Casinos in Western Oklahoma Reopen

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes reopen gaming enterprises

On April 29, 2020, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Gov. Reggie Wassana issued a release announcing the reopening of all six of the tribes’ Lucky Star Casino enterprises in western Oklahoma beginning May 15.

Gov. Wassana has met weekly for the past two months with team members, as well as Indian Health Services (IHS) monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic numbers pertaining to the state of Oklahoma. In western Oklahoma, where all six of the tribes’ casinos are located, the spread of COVID-19 has been minimal, prompting the decision to carefully and responsibly begin reopening the tribes’ gaming enterprises.

The tribes operate six casinos and two travel plazas in the western Oklahoma counties of Canadian, Blaine, and Custer/Roger Mills counties. According to the Oklahoma Dept. of Health website as of May 13 the data shows Canadian

Revitalizing land on the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes reserve

(Concho, OK) The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes receive Brownfields Grant for land revitalization through Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Brownfields Project in the amount of $266,000.

The tribes were one of five tribes to be awarded the grant and the only tribe in Region 6. The EPA breaks down the U.S. into 10 different regions, with Region 6 including the states of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. Along with the tribes in Region 6, the other recipient for the grant funding went to the Oklahoma Corporation Commission for a cleanup project in the city of Okemah.

“I am glad we can all meet, even if it is through teleconferencing, to announce the Brownfields winners. The Brownfields is one of the most effective grants for underserved communities and I want to thank the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and their staff for their great work in Brownfields projects,” Ken McQueen, EPA Region 6 Administrator said.

McQueen announced the tribes and the Oklahoma Corporation Commission for the recipients for Region 6 fund.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Health Board launch face mask sewing project

As facial mask coverings become the new reality, demand for facial coverings continue to grow.

In an effort to assist tribal citizens, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Health Board has called on local seamstress volunteers to create masks for distribution throughout Cheyenne and Arapaho country.

Summer Kline-kole is heading up the mask-making project coordinating volunteers, matching them with sewing machines on loan from the tribes’ Language & Culture Program and keeping inventory of materials and finished masks for distributing.

“The goal is to have an inventory of materials and finished masks for distribution.”

Sandra Fletcher in Clinton, Okla. volunteers for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Health Board making facial masks for those in need. (Courtesy photo)
U.S. Supreme Court weighs ‘transfers of sovereign right’

McGirt v. Oklahoma examines whether a large swath of eastern Oklahoma should be considered tribal jurisdiction

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments Monday on whether tribes have jurisdiction over a large swath of eastern Oklahoma in a case that could have implications on everything from tax authority to decades of criminal cases. The case of McGirt v. Oklahoma is whether a crime committed by an enrolled Seminole Nation of Oklahoma member occurred on tribal land. Jimcy McGirt, who was convicted in state court of molesting a child, argues the alleged crime occurred within the 1866 boundaries of the Creek Nation, so the case falls under federal jurisdiction, not state.

Mithun Mansinghani, Oklahoma solicitor general, presented a new argument right out of the gate. In a shift from an earlier hearing on a similar case, Sharp v. Murphy, the state contended the Creek Nation never had a reservation, even before Oklahoma became a state, and said the tribe was instead a “dependent Indian community.”

“Oklahoma has jurisdiction over the eastern half of the state because it never was reservation land, and is certainly not reservation land today,” Mansinghani said.

Justice Clarence Thomas noted he was “very interested” in the new argument.

“If I like you first to say … why you think that and why it matters, and opposing counsel seems to think that it’s irrelevant and he as said, I recall that, is also wrong, your assessment of that,” Thomas said.

Mansinghani said the land doesn’t meet the definition of a reservation and cited a previous case, Hagen v. Utah, saying restoring land to the public domain ends a reservation.

“If what created the land was the fee patent, the opposite of that, the conveyance of the fee patented, disestablishes that in accordance with this Court’s decision in Hagen v. Utah, where it says reservation is reserving land from the public domain. So restoring land to the public domain ends a reservation,” Mansinghani said.

Ian Gershengorn, attorney for McGirt, made several points in his opening statement. The Creek Nation had a reservation, Congress did not disestablish the reservation, Congress didn’t turn over criminal jurisdiction to Oklahoma, and “Oklahoma’s rhetoric about disruption does not change the result.”

Gershengorn argued Congress established the historical boundaries of the Creek Nation, and only Congress can undo them.

“The reason we have a plain text requirement has less to do with whether you call it a reservation or a dependent Indian community and everything to do with the fact that those boundaries were set by Congress,” he said. “And so if you are going to undertake that Congress needs to speak, and Congress needs to speak clearly. We’re talking about transfers of sovereign rights. And that’s to be done clearly, in the text, and you can call it a reservation or dependent Indian community. The text would be the same.”

There were also a number of questions that focused on the practical outcomes should the court decide in favor of the state or McGirt.

One of the outcomes the justices questioned was the impact on cases that may have to be retried in federal court.

“What makes this case hard — there have been hundreds and hundreds of prosecutions of very heinous offenses — is Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, “This state law, on your view, it will all become undone.”

Gershengorn said an increase of cases hasn’t materialized for a couple of reasons, one being that federal court has higher penalties for certain crimes, and many of those convicted have already served a large portion of their sentence.

“One we’ve been hearing … both in the Murphy argument and here about, you know, murderers and rapists getting through, in fact, there is no evidence that the state has put forward that there will be … the kinds of habeas petitions that one would expect to see. The kind of tumult that has been predicted just hasn’t materialized,” Gershengorn said.

Mansinghani later said 178 people are seeking to be retried under Murphy, “even though the Murphy mandate has been stayed and the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals decision is still binding on state courts.

“So that 178 cases are just the initial cracks in the dam,” he said.

Yet Justice Neil Gorsuch suggested those consequences might be overstated.

“I would have thought that … we might have seen a tsunami of cases, if there were a real problem here, that we haven’t seen,” Gorsuch said.

Forestahdouhpih, Comanche, is a partner at the law firm Dorsey & Whitney who specializes in tribal and non-tribal businesses in Indian Country. He listened to the entirety of the morning’s arguments and said it was well argued on both sides but it’s difficult to tell which way the court will decide.

Based on the justices’ questions, Tahdooahnippah thinks Justices John Roberts, Samuel Alito, Brett Kavanaugh and Thomas are leaning toward ruling in favor of the state, while Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Gorsuch favor McGirt.

“There is a lot of legal reasoning in favor of McGirt,” Tahdooahnippah said.

“In his closing rebuttal, Gershengorn said when it comes to arguments of the case that are based on interpreting law and statutes, it should be open and shut for McGirt.

“This court may not be able to determine which party has the better reading of events on the ground 120 years ago but it is surely well-positioned to determine which party has a better reading of the text, and on that score I submit this case is not close,” he said.

In an email to Indian Country Today, the Muscogee Creek Nation said its attorneys made their case, and it was confident in the Supreme Court process.

“We feel tribal representation made our argument today with brevity and clarity,” said the tribe through its press secretary. “The decision is now in the hands of the court, and we will let it decide for that direction.”

Normally, the court issues decisions throughout May and June. With COVID-19 pushing cases back and arguments heard via teleconference, it is unknown how long it will take for decisions to be handed out this term.
Mas Bear peered down at the red earth, moving carefully. He was searching for signs of his ancestors’ presence in the shells and beads that had found their way to us from a century-old gravesite. Bear, director of the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes Historic Preservation Office, had been going about his daily routine in January when he received a call from tribal citizen George Levi about the items seen in a potential oil well site.

Levi, who came upon the site while hunting, thought it possible that the land was part of an old gravesite, so Bear, Cheyenne Cultural Coordinator Chester Whitman and Arapaho Cultural Coordinator Fred Mosqueda went to check it out. With the help of archaeologists from the oil company and the use of ground-penetrating radar technology, their suspicions were confirmed.

Today the site a few miles from Bear’s office in Concho is marked with a wrough-iron fence, finished in August, to honor those who were buried there, and to prevent any damage to the graves.

“These are the kinds of things we do as part of our preservation efforts,” Bear said.

Though federally recognized as one tribe, the Cheyenne and Arapaho were once distinct Nations that called lands far from Oklahoma home.

Both were Alyquon-speaking, agricultural people residing in the Great Lakes region along the Mississippi River. The two tribes spoke similar languages but each had their own unique culture.

Eventually, both were pushed out of the area and adopted the breeding and herding of horses, becoming nomads who followed the buffalo. The two likely came together in the late 18th or early 19th century.

Gordon Youngman, one of the tribe’s 44 peace chiefs, said it’s difficult to put a date on when the two tribes first came in contact.

“I think we started encountering one another because we were always together closely from our origins,” Youngman said. “As far as starting out and origin stories, history, where we came from, how we believe this earth was made, our stories are similar.

“The tribes camped together and battled common enemies, but preserved their own languages and traditions, Youngman said. Also around the 19th century, the Cheyenne and Arapaho each split into groups, Northern Cheyenne, Southern Cheyenne, Northern Arapaho and Southern Arapaho.

After continually being pushed from their homes and signing multiple land cession and peace treaties with the U.S. government, the Cheyenne and Arapaho experienced a day that changed everything.

On Nov. 29, 1864, a band of U.S. soldiers attacked a peaceful encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho women, children and the elderly. It became known as the Sand Creek Massacre, and the National Parks Service describes the day as ‘eight hours that changed the Great Plains forever.’

Maj. E. W. Wynkoop investigated the incident and wrote a report including his interviews of the soldiers, who agreed that the violence was atrocious.

“Women and children were killed and scalped, children shot at their mothers’ breasts,” Wynkoop wrote.

After the massacre, outraged Cheyenne warriors carried out a series of raids on the U.S. military, bringing the violence to a head.

In the fall of 1865, the Southern Cheyenne and Southern Arapaho tribes, along with the Comanche, Kiowa and Plains Apache, signed the Little Arkansas Treaty, which gave them land in Kansas and Oklahoma. However, the Little Arkansas treaty was only in effect for less than two years and much of the land promised was never actually given to tribes.

Finally, the Cheyenne and Arapaho were forced into Indian Territory by the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867. Many died on the journey from disease, Youngman said.

“There were many of them that fought to stay where they were,” Yel-lowman said. “But in the end, they lost their lives through that fight. And then when they were marched here forcibly, there was sickness, disease that the whites brought us. Our immune system couldn’t adapt to those diseases, and that’s what killed us off on the way here.”

The treaty created the Cheyenne and Arapaho lands in Oklahoma, with the capital in Concho, and the two eventually became known as the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes.

Through it all, the tribes have held onto their histories and cultures.

One example is the 44-chief system, given to the Cheyenne by the prophet Sweet Medicine. It is said that Sweet Medicine went into a sacred opening at Bear Butte, a mountain-like feature in South Dakota, and returned with rules for the Cheyenne to live by, as well as prophecies predicting the coming of the white man.

The Council of 44 is a group of chiefs who are in charge of keeping the peace. Coordinator Chester Whitman, all of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, items he found while hunting on land in Concho, Okla. (Submitted photo)

Gordon Youngman works for the Department of Education at tribal headquarters in Concho. (Photo / Jana Allen)

“You have to keep the stories because they’re a part of your identity, of who you are, where you came from, and where you’re going.”

Another important part of the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes today is storytelling — recalling the oral histories of the people and passing them from one generation to the next.

In order to be part of, and keep alive, “a living, breathing culture,” you need to know your people’s history, Yellowman said.

“You have to keep the stories because they’re a part of your identity, of who you are, where you came from, and where you’re going.” Yellowman said.
LAND REVITALIZATION

Continued from pg. 1

continued from pg. 1

CLINTON SERVICE UNIT COVID-19 TESTING

Based on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s most recent guidance for COVID-19 testing, Clinton Service Unit’s testing services will be expanded to include anyone who is eligible for services through Indian Health Service and would like to be tested.

CLINTON INDIAN HEALTH CENTER DRIVE-THRU SCREENING
Monday - Friday from Noon to 2 pm
OR
Call 580.331.3300 to schedule an appointment

EDA awards a $700,000 grant to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes

(OKLAHOMA CITY) The U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded a $700,000 grant to the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes in Oklahoma.

The grant will advance long-term economic recovery and resilience efforts following the 2018 wildfires. The EDA grant will be matched with $307,604 in local investment.

“The Trump Administration is working diligently to help tribal communities impacted by natural disasters, including those devastated by wildfires in Oklahoma in 2018,” said Dana Gatzke, Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development. “This project will allow the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes to develop master plans and update their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) so they can best engage in long-term economic development activities that will attract private investment and create jobs.”

This project is funded by the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act of 2019 (Pub. L. 116-20), which provided EDA with $600 million in additional Economic Adjustment Assistance Program funds for disaster relief and recovery for areas affected by Hurricanes Florence, Michael, and Lane, Typhoons Yutu and Mangkhut, wildfires, volcanic eruptions, and other major natural disasters occurring in 2018, under the Robert T. Stafford Act.

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EL RENO INDIAN HEALTH CENTER
Call 405.234.8400 to schedule an appointment

WATONGA INDIAN HEALTH CENTER
Call 580.623.4991 to schedule an appointment

CASNOS REOPEN

Lucky Star Casino employees were all tested for the coronavirus COVID-19 prior to the reopening of casinos. The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes

Count with 114 positive COVID-19 cases, Custer County with 12 cases and Blaine County with 10 cases.

“The health and safety of our community and employees is always our top priority and through this pandemic we have relied on facts from the CDC and health experts to guide our decisions,” Gov. Wassana said.

Wassana stated the employees will be required to wear masks and gloves, with both being provided for patrons who wish to wear masks and gloves inside the casinos.

Thunderbird Casino reported in May 2020 with 50 percent occupancy, our employees are all being screened and we will be taking customers’ temperatures using an infrared thermal scanner, as well as monitoring any health issues someone may be displaying upon entering,” Andy Rednose, Lucky Star Casino Chief Operating Officer said.

Rednose said each casino will be deep cleaned in house nightly and will have bio-hazard deep cleaning once a month by Orkin. Plexiglass has been installed at all cashiers stations, players will be taking customers’ temperatures using an infrared thermometer and we will be monitoring all players who wish to wear masks and gloves, with both being provided for patrons who wish to wear masks and gloves inside the casinos.

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As of press time, of June 1 being discussed for table games.

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How long does the coronavirus last on surfaces?

The coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) can remain on various surfaces for different amounts of time depending on the type of surface. For example:

- It can survive on plastic and stainless steel for up to 7 days.
- It can also survive on paper for up to 3 days.
- However, the virus is generally more stable on non-porous surfaces like metal and plastic than on porous surfaces like cloth or paper.

How can I care for a family member with the coronavirus disease at home?

If someone in your household is infected, provide them with plenty of rest and encourage them to follow evidence-based clinical care. Be sure to wash your hands often and use good respiratory hygiene to prevent the spread of virus to others. If you suspect you or someone else has COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider.

How can I prevent the spread of coronaviruses?

There is no specific cure for COVID-19, but there are steps you can take to reduce the risk of spreading it. These include:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or touching something that might be contaminated.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Practicing social distancing by maintaining at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and others.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Is the coronavirus disease more severe for kids?

Most children and young adults infected with COVID-19 seem to have a milder illness compared to adults. However, children can still develop severe illness, including severe respiratory illness requiring hospitalization. Therefore, it is important for all children to follow the guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus.

Can antibiotics treat the coronavirus disease?

No, antibiotics do not work against viruses. The 2019-nCoV is a virus and, therefore, antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment. Although there is no specific treatment for COVID-19, supportive care may help relieve symptoms.

Can cold or hot weather prevent the coronavirus disease?

There is no evidence to suggest that cold and hot weather can kill the new coronavirus or keep it from spreading. However, proper hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing and avoiding close contact with sick people, can help reduce the spread of the virus.

Is there a vaccine for the coronavirus disease?

As of November 2020, no vaccines are approved for use against COVID-19. However, several COVID-19 vaccine candidates are currently in development. Clinical trials are ongoing, and it is hoped that a vaccine will be available in the near future.

Can you contract the coronavirus disease more than once?

The coronavirus disease is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is known to cause common cold-like illnesses in most people. For those who are immune to SARS-CoV-2, there is no reason to believe that they will be more susceptible to the coronavirus disease caused by SARS-CoV-2. However, it is possible that people who have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 may become reinfected with different strains of the virus in the future.

Can I donate or sell masks made for personal use?

Yes, masks made for personal use can be donated or sold to help others who need them and support local businesses. However, it is important to ensure that the masks are made with materials that are safe and effective in preventing the spread of the virus.

Do masks help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Yes, masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by blocking respiratory droplets that may contain the virus when an infected person coughs or sneezes. However, masks are not a substitute for other preventive measures such as social distancing and good hand hygiene.

The Diabetes Wellness Program has been helping the community since April 2019.

The program serves 210 letters to members on the Diabetes Registry informing them of the hours and that the program is available by appointment on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 am to 2 pm. They also received information regarding care during COVID-19. In April, we gave 13 people masks, sent out 20 letters to the Diabetes Wellness Center for distribution in May. We had several letters that were returned because of incorrect addresses. If you are an Elder or a person with diabetes and did not receive a letter, please call or email to ensure you receive your program and important care information.

We also received tomato plants for the GIW Healthy Lifestyle Programs and received feedback that the program is ready for distribution in the near future. If interested in the program, please contact Tara Conway.

We recommend that you wash your handwashing techniques, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds. Remember to wash all surfaces daily and don’t forget to clean your cell phone, doorknobs, car handles, and steering wheel.

For a personalized weight management program, contact Tara Conway at Diabetes Wellness Program 405-422-78651-800-247-4612 ext. 27655 or email tconway@cheyenneandarapaho-nsn.gov.
Tribal Tribals: Caring For Others

Iwannah Whitfield Jones was born Jan. 2, 1963 in Feltville, Okla., to Alvis and AnnaJo Jones. Her parents passed away May 9, 2020 after battling lung cancer. She was very loved by her grandchildren, one great-grandchild, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many other related family members.

She attended the sporting events and school events. Iwannah helped out every body who needed it and was known for her cooking and helping people at the VFW. She is survived by her brother, sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many other related family members.

She passed away May 9, 2020 at the Emmie C. Holderman Nursing Center in Holdenville, Okla., to the family of her beloved son, father and mother.

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Happy 62nd Birthday
Bob Lamebull
Love from your family and friends

Happy 14th Birthday
Amber Lynn
May 10
Love all your family & friends

Happy 4th Birthday
Daralis RedShin
May 16
Love your family

Happy 50th Birthday
Ruth Bearshield
We pray Maheo blesses you with many more!
With all our love,
your son and husband

Who would have thought it would all amount to this, me here and you there. Never able to hear your words of comfort or feel your touch to encourage me. For these last few years I really have been lost. Really it’s like I lost my way ever since you have been gone. I know you are trying to find my footing each time I stumble. With you gone I had to pick myself up each time I fell. In my heart I can hear you say what doesn’t kill me only makes me stronger. I understand that but losing you hurts like hell. Just though I’d let you know you are really missed.

Love your Son
Jimmy

Who are you doing out there beautiful? I hope all is well out there with you and the boys. I know you are out there dealing with a lot so I have been praying for you. You’re a strong woman and I already know you can handle yourself. But we all have our breaking point. I just want you to know that I’ll always be here for you no matter what. I’ll be home soon. I love you until the casket drops.
Stay safe – All my love Jim

Happy Heavenly Mother’s Day
Submitted By Rodney Candyfire

Once upon a time a long time ago a girl, her brother and her mother decided to go to the State Fair. So they loaded up and took off. As they drove to the fair they laughed and listened to music. The moon was full and they decided to take the scenic route. They had a blow out and the car turned on its top slowly spinning. When it stopped the girl jumped out of the vehicle, checked on her family and they were scared but okay. The girl said her mom to stay with her little brother and she would go for help. She started walking. She was scared and a white dog showed up, befriended her and led her to a lighted house. She knocked on the door and a lady opened up and invited her in. The lady woke her husband up after the girl explained what had taken place. The man of the house started his truck and offered to help the girl in any way possible. The two of them looked up and were on their way to the accident. The girl spoke up and said you have a nice white dog sir, he led me to your place. The man said what white dog? I don’t own a white dog.

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Coronavirus cases spread in nursing homes as facilities face ‘absolute devastation’

By Kassie McClung, The Frontier

(OKLAHOMA CITY) As state officials say Oklahoma is starting to “flatten the curve” on COVID-19 infection rates, nursing homes and other senior care centers are scrambling to contain the spread of the disease and worry they won’t be able to financially stay afloat.

Elderly people who get the novel coronavirus are at much higher risk for complications and death. And that’s not lost on long-term care facilities’ only worry, some facility owners and industry leaders worry the industry is potentially facing financial devastation.

About one in three COVID-related deaths in Oklahoma have been connected to a long-term care facility, according to the state health department. Since then, the group has discussed the issue with the Oklahoma Health Care Authority and members of the governor’s cabinet, Buck said.

“I have been encouraged by some of the early response, but nothing definitive has been offered at this time,” Buck said. “And I would just underscore that it needs to pick up some urgency.”

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities is tricky because many people don’t show symptoms. A worker could easily enter a center unaware they have the disease, said Steven Buck, president and executive director of Care Providers Oklahoma, which represents the interests of residents and workers in long-term care facilities.

“It’s well documented we (the state) didn’t have a great deal of testing,” Buck said. As the state’s testing capacity increases, the care community warrants more testing, he said.

To slow the spread of COVID-19 in facilities, the state is in the process of establishing intermediate care centers for nursing home residents returning from the hospital. A wing of Franciscan Villa has been outfitted for that purpose, another facility is available in Enid and spaces will soon be open in Oklahoma City, Buck said.

With the heightened use of personal protective equipment, additional staffing and overtime, financial assistance for the industry will be needed.

Care Providers Oklahoma last month in a letter requested financial relief from the state. Since then, the group has discussed the issue with the Oklahoma Health Care Authority and members of the governor’s cabinet, Buck said.

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