



## Notes from the Chief

*What I'm working on for You*

Osiyo -

Oklahoma's small-business community represents an important part of our state's ability to generate wealth and drive our economy. According to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma consistently ranks among the top states in America for entrepreneurial activity and entrepreneurs per capita. That speaks volumes about what we do here in Oklahoma and how important entrepreneurship is to the economy of Oklahoma.

Cherokee Nation is playing a vital role in the landscape of creating a strong environment for small-business owners and startups. We certainly want to help our citizens find the right resources that will allow their unique business ideas to bloom.

Since 2010, the Cherokee Nation Economic Development Authority has issued more than 200 small-business loans. That has created 940 jobs within our tribal jurisdiction and represents an investment of more than \$8,914,000.

Entrepreneurs are the future of Indian Country's economy, and in order to keep growing the local economy, we must support the development of Cherokee entrepreneurs in Oklahoma. That's why we offer our tribal citizens who aspire to open and operate their own business financial support through a variety of loans, as well as technical assistance and training to help them start and grow their business ideas.

The business world is driven by those willing to take a risk and turn their dreams into reality. As a small-business owner myself, I understand the desire of working for yourself and making a positive impact on

your families and your community.

We've seen many great stories emerge from our small-business loan program:

- Janet's Beauty Salon, owned by Janet Binam in Locust Grove, has expanded and modernized to keep a business open and thriving on the community's main street.
- Bo Gaines opened his specialty coffee shop in downtown Pryor next to his church, where his idea started when he brewed and gave coffee to members on Sunday mornings. Today, he's grown that idea into a standalone coffee shop.
- Rita Drywater expanded her business in Grove by opening a second location in Pryor. Rita is making a real difference in the lives of area families by offering a sober living residence for women that helps address the disease of addiction and substance abuse.
- In Vian, Morning Sky and Evening Shade Mercantile has rejuvenated the downtown area with its unique retail offerings. Callie Prier along with her mother, Suzanne Sullivan, have created a destination shopping boutique.
- Currently, we are supporting Robert and Jeanne Burgess in opening Junk and Disorderly in downtown Grove. They are renovating an old vacant building and bringing new life to Grove's downtown district.

These are all Cherokee Nation small-business owners that we have invested in and helped sustain, creating a clearer path to success. Small businesses are Oklahoma's lifeline in the present and represent a bright future. The bulk of our state's workforce is employed through small-business ventures.

I encourage you to explore the possibility of small-business ownership, and if you need assistance, please contact the Cherokee Nation Small Business Assistance Center. Our staff can help you understand different financial options and any other funding availability.

Please visit [www.Cherokee.org/sbac](http://www.Cherokee.org/sbac) or email [sbac@cherokee.org](mailto:sbac@cherokee.org) or call 918.453.5536 for more info.

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