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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chickasaw Cultural Center Celebrates Half-Decade of Sharing Chickasaw Culture

SULPHUR, Okla. - Not too long ago, the Chickasaw Cultural Center was only a dream, fueled by vision of Chickasaws who wanted a place to revitalize, celebrate and share Chickasaw culture.

Chickasaw people envisioned a place Chickasaws could call home and guests could appreciate the story of the Chickasaw people.

Today, a cultural awakening has arisen at the Chickasaw Cultural Center. In the five years since the massive campus opened, more than 365,000 guests from across the globe have experienced the story of the unconquered and unconquerable Chickasaw Nation.

Built on the dreams, imagination, determination and vision of Chickasaw citizens, the Chickasaw Cultural Center's serene 109-acre campus has hosted both international guests as well as local school children.

Each aspect, from the trickling water features to the carefully planned café menu, was integrated into the Chickasaw Cultural Center because of its cultural significance.

Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said the Chickasaw Cultural Center is “truly a center of our living culture, because it is built on the ideas, imagination and creativity of Chickasaw people from all walks of life.

“Our cultural center offers a unique venue for Chickasaws to immerse ourselves in our culture,” he said. “Beyond that, it offers a rare opportunity to help visitors from around the world learn more about our history and heritage.”

Grandparents, parents and children visit the Cultural Center and become immersed in the culture; learning the art of beading, basketry, Stomp Dance, Stickball and other culturally-significant activities. As guests are actively participating in these activities, they develop an appreciation of the history and heritage of the Chickasaw people.

This appreciation of culture is nurtured by staff members, who range in age from 18 - 70 years old, who learn skills from one another, which better serves and educates the guests.

Many families have established new family traditions by attending annual Chickasaw Cultural Center’s special events, including the month-long Christmas light drive-thru display, to culturally-centered celebrations such as the Three Sister’s Celebration, Children’s Festival and Fall Festival.

Military veterans have found a place of honor at the Chickasaw Cultural Center with special observances such a Veteran’s Day and Memorial Day and corresponding exhibits, which highlight military service.

Campus Grows

The Chickasaw Cultural Center campus has also expanded since opening.

Massive outdoor sculptures, such as “The Arrival” by Chickasaw artists Mike Larsen’s and Joanna Underwood’s southeastern pottery sculptures intermingle with beautiful water and rock features and native landscaping.

The Apisa Art Gallery, opened in 2013, serves as a home of Chickasaw art, a

place to appreciate the art and artists of the Chickasaw Nation.

Hundreds of Native Americans have connected with their family heritage in the Holisso: The Center for the Study of Chickasaw Cultural and History.

A giant video wall has been added to the Chikasha Poya exhibit center, to share stories of Chickasaw lives.

Learning opportunities have expanded in the Chikasha Inchokka' Traditional Village where energetic cultural instructors, dressed in 1700's regalia, share activities such as Stickball games, cooking demonstrations, language lessons, corn husk doll and archery demonstrations.

The village features traditional Chickasaw homes, a replica mound and cultural instructors demonstrating traditional crafts such as beadwork, basketry and pottery, tanning hides, bow making and flute making.

World-Class Exhibits

The Chickasaw Cultural Center has become a venue for world-class exhibits.

More than 39,000 visitors have experienced the "Dugout Canoes: Paddling through the Americas" exhibit which is open until Sept. 27, 2015. This object-rich experience features American dugouts from ancient times to present. The exhibit centerpiece is a magnificent 400-year-old pine dugout canoe and paddle and also highlights artifacts from the world's largest archaeological find --ancient dugouts found together in a Florida lake.

The special exhibit *1700's Beadwork of Southeastern Tribes*, features historical Southeastern tribal beadwork from pre-European contact, is open until November 2015. The beadwork exhibit features 200-year-old artifacts as well as Chickasaw and southeastern tribal beadwork from pre-European contact through today.

Awards and Honors

In the past five years, the Chickasaw Cultural Center has received numerous awards and honors, most recently receiving two RedBud Awards: Best Website and Outstanding Temporary Exhibit: "Dugout Canoes: Paddling

through the Americas”. Open to all Oklahoma tourism entities, the RedBud Awards represent the highest honor given in the Oklahoma tourism industry.

In 2012, the center was awarded a RedBud for Best New Attraction.

The interactive nature of the Chickasaw Cultural Center is one reason editors of *Metro Family Magazine* selected the Chickasaw Cultural Center as one of the “Best places to learn outside the classroom,” in an article published Aug., 2014. Editors praised the Chickasaw Cultural Center’s “perfect combination of tribal history and modern technology allows kids to become totally immersed in the vibrant history and celebrate the ongoing culture of the Chickasaw Nation.”

Other awards, honors and accolades bestowed to the center include “The Oklahoman Reader’s Choice “State Tourism Destination,” TripAdvisor’s “2014 and 2015 Certificate of Excellence,” and a two-time Yelp “People Love Us On Yelp” recognition.

The Chickasaw Cultural Center, located at 867 Cooper Memorial Drive, is open Monday-Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. For more information, call (580) 622-7130 or visit www.chickasawculturalcenter.com.

Chickasaw Cultural Center Anniversary Week Celebration Schedule

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. July 20- 25

Monday, July 20

10:30 a.m. “Behind the Scenes” film

11 a.m. Stomp Dance

11:30 a.m. “First Encounter” film

Noon “Behind the Scenes”

1 p.m. “First Encounter”

2-4 p.m. “Building of the Chickasaw Cultural Center” Lecture Series

2 p.m. Children’s flute class

Special Retail Sales

Café Specials

Tuesday, July 21

11 a.m. Stomp Dance
Special Retail Sales
Café Specials

Wednesday, July 22

10:30 a.m. “Behind the Scenes” film
11 a.m. Stomp Dance
11:30 a.m. “First Encounter” film
Noon “Behind the Scenes”
1 p.m. “First Encounter”
1 p.m. Special Lecture Series: Lucy Allen, Mississippi
2 p.m. Mini rattle Class
3 p.m. “The Sandlot”
Special Retail Sales
Café Specials

Thursday, July 23

10 a.m. – Noon “Photo Document Preservation” class
11 a.m. Stomp Dance
Noon “Behind the Scenes”
1 p.m. “First Encounter”
2-4 p.m. “Building of the Cultural Center” presentation
2 p.m. Cornhusk Dolls Class
Special Retail Sales
Café Specials

Friday, July 24

10:30 a.m. “Behind the Scenes” film
11 a.m. Stomp Dance
11:30 a.m. “First Encounter” film
Noon “Behind the Scenes”
1 p.m. “First Encounter”
2 p.m. “Old Stone Fort” presentation
2 p.m. Mini rattle Class
3 p.m. “Night at the Museum 3: Secret of the Tomb”
Special Retail Sales
Café Specials
T-shirt Giveaway
Anniversary Cake

Saturday, July 25

10:30 a.m. "Behind the Scenes"

11 a.m. Stomp Dance

11:30 a.m. "First Encounter"

Noon "Behind the Scenes"

1 p.m. Presentation: Artist/Filmmaker

2:30 p.m. Stomp Dance

3 p.m. "Indian in The Cupboard" film

6:30 p.m. "Adventures in Babysitting" film

Special Retail Sales

Flute Presentation

Café Specials

Youth Art Workshop

Cooking Demonstrations

2D Art Class