



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You

Osiyo -

The strength of the Cherokee Nation resides in our people. We are all Cherokees, whether we live inside or outside of our 14-county jurisdictional boundaries. Over the course of the past year, we have achieved many things that will improve the quality of life for our citizens. Those efforts can be seen today, and they will be felt for generations. We have created jobs, increased health care opportunities and invested in education like no other time in our history. One of the most important things we do is engage with our people locally at the community level. The work of Cherokee Nation's Community and Cultural Outreach team connects people to Cherokee culture as well as continuing education programs.

Today, our CCO staff provides capacity building and training to Cherokee community organizations. They also manage a community work/building program, a volunteer program, a cultural outreach program, a history preservation program and the Cherokee Language Master/Apprentice Program. This work is done within our 14 counties as well as our formalized 20 at-large communities across the United States. As the largest sovereign government in the United States with a citizenry of more than 360,000 people, we strive to keep our people connected to culture by offering our citizens informative and educational opportunities to learn and volunteer.

Our culture and heritage are who we are, and it is a blessing to share that bond with other Cherokees at CCO gatherings, which in the past year have been bigger and better than ever before. CCO's work has helped revitalize the spirit of "neighbors helping neighbors," a core Cherokee value.

In the past year, CCO has served 112 different Cherokee community organizations with technical assistance, a 55 percent increase from just two years ago. They offer community organizations tips on funding sources, grant writing, new program development, board of directors development, and ways to improve technology use and communication.

The volunteer program under the CCO umbrella coordinates with universities and other education-based programs, like AmeriCorps, to provide opportunities for students to come into the Cherokee Nation and volunteer their time and energy to build and repair homes of elders, veterans and other citizens in need. We have created collaborations that help Cherokees and completed 64 enhancement projects last year by partnering with schools like Ohio State, Texas Tech and Vanderbilt. The completed work has a monetary value of about \$240,000.

Sharing Cherokee culture is one of the most important jobs at CCO, which coordinates weekly cultural presentations, oftentimes conducted by Cherokee National Treasures in all areas of Cherokee life. The presentations are filmed and are popular on YouTube. Our team recognizes the need for a strong cultural identity, the expansion of our language and the preservation of our history.

Nationally, attendance is up almost 25 percent at our at-large meetings in the past year. The spirit of community is alive and well in these endeavors. It is always a blessing to see so many friends and meet new ones as well.

We have laid a strong foundation for success in the past year within our CCO programs. The staff has a wide range of expertise, and participating in CCO's community events are some of my favorite responsibilities as Principal Chief. Every CCO meeting, educational program, cultural presentation, language workshop or leadership lesson is made with one goal in mind: to make the Cherokee Nation and our people strong.

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