacy, and public service through removal, rebuilding, allotment, statehood, federal interference, and the modern era of self-determination.

The Task Force believes that self-governance is not simply a legal status enjoyed by the Cherokee Nation. It is part of the living culture of the Cherokee people. The institutions of government, the exercise of sovereignty, and the work of Cherokee leaders are woven into the story of who we are as a Nation.

Preserving the records of the Office of Principal Chief therefore protects more than the history of government. It preserves an important chapter in the cultural history of the Cherokee people themselves.

Future generations deserve access to these records so they may better understand not only how the Cherokee Nation was governed, but how Cherokee people expressed their identity, values, resilience, and sovereignty through the act of governing themselves.

The findings and recommendations in this report are intended to guide Cherokee Nation in pursuing the strategic reacquisition of its Principal Chiefs' records and in ensuring that records of historical significance are properly managed, preserved, and made available to the public.

Appendices

Appendix A – Executive Order 2026-03-CTH

Appendix B – Advisory Member Questionnaire

Appendix C – Citizen Survey

Appendix D – Inventory Summary

Appendix A

Executive Order 2026-03-CTH



GWY. D8P
CHEROKEE NATION®
P.O. Box 948 • Tahlequah, OK 74465-0948
918-453-5000 • www.cherokee.org

Office of the Principal Chief

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief
GP TTP S1S
O-EOGA

Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief
SZAPV.9
WPN D1S1 O-EOGA

**EXECUTIVE ORDER
2026-03-CTH**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING PRINCIPAL CHIEF'S TASK FORCE ON THE
MANAGEMENT, REACQUISITION AND DISCLOSURE OF RECORDS OF THE OFFICE OF
PRINCIPAL CHIEF**

1. **AUTHORITY:** The Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation.
2. **POLICY:** It is in the interest of the Cherokee Nation to preserve and make available for public inspection the records of the Principal Chief in a manner free from political considerations and in a manner that acknowledges other important national interests such as individual rights to privacy, individual rights to property, the orderly administration of governmental operations and relationships with foreign governments. It is further in the interests of the Cherokee Nation to assess the status of Principal Chief records as it relates to current ownership or possessory interests and strategies for acquiring original, facsimile or electronic copies of said records from individuals, governments and institutions. Cherokee Nation further should declare, as a matter of Cherokee Nation law and policy, that records generated in connection with the administration of the Office of Principal Chief, since the inception of that office in 1827, is the property of the Cherokee Nation, held in the public interests, publicly disclosable with appropriate exclusions and conditions as determined by Cherokee Nation law in the public interest and that such records in the possession of any individual, government or institution should return such records to the possession of the Cherokee Nation. Based on the foregoing the Principal Chief's Task Force on the Management, Reacquisition, and Disclosure of Records of the Office of Principal Chief is hereby established to undertake a threshold examination of this subject and make recommendations to the Principal Chief and the Council for further action.
3. **Principal Chief's Task Force on the Management, Reacquisition, and Disclosure of Records of the Office of Principal Chief:** There is hereby established the Principal Chief's Task Force on

Executive Order Establishing Principal Chief's Task Force on the Management, Reacquisition and Disclosure of Records of the Office of Principal Chief, 2026-03-CTH

the Management, Reacquisition, and Disclosure of Records of the Office of Principal Chief, operating pursuant to the composition, objectives and other parameters set forth herein, and *alternatively known as the Principal Chief's Records Task Force*:

- a. **Composition:** The Principal Chief's Records Task Force shall be composed of the following members:
 - i. **Keith Austin**, Cherokee Nation Businesses Cultural Tourism Consultant, former member of the Council of the Cherokee Nation (Chair)
 - ii. **Molly Jarvis**, Cherokee Nation Cultural and Economic Development (CNB), Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (Co-Chair)
 - iii. **Jack Baker**, President, Oklahoma Historical Society; President, National Trail of Tears Association; former member of the Council of the Cherokee Nation
 - iv. **Camerin Fite-James**, Executive Assistant to Principal Chief Hoskin
 - v. **Dr. Ross Mulcare**, Cherokee Nation Businesses, Sr. Manager of Cherokee Nation Research Center
 - vi. **Todd Hembree**, Cherokee Nation Businesses, special counsel; Cherokee Nation Attorney General (2011 to 2019)
 - vii. **Seventh member chosen by appointed membership, subject to approval by the Principal Chief**
- b. **Task Force Advisory Members, by invitation:** All living former Principal Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation.
 - i. **Bill John Baker** (October 19, 2011 to August 14, 2019)
 - ii. **S. Joe Crittenden** (*Acting Chief* August 14, 2011 to October 19, 2011)
 - iii. **Chadwick Smith** (August 14, 1999 to August 14, 2011)
 - iv. **Joe Byrd** (August 14, 1995 to August 14, 1999)
 - v. **Ross Swimmer** (August 14, 1975 to August 14, 1985)

Advisory members will receive special briefings and an opportunity to provide input and recommendations to, and ask questions of, the Task Force.

The Task Force may request the assignment of such clerical and administrative assistance as necessary to perform its work. Additionally, the Task Force is generally authorized administrative

expense funds available under the Housing, Jobs and Sustainable Communities Act to fund its work, subject to approval of specific amounts.

c. Definitions

- i. **Records of the Principal Chief:** Any record in any form, including written, audio and visual, including hard copy and digital format, created in connection with the work of a Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, from the inception of that office in 1827 through the present date, or individuals working directly within his or her control and in the interests of his or her administration, excluding such records of a purely personal nature with no substantial nexus to the administration of the authority or responsibilities of the Office.

d. Objectives: The Task Force should examine the following subjects:

- i. *What definition of "Records of the Principal Chief," if other than that described in at forth in this order, should apply for the purposes of guiding the work of the Task Force?*
- ii. *An inventory of the status of records of each Principal Chief, including where such records are held and by whom, the physical condition of such records, whether such records have been digitized and an estimate as to the volumes of such records that have not been digitized and whether there exists a summary or other reference to such records useful for further investigation.*
- iii. *With respect to the records of each Principal Chief, to the extent such records are determined to be out of the possession of Cherokee Nation, what are the recommended strategies to reacquire such records?*
- iv. *Where, and under what legal authority, should Records of the Principal Chief be held?*
- v. *Identify, in summary fashion, current law relating to the reacquisition, storage or disclosure of Cherokee Nation public and archival records, including but not limited to Records of the Principal Chief.*
- vi. *What conditions or exclusions should attach to Records of the Principal Chief as it relates to public disclosure of such records, including but not limited to such considerations as delaying release of such records for a specified number of years after the subject Principal Chief leaves office, redaction of records identifying private individuals, etc.? In this analysis the Task Force should make such*

Executive Order Establishing Principal Chief's Task Force on the Management, Reacquisition and Disclosure of Records of the Office of Principal Chief, 2026-03-CTH

- recommendations irrespective of current controlling law, but should make an appropriate notation, where current law may be relevant to the analysis or may warrant amendment (eg, the Cherokee Nation Freedom of Information Act).*
- vii. What legal or administrative guardrails are advisable to eliminate political bias in the reacquisition, storage or disclosure of Records of Principal Chief?*
 - viii. What issues, questions, concerns or recommendations are raised by all living former Cherokee Nation Principal Chiefs?*
 - ix. Identify a cross section of stakeholders and professionals, including current Cherokee Nation appointed and elected officials and non-appointed cabinet members, members of Cherokee Nation or related entity boards and commissions, academics and archivists and solicit their input in a standardized format.*
 - x. Create a means of soliciting Cherokee Nation citizen input via the Cherokee Nation Gadugi Portal.*
 - xi. What executive and or legislative action should be taken by Cherokee Nation to effectuate the purposes and policies of this Order and the recommendations of this Task Force?*
 - xii. Should the Task Force be adapted by legislative act to a more durable body authorized by law to continue guiding, recommending or making administrative determinations as it relates to the reacquisition, storage and disclosure of Cherokee Nation records, including but not limited to Records of the Principal Chief?*
- e. **Deadline:** The Task Force shall complete its work and issue a final report by June 30, 2026, unless extended in writing by the Principal Chief.
- f. **Prohibition Against Bias:** Members of the Task Force will undertake their examinations of the issues presented and make recommendations in response to this Order in a manner free from political or personal bias as it relates to the individuals who have held the Office of Principal Chief, or the incumbent principal chief.
- g. **Transparency:** Although the Task Force is an executive branch advisory group and not a public body within the meaning of the Cherokee Nation Freedom of Information Act, its final report shall be distributed to Cherokee Nation elected officials and to the general public via the Cherokee Nation website within 45 days of completion.

Executive Order Establishing Principal Chief's Task Force on the Management, Reacquisition and Disclosure of Records of the Office of Principal Chief, 2026-03-CTH

4. **ORDER:** The Principal Chief's Task Force on the Management, Reacquisition and Disclosure of Records of the Office of Principal Chief is hereby created to achieve the purposes and policies set forth in this order.
5. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Order is effective immediately on this date, April 14, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CHH', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation

Appendix B

Advisory Member Questionnaire

Advisory Members Consultation Questions

These consultation questions are designed for Advisory Members assisting the Principal Chief's Records Task Force.

Opening Perspective

- From your experience, how were records created, maintained, and stored during your administration?
- What do you see as the most important principle guiding how Cherokee Nation should manage the records of the Principal Chief?

Definition & Scope

- How would you define 'Records of the Principal Chief'?
- Where do you believe the line should be drawn between official records and personal materials?

Inventory & Current Status

- To your knowledge, where are significant records from your administration currently held?
- Are there gaps, missing materials, or records at risk that the Task Force should prioritize?

Reacquisition & Stewardship

- What approaches do you believe would be most effective in encouraging the return or sharing of records held outside the Cherokee Nation?
- Are there institutions or individuals the Task Force should engage early in this process?

Storage & Custody

- Where do you believe official records of the Principal Chief should ultimately be housed?
- What standards should guide their preservation, security, and long-term care?

Public Access & Disclosure

- What level of public access do you believe is appropriate for these records?
- Should there be a waiting period before records are released? If so, how long?

- What types of information should be protected or restricted (e.g. personal, sensitive, governmental)?

Legal & Policy Considerations

- Are there legal or policy challenges you encountered related to records that the Task Force should consider?
- What changes to current law or policy would improve the management and protection of these records?

Safeguards & Neutrality

- What safeguards should be in place to ensure records are managed without political bias?
- How can the Cherokee Nation ensure fairness across administrations – past, present, and future?

Reflection & Lessons Learned

- Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently regarding records management?
- What lessons from your administration would you want future leaders to understand through these records?

Closing Input

- What recommendations would you make to this Task Force as it develops its final report?
- Are there any additional concerns, priorities, or perspectives you would like to share?

Appendix C

Citizen Survey Summary

Principal Chief's Records Task Force

Citizen Survey — Summary of Results

Gadugi Portal Survey • Conducted May–June 2026

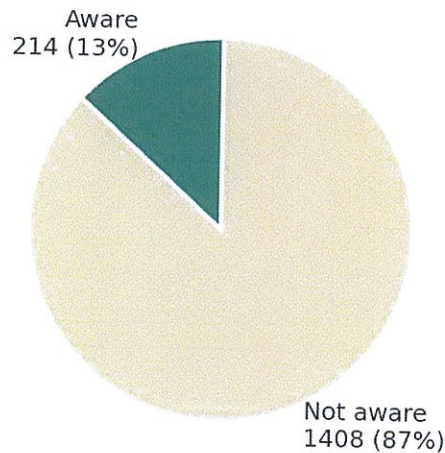
1,622 total survey respondents	94% call reacquisition “very important”	87% were unaware before the survey
--	---	--

This summary presents results from the citizen survey conducted by the Principal Chief's Records Task Force via the Cherokee Nation Gadugi Portal, distributed by email and social media during May and June 2026. The findings show overwhelming support for preserving and reacquiring the records of the Office of Principal Chief, and they surfaced numerous citizen-identified leads on records held outside the Nation's custody.

Awareness of the Records Evaluation

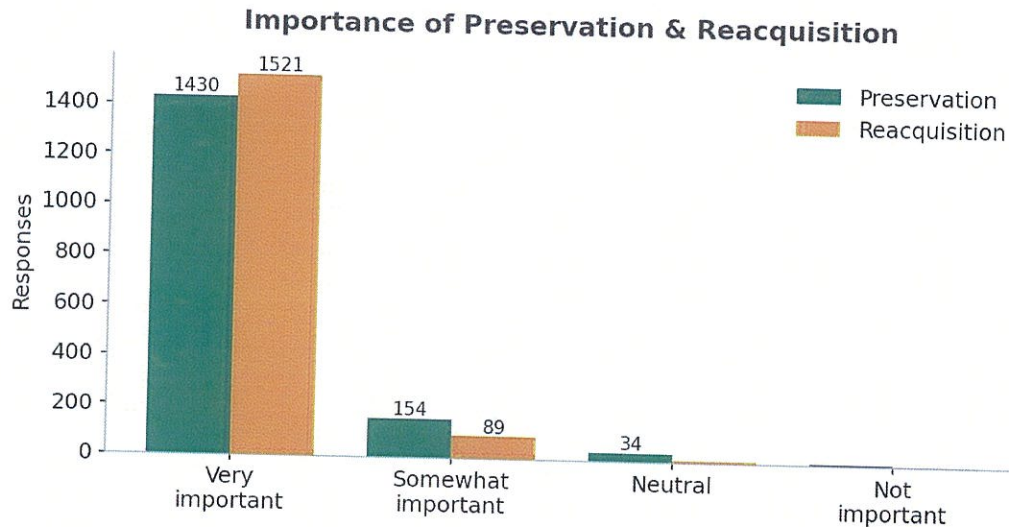
Before participating, only 214 respondents (13%) were aware that Cherokee Nation was evaluating the historical Records of the Principal Chief, while 1,408 (87%) were not. The survey itself served as a meaningful public-education tool, underscoring the value of an ongoing communications effort as the Nation moves into implementation.

Prior Awareness of the Records Evaluation



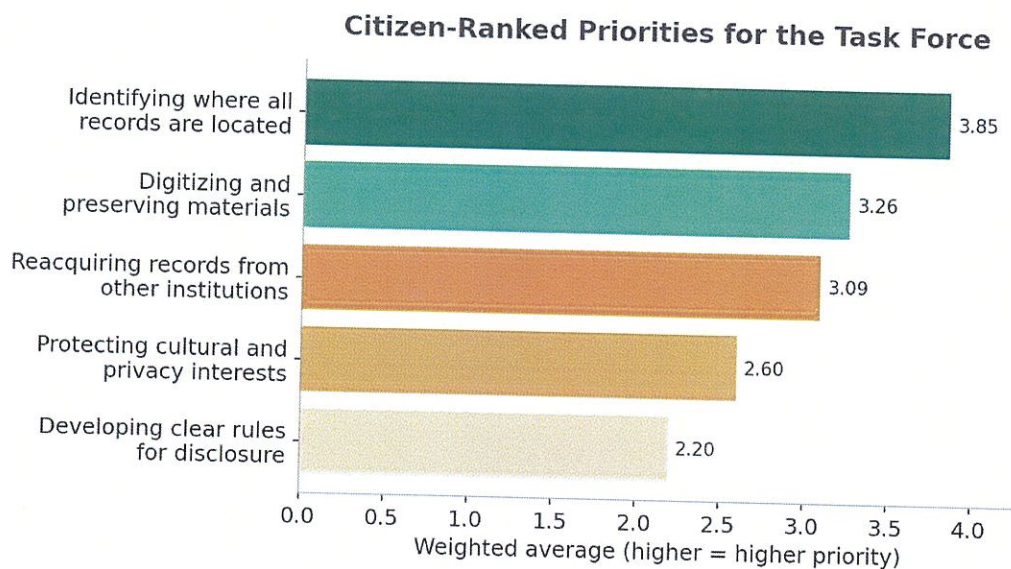
Support for Preservation and Reacquisition

Support for both preservation and reacquisition was nearly universal. Preservation was rated “very important” by 1,430 respondents (88%), and reacquisition — bringing home records held by outside institutions — by 1,521 (94%). Fewer than five respondents in each case considered the work “not important.”



Citizen-Ranked Priorities

Asked to rank the Task Force’s priorities, citizens placed locating and digitizing records highest, followed by reacquisition; developing disclosure rules ranked last. This ordering offers useful guidance for sequencing the implementation phase (higher weighted average indicates higher priority).

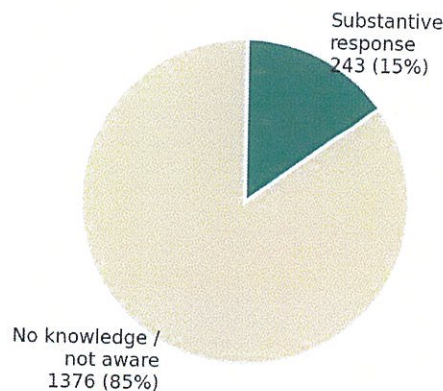


Rank	Priority	Weighted avg
1	Identifying where all records are located	3.85
2	Digitizing and preserving materials	3.26
3	Reacquiring records from other institutions	3.09
4	Protecting cultural and privacy interests	2.60
5	Developing clear rules for disclosure	2.20

Citizen Knowledge of Records Held Elsewhere

The survey asked whether respondents were aware of any Principal Chief records held at another institution or in a private family or personal collection. Of 1,622 free-text responses, roughly 1,379 indicated no knowledge, while about 243 offered substantive information — a valuable pool of citizen-sourced leads.

Responses: Awareness of Records Held Elsewhere



Institutions and Repositories Named by Citizens

Respondents identified numerous external holdings. Several confirm leads the Task Force had already identified; others are new and warrant follow-up:

- Frequently named: Gilcrease Museum / Helmerich Center (John Ross papers), University of Oklahoma (Mankiller), University of Tulsa (J.B. Milam), the National Archives (incl. Fort Worth), and the Smithsonian / National Museum of the American Indian.
- New external leads: Yale University (Cherokee language assets), Hunter's Home (reported John Ross artifacts and family Bibles), UK archives (British Library, The National Archives at Kew), and Spanish colonial archives (Archivo General de Indias / PARES, Bexar Archives).
- Regional and other holdings: Oklahoma Historical Society, Sequoyah National Research Center Museum of the Five Civilized Tribes, Bacone College, Haskell Indian Nations University, Dallas Public Library, Hargrett Library / Digital Library of Georgia, and the University of Missouri.
- BIA-era Tribal Executive Committee minutes from Chief Keeler's tenure, reported at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and accessible online via the Department of the Interior Library.

Appendix D

Preliminary Inventory of Records

Appendix D: Preliminary Inventory of Cherokee Nation Principal Chiefs' Records

Repository	Location	Collection / Record Group	Extent	Date Span	Chiefs / Administrators Covered	Nature of Documents	Preservation Status	Digital Status	Digital Access Point
Gleason Mason / Research Center for American Research	Tulsa, OK	John Ross Papers (Manuscript Coll. 4028)	11 linear ft.; 2,009+ documents (1,424 items online)	1767–1887	John Ross (1808–1866); some W.P. Rogers-era material	Chief's correspondence; proclamation as Principal Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Congress; removal delictation orders; nation accounts; legal papers; Civil War material; family correspondence	Certain	Extensively digitized (item-level imaging); finding aid online; Multicon documentary edition (2 vols., 1885) provides published intellectual access	collections: archives.org/collections/john-ross-papers
Oklahoma Historical Society, American Indian Archives	Oklahoma City, OK	Cherokee National Records (Series CHN)	Largest single body; 129 document boxes (3,08m) plus originals; 12 volumes + document boxes	1858–1906	Lewis Downing through W.C. Rogers (constitutional government era)	Executive, legislative, and judicial branch records; chief's correspondence, laws and acts, council and senate journals, court dockets, election records, treasurer's district/township records, some Cherokee syllabary	Certain	Partial; digitized on demand (patron or tribal-entity request). No full-text permission; posted to Gateway to Oklahoma History; work in progress	gateway.okhistory.org
Cherokee National Research Center (internal)	Tahlequah, OK	Ross Shimmer Papers (MS 185); Cherokee Nation Records, Shimmer record group	8.3 linear feet; around 20 boxes	1975–1984	Ross Shimmer	Correspondence, Arkansas Riverbed litigation materials, Committee and Board minutes and decisions, CN Program documentation	Certain	Minimal digitization; need for digital preservation platform	Internal (TMS/Space)
Cherokee National Research Center (internal)	Tahlequah, OK	W.W. Keeler Papers (MS 85)	13.3 linear feet; 32 boxes	1848–1974	W.W. Keeler	Correspondence, Task Force and Committee minutes and decisions; legal documents; Miamis official correspondence records	Certain	Minimal digitization; need for digital preservation platform	Internal (TMS/Space)
University of Tulsa, McFarlin Library, Special Collections & University Archives	Tulsa, OK	J.B. Miami Barter/Miami Papers (1909-2020) plus discrete official items — Act Abrogating the Treaty with the Confederacy signed by John Ross; Executive Dept. Transcribing Proclamation (1886); Dwight Clinton Lipe-Cherokee Strip Papers (1891-1901); Cherokee National Papers Collection (VFC 185-3)	Miami papers 1925–1950 (bulk items); 1909–2020 plus several smaller/loose items; no manuscript holdings	1795–1950	J.B. Miami (appointed PC 1941–1949); John Ross (1828–1866); D.W. Keeler (1897–1907); pre-constitutional National Council (1795)	Principal Commissioner of Indian Affairs; signed national acts and executive proclamations; Treasurer's (Lipe) Official correspondence; telegrams; copybooks; chief's messages; speeches of delegates; proceedings; laws; court decisions; letters; newspaper; election return; removal claim statements; treaties; delegations, elections, kindred	Certain	Finding aids online (TU Archival Catalog); selected items digitized; bulk undigitized	url:usa-as.asia-sys.com (TU Archival Catalog)
University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections	Norman, OK	Very large [multi-hundred box] collection of correspondence and other documents; microfilm surrogate exists (1818–1893)		1818–1910	Multiple chiefs; strongest for post-removal constitutional era	Official correspondence; telegrams; copybooks; chief's messages; speeches of delegates; proceedings; laws; court decisions; letters; newspaper; election return; removal claim statements; treaties; delegations, elections, kindred	HQ (mixed)	Finding aid online (ArchivesSpace + full PDF); microfiche surrogates; minimal item-level imaging	archives.lib.ou.edu/repositories/2/?source=8738
Brazos Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin	Austin, TX	Dennis Wolf Bushyhead Papers (O1036)	2 inches	1879–1913	Dennis Bushyhead	Correspondence, minutes, legal documents, clipping, and a map of Indian reservations	High	Finding aid online (ArchivesSpace + full PDF); no item transcription available (finding_aids/O1036.xml)	
National Archives, Washington DC	Washington, DC	RG 75 Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Cherokee Agency (M24) and successor series	M24; Cherokee Agency role (multi-roll on within file set)	1824–1851 (M24); successors beyond	Every chief from John Ross forward (official correspondence as received by Commissioner)	Received originals of chiefs' official letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs; delegations; annuity and treaty matters	High	Microfilmed; substantially digitized through NARA digitization partners	NARA catalog: FamilySearch/FoldAcrsearch Meritans
Tennessee State Library and Archives	Nashville, TN	Penslope Johnson Allen Cherokee Collection	Multi-box; incl. 119 Tennessee reservation surveys	1775–1878	Pre-constitutional chiefs through John Ross	Ross correspondence (1788–1808); Documents of the Cherokee Nation (1791–1820) incl. pre-constitutional national council (1795–1810) dated 1795–1808 parents; Chief's annual reports, executive correspondence, speeches, proclamations, and instructions to Washington, delegations – 1807–41; C. J. Mayes (1807–41); W.C. Rogers (1803–7); last PG; W.P. Ross; John Ross (research typescripts)	Moderate	Substantial portions digitized via TWM digital platform; full finding aid PDF online	tewa.contentdm.oclc.org (Cherokee collection)
University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections — individual Principal Chief collections	Norman, OK	Discrete named collections separate from MS43 (R403) and Manikler (R404); John Ross; Cockalee (Charles Thompson); Joel Bryan Meyers; C. Johnson Harris; Dennis Wolf Bushyhead; William Patten Ross; Charles Johnson; William Charles Rogers; Cornsberry (1883 Bushyhead delegation instructions); Proclamation Collection	Multiple small collections (mostly 1800s–1850s) with Ross-era content	1686–1907 (mostly 1800s–1850s)	Charles Thompson/Cockalee (1875–78); John Ross (1808–1866); Joel Bryan Meyers (1807–41); C. J. Mayes (1807–41); W.C. Rogers (1803–7); last PG; W.P. Ross; John Ross (research typescripts)	Chief's annual reports, executive correspondence, speeches, proclamations, and instructions to Washington, delegations – 1807–41; C. J. Mayes (1807–41); W.C. Rogers (1803–7); last PG; W.P. Ross; John Ross (research typescripts)	Moderate	Finding aids online (OU ArchivesSpace); minimal item archival; lib.ou.edu (OU ArchivesSpace)	archives.gov (NARA catalog); partner platforms
National Archives at Fort Worth (NANA Southwest)	Fort Worth, TX	RG 75 Muskogee Area Officer / Five Civilized Tribes Agency / Union Agency records	Very large federal record group segment; post-1850 OK records here rather than OHS	1855–1920s+	John Ross, Intermittent appearances, J.B. Miami, early W.W. Keeler	Total administrative office documents from Dawes Commission (correspondence, allotment, probate, financial and school records)	Mixed; federal records	Partial; Dawes-era series heavily microfilmed and digitized via NARA partners (Ancestry/Fold3FamilySearch); administrative files largely undigitized	archives.gov (NARA catalog); partner platforms
Gert Albert Center (CU) + congressional collections	Norman, OK (and dispersed)	Keeler-related material in congressional/political collections (e.g., Dewey Burdick Coll., James R. Jones Coll.)	Fragmentary — scattered items and folders	1949–1975	W.W. Keeler	Constitutional correspondence; Cherokee Nation (1808–1866) correspondence; no original Cherokees-dedicated Keeler papers collection outside	Low	Some items in Carl Albert Digital archive (PreserveUSA)	ouccc.access.preservice.com
Yale University (Beinecke Library / Yale University Library)	New Haven, CT	Western Americans visual + printed Cherokee material: drawings/printings of John Ross and Lewis Downing; photographs (WA Photo 200.101.101.101.101.101 S-128); treaty microforms; Worcester v. Georgia options	Scattered items across collections	1750s–1890s	John Ross; Lewis Downing (specimens/portraits)	Portraits, engravings, photographs, lithographs — no original Cherokees-dedicated Keeler papers collection outside	Low	Substantial digitization via Yale (DLUX / Quicksearch)	collections.library.yale.edu (DLUX)
Gladys Lehman Institute of American History	New York, NY	Scattered items; Lincoln-Cherokee collection (GLC01233) incl. John Ross to Abraham Lincoln (Sept. 16, 1862) and a letter to John Ross.	Handful of discrete items	1862–1870	John Ross (1828–1866)	Identified "selfing official correspondence (1862–1870)" — no original Cherokees-dedicated Keeler papers collection outside	Low	Digitized; item-level images online (subscription/teaching access)	gladyslehman.org (collection GLC01233)
University of Arkansas, Special Collections	Fayetteville, AR	John Ross Correspondence and Memorial (MS RT3), broader Cherokee records (MS RT3), Western District of Arkansas records (federal/triangulation)	Small (one discrete chief collection + scattered items)	1830s–1860s (Ross items); 19th c. court records	John Ross	Ross correspondence and a memorial; remainder is federal Cherokee (after any and miscellaneous Cherokee items)	Low	Finding aids online; limited digitization	uatk.as.asia-sys.com (UA ArchivesSpace)
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Special Collections	Knoxville, TN	Penslope Allen Collection (MS-2033)	2.5 linear ft.	1801–1820 (bulk 1823–1877)	John Ross	Receipts, claims, correspondence re: Andrew Agency; Reum J. Meigs market;	Low-moderate	Finding aid online only; not digitized	tsccal.lib.utk.edu/repositories/2/resource/84811
Newberry Library, Ayer Collection	Chicago, IL	John Howard Payne's Papers	14 volumes (disbound)	1830s–1840s (content to 18th c.)	John Ross era; Charles Hicks material	Payne's research for innuendo Cherokee history; correspondence and notes re: Tribal Council; Ross, U.S. government; documents referenced; Hicks and Ridge letters	Low-moderate	Not digitized; finding aid online; Payne-Burdick reference edition + Native Guide provide intellectual access	archives.newberry.org/repositories/2/resources/762