

GAMING CAPITALISM IN THE SERVICE OF A PEOPLE:
A MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF THE CHICKASAW NATION

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

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(Under the direction of Martin Johnes, Randal Ice, Dr. Louise Miskell, and the late Noel Thompson)

Gaming Capitalism in the Service of People: A Multidisciplinary Study of the Chickasaw Nation

The story of the emergence and growth of contemporary economic development for Native American tribes and particularly those in the gaming industry, is an intriguing one. It is a story that spans more than three decades. It essentially, for many tribes, changes their position from that of an impoverished people to utilizing this industry, to build their identity and strength. However, the story of one of those Indian Nations, the Chickasaw Nation, and their emergence to become such a big player in the gaming industry in Oklahoma and ultimately a major economic engine in the State of Oklahoma, is a particularly intriguing one. The Chickasaw Nation is the 13th largest federally recognized tribe in the United States and has more than 73,000 tribal citizens. They pump \$2.4 billion into the state economy and have 16,000 wage earners benefitting from employment. Their success exceeds that of many Native American tribes. And, while gaming is their predominant revenue stream for the Nation, they diversify and generate other revenue streams which contribute to the local and state economy as well as engage in philanthropic efforts within their jurisdictional boundaries and across the state. Their revenue generation has allowed them to build their social capital in programs and services by giving back to their tribal citizens to further their mission “to enhance the overall quality of life for the Chickasaw people.” In summary, the history of the Chickasaw people is intriguing as well as is their ability to navigate and negotiate with both the federal and state governments. They possess a strong three-branch government (executive, legislative, and judicial), uphold their constitution, sustain continuous strategic leadership, and ultimately protect their sovereignty. It would appear those tools have positioned the Chickasaw Nation to

sustain and grow in their economic success, make a significant contribution to their people, the state in which they reside as well as poise themselves for future challenges.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Chickasaw Nation, the 13th largest federally recognized tribe in the United States with more than more than 73,000 citizens, has been observed as economically successful in Indian Country in the last 30 years (Chickasaw Nation Progress Report, 2019). This success is based on gaming revenues and is demonstrated through their economic impact on the State of Oklahoma, which is home to their 13 county jurisdictional boundaries. One should note the term gaming is referencing Indian casino gambling and commonly used in Oklahoma. It will be used interchangeably in the research as will Chickasaws, Chickasaw people, Chickasaw citizens, tribe, and the Chickasaw Nation. These are all commonly utilized references and terms in Indian country.

According to a recent study, the activities of the Chickasaw Nation ‘when analyzed in the context of the Oklahoma economy and accounting for spillover (multiplier) impacts’, support ‘15,958 jobs in the state, \$525 million in state income, and \$2.43 billion in state production of goods and services’ (Dean and Evans, 2012, p. 2). Their success, at least in the gaming industry, exceeds that of Oklahoma’s other Native American tribes. The Chickasaws lead the Oklahoma tribes in fees paid to the state based on their gaming profits at \$63,292,502. The closest tribe would be the Choctaws and they were significantly below the Chickasaws at \$34,219,593 in gaming profits (Gaming Compliance Unit, Oklahoma Office of Budget and Enterprise Services,

2021). Mize notes that the Chickasaw Nation's direct payroll was \$318 million and that spinoff jobs totaled \$525 million. He also suggested that the Chickasaw Nation paid \$119 million for goods and services in the State of Oklahoma (Mize, *The Oklahoman*, 2012). The profitability of the Chickasaw tribe coupled with that of the impact of job creation and retention is important to be recognized and explored, as one observes many tribes struggling in other parts of the country. Indian Country has evolved historically but the merits of financially successful tribes, and particularly the Chickasaws in this case should be explored further to determine what could be, if anything, replicated as a potential model. Additionally, the social capital acquired through the benefits of economic success that improves the welfare of the Chickasaw people warrants contemplation as well.

The Chickasaw Nation's history of their significant revenue acquisition, largely through the onset of tribal gaming in Oklahoma, is an intriguing tale, as is the way the tribe has chosen to allocate their resources. The exponential growth occurred during a short period of time, and one must contemplate what would set the economic success of this tribe apart from other Native American tribes. As one approaches the research, it should be noted that there seems to be much more to the research than a business approach on what has determined the revenue trajectory. As one moves through the discussion, one will find elements of history, political science, business, and economics resulting in a much more multidisciplinary piece.

Some might argue gaming is the secret of success for the Chickasaws, but most tribes have had the benefit of entering the casino industry in this same period. While gaming has certainly opened the door for an incredible revenue stream, the Chickasaws have had a formula for success that has made them leaders in Oklahoma among the tribes. This perception of

leadership is observed many times in interactions this researcher has in political, tribal, and educational settings. Their location on major transportation thoroughfares has no doubt influenced that success. The tribe's ability to navigate the United States political and court systems is also important, as is their efforts to preserve their sovereignty on all fronts. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the Chickasaws also have had the benefit of longevity in their leadership and appear to be somewhat purposeful in their efforts to lead strategically.

The way Native American tribes allocate their revenue is significant. Native American tribes vary in the way they choose to allocate resources from their profits. In this researcher's opinion, this is a pivotal point. The Chickasaw Nation's mission to enhance the lives of the Chickasaw people is demonstrated by their adherence to placing millions into healthcare, education, family services, and programs that serve the people and important to note. Native Americans, as an ethnicity, continue to have societal and health care challenges. In a recent article it is noted that "the Native population has higher rates of mental and physical health problems, suicide, and chronic disease" (Morris, Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2021). But the Chickasaw Nation, one could surmise from the lists of programs and services available to tribal citizens, is seeking to make the quality of life better for their people in those areas (Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directories, 2023).

Despite their current success, the history of the Chickasaws has not always been a tale of fortune and economic power. The Chickasaw Nation, like so many other tribes, had to overcome significant challenges. That history is important to visit, and one should obtain a glimpse into a past and its linkage to the future.

Chickasaw Nation History:

During the Sixteenth Century, the Chickasaw Nation was among the first Americans encountered by Europeans, and they were found to be self-sufficient. During this period, the Chickasaw Nation found themselves caught up in the aggressive conflict among the British, the French, and the Spanish for control of North America (Chickasaw Television Video Series, 2021). This situation generated discord between the tribal nations as well as within the tribe, which the Chickasaws were most associated, the Choctaws (Paige, Bumpers, Littlefield, 2010). Although they were small (3,000 to 4,000), the Chickasaw Nation was delving into the field of agriculture as a means of economic development. It has been noted that they had significant amounts of a variety of livestock and were raising a variety of crops. In 1830, the Chickasaws exported 1,000 bales of cotton and a significant portion of beef and pork (Foreman, 1985). One could ascertain, in that period of time, the Chickasaw Nation was demonstrating an ability to survive and flourish in their surroundings.

This successful agriculture was also utilized to create opportunities for trade and other necessities and comforts such as sugar and coffee. As the United States population began to grow, the government sought to acquire valuable agriculture east of the Mississippi River which was inhabited by Native American tribes. There was also a push to civilize tribes and assimilate them into the ways of a white society. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, passed by Congress and under the direction of President Andrew Jackson, would move that effort along. The Act provided the President with the authority 'to negotiate with tribes for the exchange of their lands in any state or territory for new lands outside of a state or organized territory' (Gibson, 1972, p. 169). In that same year, Chickasaw leaders were requested to attend negotiations with

the government in Franklin, Tennessee. President Jackson attended the proceedings as well as a show of force. The Franklin Treaty was signed, and the Chickasaws ceded their homelands for a western home. The interesting caveat was that the treaty could not be ratified until 'the Chickasaws had examined the western territory and selected a 'country suitable to their wants,' a clause which gave the Chickasaws a peculiar and unsuspected advantage' (Gibson, 1971, p. 173). This quote suggests their political acumen in this situation allowed them to delay their departure from their homelands by seven years. They finally signed the Treaty of Doaksville in 1837. This agreement included payment to the Choctaw Nation of \$530,000 for land that included the central western portion of the tribe's domain and essentially placed the Chickasaw Nation within the Choctaw Nation as citizens of that tribe (Gibson, 1971). The government had won, at least initially, and the tribe was relocated.

Other tribes forced to relocate from their homelands to Indian Territory included the tribal nations of the Choctaws, Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles. These five represented the Five Civilized Tribes. The term Five Civilized Tribes, evolved from the period of the Indian Removal Act and was most widely used in Indian Territory and Oklahoma, came to mean those who appeared to be assimilating to Anglo-American ways. This included, but was not limited to, the adoption of Christianity, written constitutions, constitutional governments, intermarriage with white Americans, literacy, slaveholding, and economic activities. The Five Civilized Tribes were also considered distinct from other tribes due to their relying less and less on hunting for survival. The progressive nature of the Five Civilized Tribes in establishing governments, engaging in economic activities, valuing education, and being viewed in a different light to

other tribes provided better positioning for these tribes as they settled in Indian Territory (Frank, 2022).

In 1837, the exodus of 4,500 Chickasaw citizens to Indian Territory began, which would eventually be the State of Oklahoma. A period of adjustment had to be endured, which included other Plains Indian tribes encroaching on their land. The establishment of Fort Washita in 1842 and Fort Arbuckle for the protection of the Chickasaws from other tribes provided them with the opportunity to move deeper into the fertile lands for agriculture purposes. They could operate grist and lumber mills, cotton gins, and mercantile establishments in their new location. Despite their situation, the Chickasaw Nation continued to want their own territory and government separate from the Choctaw Nation. Gibson (1971) notes in 1856, the Chickasaw Nation separated from the Choctaw Nation and created their own constitution for their own separate jurisdictional boundaries. The Chickasaw Nation was reestablishing themselves as their own Nation again and going forward apart from the Choctaw Nation.

The movement to their own district provided the Chickasaw Nation with significant improvements to tribal life. 'These included a resurgence of economic self-reliance and an arrest of the fragmentation process which had nearly destroyed the Chickasaws as an ethnic community' (Gibson, 1971, p.229). It is interesting to note that the ancient practices retained included the ball game and horse racing. The Chickasaw Nation evidently had a long history with 'breeding fine horses' (Gibson, 1971, p. 229). This might be noted as a precursor of things to come as the horse industry would prove to be somewhat of a catalyst for their modern-day economic endeavors.

The Chickasaw Nation continued their economic growth as they created communities and businesses. Religious bodies (Baptist, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian) began to arrive to assist with the organization of churches and schools. The first school, the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy, was completed in 1851 (Gibson, 1971). One researcher suggests 'Chickasaw people used literacy, taught to them by whites in order to colonize them, to participate in and gain control over their current situation' (Cobb, 1992, pp. 35-36). One could purport the Chickasaw Nation viewed it to not only take on the challenges of the new world they had been forced into but preserve the culture of the Chickasaw Nation.

One of the next significant threats to the Chickasaw Nation came in the form of war. The location of lands ripe for farms, the marriages into southern white families, the opportunity for continued trade in Indian Territory, as well as the existence of slaves owned by approximately 200 slaveholders in 1861, contributed to the alignment with the Confederacy (Gibson, 1971). This period represented a setback for the Chickasaw Nation. The Chickasaw Nations' allegiance to the Confederacy, even though they struggled at the beginning on which side to take in the War, cost them in the end. The U.S. government did not honor the treaty payments they owed the Chickasaw Nation and abandoned forts they had set up to protect them (Chickasaw Television Video Series, 2021). One could ascertain the need for strong leadership within their elected government would need to provide the strength needed to weather the challenges brought on by Civil War.

In 1856, the Chickasaw Nation had written their own constitution and created a government which included three branches (legislative, executive, and judicial) and Cyrus Harris was selected as the first Chickasaw governor in their new homeland. As the United States

government continued to have tribes move into Indian Territory, the next challenge for the Nation came in the form of the Allotment Act of 1887 which divided up reservations into small areas of land where individual Native Americans could engage in agricultural activities. The tribe's business model at this point was one of farming the parcels of land along creeks and rivers. The crops were mainly corn, beans, and cotton, which were traded or sold. Ranching was another means of commerce as the tribe was raising cattle, hogs, chickens, and horses. The Army was often the recipients of the beef and hogs, which were sold to them. The horses, which they brought from Mississippi were valued highly and were predecessors of the American Quarter Horse (Chickasaw Cultural Center Exhibit, 2018). Many changes were happening for the tribe, but they were also contributing to the evolution of the American way of life as well.

At that time, the economic development activity was more around individual Indian entrepreneurs, than a collective approach by the tribe. However, their land remained in ownership of the United States government as they held it in trust. Miller suggests the Allotment era was detrimental to tribes and describes 'the real goal of Allotment was to destroy tribal governments and to break up the reservation landmass for the use of the majority of society' (Miller, 2012, p. 43). Economic development potential became more challenging for tribes as their assets were being diminished. Federal bureaucracy and the lack of opportunity made it challenging for Native Americans to make decisions around resources. These were challenging times for tribes, and it would seem for multiple reasons in assessing their ability to affect economic change for their tribes were being diminished.

Leadership, at this point in time, was still a position elected by tribal citizens. However, that would change. It was during this period that Tribal Governor Douglas Henry Johnston presided (1898-1901 and 1904-1906) over the tribe. This was followed by his appointment by the United States government when tribes were no longer allowed to elect their own officials. Johnston served until his death in 1939. This has been recognized as the longest tenure of a Native American leader, albeit most was an appointed position (Lovegrove, 2009). It is important to note this is being rivaled by a current leader of the Chickasaw Nation, Governor Bill Anoatubby, who is currently in his ninth term and has been in that role 36 years continuously (Chickasaw Times, Vol. LVIII, No.3, September 2019). Both Johnston and Anoatubby had long periods in office and research will also note another lengthy leadership tenure as well.

The period in which Douglas Henry Johnston was serving was also one of the most significant periods in tribal history following Removal, as the Chickasaw Nation sought to adapt the governmental legislation that continued to emerge. The Dawes Commission had been created to execute the individual allotments of land and the United States government was calling for the tribal governments of the Five Civilized Tribes to be dissolved by March of 1906 (Lovegrove, 2009). The Chickasaw Nation had to endure another period of transition brought on by the U.S. government, but they were also acquiring what one could perceive as a degree of influence over the early formation of state government in the State of Oklahoma, if only by virtue of marriage and family ties. Chickasaw Nation's Governor Johnston's niece married William H. 'Alfalfa Bill' Murray, who was a U.S. Representative and Governor of Oklahoma at one point and, is credited with being a part of the movement that would move Oklahoma

Territory and Indian Territory together to be a single, combined state even though the population was sufficient to be two different states. This movement was completed in 1907 when Oklahoma became the 46th State in the U.S. Murray also helped form Oklahoma's constitution and then served as Governor of the State from 1931-1935 (Bryant and Murray, 2021).

The second Governor, Lee Cruce, was also an intermarried citizen in the Chickasaw Nation. Political influence was important, and the Chickasaw Nation would need to be engaged in that world to make things better for their tribe. This influence will be demonstrative as one observes the manner in which their political prowess is utilized.

During Johnston's tenure, the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), which is also referred to as the Wheeler-Howard Act, decreased federal control of Native Nations and promoted the idea of self-governance, once again, among the Indian Nations. In the reservation system, tribes had lost a degree of control over tribal affairs. But the IRA, at least, opened the door to changes being made to tribal authority or self-governance. This was significant as the authority had been taken away from them in 1907. As noted previously with government appointed leadership, it took the authority out of the hands of tribal members to elect their own leaders. Just prior to that time, in 1933, John Collier had been appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the philosophy of the Bureau seemed to undergo a radical change. Thus, he wanted to see a revitalization of culture and for Native Americans to be given more 'status, responsibility, and power within the larger American society' (Lovegrove, 2009, p.173). Commissioner Collier disagreed with how the government had dissolved Indian government and it was suggested by him that the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) 'called for

recognition and empowerment of Indian societies for political, administrative, and economic self-government' (Lovegrove, 2009, p. 177). Cornell and Kalt, (2007) suggest that while the IRA really did not provide a significant increase in tribal government authority and tribal constitutions, it still created an opportunity to intensify and support a federally recognized system through which tribes could start to self-govern. Prior to this time, they had been at the mercy of the federal government. Thus, the Wheeler-Howard Act promoted the idea of self-governance and the mechanism to be in place. Yet, little changed, and it would take almost 40 years for true self-governance for the tribes to be signed into law and become a reality.

Clark (2009) notes that during the 1950s, several initiatives were put in place to establish a tribal government that was democratic. The Chickasaw Advisory Council, which was the forerunner of the Tribal Council was established. A key proponent of this initiative was tribal leader Overton James. James was an educator and a salesman. He had been appointed as Chickasaw Governor in 1963 and would later be the first governor elected by the Chickasaw people. His leadership would be in a pivotal time period as it pertained to the Chickasaw Nation and their ability to navigate as a sovereign government and move themselves forward in a self-sustaining way.

Just prior to that, Congress had passed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, as a part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and the Great Society. This established the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity and one of the most significant aspects of that for Native Americans was the establishment of Community Action Programs (CAP). The CAP programs were part of an effort to assist those in poverty and Native Americans were included as a target population. The programs allowed federal money to be disbursed to tribes to

enable Native Americans to hire employees and manage and lead programs such as Head Start for preschoolers, home improvement programs, legal services, health centers, and economic development. The projects gave Native Americans empowerment to step into other tribal leadership roles as well and ultimately the power to succeed or fail (Miller, 2012). This shift in policy and the movement that followed provided tribes with more opportunity to self-govern and, in turn, begin to look at ways to grow and sustain themselves economically as a tribe.

As these policies were beginning to impact and promote self-governance for the tribes versus the assimilation and termination policies of the past, President Nixon emerged as a voice for Native Americans. One researcher noted that in 1970 President Nixon called for 'an end to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) paternalism and the federal management of Indian life,' (Miller, 2012, p. 37). Nixon, it seemed, understood the need for a continued push to remove governmental control over Native American tribes and, rather, invoke empowerment through their ability to manage their own economic and tribal affairs (Clark, 2009). This appointment process along with the paternalism demonstrated by the BIA and federal government up until this point, highlights the extensive degree of control over the tribes through the allocation of resources and land as well as the decision-making power of programs (Miller, 2012). Again, the ability of a tribe to elect their own leader was another way of placing the power to self-govern back with the tribe. It seemed a new era was emerging for the American Indian.

Nixon noted also during this time 'tribes and Indians should be allowed self-determination and should be allowed to tell the federal government how best to serve their needs' (Miller, 2012, p. 37). Such a statement implied that tribal decisions should reflect tribal interests and should entail the tribes' accountability for them. It would therefore seem that

Nixon recognized the value of Native American people being able to make the decisions that would affect them and, in turn, making them less dependent on the government. He was positioning them not only to live with the consequences of their decisions, but also to take responsibility for their own success (Miller, 2012).

It seems the Chickasaws began to do just that. In 1974, an *Oklahoma Today* article titled 'Indians in Industry' noted approximately 250 Indian owned and operated businesses in Oklahoma. It was also noted that the then Chickasaw Governor Overton James and the Chickasaws had made a significant strategic move with the purchase of the Artesian Motel in 1973. It was the first time a tribe had competed in an open bids process and won. The article, which goes on to describe other successful Native American business ventures, points out" what appeared to be "The End of the Trail: to some has proved otherwise. "The Vanishing American has not vanished." Native American people were demonstrating their ability to be a continued growing and economic force in the State of Oklahoma (Holding and Gibson, 1974, p.18).

As this era of movement toward better economic positioning continued to take shape, the 1975 Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act allowed the government to contract for the management of federal programs directly with Indian tribes as against operating through the BIA. This allowed tribes to "plan and administer federally funded programs" and "to put tribal governments even more in control of reservation economic development programs and projects" (Miller, 2012, p. 47). They were referred to as 638 compacts and contracts and references the Public Law 93-638 (Public Law 93-638 Contracting and Compacting, 2017). Self Determination was providing a pathway for tribes.

With this change in law, tribes began to contract with the federal government and build their capacity through administrative infrastructure. Many of the Oklahoma Indian tribes, including the Chickasaw Nation, utilized the opportunity provided by changing federal policy to declare their sovereignty. During this period, they were allowed, once again, to elect their leadership and reestablish their constitutions and subsequently, their government.

According to an article in the *Chickasaw Times* in December of 2002 describing what was going on in the 1970's, the tribe's future growth was tied almost exclusively in obtaining federal funds. Grants from the Department of Commerce's Office of Native American Programs provided the opportunity for planning departments to be established. The *Chickasaw Times* article cites Emil Farve, the Nation's first planner, who noted that the Nation acquired almost \$2 million in federal money during his first year (1974-75). The grants they were acquiring were allowing the tribe to develop programs and services as well as the human resource base to staff them.

The growth of the tribal budget is demonstrative of what began to occur. "The annual tribal budget (total income from all sources) of \$50,000 in 1963 had skyrocketed to over \$15 million by 1990" (Clark, 2009). It was in this period that Bill Anoatubby was elected Governor of the Chickasaw Nation. Anoatubby had started at the Nation in 1975 as the health services director and then began to be promoted through the organization. His next stint was in the tribal finance department where he planned, organized, and directed accounting systems for the Nation. In 1978, he received a promotion again and was named the Special Assistant to the Governor and Controller. He was on the ballot in 1979 for Lieutenant Governor and won two

terms in that role before being elected Governor in 1987 (Chickasaw Television Video Series, 2021).

During an interview discussing that time, Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby noted infrastructure for the Chickasaw Nation meant constructing an organization and a budget to deliver direct services to its citizens. This meant building accounting, personnel, and procurement departments. Anoatubby suggests there are problems with Indian tribes depending solely on government programs, so one could ascertain the Nation needed to grow and create resources of its own. “So, this became the business strategy utilized by the Chickasaws initially, obtaining money by contracting with the government and as they obtained revenue, to invest, and accumulate capital” (Anoatubby, personal interview, 2014)¹.

There was research completed by Franklin David Alexander in 1978 on the Chickasaws and Self-Determination, specifically around a study of the organization and organizational climate. He noted that the concept of self-determination, as outlined by the policy, had the ability to allow Native Americans to affect change over matters, which impacted them. He suggested, “increased opportunity for participation within the tribe is central to the policy of self-determination” (Alexander, 1978, p. 3). Those economic activities in this period of time included the form of Chickasaw Trading Posts (convenience stores), tobacco shops, and bingo as being a part of an emerging portfolio for the Nation. Alexander’s research suggested what the tribe was doing in 1978 should continue and that they had taken advantage of the

¹ Anoatubby, B., (2014), An Interview with the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Ada, OK, 12/6/2014.

resources afforded to them. He noted that the measurement of effectiveness would be if the Chickasaws could utilize the resources in a way that served them well (Alexander, 1978).

The next test for the nation was how to navigate gaming. A significant economic driver for Native Americans was the “series of Supreme Court cases and Federal legislation in the mid to late 1980s, which gave Indian tribes in certain states the ability to open Las Vegas-style casinos” (Kim, 2006, p. 1). Prior to that time, as noted by Chickasaw Legal Counsel Stephen Greetham, high-stakes bingo halls and card clubs had become an economic force in Indian Country as more and more tribes and the federal government recognized tribal gaming’s potential for generating revenue to support tribal government programs and citizen welfare (Greetham, personal interview, 2015)². Greetham also noted in a presentation at the Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association Legislative Summit in 2019, that it is “undeniable that gaming has been the single most successful tribal economic development initiative since the first European Native American contact” (Embree, Greetham, Norman, and Luthey, Legislative Summit, Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association, 2019).

When gaming became an option, the Chickasaw Nation was positioned for the next step. It would seem there had begun to be an element of comfort with Indian gaming (i.e., bingo halls) in the State and Oklahomans were beginning to see jobs created and some revenue generated back into the tribes. While the public view of gaming was shifting, there was also a need from the horse track racing/horsemen industry, due to a waning Oklahoma market, to better compete with surrounding states. This industry segment began to press for gaming as

²Greetham, S., (2015), An interview with Chickasaw Nation Legal Counsel by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Ada, OK, 3/6/2015.

well and aligned with the tribes to pursue the effort of passing casino gaming in Oklahoma (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).³ Those two factors would add to the mix the need for more education funding in the State of Oklahoma as a mechanism to invoke more public support. Per comments by William Norman as a part of the Oklahoma Tribal Gaming panel, it worked (Embree, Greatham, Norman, and Luthey, Legislative Summit, Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association, 2019). In 2004, the big gaming tribes in Oklahoma (Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee Nations), as well as the horse racing industry, negotiated a tribal gaming compact with the State of Oklahoma. Tribal gaming compacts are essentially a business agreement between tribal and state government and in this case was for the gaming being done by tribes. Voters approved State Question 712, which enacted the State-Tribal Gaming Act. It was the compacting between the State and the Indian tribes, that set up two principal components including the regulation of Class III gaming, as well as authorized gaming terminals at three Oklahoma racetracks (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

Blatt (2015) notes that under the compact, tribes were allowed to operate Class III games in return for making exclusivity payments to the state. “The state’s share of adjusted gross revenues begins at four percent of tribal games subject to the compact (10 percent for card games), and at 10 percent of revenues from racetrack gaming’ (Blatt, Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2015). Blatt attributes 86% of tribal gaming revenue to electronic games. Card games accounted for the other 14%. Former Governor Brad Henry was in the Office as Governor of the State of Oklahoma when State Question 712 was voted in by the people of the State. He

³ McDaniel, S., (2017), An interview with Former Choctaw Administrator by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Durant, OK, 9/27/2017.

notes that the “question itself (SQ 712) has created tens of thousands of new jobs, has increased economic activity in our state by billions of dollars, has created destinations all across our state where people come from outside our state to stay, play, and spend money” (Henry, personal interview, 2014).⁴

It would seem gaming has accounted for a significant economic boon and job creation. The Chickasaws have emerged from the trial of their removal and significant challenges to adapting in a new land with considerable success. Chapter 2 will address the growth of economic development of the tribe including the addition of gaming in more detail. It is the biggest revenue generator for the Chickasaws and their revenue almost doubles that of the tribe closest to them in terms of revenue (the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma). The Chickasaws increased their revenue in gaming from \$42,303,348 in 2014 to \$53,514,192 in 2019. And although the Choctaws outnumber the Chickasaws in casino properties, with 22 compared to 21 for the Chickasaws, their revenue figure was still well below them in 2019 at \$17,892,546. Next on the list were the Cherokees with \$17,897,676.99 and the Muscogee (Creek) with \$9,250,360. The Chickasaws holding almost 16% of the casino properties in Oklahoma are outpacing 31 other Oklahoma tribes (Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Report, 2015 and 2020). Although there are significantly smaller tribes than the Chickasaws, there are also larger tribes as well (i.e., Choctaws and Cherokee). The Chickasaws are outpacing their other Oklahoma tribal nations significantly, at least in the gaming industry.

Research Questions:

⁴Henry, B., (2014), An interview with former Governor of the State of Oklahoma by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Norman, OK, 12/12/14.

This research draws upon different disciplines which might include history, political science, social science, business, and economics. It's contribution to the field of research is the value that comes from the interfacing of historical facts, economic and political challenges, as well as the impact of the navigation of those challenges for societal and cultural impact. The research poses several questions aimed at understanding the reason the Chickasaw Nation have seemingly outpaced other tribal nations with their success, even though at least a handful of those tribes have had very similar opportunities in the last three decades. The research seeks to delve into the question of why the Chickasaw Nation's success has been so markedly different in terms of revenue and economic prowess versus other Oklahoma tribes. The questions to be addressed in the research include:

1. What is the income generation model of the nation and how sustainable is it? What has been the most important factor in the Chickasaw Nation surpassing all other tribes in revenue? Has their approach to diversification of revenue into other business ventures created a sustainability model for the tribe to continue if gaming were to go away?
2. How important has political negotiation, lobbying, and legal actions been to their success would be better? Has the Chickasaws' ability to navigate politics and win battles in the courtroom as well as influence important state and federal political figures through lobbying efforts been the most important piece of their success?
3. What role has leadership played in the success of the Nation? For economic prosperity, is strong leadership or even the continuity of strong leadership

been the difference maker for successful tribes, and specifically, the Chickasaw Nation? How did strategic visioning of that leadership come into play for this tribe versus other tribes with similar continuity of leadership?

4. How pivotal is the geographical location of the Nation to its business success? How has the location of the Chickasaw Nation's jurisdictional boundaries imposed upon them by the federal government important in relation to the locations of their businesses, and specifically, gaming.
5. Has their model of revenue allotment been pivotal in their success? Tribal nations disperse revenue differently. Is the model for placing revenue back into programs and services versus an allotment or a check each year a better approach to helping tribal citizens?
6. What has been the social capital for the Chickasaw Nation as they utilized the revenue to increase the degree of programs and services as it relates to their mission of the tribe which is to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people.
7. Finally, sovereignty. It is by far, one of the most significant challenges Native Nations have encountered as they continue to address the consistent and relentless attempts at diminishing this inherent right. How has the Chickasaw Nation navigated this treacherous fight (then and now) and managed to be successful in those attempts?

Addressing these questions is to understand the reasons for the success of the Chickasaw Nation, and more importantly, if their formula for success is one that could be

replicated by other tribes or even other organizations. Literature on Oklahoma's big gaming tribes, and specifically, the Chickasaw Nation is, for the most part, limited as are the documented reasons behind the success they have enjoyed. The research conducted in this study is about what the contributing factors were for the Chickasaw tribe (and other Oklahoma tribes as well) to position them for economic self-sufficiency but delves much further for the reader as it takes one into essentially, how the Chickasaws built their upward trajectory of revenue and outpaced the other tribes in the process. This is critical as it is the aim of the research to find out what makes this tribe successful, especially as it pertains to Oklahoma tribes. As this researcher has been particularly close to individuals within the tribe and worked on collaborative efforts between state and federal programs, it has given personal interest into how this tribe has functioned as a successful organization still operating as a sovereign government. Each tribe is unique, and this researcher has been fascinated by watching the evolution of success of the Chickasaw Nation, not just in Indian Country but also as a corporate giant in Oklahoma. They are a political power in Oklahoma and to have emerged within the United States government's attempt to dismantle them multiple times is intriguing. Is it an approach that could be utilized with other tribes? This researcher would suggest the contributions of this dissertation present a different perspective than prior literature, including a multidisciplinary perspective, and could provide a model for other tribes who seek to develop more economically as well as in other ways that would impact their tribe positively.

Introduction to Literature Review

The academic research available around the Chickasaws is very limited and does not address the questions the researcher is posing. However, three researchers (Alexander, 1978), (McCoy, and Delashaw, 1993) and (Cobb, 1992) have specific research as it pertains to the Chickasaws that lend relevancy to their success (strategy, political process, education, etc.) though not specifically addressing the reasons behind the success as it predates the catapult period of revenue acquisition from 10 to over 25 years. Alexander delves into the impacts of self-determination and the impacts of it on the organization and organizational change. His literature is insightful as it provides a glimpse of the tribe as they were building on United States policy that had repositioned them for empowered self-governance. Yet, the research predates the onset of gaming and its impact by over 25 years. McCoy and Delashaw, (1993) conducted an exploratory study on Chickasaw tribal elections and one finds it interesting to see the politics evolving as they were growing stronger politically. And (Cobb, 1992) utilizes the stories of Chickasaw females from one of the Chickasaw's educational facilities (Bloomfield Academy), which gives one some insight into the importance of education for the Chickasaw Nation. Again, this study endorses some potential thought around the visioning the Chickasaws might have had as to how important education might play out for their tribal citizens. All contribute to understanding critical aspects of the development of the Nation as it is today. Yet, none address the reason for the success, and specifically, the success that outpaces Oklahoma tribes. This is where the contribution of this research will have its' most impact.

As it relates to Indian Country as a whole, there are, however, some reoccurring themes. The onset of tribal casinos and opportunity for gambling on their reservations and/or jurisdictional boundaries has been a game-changer for a lot of tribes. And existing academic

literature provides insight into how sovereignty, self-governance, and visionary leadership have all contributed to economic success for tribes.

Despite the differences noted, the current literature reviewed for the purpose of this research does suggest some common threads among successful tribes. Themes emerging included a variety of approaches to tribal economic development including the implication of gaming for tribes, the significance of locations of tribes, leadership as a critical element, the ability of a tribe to be strategic in their planning and businesses, the importance of a strong tribal government and the exercise of sovereignty, and the differences surrounding the allocation of resources. While one could argue each of these themes could be a weighted factor in the success of a tribe, one must consider, have any of those factors or a combination of those have been the most important piece? The research seeks to address what the current literature omits regarding the factors most important to tribes in being economically successful especially as it pertains to Oklahoma tribes.

The big gaming tribes such as the Nations of the Chickasaws, the Choctaws, and the Cherokees and their business strategies remain, for the most part, unaddressed in the existing literature; this even though their revenue stream is significant when compared to other tribes. And furthermore, that literature does not address what has, placed them as frontrunners in terms of economic development in Oklahoma. More importantly, the literature seems to have significant gaps in assessing the sustainability of these strategies over a significant period of time, though it does touch on the diversification strategy on some of the Native American Indian tribes.

It is these gaps in the literature, which the thesis seeks to fill and address. The historical context as it relates to success and the onset of economic development through contracting, acquisition of businesses, to finally gaming that provided an opportunity for the Chickasaw Nation, as well as other Oklahoma tribes, will be detailed. Interviews with tribal citizens, leaders, as well as decision makers across the State will contribute significantly to developing the story of the Chickasaw success as will documents acquired from the Nation that help demonstrate the growth and success. More specifically, it will address the absence in the current literature of any sustained or detailed micro study of what has made the Chickasaw Nation seem to be successful entrepreneurs.

Literature Review

Varied Approaches by Tribes to Economic Development:

Before one delves into the reasons behind the success, what insights can be drawn from the available literature? What is it that one already knows by reviewing authors who have presumably identified strong economic development in tribal nations or the characteristics of a tribe with a successful business model? Has the business plan or strategic methodology of the Chickasaw Nation already been identified as a model and have the identified tribes within the literature done similar things? Historically, it would seem strong (and continuous) leadership, government structure, sovereignty, a significant revenue stream, strategic planning, political savvy, and geographic location emerge as possible significant factors that contribute to the success of the Chickasaw Nation. But one must delve into one pivotal factor to discern if simply the onset of gaming and the significant revenue that followed made the difference for the

success. Again, research delves into successful economic models but seems relatively limited in the arena as it pertains to the big gaming tribes, especially in Oklahoma, and specifically what appears to be a very successful tribe – the Chickasaw Nation.

Research around economic development seems to dedicate a significant proportion of the literature to models that relate to reservation Indians such as Kim's *The Economic Impacts of American Indian Casinos* (Kim, 2006) and Miller's *Reservation Capitalism* (Miller, 2012). One should note that a tribe living on a reservation in Arizona is quite different from a tribe living within jurisdictional boundaries in Oklahoma. There will be significant factors that impact the ability of a tribe to be economically successful such as the way they uphold their sovereignty, their governmental structure, resources available for economic development, leadership, and strategy, as well as their location, among other things.

Per the literature noted, the opportunity for gaming for tribal nations does matter. Miller's *Reservation Capitalism* (2012) delves into the history of some of the American Indian economies and the diversity it demonstrates as it relates to economic development models. He investigates why American Indian tribes went from self-sustaining entities to being among the poorest groups in the United States. Miller (2012) notes there are 565 federally recognized tribes, and they range from small to large in terms of population and reservation size. Tribal lands can be extremely rural or can be in significant urban settings, so it is logical to assume the economic activity is varied. Miller shows that the 1990s saw the income levels of Native American families rise across the U.S. He notes this is not attributed entirely to gaming activity, as the rate of increase in income levels was higher for areas where tribes resided without gaming (33%) versus tribal areas with gaming at 24% (Miller, 2012). Those still fell significantly

below the income average for the American household. Some of the diversification of economic development that Miller discusses includes revenue generation from timber, minerals, land leasing, manufacturing, agriculture, ranching, government administration, tourism, intertribal and international business, fishing, water, and housing. He provides insight on the economic activity of three specific tribes including the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, and the Hoopa Valley Tribe of California (Miller, 2012). Miller's summary of these three tribes and their economic activities allows the reader to examine how they have worked to create remarkable economic climates within their tribes. Two of the tribes (the Eastern Shawnee Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation) have utilized gaming as a catalyst for economic growth. However, the Hoopa Tribe has had to be more creative in their rural area. This is demonstrative that other paths than gaming have been pursued for economic growth.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation utilize gaming, agriculture, timber, livestock, technology, recreation, hunting, fishing, and a tribally owned market, gas station/truck stop, trailer court, and grain elevators. He notes their operating budget went from 0 in 1968 to \$126 million by January of 2006 (Miller, 2012). Similarly, the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, the tribe, that had a budget of \$50 in the 1950s-1960s and no economic activity grew to over \$100 million invested in stocks and bonds by 2009 (Miller, 2012).

The Hoopa Valley Tribe in California is extremely rural but, according to Miller, the tribe has done a significant amount of economic growth in the past 20 years. In 2009, the Hoopa Valley Tribe had \$75 million annual budget, which had doubled from the ten years prior to that.

Economic development for the Hoopa Valley Tribe comes in the form of a casino, motel, campground, and a gas station/mini market. However, their rural location has allowed them the opportunity to expand into other economic drivers including the Hoopa Forest Industries, gravel mining, and a modular home construction plant as well (Miller, 2012). In reviewing the economic activity of these tribes, Miller notes the variety of approaches utilized by tribes that allow them to demonstrate their ability to strategize and maximize their resources for economic growth as well as use governmental and sovereign advantages in their planning. He suggests that tribal governments need to expand opportunities for economic and business activities in Indian Country and he purports that opportunity is enormous as it relates to Indian-owned businesses and reservation economies. Miller goes on to suggest tribes also have a role in supporting that through incentives for economic activity. But, while Miller (2012) provides insight into a varied strategy by three different tribes, it should be noted that gaming does, in fact, play a significant role in economic development for each of them. Miller's research devotes an entire chapter to discuss tribal gaming, citing it as the most successful endeavor in modern day Indian country. Miller notes the tribes involved in gaming brought in gross receipts of \$5.4 billion (1995), \$11 billion (2000), \$19.5 billion in 2004, and 26.7 billion (2008). Miller also discusses the impact it has on federal and state revenues as well as the number of non-Indians that are employed in the industry. He notes that in 2007, gaming establishments for tribes accounted for 670,000 employees in 28 different states. His research also suggests the controversy associated with it including the negative effects of the impact it might have on traditional Indian culture and pathological gambling. Also, of note is his mention of challenges associated with gaming. One includes that of revenue sharing as a part of the deal as is

currently in place in Oklahoma with the tribal compacts and a percentage going back to the State of Oklahoma from gaming. The second involves the threat of saturation of the gaming market as the number of casinos increases. Still, despite its challenges, it is suggested as a plausible approach for economic growth.

Other authors also stress the economic importance of gaming to tribes. Mark Fogarty discusses Indian gaming revenue accelerated in 2015 more than doubling 2014 - such as gaming, retail, housing farming/ranching, tourism, and Internet services. He notes that gaming seems to be the most significant citing a 2017 accounted for \$30.5 billion in revenues which was a record for the industry at that time (Fogarty, Indian Country Media Network, 2017).

Other researchers acknowledge that gaming is a unique strategy utilized for economic development that has enabled tribes to acquire revenue to administer their tribal programs and services (Schaap, 2010), (Gordon, 2010) and (Cornell and Kalt, 2010). According to the National Indian Gaming Association, "2019 marked the Indian gaming industry's highest ever revenue report. During FY19, nearly every NIGC region experienced growth. The Oklahoma City region saw the largest increase of 7.7%," (Harris, National Indian Gaming Commission, 2020). The press release quotes NIGC Chairman E. Sequoyah Simermeyer "healthy tribal economies are important to promoting the tribal self-sufficiency envisioned in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. The growth reflected in the 2019 gaming revenue demonstrates the strength of tribal economies in recent years. The Indian gaming industry is a vital component to many tribal economies across the country." The tribal gaming industry, however, is highly regulated. Per the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), gaming revenue can only be utilized for the following: "1) fund tribal government operations, 2) provide for the general welfare of the Indian tribe

and its members; 3) promote tribal economic development; 4) donate to charitable organizations, 5) help fund operations of local government agencies” (Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit, Oklahoma Office of State Finance, 2021). In essence, the revenue can be utilized to address infrastructure, provide educational opportunities, and services to the tribal citizens. The allocation of that revenue, per the guidelines, varies by tribe. Improved health and general welfare of tribal members have been attributed, in part, to gaming revenues being placed back into tribal programs and services. Revenue has also provided tribes with the opportunity to contribute to local economies through contributions of taxes, employment opportunities for non-Indians, shared revenue, and charitable donations. The increased revenue and the cascade of benefits to tribes is demonstrative of how gaming has changed many tribes’ ability to acquire revenue for the benefit of their tribe.

Interestingly enough, as some researchers will note, one cannot understand Indian gaming without understanding the sovereignty of Native Nations and their legal and political status within the United States government (Light and Rand, 2005). Their book *Indian Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty – The Casino Compromise* is written to explain tribal sovereignty, the how and why Indian gaming is a political phenomenon, and how sovereignty for the tribes and gaming presents an opportunity to view the success around gaming and the opportunity for policy reform (Light and Rand, 2005, p. 6). The evolution of Native American history along with the societal impacts of gaming is presented. Time is spent in the research around why one would consider gaming for Indians as a type of “welfare?” One quote from a former Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Assistant Secretary Ada Deer notes, “that whenever tribes show progress in their self-determination and economic development, it seems that the dominant society wants

to sweep that away” (Light and Rand, 2005, p. 127). This is further reiterated with a Bureau of Indian Affairs Representative Vincent Lovett when quoted “They are just exercising the same rights of any other Americans to go into business and make money. If they have an advantage, that is just the way it is – Why not? The Indians certainly have not had all the advantages in a lot of other ways in this country” (Mitchell, 2016, p. 28)

Light and Rand (2014) in their later research describe tribal sovereignty and Indian gaming prior to 1988 as well as the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 including the National Indian Gaming Commission and Classes of Gaming. Legal developments, the role of politics and policy, political issues and policy outcomes and the future of Indian gaming. It is noted in this book that “tribes continue to frame Indian gaming as a vehicle through which to further self-governance and economic sufficiency, and more recently as the foundation for tribal-state partnerships to support both tribal and local economies” (Light and Rand, 2014, p. 138). In that vein one should consider a comment from Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby noted in the 1996 research of W. Dale Mason in which Governor Anoatubby responds to a dispute regarding taxing cigarettes at smoke shops owned by Indian tribes. The then and current, as of 2023, Chickasaw Nation Governor agreed with then Cherokee Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller by noting the opportunity to negotiate an agreement was indicative of their sovereign status. Governor Anoatubby said “this government-to-government compact is the most reasonable method of settling our disputes. It is a true exercise of sovereignty” (Mason, 1996, p. 188).

An interesting background is provided by Mitchell’s research, entitled *Wampum: How Indian Tribes, the Mafia, and an Inattentive Congress Invented Indian Gaming and Created a \$28 Billion Gambling Empire* (Mitchell, 2016). He notes that in 2010 one of all Americans of the

age of 21 and older, which equates to 60 million people had been in a casino. A substantial statistic to be considered. He notes that the powers which are vested within an Indian tribe are not delegated but rather inherent and have never been extinguished. He provides detailed research around the history of Indian gaming and the parts played by the aforementioned powers in the title of the research (Mitchell, 2016). His research is fascinating as he shares much of the behind-the-scenes efforts utilized which resulted in what we know as Indian gaming today.

There does, however, seem to be myths associated around Native tribes and gaming. There are factions that adhere to some commonly held myths around tribes and casinos. This researcher has witnessed these misconceptions firsthand as a citizen of Oklahoma and one that resides in an area of the State where the Chickasaws and Choctaws operate multiple casinos. Many people still perceive tribes as those who do not pay taxes, receive a check every month from the federal government, and generally, do not contribute to the overall economy as they operate casinos and profit immensely in the State of Oklahoma. There are factions of Oklahomans, both educated and uneducated, who remain somewhat prejudicial towards the Native Americans and their success in gaming. While undocumented in academic research regarding these Oklahoma tribes, there are journalism pieces that address this, and one should note those myths as it will be important later in this research. Particularly, as it regards the impact these perceived myths have on challenges tribes continue to have, particularly in the State of Oklahoma even as recently as 2022. In a 2017 article in an Indian publication, *The Myth of Indian Casino Riches*, Dwanna K, Robertson suggests that the common misconception around Indian Casinos is that every tribe has a casino in which every Indian has a job, and all

receive profits from the casinos. Those suggested misconceptions can be challenged.

According to the National Indian Gaming Commission governmental website, (2019) there are only 238 with a total of 474 gaming operations. That is only 50% of the 573 federally recognized tribes (National Congress of American Indians, 2019). Fact checking dispels the myth regarding all tribes engaging in casino gambling and the others should be addressed as well.

Miller (2012) notes that in 2007 it was estimated that Indian gaming generated 670,000 jobs and that 75% were jobs held by non-Indians. Contrary to the myth, those employees are required to pay federal, state, and local taxes. Oftentimes those jobs are held in rural areas where unemployment is higher, and more workplaces are needed for both Indians and non-Indians. It would seem, the workforce, at least in tribal casinos, is mostly made up of a non-Indian workforce and could dissipate the rumor associated with every Indian having a job in a casino.

To further address the myths of Indian tribes and gaming, it should be noted that while the IGRA has provided five purposes for gaming revenue (noted previously), it does also allow those profits to go in part or all to tribal citizens on a per capita basis. That being noted, according to Miller (2012) 75% of gaming tribes choose to retain gaming profits to perform tribal operations, invest, or engage in economic diversification rather than disperse to tribal members. This would suggest it is a myth that all Indians receive a check from casino profits.

Finally, researchers suggest gaming is a highly politicized issue for tribes. It is perceived that many of the public and political leaders believe that gaming increases crime in the areas

where casinos are located. This perception is addressed by studies that have been conducted by non-partial organizations (Miller, 2012).

Societal Impacts of Gaming:

There are secondary effects of gambling including the controversial moral aspect as discussed by (Miller, 2012). He discusses the problem of gambling addictions. He notes a 1999 study by the National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC) that indicates that by 1998 one to almost two percent of the United States population could be considered pathological gamblers at one point in their lives. He also discusses the positive effects in terms of employment and enhanced tribal services that gambling revenues have brought to tribal citizens.

Along the same lines in assessing negative impacts of gaming as a revenue source for Native Americans, another piece of literature discusses the social and economic impact of Native American casinos. This research suggests there may be significant social implications for casinos and gambling being an integral part of Indian Country economic development. Addressing pathological gambling is something Oklahoma has addressed as a State to some extent with the allocation from tribal revenue. (Blatt, 2015) notes in an Oklahoma Policy Institute blog on Oklahoma gaming revenues that Oklahoma, per the agreement with the tribe, does allocate an initial \$250,000 to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for gambling education and treatment. After that initial contribution, 87.5 percent is provided to the 1017 Education Reform Fund and the remaining 12.5 percent is placed in the General Revenue Fund for the State. However, according to the Tribal Court Clearinghouse, the national prevalence rate for lifetime pathological gambling is 0.8 compared to alcohol

dependence at 13.8%, drugs at 6.2%, and major depression at 6.4%. Indian tribes also often have resources in the form of programs for gambling addiction (Native Gaming Resources, 2021). Patterson, Wolf, Welte, Varnes, Tidwell and Spicer (2014) also provide research on the prevalence of problem gambling among Native Americans. The research suggests that the opportunity for gaming poses a threat to Native Americans as they have twice the rate (19%) of problem gambling in the national sample (8%). On the positive side, it is noted that young adults are moving back to the reservations, employment rates are rising, and there seems to be a decline in poverty rates. On the negative side, (Gorman, 2021) notes a “10% increase in auto thefts, larceny, violent crime, and bankruptcy in counties four years after a casino has opened, and an increase in bankruptcies within 50 miles of a new casino” (Gorman, 2021, p. 1). The Oklahoma Association on Problem Gambling and Gaming (OAPGG) notes there are 6.2% of adults in Oklahoma with a gambling disorder, 73% of adults with a gambling disorder who also suffer from alcohol use disorder, and 20% of adults with a gambling disorder who attempt suicide (Oklahoma Association on Problem Gambling and Gaming (OAPGG), 2023). In summary, it would seem there are some significant moral issues to consider from both a positive and negative side around gaming and Native Americans.

Researchers that suggest there are many positive aspects of gaming including the significant impact not only from an economic standpoint, but also for the benefit of the healthcare and social needs of its people. It can also benefit the communities, regions, and states in which the tribe resides through economic growth, charitable contributions, and helping to build and sustain infrastructure (Schaap, 2010), (Miller, 2012), (Kim, 2013), (Gordon, 2010) and (Cornell and Jorgenson, 2010). Despite these benefits to Native Americans as well as

non-Native Americans, challenges exist for tribes in gaming. One such challenge that occurred in 2020 was the challenge of negotiations with the Governor of the State of Oklahoma regarding the compact's renewal. Negotiations regarding the renewal did not occur between the tribes and the State prior to the expiration. The tribes contended that the compact remained the same if other organizations were given authorization to provide electronic gaming. In this case, that included the Oklahoma Horse Racing Commission, and that authorization was given just prior to the expiration date. When the Governor purported it did not automatically renew, the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw tribes filed a lawsuit December 31, 2019, in federal court asking for the U.S. District Court to rule the gaming compact did, in fact, automatically renew. U.S. District Court Judge Timothy DeGiusti did rule in favor of the tribes (K. Miller, The Washington Post, 2020). This challenge is demonstrative of the issues tribes continue to face in their efforts around economic development.

Gaming: Saturation vs. New Markets:

As gaming has been on an upward trajectory for almost 20 years raises the question as to whether gaming revenues have peaked in Oklahoma yet. (Blatt, Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2015) notes that Oklahoma gaming revenues grew rapidly after State Question 712, which was the bill that allowed for Class III gaming in the State, passed. The revenue reached \$132.1 million in FY 2010 but notes growth in four years following were much more modest. Blatt does notes that in Fiscal Year 2014 that revenues from gaming declined. Revenues fell by \$5.7 million which would be 3.6% (Blatt, Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2015). One should note that gaming revenues in Oklahoma fell in Fiscal Year 2020 and the exclusivity fees collected by the State of Oklahoma were 16.6% below FY 2019. Per the Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit

Annual Report, this is a first since the 2014 year (Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit, Office of Management and Enterprise Services, 2021). Tribal gaming is not immune, so to speak, to a global pandemic.

(Miller, 2012) notes that traditionally gambling in the United States is on a 70-year cycle with a roller coaster of ups and downs as it pertains to interest and legality. If this holds true, the gaming could be waning in the coming decades. Based on this research there could be a saturation point where societal perception, legal issues, or markets may change. This remains a possible threat for this type of economic development.

Some of the literature has suggested the need for diversification, which is further discussed in the article around Native American tribes venturing out of the casino business by Conrad Wilson. In an article around tribes venturing into the casino business discusses the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe in central Minnesota that has moved beyond gaming to the purchase of hotels in downtown St. Paul. The article cites the presence of non-tribal gaming and the competition that presents to the tribes. Wilson purports, tribal leaders with business prowess utilize diversification strategies to prepare for sustainment and future economic growth (Wilson, Native American Tribes Venture Out of Casino Business, National Public Radio, 2013). If gaming is indeed becoming a saturated market in some areas, perhaps tribes should continue to look at ways to not be held hostage by only one industry that generates revenue.

While gaming in its traditional form may be looking at saturation, gaming also has the potential to expand its reach (Davis, Smarter Plans for Tribal Economic Development, IndianZ, 2013) offers up E-commerce as a possible solution to become the great equalizer for Indian country, in that it can level the playing field as it regards geographical limitations. He notes that

some tribes are involved with exploring E-commerce with Internet gaming. He also points out that this can be limited due to the availability of Internet access on reservation and tribal lands. Yet, tribes have begun to look at ways to establish ordinances and regulatory oversight for this type of venture (Davis, Smarter Plans for Tribal Economic Development, IndianZ, 2013). This could also present a challenge as significant broadband issues in rural areas exists.

Critical Role of Location for Tribes:

As has been discussed, gaming can be impacted significantly by the location of its facilities. However, researchers suggest location is critical for other types of economic development for Native American tribes as well. One should note that tribes have been allocated their resources and location because of government assignments of reservations or delineations of their tribal nation territory or boundaries. Like Miller (2012) that noted the significant factor of location with the Shawnee and Umatilla Indians, Annette Alvarez also draws a correlation between growth and location noting the uniqueness of Indian country and the variety of resources and levels of needs/challenges. She notes how some have significant natural resources and some are in more growing metro areas which are more advantageous for gambling, retail, and hospitality (Alvarez, Native American Tribes and Economic Development, Urban Land Magazine, 2011). If tribal lands are close enough to commercial activity, then a successful casino, hotel, or conference center can produce revenue. Often the rural nature of tribal land prohibits this type of economic activity. There are challenges associated with investments into key infrastructure in rural areas. These challenges can perpetuate unemployment, economic development, and poverty. Additionally, Schaap (2010) notes the impact location can have on economic success as many tribes are in rural areas and do not have

access to larger, more urban markets. It would seem location can be a major factor is it pertains to economic growth for a tribe.

Importance of a Strong Tribal Government and Sovereignty:

Researchers have offered up suggestions around what can make a difference for tribes in terms of economic development (Miller, 2012) and (Cornell and Kalt, 2007) both address the importance of strong tribal governments as it relates to economic development. Miller (2012) suggests that many tribal governments are not business friendly. His research suggests that a lack of experience and challenges associated with complicated business deals and contractual issues can be daunting for a tribe. Miller goes on to discuss how time invested in dealing with tribal bureaucracy could be frustrating to those attempting to do business with the tribes and that they may have to deal with multiple levels of knowledge, experience, and helpfulness. He cites a 1994 study in which tribal leaders suggested the barriers to growing economics within tribes. They included “1) a lack of capital resources; 2) lack of economic resources and an inability to obtain capital; 3) lack of natural resources; 4) lack of trained management; and 5) lack of trained personnel” (Miller, 2012, p. 127). He suggests time must be invested in creating functioning reservation economies that includes tribal institutions and laws, infrastructures, supporting Native American owned businesses, and potential strategies with housing, banking, rural partnerships, intertribal businesses and investments, the Small Business Administration and Department of Defense, and encouraging entrepreneurship (Miller, 2012). He reiterates that Indian Country as a whole, remains poor and encourages the development of capitalism, socialism, and free market entrepreneurship. The opportunity to improve the economic situations can spur the enhancement of better health, education, and improved quality of life

on reservations (Miller, 2012). It could be surmised Miller recognizes the need for social capital to be gained in Native American economies and the importance of developing infrastructure to support many types of entrepreneurial activities.

Additionally, Cornell and Kalt (2007) do pose key questions and offer some suggestions as to what the secret of such strong economic performance by tribes is. They suggest that a successful approach that can be identified in these break-away (their term) nations is what they refer to as the nation-building approach. They suggest that the Native Nations utilizing this approach have created success within their societies. This can be observed not only in terms of economic prosperity, but also in the social and political arenas. Further, while acknowledging it can have major impact, they suggest this success is not primarily due to Native Nations entering the gaming industry.

Here Cornell and Kalt (2007) note the primary influence on their thinking is what has been done in the last 20 years by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development at Harvard University and, more recently, the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy at the University of Arizona. They suggest that in assessing successful strategies for tribal economic growth there is value in comparing what has been the standard approach to the nation-building approach, which are terms utilized in their research (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

An explanation of the difference in the two approaches is necessary to understand the comparison. Cornell and Kalt's description of the nation-building approach includes five primary characteristics which includes the assertion of decision-making power by the Native nation self-rule or (sovereignty), support of decisions by an effective government structure, a

government structure that parallels the political culture, decisions that are based on an overarching strategy, and leadership that seeks to build a nation and motivate and mobilize what needs to be done to accomplish that. Cornell and Kalt suggest that rather than pursuing funding and projects, it is more about creating an environment and political structure that facilitate for the growth and development of the nation.

Cornell and Kalt (2007) note that self-rule is critical in that it makes the development agenda the responsibility of the tribe rather than something passed off to them by the federal bureaucracy. Cornell and Kalt also believe that self-governance also provides accountability as tribes bear the consequences of the decisions which they make. A native tribe is therefore more likely to make better decisions regarding their future when they must be accountable to themselves rather than the federal government.

In the nation-building approach, Cornell and Kalt (2007) purport a sound government structure within the tribe is critical for economic development. They suggest it must be secure and rules must rest in a constitution with bylaws and processes. Daily business decisions and management must be protected from political intrusion. Those placed in the position of management must be allowed to conduct business as appropriate and be provided with the ability to do that effectively. Furthermore, Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest tribal courts must be free from political interference as well so that tribal citizens understand their disputes will be dealt with in a fair and just manner.

Another aspect of the nation-building approach noted by Cornell and Kalt (2007) is the parallel between the government structure and the indigenous culture. Native cultures have been very diverse and have had a variety of governmental structures that have included only a

few decision makers or maybe a council made up of multiple individuals. Furthermore, some native cultures have had their political power to be vested in a spiritual leader. Cornell and Kalt suggest those nations, which have aligned more with their native political traditions in their governance structure, may be more successful. They regard synergy between culture and government structure tends to be more prosperous (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest that within the nation-building approach, one will find strategic decision making rather than sporadic, impulsive decision-making orientation. They suggest this approach allows native tribes to look at the society they are trying to build or sustain as well as what policies and systems are needed to attract and retain people to that society. There is therefore much more of a societal focus compared to a narrow problem-solving approach to problems that arise.

Lastly, in the nation-building approach, Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest that leaders are those who seek to build their tribe and be a catalyst for economic growth. They see the leaders within those nations utilizing the standard approach as being there to simply distribute resources and gain support from their constituents by doing that. They differentiate the standard approach from the nation-building approach by suggesting those leaders within the nation-building cultures seek to put in place deliberate and strategic groundwork for economies that can be sustained for the improved community (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

Cornell and Kalt (2007) surmise there is more opportunity for advancing the objectives of the nation and transforming government within the nation-building approach. They suggest that with such an approach the leadership seeks to empower the citizens of the nation rather than in the standard approach where different groups might be fighting over resources or

power. They go on to say that where a nation exists that seeks to promote the nation's welfare and empower the people, it can be seen as legitimate by the people (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest the standard approach characteristics include decisions that are short-term and non-strategic; outside entities, rather than Native Nations, determining the development agenda; development being viewed as primarily an economic problem, culture seen as an obstacle to development, and leadership serving only to distribute resources. They suggest that in the standard approach, economic development is approached as an economic problem and that unemployment and low-income problems are brought on by market, available capital, or location. That being said, the researchers do note, the availability of natural resources on tribal lands, the location of the tribe as it relates to a gaming market, and the educational attainment level of the labor force within the tribe can have impact on the ability to develop economically (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

The nation-building approach as compared to the standard approach demonstrates two different ways in which a tribal entity might pursue economic development. Their research suggests the nation-building approach is far more successful than the standard approach. And in regard to that approach, Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest a scale of self-assessment along four dimensions of self-governance: governing institutions, business and economic development, intergovernmental relations, and leadership and note these are areas where one might find the most significant differences between the nations that use the standard approach and those that use the nation-building approach.

Other authors of note are the researchers associated with *The State of the Native Nations*. Henson, Taylor, Curtis, Cornell, Grant, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Lee (2008) and the Harvard

Project on American Indian Economic Development note the resilience of Native American tribes. Reference is made to the emergence of the tribes in recent years after European contact despite their confrontation with sicknesses, battles, economic challenges, attack to their self-governance and their languages and culture (Henson, Taylor, Curtis, Cornell, Grant, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Lee, 2008). Like some of the aforementioned researchers, it is suggested the Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Project Act of 1988, was a distinct shift in thinking by the federal government, which allowed Native tribes to manage themselves and their programs. Prior to the Self Determination Act, those programs and services were managed by the federal government. These researchers seem to emphasize the importance of a strong government structure within the tribes. They note three examples of tribes that have recognized the need to evaluate and amend their constitutions to make them stronger. They include the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Mississippi Band of Choctaws, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenae Tribes of the Flathead Reservation. They make mention of Wendell Chino, long-time chair of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, as suggesting that the keys to their success in the Mescaleros' route to sustainment in economic development was their changing of the constitution to provide more solidity (Henson, Taylor, Curtis, Cornell, Grant, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Lee, 2008). The shift that occurred with Self Determination continues to be noted as a significant piece of economic success in Indian Country.

Henson, Taylor, Curtis, Cornell, Grant, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Lee, (2008) also note the importance of a strong government structure within a tribe. Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde (2003) suggest as well that among the political factors set apart as difference makers are self-rule, capable institutions of self-governance, a strategic orientation, and a cultural match.

Kalt and Singer (2004) argue that the resurgence of sovereignty in Indian Country is the reason behind the economic successes being realized. Other researchers are adamant about the protection of sovereignty including Begay, Cornell, Jorgensen, and Pryor (2007) and (Thompson, American Indian Law Review, 2012). It would seem they believe tribal leaders need to possess the skill and ability to facilitate effective self-governance and protect tribal sovereignty.

McCoy and Delashaw (1993) provide insight into the evolution of the Chickasaws' three-branch government and the basis of the Chickasaw Nation Constitution. The research also provides a snapshot of what makes up the Constitution as it pertains to the three branches of government and requirements, duties, and powers of each branch. There is some comparison provided to a smaller tribe in a later chapter as it relates to the differences in the Constitution and style of government. The research will also make note of the literature by Cornell and Kalt (2007) as it pertains to insuring an effective governing body that strives to be void of infighting.

Henson, Taylor, Curtis, Cornell, Grant, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Lee, 2008 also cite the Self Determination era and the policies that emerged from the 1970s noting accountability and decisions being made that aligned with Native American culture. It is suggested by the authors that it was no longer a cookie cutter approach but much more rooted in what the tribes could create and sustain within their own cultures. They suggest that tribes are significantly stronger politically and financially through their ability to self-govern. Furthermore, the authors discuss how tribes have been involved in capacity building as it relates to civil society and community organizations, tribe-to-tribe relations, and sovereignty as critical elements for Native American tribes to be able to emerge and prosper economically. Again, the importance of sovereignty

and self-governance is noted as a key element and tribal control over their own destiny and their affairs is critical to success.

In addressing economic growth within Native Nations asserting that successful tribes have three essential characteristics. They include 1) they maintain the power of self-rule for their Native Nation, 2) they build strong institutions of self-government to provide sustainability and strength against political interference, and 3) their efforts are based in their culture yet evolve to align with progressive norms and customs to keep their tribes successful without leaving behind tribal priorities. He also reiterates what was in the State of the Nations, namely that a “one-size-fits-all policies” has created significant issues and challenges for the Native Nations in the United States (Henson, Taylor, Curtis, Cornell, Grant, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Lee, 2008).

Leadership, a Critical Element in Advancing a Tribe:

Cornell and Kalt (2007) argue that leaders are nation-builders and mobilizers and that those leaders build on critical foundations for sustained development. They note that strategic decision-making is critical and provides a foundation for continuing development. Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt and Spilde, (2003) suggest it is indeed a powerful force for tribes going forward. Also, as it pertains to leadership, McCoy and Delashaw (1993) bring out the importance of linking culture of the tribe and its government and as a leader being responsive in recognizing the value of culture to the tribal citizens. Cornell, Jorgenson, Kalt, and Spilde (2003) also suggest the importance of placing great value on culture by leaders.

There are qualities of leaders that research suggests can be difference makers. One of those would be political astuteness and a leader’s ability to navigate relationships and rapport

with state and federal officials (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). This can be critical as tribes have had to navigate court systems in tribal lawsuits in arenas for advocacy and protection of tribal and natural resources. Many tribes have felt the need to become more and more involved in lobbying for tribal interests and other issues that would impact their world. Other articles in the research demonstrate the money that tribes often invest in protecting their interests. One article notes that organizations that engage in being organized in these efforts get much more impact than the average citizen (Gilens and Page, 2014). The tribes may see, like other organizations, a return on their investment in this arena. Another researcher suggests that tribal leaders should be educated in a variety of areas and notes specifically healthcare, education, social service programs and natural resource management as well as understanding the needs of youth, families, and elders (Allen, Indigenous Governance Database, 2004). As it relates to how these leadership attributes for tribal leaders suggested by researchers compared to other organizations, one sees some correlation and is noted. Collins and Porras (1997) denote leaders of other organizations possess qualities like persistence, strategic thinking, recruitment of quality workforce, and empowerment of people. It would seem many of the qualities, strategies, and engagement with decision-makers, are very similar for the tribal world as it is in the corporate world.

Diversity of Approaches by Tribes to Allocate Resources:

Another important discussion as it pertains to what makes a tribe successful is the issue of allocation of resources. Tribes vary on how they allocate revenue. Prior to the economic revitalization of Indian Country, the United States government allocated resources to tribes and played a part in creating cultures where tribal members were dependent on these sources. Self

Determination changed that when it reinvigorated the ability for tribes to contract with the government and acquire their own resources through administering grants. This transition has been important to tribes in moving into self-supporting entities. It is also important to note that that in some tribes, per capita payments (individual checks) are made to all tribal members from tribal revenue. Similar to Robertson (2017) who purports poverty increases when distribution of gambling revenues returns to members rather than the tribe, Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest that where socioeconomic challenges exist, tribal members may want the resources distributed in the short term versus investing it back into the tribe for tribal services. Another research article suggests it is important to prevent creating a culture of dependency within a tribe (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003).

Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest that those tribes who are engaged in the standard approach vs. the nation-building approach will look at distributing resources to tribal members to gain support from constituents. Distribution of resources (i.e., per capita checks distributed to membership), is an important component of tribes. Fremstad and Stegman (2015) suggest tribes should consider the design of per capita payments and make the effort to find a balance between payments and investments into the social and economic infrastructure of the tribes (Fremstad and Stegman, 2015).

Where payments are received by tribal citizens from revenue, tribes must first submit a revenue allocation plan and receive approval from the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior. According to an article from Tribal Government Gaming there are 370 tribes in the lower 48 states with 242 of those operating casinos. Those revenues assist with community infrastructure, health care, housing, education, and other services. However,

the article notes the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) reports 130 of the gaming tribes provide per-capita payments to tribal members/citizens. Per capita payments range in size depending on the success of the tribe. And, that many tribal leaders believe it is a huge political force in Indian Country that can impact a tribal community to increase a cycle of dependency rather than furthering education and job opportunities (Palmero, Chickasaw Election Results, news.com, 2019).

Challenges for Tribes:

Finally, a very significant challenge going forward that will be explored is that of blood quantum for Native Americans. The dilution of bloodlines can be a threat to the tribes. Membership rolls emerged from the General Allotment Act or the Dawes Act of 1887. What followed were tribes being encouraged to adopt membership rolls based on lineage and blood relationships (Schmidt, 2011). Schmidt addresses this in the research through raising questions around the increased number of Native Americans marrying non-Native Americans and how that implicated blood quantum, heritage, and identity. The blood quantum classification is eradicating those with Native American heritage. The alternative is going to a descentance model versus blood quantum to establish tribal membership. This also impacts leadership roles within tribes as when a minimum blood quantum is required (1/8 or 1/4 blood quantum for leaders) it reduces the number of qualified candidates for leadership. This may be one of the most critical issues for tribes going forward and will be discussed further in Chapter 5 regarding challenges facing tribes.

As the literature review provides a backdrop for what has been suggested as successful economic models, it also provides the opportunity to delve into a different business model that

appears to be extremely successful. Identifying the correlation, if any, of the suggested strategies or characteristics of the tribes outlined in the research with the Chickasaw Nation will be important. The research will also provide insight into how their strategy or methodology differed from other identified best practices.

Methodology

A variety of documents, resources, and key people were utilized to acquire various pieces of the story of the Chickasaws success. Annual reports, Chickasaw media (both written, websites, and video), Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce documents, federal and state government reports, gaming reports, minority statistical reports, United States congressional committee testimonies, and numerous state and national articles on tribes and, specifically the Chickasaws, will help generate a backdrop for the chapters as it relates to their acquisition and allocation of their revenue, disbursement of revenue resources, leadership opportunities, political battles, and potential threats to tribes as well as reasons for success and challenges ahead. Access to proprietary data regarding revenue generators, programs and services, and quarterly business reports will provide more specific data in terms of financials. This will establish the course and momentum of economic development, what the businesses were that were established during this critical period, their number, their success, and the expansion of their revenue stream. Access to documents within the Holisso Research Center located at the Chickasaw Cultural Center was also provided and the researcher was able to utilize some very early period documents from governmental perspectives. The State of the Nation addresses delivered by Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby from the last three

decades were also available and these will be utilized to analyze visioning, strategic planning, and goals in the documents. Additionally, relevant and insightful material has been acquired through 12 interviews with executive Chickasaw tribal leaders, Chickasaw Nation tribal legislators, Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce leaders, Chickasaw Nation Government Liaisons, consultants, long-time Chickasaw government employees, Chickasaw elders, other Oklahoma tribal leaders, and the former Governor of the State of Oklahoma who served during the time of the most significant era of growth with the tribes in Oklahoma. Several of the interviewees have been engaged as employees for the entire period of this significant trajectory of growth within the tribe. The intent of these interviews was to delve into the last 30 years to identify both the strategic, political, leadership and historical development of the tribe and its businesses as well as the seek to identify the difference maker that catapulted the Chickasaw Nation into the forefront of economic success.

Interviewees were selected based on recommendations by Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce CEO initially and then the list grew based on contacts and following leads from previous interviews. Interviews (except for one) were conducted in person and recorded (either by video when available) or recorded notes. Permission was given verbally on video interviews and then followed up by written permission.

Historical documents from earlier Chickasaw governments available at the Holisso Research Center at the Chickasaw Cultural Center, as well as Native American facilities were also utilized to obtain additional information. Visits were made to the Chickasaw Cultural Center, the Chickasaw Nation Capitol, and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian to obtain more insight and data. The researcher also had opportunities to derive

important data from being a part of presentations to Oklahoma leaders from the Chickasaw as well as other tribal leaders regarding tribes and their successes as it pertained to strategies, successes, and challenges for Native Nations.

It is important to note the challenges associated with the interviews and presentations as one might assume a somewhat slanted perception from those who have been involved with and continue to work and benefit from, the enterprise that is the Chickasaw Nation. This was taken into consideration when developing the narrative and the researcher sought out factual information when available to assess. Living within the jurisdictional boundaries of both the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations have afforded the researcher the opportunity to witness firsthand what both tribes have contributed to infrastructure, healthcare, education, philanthropies, etc. Also, as a citizen of Oklahoma and attending many events where the contributions have been significant to efforts that impact the health, education, and cultural environment of the State has provided a different perspective than others in other parts of our State or even the country. While effort will be placed on attempting to overcome this challenge and delve deeper into some of the nuances of the Nation as a successful business entity, there is acknowledgement by the researcher that this is material that must be handled with critical care. An objective approach was imperative for the researcher.

Chapter Summaries

The research will begin with a look into over 30 years of growth by the Chickasaw Nation. Chapter 2 will be examining how the tribe acquired its revenue starting first with the obtaining government contracting and then the purchases of businesses that followed. Some

of those purchases were not always successful but one observes how the tribe begins to build revenue to be able to continue to invest. Gaming emerges on the scene, and one will observe in this chapter how the Chickasaw Nation moves into more successful ventures and begins to diversify.

Chapter 3 will examine the resource allocation model for the Chickasaw Nation. This tribe has chosen, rather than allocate a check to tribal citizens in a per capita model, to invest into programs and services for their people. The revenue is funneled into a vast number of opportunities for Chickasaws and, in some cases, Native Americans to obtain assistance with needs in health, family services, education, housing, cultural services, wellness, as well as many more arenas. The research question will be addressed around what the actual formula for success in Chapter 4 is as it pertains to sovereignty and tribal governance structure, execution of strategic planning, allocation of resources, leadership, longevity of tribal leaders, navigating the courts, tribal lobbying, and location.

Chapter 5 will be a look into the future in terms of what are the challenges going forward for Chickasaw Nation (and possibly other tribes) including Texas legalizing gaming, the societal implications of gaming, a strong diversification strategy, political climates and their impact on tribes, negotiations with State government, navigating the courts, protection of sovereignty, the challenge of the dilution of blood quantum for the tribes, and maintaining strong, continuous leadership within the tribe.

Conclusion

This research delves into this successful tribe that, up until this point, has not been examined significantly in academic literature in this manner. The researcher has been privy to personal observation of the impact the Chickasaw Nation has had on not only the region in which their jurisdictional boundaries lie but also the benefits the State of Oklahoma has had because of the tribe's work and generosity. The researcher has also had direct access to tribal leaders and the opportunity to have personal observation of many conversations and strategies utilized by three different tribes over the course of the last twelve years. These opportunities are unique and will be particularly insightful as the story unfolds around the Chickasaw Nation.

Finally, the implications of this research could be valuable to other tribes in terms of economic success, social capital, political navigation, cultural enhancement and the concept of how a tribe can enhance the well-being of its citizens and the state in which it resides. As has been noted, up until this point, most academic literature has been completed around tribes that are reservation bound. Limited literature has been created on what this researcher refers to as the big gaming tribes of Oklahoma and none that has been located on the Chickasaw Nation and the essential reasons for their success. Native Nations, and possibly even other businesses or corporations, could also utilize the information for strategies around economic success. Regardless, this thesis serves to provide a unique contribution to academic literature as well as provide an intriguing look into what has become a successful Native American tribe. One could argue all those factors have played a role in their success, but this research believes the perfect storm of contributable factors is superseded by the long tenure of strategic leadership in a critical period of time would be the most significant piece of the puzzle.

Gaming has been very significant to the Chickasaw Nation. The success of the tribe has already been noted as it outpaces other tribes in Oklahoma including the two closest in “Oklahoma’s big gaming tribes” (both the Choctaw and Cherokee Nations). In the Chickasaw Nation Governor’s State of the Nation address in 2019, he notes record profits and revenues. That included increasing core business operations by 15 percent and net assets growing by 11 percent (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2019). Other than the tribes within the State of Oklahoma, the competition is suggested to be the Louisiana casinos, and Las Vegas. However, one needs to only look at the parking lot of WinStar Casinos to see the significant number of Texans finding their way to the Oklahoma Chickasaw-owned casino. WinStar is such a short distance to the Dallas/Fort Worth metro area, it is a reasonable alternative to the drive to Louisiana or a flight to Las Vegas for the other gaming venues. Thus, the market for gaming is substantial in the region. While location is, in fact, significant, one should note WinStar is close to the second largest major metropolises in the United States (Dallas-Fort Worth area) where an estimated 7.1 million lived in early 2015 (Steele, 2016). This is certainly opportunistic for the Chickasaws in this arena.

The success of the Chickasaw Nation has allowed them to build an economically diverse approach to funding their programs and services to tribal citizens. Clark (2009) notes the Nation had two employees in 1972. In 2019, it was reported the Chickasaw Nation employed more than 13,500 individuals (Chickasaw Nation Progress Report, 2019). In this context, it is important to note the Chickasaw Nation appears to return much of their revenue back into programs, services, and equity-building investments with the primary goal of economic self-sufficiency; so, if gaming ceases the programs and services can be continued. While gaming is

their major revenue generator, there is an aggressive diversification strategy in place for the Chickasaws and one that they are constantly evaluating and pursuing to ensure their portfolio goes way beyond simply gaming revenue. When then Chickasaw Nation Director of Development Dan Boren (now Chickasaw Nation Director of Commerce) was asked where revenue went, he responded, “it goes right back to Chickasaw citizens” (Mize, *The Oklahoman*, June 8, 2018).

The expenditure on the services themselves provides the opportunity for potential social impact to the Chickasaw Nation. A 107-page guide published in 2020 titled Programs and Services, outlines opportunities that the Nation provides. That list includes the opportunities for children and youth, community services, culture, education and training, elders, employment, enterprise and commerce, family, government, health and wellness, housing, and legal. Services and programs include items such as state of the art recreational facilities, transportation services, veterans’ programs, summer youth programs, sports camps, nutrition programs, internships, college scholarships, language and cultural enrichment programs, career services, and a healthcare system (Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services, 2020). The healthcare system includes a \$146 million Chickasaw Nation Medical Center. The 370,000-square-foot center includes a 72-bed hospital, an emergency department, a diabetes care center, a dental clinic, a diagnostic imaging center, a women’s health center, and offices for the tribe’s health program (Evans, *Native Times*, July 25, 2011).

Governor Anoatubby is quoted as saying:

“Today, revenues generated from our diversified business portfolio and economic development endeavors allows us to invest in the success of all Chickasaws. From

educational opportunities and health care programs to quality housing services and cultural connections, Chickasaws have more opportunities than ever before” (Chickasaw Nation Progress Report, 2021, p. 6).

It should be noted that this allocation of resources back into the tribe and its people versus a tribe that divides the revenue among tribal members or citizens, is noted and could be suggested as a more effective approach to helping a tribe have more to offer in programs and services.

This researcher has personally observed many charitable contributions and sponsorships to communities, regional, and state entities. Sponsorships are given annually to entities including universities, local sports teams, hospitals, foundations, leadership organizations, and a vast number of charitable organizations and can be observed on event programs, signage in hospitals or names of wings of facilities or on educational buildings. It is very common in the State of Oklahoma when this researcher has attended an event and opening of a program to find the Chickasaw Nation listed as a gold or silver sponsor upwards of \$1,000, \$5,000, and \$10,000 levels (or more). Additionally, if one attends a major sporting event in the State of Oklahoma whether it is a college or professional, one will find the Chickasaw Nation as a premier sponsor as well. These contributions to other entities, partnerships, and collaborations, could be viewed as the Chickasaw Nation contributing not only to their tribe but also to entities within the State of Oklahoma.

As one surveys the story to unfold regarding the Chickasaws Nation’s history of the progress made in the last four decades, this researcher considers terms such as adaptability, resilience, tenacity, initiative, and entrepreneurship. This is reminiscent of the last half of the

century in Indian Territory as noted by researcher and historian Amanda Cobb regarding the Chickasaw Nation and their positioning as it related to autonomy, self-sufficiency, and independence (Cobb, 1992).⁵

It would seem there was also value placed on educational attainment that can be considered with the Chickasaw Nation during the time they were relocated to Indian Territory. Quality educational institutions were founded by the tribe in collaboration with missionaries in 1852 while they were still being pursued by the United States military. One such example is Bloomfield Academy, a school for girls (Cobb, 1992).⁶ The tribe appears to continue to place value on education as one observes the investment they make in educational programming at all levels as well as scholarships as evidenced in listed programs and services (Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2020).

Also, it is noted and will be discussed how leadership in turbulent times and leadership for extended periods of time has impacted the Chickasaw Nation. Long leadership periods such as the one which included Chickasaw Nation Governor Douglas H. Johnston during the time periods of (1898-1902, 1904-1906 and then appointed for life [1939]). He is noted as what one might call politically savvy and had a willingness to engage with those responsible for organizing

⁵ Amanda Cobb, *Listening to our Grandmother's Stories*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 6. "The Chickasaws had not been relegated to a reservation and had achieved in the last half of the century in Indian Territory a much higher level of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and independence than most other tribal nations."

⁶ Amanda Cobb, *Listening to our Grandmother's Stories*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 6. "The Chickasaws founded Bloomfield, not because the federal government demanded it, but because the Chickasaw people knew that literacy training was crucial to their survival as a nation, to their preservation."

the Statehood of Oklahoma.⁷ Current Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby notes him as someone that “led our citizens and marked our path throughout that dark period, and all Chickasaws today owe him debt of gratitude.” Those early efforts around continuing to stay in the political game may be observed later in the research as discussion around lobbying efforts and courtroom battles are presented.

And one must also consider location of tribal land. It is interesting to consider whether the actual land allotment they were provided with by the U.S. Government could, be a major factor in their ability to locate marketable businesses? The jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation include 13 counties (Grady, McClain, Garvin, Pontotoc, Stephens, Carter, Murray, Johnston, Jefferson, Love, Marshall, Bryan, and Coal). More importantly, the Interstate 35 highway corridor runs right through the middle. One should consider if this has played a role in the economic development of the Chickasaw Nation as well as the proximity to two major metro areas (Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, and Oklahoma City, OK).

Finally, the importance of the ability to demonstrate political prowess, maintain their tribal governance structure, or the protection thereof, and the navigation of sovereignty is paramount to success in Indian Country. When the tribes were first removed to Indian Territory, now the State of Oklahoma one researcher notes that the Nations of the Chickasaws, Choctaws, Cherokees, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole, became known as the Five Civilized Tribes. This became a way to separate themselves from tribes of the Plains. It is also noted by

⁷Michael W. Lovegrove, *A Nation in Transition: Douglas Henry Johnston and the Chickasaws, 1898-1939*, (Chickasaw Press, 2009) p. 11. “Throughout the years, Johnston had the tenacity and strength to lobby Congress and secure beneficial legislation for his people. After statehood, he was aided by a perennially friendly Oklahoma congressional delegation that attempted to conclude tribal business.”

the author that this distinction was made as “these Indians made such remarkable social and political prowess” as they settled in their new home in Indian Territory (Debo, 1940, p. 5).⁸

Debo is also quoted as saying the Five Civilized Tribes “had a natural genius for politics” (qtd in Mason, 2000, p. 181).⁹

The tribes have had multiple threats to their sovereignty or the ability to govern themselves over the years. Many details of this importance will be discussed later in research but having that power to govern as a sovereign nation returned to them could quite possibly be their ace in the hole. Without it, they would not be able to operate in the manner they are today. “When Native Nations back up sovereignty with stable, fair, effective, and reliable governing institutions, they create an environment that is favorable to sustained economic development. In doing so, they increase their chances of improving community well-being” (Cornell and Kalt, p. 24). All these arenas in which the Chickasaws, alongside these other tribes, have facilitated for themselves what will be discussed at length as one looks at the reasons for tribal success. In referencing a compact from 1992 involving the Cherokee, Chickasaws, and Seminole Nations, once again noted, Chickasaw Nation Bill Anoatubby is quoted as saying “this government-to-government compact is the most reasonable method of settling our disputes. It is a true exercise of tribal sovereignty” (Mason, 2000, p. 188).

⁸ Idem, *The Five Civilized Tribes*, 1934 qtd in *And Still the Waters Run Dee*, Angie Debo, 1940, p. 5.

⁹Walter Dale Mason, *Indian Gaming – Tribal Sovereignty and American Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2000), p. 181. “Trained through countless generations in the proud democracy of primitive councils, they found their borrowed Anglo-American institutions in perfect harmony with their native development...Few communities have ever equaled these small Indian republics in political skill. These ‘republics’ survived relatively intact until just before statehood” Debo qtd in Mason.

Causal factors driving the success of the Chickasaw Nation's economic success and associated social and cultural achievements, a detailed consideration of more recent developments in the period since 1987 is critical to any explanation of what has occurred. For it is in that period that we see the economic growth take off for the Chickasaw Nation in the State of Oklahoma. It is also the period that Governor Bill Anoatubby has been in office as a leader for the Chickasaws. This period, its onset of gaming, as well as the other factors that may have impacted the growth already proposed will form the substance of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Infrastructure, Growth, and Gaming

Introduction

This storied history of the Chickasaw Nation, currently a two-billion-dollar empire leads to what has become significant revenue generator located in the heart of Indian Country, and specifically, south-central Oklahoma. The chapter will attempt to provide a macro account of the building of what appears to be at least an attempt at a diversified revenue stream for this organization, but which started with some very meager beginnings and significant challenges. A historical background of the Chickasaw Nation has been provided in the opening chapter but a brief mention of the period leading up to the significant growth period is necessary to set the stage for the discussion. It is important to make mention of the eras that brought about some of the earlier challenges experienced by tribes as it relates to policies of the federal

government. As the chapter progresses, one can observe that while, there have been federal laws and judicial rulings that affected tribal economic development, for the purpose of this research we will look at essentially what leads up to the most impactful era of revenue generation for the tribes but most specifically, the Chickasaw Nation. It could be a case for review for other tribal commerce strategies.

In setting up the progression of Native American tribes and their quest to be economically self-sustaining, it is important to note there have been multiple attempts by the federal government to assist and support tribes through various forms of legislation. Yet, there have been pieces of legislation meant to assimilate or even terminate tribes. The tribe's inherent right of sovereignty has always been threatened and remains critical to tribes for their ability to self-govern. It is imperative for the reader to note how critical a tribe's right to be recognized as a sovereign nation really is. Sovereignty is essentially the right as a tribal nation to be recognized as an equal and independent government. Threats to this sovereignty came in many forms throughout history. Greetham (2014) notes that United States law, as it pertains to Native Americans has historically left the legal rights and status of tribes in the hands of the U.S. government and yet, many times their interpretations and implementations threatened tribes' sovereignty. Many of the implementations of federal policy were devastating to the tribe's ability to have sustained economic development. The Self Determination Era became the pivotal piece for economic development for the tribes, which came about with the Self Determination Act of 1975 (Miller, 2014). This historical interference was extremely challenging for tribes to survive. Self-Determination was a difference maker as it gave the tribes their ability to self-govern again. Their decisions (along with the consequences) were placed

back into the hands of the tribes. They could, once again, self-govern (Cornell, Kalt, and Jorgenson, 2007).

The time period of the 1970's forward will be the crux of the chapter as it reveals how, what could be referred to as the Chickasaw Achievement, began. There is reflection on the importance of how essential the Self Determination Act was to tribes and the beginning of government contracting which began to position Native Americans for the economic resurgence they have experienced up to present day. The 1970's has been noted as a substantial time period for tribal opportunity and the protection of sovereignty and self-governance. As it pertains to self-governance, Public Law 91-495 was put in place in that period, which enabled the Five Civilized Tribes to elect their own leaders (Public Law 91-495, 1970). Prior to this the President of the United States had been appointing tribal leaders since 1907 (Clark, 2009). The changes in federal policy that would be put in place in the '70's allowed tribes, including the Chickasaw Nation, to assert their sovereignty through their ability to negotiate and collaborate with other sovereign entities (i.e., federal government in a nation-to-nation dialogue). Again, this sovereignty is a critical concept to understand as the recognition of it further allowed the tribes to once again, elect their own leadership and reestablish their constitutions and tribal governments. The time period was significant to provide for that inherent right (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

As that sovereignty was recognized, it provided the Chickasaw Nation with the ability to have significant control over tribal affairs and determine their own strategies for creating and sustaining their economic development as well as be accountable for their own self-governance. While one recognizes a significant era of this time period for tribes, it has been a

continual battle for tribes. Brian Gabbard, a CPA/consultant hired by the Chickasaw Nation since 1995 and a Chickasaw, notes in the discussion around sovereignty that few people have a clear understanding of what it means. He goes on to note that he believes the Chickasaws have invested more time and resources in protecting their sovereignty than most tribes. One should consider this observation as one contemplates reasons behind their success and whether this has had a significant degree of impact on the upward trajectory of that tribe (Gabbard, personal interview, 2015).¹⁰

As the story unfolds in the late 1990's and early 2000's, the history of gaming both nationally and within the State, will be presented. Gaming became the mechanism for tribes, and particularly the larger Oklahoma tribes, to propel themselves into revenue growth. The Chickasaws, owners of several highly successful casinos, have utilized that gaming revenue as an opportunity to grow in that industry to the point of outpacing every other tribe in terms of revenue. However, they have also been purposeful in diversification. A chronological presentation of their diversification efforts in other industries such as banking, government contracting, healthcare, tourism, and hotels will be discussed as it progresses through this same period of time. The growth demonstrated can be observed as substantial and gaming has provided the Chickasaws, as well as other tribes to diversify. It is an important element of the Chickasaw Nation growth story.

As the story unfolds, one may observe the historical legislation led them first through their resurgence into self-governance as well as the ability to conduct government contracting

¹⁰ Gabbard, B., (2015), An interview with Chickasaw Nation Tribal Consultant by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Oklahoma City, OK, 3/5/15.

enabling them to establish a revenue stream. Once their revenue generation began and they engaged in owning and operating a variety of types of businesses, they began to grow. When gaming came on the scene, the Chickasaws found themselves catapulting into a vast revenue stream that would allow them to grow their self-sustaining economy and invest back into Chickasaw citizens with more programs and services. Again, the research question remains as others had the same opportunity, what was the difference for the Chickasaws in terms of the formula for success? One will potentially observe how this era of time, the legislation implemented, the battle for sovereignty, the leadership, and the strategy placed the Chickasaws in a position of perceived success.

Establishing the Infrastructure:

As stated previously, the time period following the Self-Determination Act was a pivotal era for the Indian tribes not excluding the Chickasaw Nation and a business infrastructure would be important to establish for them to move forward. The era that followed the Self Determination Era gave the tribes the opportunity to conduct business for themselves and to contract for federal programs that were designed to serve the people. Prior to this time, these programs were being administered by federal employees at federal rates for salaries and benefits. The tribes knew the programs needed to be operated differently for their people than the way the government had, as this had helped foster dependency rather than self-sufficiency. With this change, the money was given back to the tribe to administer, and they were given the power to hire from within, run the programs, and provide the services at the rates they deemed appropriate. The opportunity to be self-sufficient through an infrastructure that allowed for the administration of needed programs and hiring from within the tribe (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

The '70's and Self Determination created new opportunities but also new challenges. Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby (2014) noted in a presentation to Leadership Oklahoma that the Chickasaw Nation needed to build the organization and a budget in order to deliver direct services to native people. The next step for the Chickasaws would be to establish an infrastructure that would support the organization, economic development activities, and ultimately, support services to the Chickasaw citizens. As one observes this time period and the work being done, one might perceive a sense of urgency within the Chickasaw tribe as it related to their positioning for self-sufficiency through economic development strategy. It could be speculated that their efforts through infrastructure, government contracting, significant legislation, and strategic visioning was setting the stage for the next phase of business and economic growth, each of which will be addressed in this section (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, Tribal Government, Leadership Oklahoma presentation, 2014).

The pursuit of winning federal funds in this era is further supported by an article in the *Chickasaw Times* in December of 2002 describing what was going on in the 1970's. This resulted in revenue generation. Those federal funds included Bureau of Indian Affairs money which consisted of things inclusive of higher education scholarships, secondary school programs (i.e., the Johnson O' Malley program designed to afford educational opportunities for elementary students), higher education student clothing allowances, social program funds such as child welfare, burial assistance, and general welfare assistance, money for tribal law enforcement, resources to expand or create tribal farming and ranching activities, and forestry (i.e., the conservation of timber lands on tribal trust properties for conservation of natural resources and fire eradication), as well as funds for tribal newsletters. Thus, alongside these

other funding opportunities previously noted, grants from the Department of Commerce's Office of Native American Programs provided resources for a planning department to be established. The federal government was finally providing tribes with programs that were empowering them to build their tribal governments into self-sustaining entities even to the point of the resources to set up strategic planning. That planning was to evolve the Chickasaw Nation into the next stage of revenue generation. In a 2002 *Chickasaw Times* article, Emil Farve, the Nation's first planner noted for example, that the Nation obtained almost \$2 million in federal grants during his first year (1974-75). Alexander (1978) notes that there was evidence the tribe was engaged in comprehensive planning and was directed to an overall economic development program document. It seemed to be a comprehensive effort and included a description of the Overall Economic Development Program, personnel involved, tribal enterprises with development impacts, the preparation, and a formulation and review of the program. The plan included an assessment of past development efforts which were, at that time (Fiscal Year 1977-Fiscal Year-1978) the Chickasaw Motor Inn and Restaurant, Kalihoma Community Facility and Cash Crop, Manpower (CETA), and Housing (Chickasaw Housing Authority). It also included project selection with job training, social, education, and environmental improvement, employment, and economic development. The outline concludes with tribal department assignment by project, prioritization of project, source of funding, and timetables. Alexander does note it seemed the motivation for a strong planning effort was the need for many of the federal funding agencies the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian Health Services (IHS), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to see a demonstrative effort around strategy in order to be eligible for certain projects. It was suggested it was a

comprehensive attempt at a plan being utilized by the Nation to advance their economic development efforts (Alexander, 1978).

Additionally, Alexander's research (1978) addresses the process being executed by the Nation during this time the Chickasaws included a strategic plan demonstrative of appropriate delegation of tasks with a strong leadership in place. He alludes to the leadership working to provide relevant management as well as increasing the participation of tribal citizens. There were efforts to involve tribal members more while including mechanisms in community to allow for the expression of tribal members' needs and desires. Six councils were set up in 1975 and 1976 and met at least once monthly. Alexander also notes the organization being set up included the advisory council made up of tribal members as well as a board of directors for the Housing Authority Board. The council and the board were involved in open discussion regarding issues impacting tribal businesses (Alexander, 1978). It would seem the Chickasaws were positioning structurally as well as being communicative and receptive to feedback from tribal citizens. This would assist the tribe in the next step for economic growth within the Nation.

Another important item noted by Alexander in his research is that of the recognition of strong leadership in the tribe at that point in time (1978). The Governor of the Chickasaw Nation would have been Overton James and Alexander cites him as strong in his role and "an influential, charismatic leader" (Alexander, 1978, p. 90). It must be noted this is the leader that would precede Governor Bill Anoatubby, who remains as of 2023, the leader of the Chickasaw Nation. This is significant to mention as one of the questions around the research is how important leadership has been or even continuity of leadership has been for the Chickasaws in

their success. Additionally, noted in Alexander's research, is the tribe's ability to attract talented individuals (both young and old) to take on tribal leadership roles. There is information cited that the tribe is "building a cadre of leaders and future leaders to aid in building a stronger tribal organization" (Alexander, 1978, p. 91). Succession planning would be important as a Nation moved forward.

In this era, acquisitions of businesses by the Chickasaw Nation were increasing and the employment of Native Americans was being acknowledged. Their purchases included a Sulphur motel as the first business venture for the tribe having a purchase price of \$139,000 from tribal funds and at the time of Alexander's publication (1978) was worth \$500,000. In 1976, the motel operation returned \$32,000 to the tribal treasury. In addition to this hotel and the government contracting revenue they were obtaining during this time; the Chickasaws' economic activity was furthered by the purchase of a trailer manufacturing company in 1976. The Chickasaws purchased the bankrupt Hickory King Trailer Manufacturing located in Tishomingo, Oklahoma for the purchase price of \$101,455. The company manufactured horse and stock trailers and employed 42 people. Half of the employees were Native American, and a non-Native American was retained as a manager but at the time of the 1978 research, had been replaced with a Native American. The employment of Native Americans was being noted and seemed to be of importance in that era (Alexander, 1978). It is relevant to note this is a topic that is considered within tribes. Diversification of businesses is important to tribes and many

look for ways for those acquisitions to employee tribal members or other Native Americans (Keechi, personal interview, 2018).¹¹

It might be implied that the Chickasaw Nation was being aggressive in their planning and moving forward in an organized systematic manner. One might wonder how they were faring versus other tribes. Alexander suggests they might have moved at a faster pace than other Oklahoma tribes with similar resources and opportunities. Alexander does make mention of his discussion of “Chickasaw effectiveness” with members of the tribe. He indicates that he found tribal members that would dispute they were the “most effective tribe in Oklahoma but would agree they were *among* those who could be given that designation” (Alexander, (1978), p. 96). It is important to note the growth that was occurring. There is a stark contrast of the assets and net worth between 1963 and 1981, which had grown by \$4.5 million. As the ‘80’s was approaching, the Chickasaws were beginning to accumulate assets and engage in different economic endeavors (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1987). Their strategic planning, organizational efforts, and economic aggressiveness was potentially positioning the tribe for more revenue growth as the opportunity arose.

As has been mentioned, the current Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, as of 2023, had started as an employee of the Chickasaw Nation in 1975 as the health services director and began his upward career trajectory to ultimately be the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation. His earlier time in tribal programs and businesses included this period of significant

¹¹Keechi, F., (2018), An interview with Delaware Nation Tribal Elder/Delaware Nation Industries Board Chair/Delaware Nation Investments Board Vice Chair by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Oklahoma City, OK, 3/10/18.

planning and organizational development. This information according to the Governor's biographical page on Chickasaw.net (2020).

In his first State of the Chickasaw Nation address to the Chickasaw people in 1987, he referenced his first financial report in 1981 at the 21st Annual Chickasaw Meeting. The importance of government contracting for the Chickasaws has been noted and businesses were being added. However, the concern remained regarding significant reliance on these governmental contracts as well as in regard to economic activities. Governor Anoatubby stated in his address in 1987, that the total budget was \$10,275,055 for FY87 (most being federal dollars) and made mention of the services offered including educational assistance, senior citizens' programs, health care, and nutritional assistance. Those services mentioned were being provided as a part of those federal grants but were providing the tribe with challenges. Anoatubby reflected on the funding provided by federal departments and agencies, and from that observation suggested that "while we are allowed certain latitude in the administration of these programs," the tribe was "limited by federal laws, rules and regulations which have been devised to govern the administration of those programs" (Chickasaw Nation Governor Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1987, p. 4). The reason might be speculated that tribes were still being held captive to some degree at least, by the federal government at that time. This could have been due not only to the limitation of funds, but also the usage of that money. Rather than allow the tribe to distribute the resources to address the needs of the citizens on a tribe-by-tribe basis, they were told how and what to spend the funds on. Governor Anoatubby also noted in his address, these programs (education, health, welfare, senior citizens, etc.) had specific goals and objectives and those determined budgeting. Native Americans, and in this

case the Chickasaws, seemed to still be addressing the push and pull of governmental controls and regulations. There is indication in his address that the Nation would push ahead as they addressed the issues noted and then went on to suggest that a more purposeful effort was being executed in development and infrastructure. He stated that a “realistic plan of development must be established...we must create a strong base and build toward a self-sufficient tribal government” (Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Chickasaw Nation Address, 1987, p. 12). And, the Chickasaws, were potentially, putting that in place due to their organizational efforts, strategic planning, and leadership positioning and execution.

Beginning Stages of Revenue Growth:

Positioning themselves for the next stage of growth would be important. They were continuing to acquire and diversify into a portfolio of activity, albeit slowly as efforts were noted with the hotel, construction company trailer manufacturing previously. Next would come bingo halls and a tobacco compact with the State and would be important moving forward. The Tobacco Compact with the State of Oklahoma, which was negotiated in 1992, would help with the increase in revenue for the Chickasaws. The Tobacco Compact allowed for a significant driver of growth in revenues as tobacco sales emerged and tribes began to open convenience stores (i.e., travel plazas) in the late '80's as a way to make money. Due to the fact tribes were able to sell untaxed cigarettes in these venues, to not only Native Americans, but also non-Native Americans, it was a successful venture. However, in 1988, the State of Oklahoma placed an injunction on the Citizen Pottawatomie Tribe to prevent the sale of untaxed cigarettes to non-tribal members. That was overruled in 1990 by the 10th Circuit Federal Court in Oklahoma City, which upheld rights for the tribes that the State could not tax sales made in

tribal jurisdictions. This ruling was reaffirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1991. It is important to note this was an example of how the government continued to try to assert their authority over a sovereign nation. Shortly following the ruling, in 1992, negotiations began around the tobacco compacts with the signing of Senate Bill 759. This allowed tribes to negotiate with the Office of the Governor around the excise tax to be levied on tobacco. Those compacts resulted in a lucrative business opportunity for the tribes as they enticed significant numbers of foot traffic into their travel plazas to obtain discounts on their tobacco product purchases. The placement of the tribes sitting on borders (Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Choctaws) resulted in large waves of out of state customers making the trip to Oklahoma to buy cartons of cigarettes in large quantities. This opportunity through tobacco sales opened the door for the Chickasaws to add more businesses as the profitability of the convenience stores was adding to their revenue base (Laux and Buckskin, 2015).

The cigarette compacts coincided with increased business in 1988 with the addition of bingo into the tribe's revenue generators as the Chickasaws were focusing more on economic development. The Chickasaws added Ada Bingo, the Ada Smoke Shop, the Chickasaw Motor Inn, and the Chickasaw Trading Post #1. The addition of another Chickasaw Trading Post was announced opening the next year (1989) as well (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1988). This new venture had potential to provide increased revenue for the tribe as they continued to pursue sustainable economic opportunities.

The development of these new businesses was still driven by the Chickasaws' continued primary goal "economic self-sufficiency for tribal government and citizens" (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1988, p. 3). The Chickasaw Nation

legislative body, which would be a key stakeholder in tribal development for the Chickasaws, created legislation that would allow a Chickasaw Nation Industrial Development Commission to be formed. The purpose noted was to assist the tribe in expanding their efforts in the arena of economic development but to also ensure they had the support of the Chickasaw legislature. Governor Anoatubby notes that this legislative piece provided for a more “favorable climate for business enterprises” had been adopted (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1989, p. 3). Their efforts in economic development seemed to be focused in three significant areas that included acquisition of more of their tribal land base, employment for Chickasaws, and the continued development of tribal businesses for the purpose of continuing to be self-sustained economically. That translated to, in 1989, as increasing their base to 986 acres creating more opportunity for tribal businesses and employment for tribal citizens, 52 more jobs for tribal citizens in Chickasaw businesses, and increased the assets by almost \$2 million for a network of the Chickasaw Nation at 1.8 million. Another important priority mentioned is the continued effort to reduce debts. The Governor noted, in his address, the Nation was at the strongest financial position they had been in history and appeared to continue to put economic development activities as a priority (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1989).

The success of the Chickasaw Nation Industrial Development Commission was quickly evident. In 1990, a number of new business ventures were launched by the Nation. These included the Chickasaw Chikasha Manufacturing, Goldsby Bingo, Atali Advertising, and the Chickasaw Tool Company. The Governor noted in his 1990 address that there had been significant success in the advertising and manufacturing businesses. It was suggested by the

Governor, some business ventures were yet to be proven due to delays including the Thackerville Bingo project. And, for the Chickasaw Nation, that for the first time in several years, all businesses were generating profits as well as providing employment for 65 people (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1990). The additional business ventures and the employment numbers were addressing, it seemed, the original objectives of the Commission.

The efforts around the development of the Commission with the legislative body of the Chickasaw Nation suggest they had recognized a need to continue to develop a business-friendly environment to grow the tribe. While it should be a legislative body for any Nation is a key stakeholder and it would be important for that group to be business savvy and progressive in their strategy. Shortly after the 1989 initiative of the Economic Industrial Development Commission was formed, Linda Briggs came on board as a Chickasaw legislator (early '90's) and brought experience from corporate America and big business. As the discussion with her during her interview centered around what was going on in the early years of growth, she reiterated that there were a lot of conversations around the possibilities of the Chickasaws entry into various businesses. She suggested there were lots of endless conversations around plans that were being initiated and executed and remembers the difficulty of one particular legislative meeting where they were trying to get a bill passed to build two truck stops. She remembers they got it done and references attending the groundbreaking ceremony where she grabbed a shovel and stood next to Governor Anoatubby and the pride with which she felt at that piece of

perceived progress (Briggs, personal interview, 2015).¹² It would seem this critical stakeholder (the tribal legislative body), despite challenges, was utilizing an increasingly friendly business environment and those with business astuteness to help the nation progress.

Another Chickasaw leader notes the economic activities that were going on in the era of the '90s. Neal McCaleb, a Chickasaw Nation citizen, employee of the Chickasaw Nation as Ambassador at Large, and a former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, Oklahoma State Legislator, Oklahoma's first Secretary of Transportation, Director of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority provided an interview with the researcher. He cites what could now be interpreted as a significantly historical addition to their portfolio regarding the economic growth of the Chickasaw Nation. He remembers breaking ground in 1991 on another bingo hall in Thackerville, Oklahoma which was at first was a pea patch located on the Oklahoma-Texas border. That bingo hall was called Touse Ishto, interpreted as big money. That particular bingo hall will see significant expansion eventually and be mentioned later in this chapter as a major economic driver of the Chickasaw Nation when casino gaming takes hold in the State of Oklahoma (McCaleb, personal interview, 2014).¹³

As the more bingo and tobacco shops were added in 1991, the nation was still facing challenges with business ventures. Not all the investments were turning out to be profitable. The Governor indicated in his 1991 address that the Chickasaw Construction and the Chickasaw

¹² Briggs, L., (2015). An interview with Chickasaw Nation Elder/Legislator Linda Briggs by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Ada, OK, 2/15/15.

¹³McCaleb, N., (2014), An interview with Former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs under President George Bush/Chickasaw Nation Tribal Elder/Former Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director/Formal Minority Leader of Oklahoma House of Representatives by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Oklahoma City, OK, 12/2/14.

Tool Company were looking for breaking even at that point in time. It was reported in the Governor's State of the Chickasaw Nation address (1992) that income grew from 350,000 to 1.5 million from 1990 to 1991 with projections to grow to 2.9 million in 1992, almost twice that of the year before (Governor Anoatubby, State of the Chickasaw Nation, 1991). Despite the growth the tribe was experiencing, the Governor reports out in 1992 that the Chickasaw Tool Company was facing an uncertain future and indications were this had been a risky venture (Governor Anoatubby, State of the Chickasaw Nation Address, 1992). This is demonstrative of the Chickasaws diversifying yet finding not every business would turn a profit.

As not every business was successful, growth was occurring for the Chickasaw Nation. His address to the tribe in 1993 at the regular membership meeting demonstrated the ten-year growth from 1983 until 1993. Some of those items noted included the programmatic budget grew from \$3.5 million in 1983 to \$14.9 million in 1993. Total assets increased from a little over six million dollars to almost \$25 million in 1993. Finally, the net worth of the tribe grew from almost \$6 million in 1983 to a little over \$23.5 million. The tribe had more than tripled its worth in ten years (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1993).

One observes in 1994-1995 that growth was occurring significantly in their programs and services. Besides business entities being added in 1994 including a smoke shop that had opened in Ardmore, Oklahoma and plans for a truck stop in Thackerville, Oklahoma, there was mention of expansion in youth programs, Head Start programs, senior citizen opportunities, education, scholarships, and healthcare. Also, of note is the number of employees had grown to 1,200 with the annual payroll being around \$23 million (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill

Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1994). In 1995, there is the addition of tobacco shops in Tishomingo and Madill, Oklahoma per Governor's State of the Nation address (1995). Growth was occurring economically for the Chickasaws, but the growth in revenue was also being placed into tribal programs and services.

It is important to include an issue that Governor Anoatubby cites in his 1995 address as he refers to a "nation-wide movement, which is attacking the sovereign attributed and powers of tribal governments" (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1995, p. 7). It is suggested by the Governor that the implications of such a movement could undermine the efforts tribes have made for over 300 years. He noted the movement of less reliance on federal funds and the increase in tribal revenues through tribal businesses for self-sustainment of the tribe had moved the tribe forward as a Nation and made them stronger and able to self-govern. However, there was evidently a movement at that time with proposed significant cuts to programs through the BIA as well as governmental interference of regulation and taxation on tribal lands. He indicates that tribes' authority and power was being challenged again and vowed to continue to work to protect the sovereignty of the Indian people (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1995).

As it pertains to sovereignty, in 1996, Governor Anoatubby acknowledged that a water rights agreement with the State of Oklahoma and the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations had been settled. He notes, "through this settlement process we were able to find a way to preserve and protect the water resources essential to economic growth and quality of life in south-central and southeastern Oklahoma" (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of Nation Address, 1996, p. 3). The Chickasaws, along with the Choctaw Nation, were fighting

to protect inherent water resources of their Nation when outside entities were vying for them. This is an example of how they have continued to fight for their sovereign rights. However, we will learn as we proceed through this research, this battle will be fought again.

Opportunities for the tribe took a different turn in 1996 when the Chickasaw Nation took advantage of 8a contracting for diversification with previously noted Public Law 93-638. The 8a contracting is significant in that it allows tribes to get into contracting with the federal government in very lucrative revenue streams. The 8a status allows Indian tribes an advantage in that they are incentivized by the United States Government's Small Business Administration (SBA) to engage in lucrative contracts to manage for a period of five years. After five years they have the option to retain the contract but would have to do so through open and competitive bidding (United States Small Business Association, 8a Business Development Program, 2023). That year the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation noted that business income had increased by almost seven percent and the net assets of the tribe by almost ten percent (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1996). Growth was occurring and the opportunity for diversification came with the formation of Chickasaw Nation Industries (CNI) in 1996, a Section 503 company, which was granted a Federal Charter by the Department of the Interior under Title 25 United States Code Section 503, the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. The corporation serves as a holding company with over a dozen subsidiaries that operate Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) engaged in multiple lines of business. CNI received the 8(a) status by the Small Business Administration in 2000. Neal McCaleb, previously mentioned as a Chickasaw citizen, employee of the tribe, and former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, noted "the market was there and the time for 8a contracting emerged" (McCaleb, personal

interview, 2014). The tribe, through a federal government program, had created another opportunity for revenue streams.

It should be noted that tribes had to create holding companies like CNI because a tribe couldn't apply as a tribe as contracts required applications through Small Business Administration (SBA) guidelines. This would include leadership such as CEO's and a governing board. The application would also require background checks and other compliance requirements to ensure the contract could be awarded. Thus, CNI was created as a federally chartered corporation wholly owned by the Chickasaw Nation. This allowed the vessel by which federal money could be earned, diversified, and reinvested. The difference in this government program is that having a business with the 8a federal status becomes business operation income, instead of simply grant money to render services (United States Small Business Association, 8a Business Development Program, 2023).

Profits were increasing for the tribe, and they were beginning to use that capital to create other types of businesses. As CNI was taking off and beginning to pull in contracts, the Nation continued to expand with more new travel plazas in the Oklahoma towns of Goldsby, Newcastle, Thackerville, and Wilson. It was 2001, when CNI acquired its first contract from the U.S. Army as well as another military contract that led to a San Antonio, Texas field office for the corporation. The year 2001 also brought the opportunity for a bank venture for the tribe. Neal McCaleb was enlisted to assist and was on the organizational board of what eventually became Bank II. McCaleb noted that as bingo and the possibility of expansion of other gaming in Oklahoma existed, the opportunity for necessary capital to engage was becoming more of a reality. The Tribe invested five million dollars to get started in the banking enterprise. He

noted at that time it was worth 12 million dollars and the Bank had a capital asset base of 100 million dollars. Per McCaleb (2014) the bank was throwing off something approaching a million dollars in profit each year and historically about \$200,000 was the dividend that was going back out to the tribe. The remainder was retained to grow the bank. “There is an example of a success where we used the capital from gaming to create an entirely different business in a competitive market” (McCaleb, personal interview, 2014).

As the Nation continued their momentum, the formations and acquisition list are demonstrative of how CNI provided the vessel to allow the Chickasaw Nation with significant opportunity to diversify their revenue stream. As of 2021, the description noted in an Oklahoma newspaper article suggests “CNI is a Norman based, federally chartered holding company wholly owned by the Chickasaw Nation and supporting 20 subsidiary operating companies” (Stafford, *The Oklahoman*, 2021). It is noted the government contracting arm of CNI is administered through Chickasaw Federal and their Filtration, Manufacturing Network Services, and Research, Development, Test and Evaluation lines engage commercial enterprises (Chickasaw Nation Industries, 2022). McCaleb noted the utilization of good management had originally helped set the stage to build CNI into a big business and it would seem his predictions came to fruition (McCaleb, personal interview, 2014).

Circling back to the growth in other areas, in 2003 the Nation included in its new businesses the Bedre Chocolate Factory in Paul’s Valley, two new entertainment centers and three restaurants in Thackerville and Davis, a new travel plaza in Kingston, and a family entertainment center in Ada. Acquisitions continued in 2004 including a manufacturing plant in Marietta, Oklahoma, more expansion in Thackerville including a 1600 seat theater, a bank

expansion into Tulsa, Oklahoma a family fun center in Ada and a hotel and restaurant in Davis, Oklahoma. The purchase of the manufacturing plant is important, which was a significant employer in a small community, will be revisited in a later chapter. It could be a demonstrative effort of the investment the Chickasaws often make in local communities within their jurisdictional boundaries to assist in local economic development.

As discussion has centered around acquisitions of different types of businesses, travel plazas, the significance of the tobacco compact, and the formation of CNI, much of that has been setting up the groundwork for what would culminate in the year 2004. The Chickasaws as well as other Oklahoma tribes were about to have the capacity to see their revenue potential grow in an explosive way. In 2004 the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation noted that 16 years earlier 99% of the nation's budget was funded with federal dollars. He compares that to the current budget that has only 34% funded with federal supplements, the employment of 5500 people, and a report of the past year marking the "greatest economic growth our nation has seen" (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2004). At this point, Governor Anoatubby had been at the helm of leading the Nation for 30 years and the growth that had occurred in that period of time was exponential but what was about to happen in the next 10 years would be monumental.

What spawned that growth was gaming and at a much more significant level. Bingo was just the beginning for the Native Americans, but they were beginning to see a series of events that were unfolding and would impact tribes in other parts of the U.S. thus opening the door for gaming in Oklahoma. One must revisit this take off of gaming to gain a better perspective

on how it came about for tribes across the U.S., Oklahoma tribes, and specifically, the Chickasaw Nation.

History of Gaming:

As the groundwork had been laid for progressive movement for Indian tribes, they began to explore other opportunities for economic development in the mid-twentieth century. One must get a snapshot of what was occurring across the United States first as it was also during this time the economic climate for Native Americans was fraught with challenges and conditions on reservations were bleak. According to a Racial Wealth Snapshot for Native Americans, the statistics from the 2018 US Census indicate the national poverty rate for Native Americans was 25.4% which compares to the White population at 8.1% during the same period. The same source notes the median income for Native Americans was \$43,825 compared with the White population at \$68,785. In 2015, the average income on reservations was 68% below the United States average about \$17,000 (Asante-Muhammad, Kamra, Sanchez, Ramirez, Tec, Racial Wealth Snapshot: Native Americans, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2022). With the groundwork in place with tribal bingo halls and the need to make changes in tribal economies to provide better services, the timing became right to pave the way for an industry that could impact the economic as well as the social outlook in Indian country.

Gaming, which tribes had traditionally used mostly in social functions, became one of those endeavors. Tribes in Florida, New York, California, and Wisconsin opened high-stakes bingo parlors (Miller, 2012). The Seminole Tribe had been one of the first to open a gaming facility in 1979. They were also one of the first to utilize the principle of Indian sovereignty to assert their right to conduct gaming on their land, where state law normally prohibited it. This

sovereignty or, independent power as a government, was challenged by local officials. However, as a tribe, they continued to assert their sovereignty by claiming their right to operate a gaming facility on tribal lands. In a significant court ruling, the Fifth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals found for the tribe, in the Seminole Tribe vs. Butterworth (1981) decision (Seminole Tribe of Florida vs. Butterworth, 1981). This was followed by a pivotal California Supreme Court decision in 1987 referred to as the Cabazon decision, which removed actual restrictions on gambling on Indian reservations. The case, California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, provided that California's gaming laws did not apply on their reservations. This case signaled a huge victory for tribes since it not only opened the door for the establishment of their gaming industries but also upheld the principle of the sovereignty of the tribal nations (Miller, 2012).

As other tribes across the United States continued their work in the gaming industry, Oklahoma tribes with their rich history of Native American culture, began to collaborate to see how they could capitalize on Indian gaming opportunities. Oklahoma's history of gambling can at least be tracked back to the mid to late 1880s where horse racing was taking place among the Indian Nations and roulette wheels and poker games could be found in saloons. However, after almost 100 years of gambling not being legal, it reemerged on the Oklahoma scene. Modern day gambling, according to United States Congressman Tom Cole (and a Chickasaw citizen), can be traced to the early 1980's with the Creek Nation starting into paper bingo and the establishment of what was known as bingo halls (Brewer and Cadue, 2009). In 1973, lawmakers had legalized bingo halls to help generate modest incomes for church and civic

organizations (Hammer, *The Oklahoman*, 1985). It seems tribes jumped in as well to build revenue.

The activity conducted in bingo halls consisted of a traditional paper bingo game as well as a pull-tab component that was nothing more than a paper version of an electronic game. Patrons would essentially pull the tab which would reveal the lineup of cherries, fruits, etc. which would indicate the payout. A few short years later, around 1993, electronic bingo games arrived on the scene, which provided Indian tribes the opportunity to have a more progressive gaming activity as it became tied electronically to other tribal casinos across the United States. Linking to other casinos allowed the payouts on the electronic games to be up to a million dollars. The Choctaw Nation was the first tribe to have an electronic pay out on an electronic bingo game with a million-dollar pot going to a Texas resident (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). This would accelerate the attraction to Texas residents to head north of the border to play bingo in Oklahoma especially those located on the state borders.

As the gaming movement began to spread, there were still some conflicting positions regarding Indian gaming within the tribes. In part, because Oklahoma is considered a conservative State and many opposed gambling from a political and religious standpoint. Others thought it was a way out of poverty for areas of the State where not only jobs were needed but better-paying jobs were at a premium (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).¹⁴ However, despite the concerns noted by some tribal members, the need for a mechanism to

¹⁴ Campbell, B., (2014), An interview with Former Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce CEO by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Durant, OK, 10/1/14.

drive tribal economies seemed to outweigh the concerns as gaming was embraced as a realistic approach to revenue generation.

While one can consider both the positive and the negative aspects of gaming, regardless there remained a need at the onset of gaming expansion to address regulations. With the Cabazon decision opening the door and tribal gaming having the opportunity to expand across the United States, state government as well as the federal government, began to see a need for regulation on tribal gaming. Michael Cox of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation notes that he thought Cabazon was a shock that the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the tribes. Suddenly, Congress had to do something to regulate gaming because they believed the lack of regulation would create disorganization (Cadue and Brewer, 2009). The following year (1988) after Cabazon, Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), which authorized casino gambling on Indian reservations. Up until this time there had been no rules in place and the federal government had to find a way to regulate gaming. Gambling, such as was done in Vegas, had been subjected to state laws. However, Indian Nations were different because they had a government-to-government relationship with the federal government. And there were minimal or no tribal nation to state relationships in existence before gaming. It should be noted that gaming forced states and tribal nations to form and maintain those relationships (Miller, 2012). This will be revisited later in research and expounded upon further as discussion around political lobbying/activities is discussed. However, at that point in time, the IGRA was an attempt to develop a compromise between the tribes, state, and federal government. Miller (2012) adds that IGRA set out that only tribal governments can own and operate gaming activities and they can only be conducted in Indian Country. The objectives of IGRA included

assisting Indian tribes to benefit from the authorization of gambling and promote their ability to be self-sufficient. Essentially, it was set up to establish the rules and regulations of gaming on tribal lands. The Act was meant to establish a culture of fair and honest gaming, prevent corruption through its regulation, and establish standards to control and regulate for the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) (Miller, 2012). The NIGC is administered by the United States Department of the Interior under the Bureau of Indian Affairs. With these federal regulations in place and following important court decisions, Oklahoma was poised to begin the efforts around its tribal gaming future.

Bingo was continuing in Oklahoma with Native American tribes as a revenue generator, however, despite a great deal of lobbying by proponents within the State and the tribes, they were still meeting with resistance to expand that to the next level of gaming (i.e., Class III gaming). It is important to differentiate a Class II and Class III game as it became a pivotal issue as tribes moved forward in their gaming activity. There is also significant information available through legal studies of Carleton, Howard and Howard from "Gaming in the United States: Native American: overview (2020). For the purpose of this research, Class II games are essentially bingo style games where players are playing against others at the casino and are determined by a central server. If the game is played electronically (and often resembles a slot machine) it would typically display a bingo-style board. This board displays the results of the game. Class III games differ in that they are typically what one would see in Vegas style gambling establishments. In Class III, patrons play against the casino in progressive play, which essentially means they play against other people across the world and results are randomly selected. This makes the pot of money one could win significantly higher for Class III gaming

(Stecklein, Enid News and Eagle, 2019). The tribes needed this next level of games (Vegas style) to increase their revenue and were advocating for this in their lobbying efforts (Indian Gaming, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2019).

At the onset of gaming in Oklahoma, confusion remained around the differences between Class II and Class III machines and some tribes were receiving Notices of Violations (NOV's) from the NIGC with the machines being shut down and the tribes experiencing hefty fines. The proposed legislation around the National Indian Gaming Commission previously noted was anticipated to clear up any questions about what was legal and not legal in the State as it pertained to gaming (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

As suggested, this differentiation of Class II and III gaming is important and one public official had noted the issue and began to take notice of what could be done by the State of Oklahoma to assist tribes. The tide changed for the tribes when they found this advocate in newly elected (2003) Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry who was in favor of expanding gaming in the State. Prior to that time, governmental officials had not been receptive to engaging in discussions around gaming compacts with the tribes. In an interview with the former Governor Brad Henry, he reflected on one of the first challenges he faced when he took office as the 26th Governor in 2003 being around Indian gaming. Once he took office, meaningful dialogue did begin to occur between the State and the tribes as he recognized the impact that could come to the State of Oklahoma as a result of tribal gaming (Henry, personal interview, 2014).

This followed significant political lobbying as well as the formation of a coalition with those in the Oklahoma horse racing industry who would also benefit from gaming. The horse racing industry in Oklahoma was in decline and desperately needed revitalization. Prior to this

time, in 1982, Oklahomans had voted to legalize gambling on horse racing (pari-mutual betting) but it still wasn't drawing the crowds needed to allow the horse racers to make money. With the horse racing industry in decline, it set up two unlikely partners (the tribes and the horse racing group) as they collaborated on State Question 712 to push tribal gaming. The legislation being proposed would actually allow the horse racing industry to have higher purses, the term utilized for pay out/winnings, The tribes would have the opportunity to establish more gaming capabilities with Class III (Las Vegas style) gaming for revenue generation (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

According to a former Choctaw tribal administrator, it would seem the tribes were positioning themselves for a win as the larger Oklahoma tribes had hired a very seasoned gaming lawyer out of Los Angeles to assist with their lobbying efforts. He had previously assisted California tribes with their gaming disputes and brought significant expertise. He advised them around working with groups, some in opposition and some in support of gaming. Those groups included religious organizations, a minority legislative caucus, and the Oklahoma Horse Racing Commission. He also assisted them in developing a Legislative Native American Caucus to help with support on legislative issues moving forward. He worked with the entities involved to develop the state questions and ensure the votes needed to get it through the legislature to force it to a vote of the people. He also advised them on how to set up the period of time before renewal of the compact would have to be done. Oklahoma had, at that time, a political history of swinging Democrat to Republican every eight years in the Governor's race. If Henry would only have two terms and the Governor's office then went to a Republican for another two terms, this would place the renewal of compact, in all probability, during the time

of a Democratic governor and a compact with the tribes and the State would probably be more likely to be in favor of continuing (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). Through the combined efforts of state leadership within the State, the horse racing industry, and the tribes, State Questions 712 went to a vote of the people of the State of Oklahoma (Henry, personal interview, 2014).

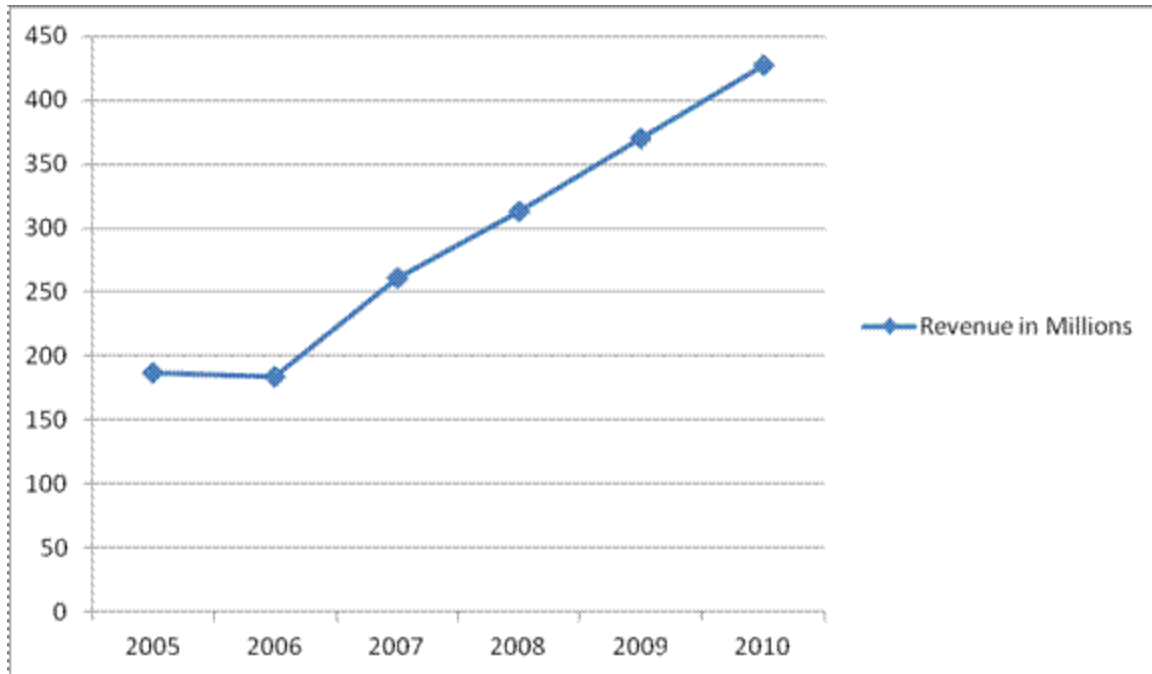
While this legislation was coming about the Native American tribes were acquiring the floundering horse tracks in Oklahoma. The Choctaws had acquired Blue Ribbon Downs in Sallisaw in November of 2003 and the Cherokees purchased the Will Rogers racetrack in Claremore in March of 2004. The Chickasaws later purchased Remington Park in August of 2009 and would go on to purchase Lone Star Park in Dallas, Texas eventually. The Texas acquisition was a forward thinking move on the part of the Chickasaws due to the significant number of Texas patrons crossing the state line to frequent Oklahoma casinos. The larger Oklahoma tribes were positioning for the next wave in terms of gambling venues that passage of the bill would affect. This combined effort of the horse racing industry and the tribes reaped success as the voters approved tribal gaming in 2004 by almost a 60% margin. When the tribes took on gaming as a strategy for revenue generation, the people voted it into law and thus a partnership was formed between the State and the tribes (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

Passage of State Question 712 did, in fact, allow tribes to upgrade from Class II games to Class III casino-style gambling with acceptance of a compact (an agreement) between the tribes and the State of Oklahoma, Secretary of the Interior approval, and subsequent publication in the Federal Register. 4 The regulations outlined in tribal-state compacts are very important as they establish jurisdictional issues, state fee assessments, contract reaches, and operating

standards (Miller, 2012). The compact also established one-time startup, annual assessments for the games' operations, and exclusivity payments. The compacts with the tribes established a revenue base for the State of Oklahoma. Under the state-tribal compact tribes pay monthly exclusivity fees from Class III games revenue based on a sliding scale. For the first \$10 million in revenue, tribes pay 4% to the state; for the next \$10 million, the payment is 5%; and for revenues more than \$20 million, the payment is 6%. Tribes pay 10% of the monthly net win from table games (Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit, Office of Management and Enterprise Services, 2020). Per the Gaming Compliance Unit report the exclusivity fees are allocated to the Education Reform Revolving Fund (1017 Fund), the General Revenue, Fund and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse services. The Gaming Compliance Unit of the conducts the oversight responsibilities provided to the state through the compact. One can observe the State of Oklahoma was to receive a portion of the revenue stream that the tribes could generate.

The uptick came with the passage of the State-Tribal compact in 2004 allowing for open gaming. This event allowed tribes to accelerate their diversification of their business portfolio. The source of the most significant revenue stream in the history of the tribe was on the cusp of occurring and would serve to further their self-sufficiency as a tribal nation. Graph 1.0 is demonstrative of how impactful the passage of gaming would be in the next ten years for the Chickasaws.

Graph 1.0 Chickasaw Nation Revenue Growth 2005-2015



Source: Chickasaw Nation Progress Reports, 2005-2015

As gaming pertains to the Choctaws and Chickasaws, their jurisdictional area borders Texas and places them a short hour and 15 minutes away from the metropolis of Dallas - Fort Worth with a population close to 7.5 million people. This is enormously significant when talking about revenue from gaming, as has been mentioned, as two of the largest casinos in the State are operating on a border and the majority of visits to those particular casinos are Texas residents. This will be revisited in terms of challenges facing the Chickasaw Nation as preventing Texas from getting gaming is in their best interest. The numbers are staggering in terms of out of state residents visiting Oklahoma casinos. The number of visits to the tribal gaming and related facilities in Oklahoma total over 38.2 million (62%) which includes more than 14.6 million (38%) from out of state. "Whatever the historical reasons for the dispersion of tribal trust land in Oklahoma, it has the effect of putting about half of the Indian gaming capacity within 50 miles of the state border and three-quarters within 100 miles" This translates to out

of state customers numbering between one to five million in driving distance of an Oklahoma gaming facility which translates into a significant demographic for the tribes (Grant, Spilde, and Taylor, 2004, p. 29).

Growth Through Gaming and Diversification:

Once gaming was in place the Chickasaws began their upward trajectory. Gabbard (2015) notes that during this period of time there were significant challenges in the beginning addressing what he described as meteoric growth. It was becoming a significantly larger organization and was growing rapidly. They were having to operate at a pace of change necessary to deal with that and each day required operating at a higher level. Essential needs such as data access were creating challenges as the volume of data available was increasing all the time (Gabbard, personal interview, 2015).

As one can observe from Graph 1.0, the year following the passage of the compact with the State in 2005 began an uptick in economic activity for the Chickasaw Nation. This would be the year the Chickasaws branched into communications with the purchase of KYKC radio in Ada, Oklahoma. The Chickasaws also opened gaming centers in Ardmore, Duncan, and Wilson, Oklahoma as well as a hotel at the Thackerville location now dubbed WinStar World Casino and completed an 18-hole golf course at that location. Additionally, the Bedre Chocolate Factory expanded and increased its sales by entering a national market which included the major chains of Homeland Grocery and Neiman Marcus stores as well as Indian Nation Wholesale located within the State. Riverwind Casino, located in Norman, Oklahoma, and just on the edge of the metro area of Oklahoma City, opened in 2006 and completion of a 10,000 square foot Golf Course Clubhouse at WinStar was completed. In the year 2007, a restaurant located inside the

Chisholm Trail Casino was the only addition mentioned but in 2008 the Chickasaw Nation's Solara Healthcare added 1,000 employees with their five new facility locations. Probably one of the more significant economic activities of 2008 was the establishment of Global Gaming Solutions, which set up a company with the ability to pursue gaming opportunities outside the tribe's boundaries. This push towards continued diversification and economic growth could be viewed as an attempt to reduce the reliance on gaming. In a document produced by the Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce it suggests that growth had been the strategy and credits leadership and futuristic thought as being a part of that success. It cites Chickasaw Nation Industries, Bedre', and Solara Healthcare as examples of alternative growth strategies outside of gaming. The document also notes the Chickasaw Nation had not limited itself to tribal boundaries but options well beyond its jurisdictional boundaries were being explored, (Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce Progress Reports, 1996-2007).

A change in leadership within the Nation's commerce division occurred in 2009 and it is noted in a Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce Progress Report (2009-2011) that the Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce aggressively pursued a diversification of revenue sources. This included "developing a systematic way to process and evaluate the range of opportunities available to the Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce and aiding the organization in making the best decisions, maintaining leadership accountability, and requiring business to develop long-range strategic and financial plans for fewer surprises and better outcomes." What emerged was a 122% growth in revenue from diversified businesses by the Division of Commerce from 108 million in 2006 to 293 million in 2011 (Chickasaw Nation Progress Reports, 2009-2011, p.3).

As growth continued, the tribes seemed to be acutely aware that Texas residents coming north of the Texas border were a major market for them. Their expansions and acquisitions reflected that as they began to prepare for the possibility of Texas being able to offer gaming. As noted previously regarding horse racing venues, Global Gaming Solutions purchased two horse racing tracks including the bankrupt Remington Park Horse Racing Track and Casino in Oklahoma City for \$80.25 million. The Chickasaws invested more than \$15 million to renovate the facility and it paid off with setting an attendance record in 2010 by bringing in 1,756,616 fans. Additionally, Global Gaming purchased the bankrupt Lone Star Park in Texas, as mentioned earlier, for \$47.8 million (Evans, *Tulsa World*, 2011). The Lone Star Park acquisition was speculated to be an investment should the neighbors to the south (Texas) vote in gaming which they have been contemplating expanding into for the last few years. WinStar World Casino, which sits right on the Texas line, continued to pull in the majority of their customers from Texas. Currently, the parking lots continue to be filled with Texas license plates as many patrons travel from north Texas and the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex to gamble at the casino (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). A later chapter will address the challenges associated with the significant gaming revenue stream one of which is the threat of Texas gaming.

These diversification efforts appeared to be purposeful as noted in a Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce document noting expansions and improvements in gaming centers, convenience stores, hotels, a media outlets investment, Chickasaw Nation Industries, tourism efforts, medical businesses, and a racetrack (Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce Progress Report, 2010). The Chickasaws opened their first compressed natural gas fueling station in Oklahoma and the Nation's Solara healthcare company sold seven of its long-term

acute care hospitals reaping a substantial return on the Chickasaw Nation investment. Of note in the arena of healthcare was the addition of Sovereign Medical Solutions as well. The economic activities of 2010, under the direction of a new commerce leader, was noted by Governor Anoatubby in his 2010 address as he noted how many of the businesses had expanded in that year (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2010).

Of significant importance was the addition of the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center in 2010 in Ada, Oklahoma. The Nation does list it as a revenue source in terms probably in terms of money collected from third party insurance. This fact is cited in that the Chickasaw Nation health departments has “third party payer arrangements with Medicare, Medicaid, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other federal programs,” (Keel, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Testimony, 2017, page 3). The facility is three times the size of the previous hospital serving Native Americans (Carl Albert Indian Health Facility) in that same community. The medical center is a 370,000-square-foot center which includes a 72-bed hospital, an emergency department, a diabetes care center, a dental clinic, a diagnostic imaging center, a women’s health center, offices for the tribe’s health program, and an increase in healthcare staff. This health care addition, while a revenue generator as well, will be discussed later in terms of services and programs vital to the Chickasaw citizens and other Native Americans.

The year 2010 saw the Chickasaws begin to make a notable effort toward cultural awareness but also tourism within their jurisdictional boundaries. The Chickasaw Cultural Center opened in 2010 and is located in Sulphur, Oklahoma just less than 30 minutes from the Chickasaw Nation Headquarters in Ada, Oklahoma and a short drive off Interstate 35. The

Chickasaw Cultural Center had been a dream of many for a significant period of time. Linda Briggs, Tribal Legislator with over 25 years in that role, noted the desire was there for a place to “show people who we are, who we were, and who we are going to be” (Briggs, personal interview, 2014). The \$40 million state-of-the-art center, located in Sulphur, Oklahoma, sits on 109 acres and contains a welcome center, the Aapisa' Art Gallery, the Honor Garden, an Exhibit Center, Aachompa' Gallery Gift Shop, Anoli' Theater, the Holisso (Center for Study of Chickasaw History and Culture), the Sky Pavilion, rotating exhibits, a traditional village, and village activities ongoing such as stickball, archery, chunky, marbles, stomp dancing, basket-weaving, hide-tanning, etc. In 2013, there were 200,000 visitors and in 2015 that more than doubled to 406,000. The Holisso Research Center jumped from 8,000 to 11,000 in that same period of time (Program Participation Within Chickasaw Nation, Chickasaw Nation, 2016). The addition of this new tourism attraction would prove to be successful for the Chickasaws in terms of enhancing their cultural presence as well as drawing more visitors to the area.

The Chickasaw Cultural Center, located in Sulphur, is also home to one of Oklahoma's oldest national park areas, called the Chickasaw National Recreation Area, formerly Platt National Park. The Park was originally established to protect the mineral and freshwater springs there. The Chickasaws were provided the opportunity to take over the management of that recreational area from the federal government due to budgetary limitations. Five years of negotiation between the Park Service and the Chickasaws resulted in a shared space at the Chickasaw Visitor Center as of 2014 (Chickasaws, National Park Service Affirm Partnership, Red Lake Nation News, 2015). This opportunity, while not generating revenue through any type of admission costs, still draws visitors to the area, which includes over 30 miles in hiking trails and

water-related recreational activities. In a presentation to the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association Webinar Series, Chickasaw Nation Undersecretary Department of Culture and Humanities Valerie Walters reported over 850,000 visitors from all over the world since opening in 2010 (American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association Webinar, 2021). This serves to further support their tourism efforts and tourism numbers would eventually reflect that success of this initiative.

The years of 2011 and 2012 would see the building or expansion of facilities with 500 gaming machines added to the Newcastle location and an increase of 54,000 square foot into WinStar World Casino and Resort adding more games, more conference space, a golf academy, a 1400 space parking garage, and more restaurants. Construction was noted as beginning on the new Bedre' Chocolate Factory which would place the facility on the well-traveled Interstate 35 corridor right in the heart of the Chickasaw Nation's jurisdictional boundaries. It was also noted in the report provided to the Chickasaw citizens that with the growth of the gaming businesses a need for substantial investments into technology was necessary to increase operational efficiencies in the tribal gaming facilities (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Addresses, 2011 and 2012).

The years 2013 and 2014 brought more gaming and healthcare additions as well as more visitors to the Cultural Center. Additionally, in 2013 the Chickasaws opened a State-of-the-Art Health Clinic in Tishomingo and conducted a ribbon cutting for a Sovereign Medical Clinic in Norman (35 Years of Progress, Chickasaw Nation, 1983-2018, 2019). The State of the Nation address in 2014 presented by Governor Anoatubby reported casinos continued to be added to the Chickasaw Nation portfolio with Salt Creek added in Pocasset, Oklahoma, the

Jetstream Casino in Paul's Valley, Oklahoma, and a new one in Davis, Oklahoma. Gaming machines were expanded at WinStar as well as the Thackerville Gaming Center. Visitors were continuing to increase at the Chickasaw Cultural Center as well as the Artesian. The new location for Bedre' Chocolate Factory was spinning off increased sales by 24%. Healthcare expansion included the Solara Surgical Partners acquisition of a surgery center in Ardmore, Oklahoma bringing the surgery center total to four (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2014). The Chickasaws were continuing to grow not only the gaming, but also services to their citizens.

As the Chickasaws were identifying ways to continue and sustain their success in their jurisdictional areas, they made the decision to invest in more tourism resources. In an effort to draw more patrons to their businesses and their attractions, the Chickasaws, along with more than 150 entities both tribal and non-tribal launched a campaign titled Adventure Road in 2015. The design of the campaign was to raise awareness of tourism opportunities on a proposed tourism corridor that spanned 130 miles in the Interstate 35 corridor of Oklahoma. "With tourism as the state's third-largest industry, it is proven that millions of visitors consider this region to be a top travel destination" noted Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Commerce Bill Lance (Adventure Road, prnewswire, March 29, 2016). The Chickasaws, now with the Chickasaw Cultural Center, the Artesian Hotel, and the Chickasaw National Recreation Area located in their jurisdictional boundaries and easily accessible to a major transportation thoroughfare, identified the opportunity to promote activity even more by pursuing the Chickasaw Nation as a tourism destination, offering amenities in entertainment, recreation, resorts, cultural opportunities, in this south-central Oklahoma tourism region.

The Chickasaw Cultural Center has earned numerous awards around being recognized as a tourist destination. In 2016 they were on target to hit the 500,000 mark for visitors since opening in 2010 and draw a projected 1.2 million visitors a year to the local area (Anoatubby, Testimony to House Committee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs, 2016). In 2020, they celebrated their 10-year anniversary and have had over 850,000 visitors in that time period despite closing some due to Covid-19 (Rains, 2020). They also expanded their tourism efforts into the famous Bricktown area of Oklahoma City with a tourism office designed to entice Oklahoma City guests to travel further south and take advantage of the gaming activities offered by the Chickasaw Nation.

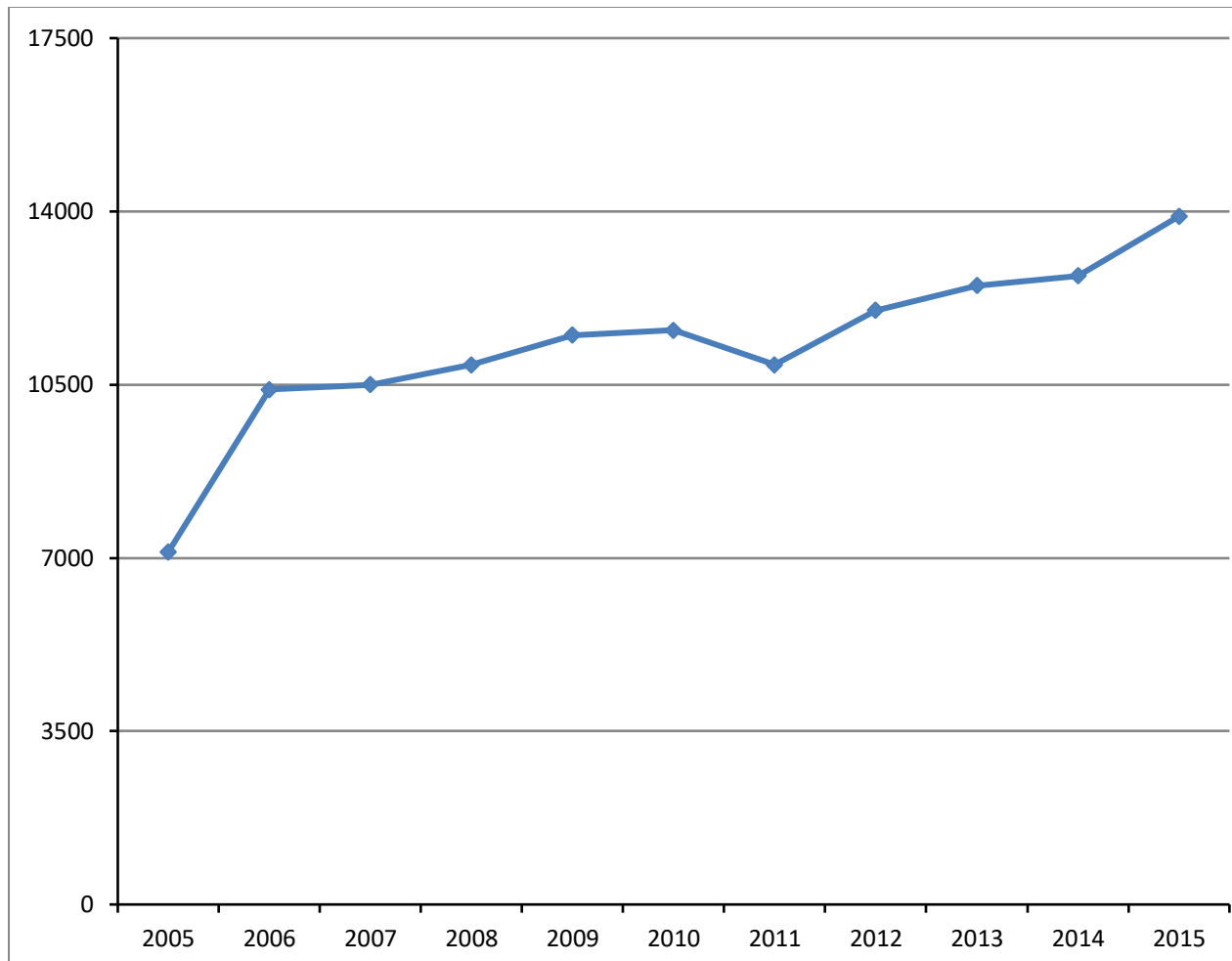
Also reported in 2016 were the results of SMARI, an independent market research firm, which suggested that the Adventure Road initiative had resulted in 385,000 visits from tourists to Oklahoma in 2015 as well as generating \$647 million in spending by tourists. The tourism campaign had also increased its partners in the venture to 230 (Browning, 2016). While there doesn't appear to be information available if the added amenities and attractions are driving more visitors to the casinos, the small community of Sulphur has been impacted by economic growth and a physical facelift. It seems tourism was now one more revenue generator for the Chickasaw Nation.

The year 2015 saw more expansion, not only with casinos and healthcare but also in diversification and initiatives to spark growth of other Chickasaw businesses. Additions at the Newcastle Casino included 730 additional electronic games and CNI entered into two contracts with the Federal Aviation Administration valued at 90 million dollars. CNI also made an acquisition of Corvid Technologies which is a unique company specializing in computational

physics analysis techniques and cutting-edge hardware to solve complex engineering and scientific challenges. Another significant project was the expansion of the Chickasaw preferred vendor program which began in 2008. The program creates opportunities for Chickasaw owned businesses to grow along with the tribe. The Nation has more than 200 owned Chickasaw owned businesses on their preferred vendor list and in FY2014 allocated almost 33 million to vendor services provided by Native Americans many of which were Chickasaws. The healthcare portfolio was increased as urgent care clinics in Oklahoma City and Edmond were added (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2015.) The efforts of the Chickasaws were not only revenue generating for the Nation itself but also for those tribal citizens conducting business in the private sector as well.

This vast business base that has been building translates into a significant growth in the number of employees. Patrick Neeley, Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce Chief Business Officer, reported at the Leadership Oklahoma Tribal Government session in 2015 that these are jobs that are sought after by many as they are generally better pay and include significant benefits such as healthcare, retirement, and life insurance (Neeley, Leadership Oklahoma Tribal Commerce Presentation, 2015). In pockets of rural Oklahoma where unemployment is high, the gaming jobs are viewed as an attractive opportunity; some of these positions on the gaming floor being paid higher wages than the average Oklahoma school teacher.

Graph 2.0 Chickasaw Nation Employee Growth 2005-2015

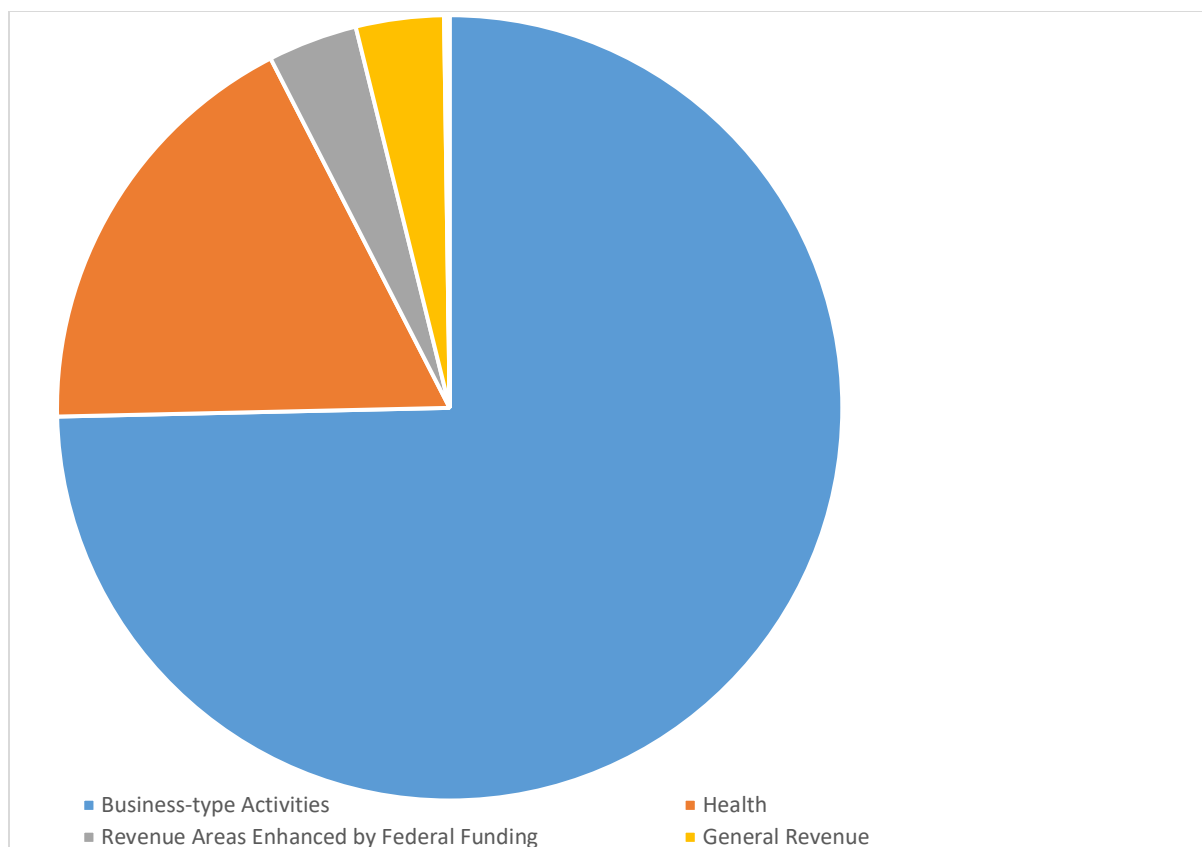


Source: Chickasaw Nation Progress Reports, 2005-2015

Graph 2.0 demonstrates the growth occurring between 2005 to 2015 with sharp increases being noted in 2005 -2006 following the gaming compact as it increased the employee base by 3500. Another large increase is noted between the years 2011 and 2015 with a 3,000-employee growth jump. This was also during a time of significant expansion in gaming but also important diversification efforts (Chickasaw Nation Progress Reports, 2005-2015). According to a Chickasaw Nation internal report on revenues by area and industry in 2015, the total revenue for 2015 was \$1,274,644,621, with the largest portion of that being attributed to gaming activity, which falls under business type activities at \$951,464,233 (see

Graph 3.0). This is indicative of that strong dependence on gaming as this is where that revenue is reported. The next largest category is combined with education, transportation, housing, public safety and defense, regulatory services, aging services, judiciary, natural resources, and social services, all of which are subsidized to some extent by federal funding. Those funding agencies include, but are not limited to, the Indian Health Services (IHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Department of Justice, Gaming Commission, Department of Health and Human Services, and other additional grant funding agencies. The closest area to that amount is healthcare with \$227,076,356, which likely includes not only the IHS funds contracted for operations as previously mentioned but also third-party insurance payments. Patrons who access the Native American healthcare facilities and have insurance, can be billed. As was mentioned earlier, the ability to bill on third party insurance occurred in the '80's. This was significant because tribes could contract with Indian Health Services (IHS), to manage and provide healthcare thus enabling them the ability to bill to party insurance. Also, on the list of sources of revenue are general government and museums (Chickasaw Nation Revenues by Area and Industry, 2015).

Chart 3.0 Chickasaw Nation 2015 Revenues by Area and Industry



Source: Chickasaw Nation Revenues by Area and Industry, 2015

Conclusion:

As the revenue portfolio is reviewed and one begins to reflect on the significant growth observed by the Chickasaw Nation it suggests there were several significant factors impacting their ability to grow to be the successful entity they have become. The revenue portfolio of the Chickasaw Nation has been evolving since gaming took off and more specifically, the last ten years. However, establishing an infrastructure that would provide a base was critical.

Alexander's work in 1978 provided a snapshot of what was going on in those early years.

Efforts were underway to get some planning and strategic thinking in place and it seemed with the opportunities that had been afforded them through Self Determination and all that meant

for revenue potential, were essentially wetting the appetite of the leadership and the people at that time.

The ability to execute their own constitution and elect their own leadership also seemed to invigorate the tribe. This came about with the formal policies of self-determination in the 1970s allowing federally recognized tribes to operate their own governments under their own constitutions (Cornell and Kalt, 2010). During this same time that Alexander had conducted his research (1978), one can observe from the document how that leadership appeared to have attempted to be inclusive in the decision making as they began to involve tribal citizens on boards and in committees. It is also important to note that they were beginning to take risks and branch out into economic endeavors such as Chickasaw Nation Industries, the Artesian Hotel, and convenience stores. It is also noted they knew that strategic planning would be important on federal applications, and they took the steps to do that.

Leadership was another important element as a part of the growth, and specifically the continuity of that leadership. The leader that still retains his position and is in his ninth consecutive term, Governor Bill Anoatubby, has been a part of the original building of the infrastructure but has also led during the time of their most significant growth as a Nation. Former State Governor Brad Henry indicates in his interview that Anoatubby provided stability at the top of the organization and is a talented visionary. He suggests he might be the greatest Native American leader in the U.S. He notes the leadership by the larger tribes, and specifically the Chickasaw Nation in this case, has allowed them to catapult past others who were plagued with internal politics and that issue prevented them from maximizing the potential they have to become major contenders in this economic environment (Henry, personal interview, 2014).

Tribes did build their portfolios in Oklahoma with the boost of bingo halls (1973), and the state-tribal tobacco compact (1992). The compact allowed them the opportunity to start working with the State of Oklahoma as it had to be a collaborative effort to reach a compromise on tobacco sales that both entities would be comfortable with signing. These two revenue streams began to spin off revenue as they positioned for the next wave which would be the advent of the gaming compact with the State of Oklahoma.

Additionally for the Chickasaws, the government contracting opportunities were highlighted as significant, and the need for the formation of Chickasaw Nation Industries or CNI as the holding company that positioned them for the 8a contracting was present. That advantageous status propelled the Chickasaws into some large contracts with the federal government and continues to spin off revenue. The addition of a bank, constant growth in travel plazas through the 90's and gaming facilities through the 2000's, a chocolate factory, and revenue generating healthcare businesses are highlighted as the Nation continued to grow its diverse portfolio.

Gaming has made a difference for the Chickasaw Nation and other tribes in Oklahoma. However, it has not been limited to Oklahoma. Many tribes across the United States have been benefitted from gaming revenue. That introduction of gaming resulted in the battles at both the local and federal levels that had to be won by the Indians before the way could be paved for the next level of gaming. There were important court decisions and rulings and all of them positioned Oklahoma for what would come next in gaming. That effort was accelerated by an advocate at the Governor's level in the State of Oklahoma (Brad Henry) as he began his tenure of leadership by assembling the 39 federally recognized tribes and discussed with them the

challenges they were facing. He listened to their concerns, and they all discussed ways of partnering and working together as well as encouraging their involvement with the state. He notes the way the larger tribes were much better organized and had a significant degree of business acumen (Henry, 2014). Tribes utilized that political acumen to navigate getting gaming passed. There were what some might consider unusual partners joining the effort. But the forming of those collaborations, that aforementioned business acumen, the expertise of some well-placed consultants, and a mutual goal, the gaming legislation passed, and tribes were positioned.

Through the growth years large investments and expansions were made into several of their gaming venues but most specifically, WinStar World Casino which at the current time holds the title as being the largest casino in the United States at 519,000 square feet. There are 1495 hotel rooms available on site, 7400 electronic games, 46 table poker rooms, and 99 table games (blackjack and poker). In addition, the building of a new hospital and tourism investments and a major investment in tourism as were also helpful to their efforts.

As one considers the breakdown of the tribes in their contributions to employment numbers, the Chickasaw Nation is a leader among tribal nations. As the fourth largest tribe in Oklahoma in 2015 at that time the Chickasaw Nation had over 14,000 employees (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2015).

Whether it be a successful business or an industry challenge, it must be figured out within their jurisdictional boundaries as they do not have the option, as a large corporation does, to uproot and move to another location. Oklahoma, and their specific jurisdictional

boundaries, remains their home and where they must do business. As one reviews the employment numbers in this chapter as it pertains to growth rate, the jurisdictional areas make up some of the poorest parts of Oklahoma. Therefore, these operations contribute significantly to the economic development of rural Oklahoma (Dean and KlasRobinson, *Statewide Economic Impacts from Oklahoma Tribal Government Gaming*, 2016).

Tribes persisted with legal challenges placed before them as they pursued new business ventures and compacts. However, with the help of some significant legislation and judiciary decisions, some Native nations, and specifically, the Chickasaws, continued to navigate their way through business. Some were successful and some were not. However, the Chickasaws were business savvy enough in their pursuit to recognize this unparalleled revenue stream created a need for planning, infrastructure, and the right leadership in place to move their tribe forward in a sustainable way.

While these efforts were ongoing on the commerce side of the Chickasaw Nation, the tribe was also looking for ways to spend off the revenue in a way that would give back to the tribal citizens. The mission of the Chickasaw Nation is “to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people” (Mission, Vision, & Core Values, Chickasaw Nation, 2021). Chapter 3 will provide a look inside the many programs, services, and opportunities with the stewardship of its revenues to tribal citizens, other Native Americans, and throughout the State of Oklahoma.

Chapter 3

The Spending of Tribal Revenue

How Do the Chickasaws Spend Their Money?

Introduction

This chapter will provide a description of what the Chickasaw Nation does with the revenue extracted from the businesses. It will provide an outline of the benefits to the Chickasaw people and even other Native Americans and Oklahoma citizens in some cases, from the revenue being generated. Those analysis of benefits include a look at the comprehensive healthcare, longevity programs, educational endeavors, cultural heritage programming, elder care activities, youth and children's programs, philanthropic contributions, community efforts, and other programs designed to enhance the lives of Chickasaw citizens. A historical perspective will be provided as well as information is available. There will be some evidence of the benefit the Chickasaw Nation has been to those outside of the Chickasaw Nation's jurisdictional boundaries.

Native Americans, as an ethnic group, have experienced many challenges as it relates to their health, housing, education, cultural existence, and other social issues. Since the beginning of their involvement with entities outside of their own tribes, Native Americans have been subjected to disease, efforts to annihilate, the threat and facilitation of assimilation into a culture which was not their own, treaties not of their making, federal laws, religious conversion efforts, and many other impositions into their way of life and culture. Legislation and implementation of varying degrees of social services at different periods in history with different levels of intensity have attempted to address another race's perception of their social

service needs. If one looks at the history of the plight of Native Americans one might see the impact to tribal survival has been piecemealed and complicated by other factors including colonization, removal from their homelands, treaties broken, laws and acts of the government, assimilation, and finally other opportunities to return to their own governance structure and constitutions as well as their ability to grow and sustain economic development for their tribes. “During the past generation, some tribal reservations have prospered, others have not...Yet on some reservations there is still a shortage of proper places in which to live. And the county with the deepest poverty in the United States is still a tribal reservation” (Brown, 1970, p. XXI).¹⁵

While that has occurred, this ethnic group has been slow in recovering from what they were subjected to and made to navigate in the best way possible for their people. Some have navigated better than others in terms of economic growth and the ability to be self-sustaining. Two examples within Oklahoma, addition to that of the Chickasaws, include two of the Five Civilized Tribes the Choctaw Nation and the Cherokee Nation. The Choctaw Nation Family Medicine Residency Program which is in Talihina, Oklahoma is one such example. The accredited program started in 2012 has “committed to training competent and compassionate family medicine physicians” (Family Medicine Residency Program, choctawnation.com) And another of the Five Civilized Tribes had addressed healthcare disparities by approving a \$440 million plan to build a hospital to replace the current hospital. An additional \$35 million will be

¹⁵ “And if the readers of this book should ever chance to see the poverty, hopelessness, and the squalor of a modern Indian reservation, they may find it possible to truly understand the reasons why.” Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, Dee Brown, 1970, p. XXV.

going to replace an outpatient center as well as donation of \$33 million to an Oklahoma regional university's college of optometry construction project (Hunter, Cherokee Phoenix, 2021). It would seem other large tribes are making strides to assist address disparities in Oklahoma.

And even as the United States has somewhat recognized the part, they have played in not allowing these tribal nations to grow and flourish and legislation has been put in place to improve the challenges, the statistics remain concerning. A fact sheet from the Indian Health Service which is an agency within the United States Department of Health and Human Services provides information around Native American health challenges and notes the statistics have long been experienced by this population. "Lower life expectancy and the disproportionate disease burden exist perhaps because of inadequate education, disproportionate poverty, discrimination in the delivery of health services, and cultural differences" are all challenges this population has faced" (Disparities, Fact Sheet, Indian Health Services, United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2023, p. 1).

United States Census Data provides statistics as it relates to housing, languages, education, poverty, and health for Native Americans. One challenge for Native Americans in Indian Country has been that of housing and specifically as it pertains to home ownership. The data indicates Native Americans are significantly less likely to be a homeowner than that of the remainder of the population. Census data indicates that nationally the percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native householders who owned their own home in 2010 was 54% compared with the overall population, which was 65% (Home Ownership in the U.S., U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Educational attainment levels are also demonstrative of the disparity in statistics for Native Americans versus others. The percentage of American Indians and Alaska Natives 25 years and older who have a high school diploma or GED is 77% compared to the remainder of the population at 86%. Only 13% of Native Americans compared with 38% of the other population. In terms of culture and language, American Indians and Alaska Natives ages five and older who spoke a language other than English in their home are at 28% compared with the national average of 21% (Educational Attainment in the U.S., U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Social issues in terms of poverty levels create barriers for Native Americans and poverty within the Native American population remains significant. Twenty-eight percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives were considered living in poverty in 2010 compared with 15.3%, which was the national average. The median income for American Indian/Alaska Native households was \$35,062 compared to the national average of \$50,046 (Median Household Income in the U.S., U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The statistics indicated for the lack of income and extreme poverty in Native Americans gives one pause.

Critical issues around the health of Native Americans have also been an issue and particularly as it pertains to life expectancy. Native Americans have a life expectancy of 73 years old compared to 78.5 years old (Disparities, Fact Sheet, Indian Health Services, United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2023, p. 1). Life expectancy and overall good health would be significantly affected by the access to healthcare. Yet, Native Americans are at 30% uninsured rate versus the rest of the U.S. at 15% (Vestal, 2013).

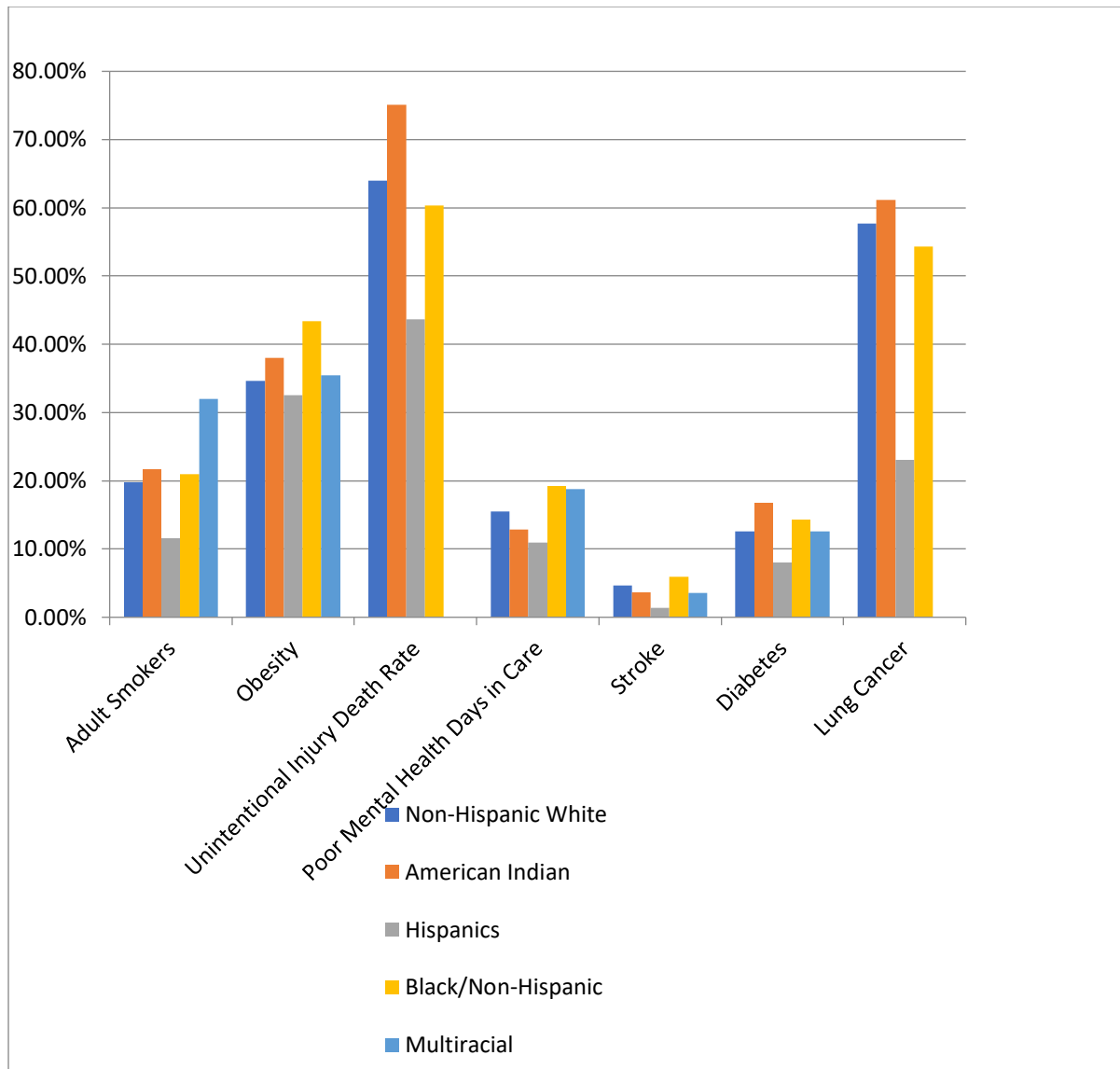
Oklahoma's Minority Health and Socioeconomic Challenges:

The delivery of services to Native American people in Indian country has been in somewhat of a transformative state since the period following the Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. It has provided Native American tribes with the ability to manage their own programs to a larger degree and determine services needed for their own tribes. “A growing body of evidence demonstrates that this is having positive effects and that tribal control is leading to significant improvements in a number of key socioeconomic indicators” (Jorgenson, 2007, p. 223). Jorgenson suggests, however, that improvements in these indicators should be considered with the caveat that while the numbers are improving, the Native Americans as an ethnic group have a significant way to go before one could be able to see less disparity with statistics pertaining to unemployment, educational attainment, and poor health, etc. as it relates to other Americans (Jorgenson, 2007).

Some of those statistics, as it relates to Native Americans as an ethnic group reveal the differences between the health of Indians compared to that of other populations. In further breaking down those statistics for Native Americans in Oklahoma, one must consider the population demographics for the State. According to a 2019 Oklahoma Minority at a Glance Report, the State’s population was 3,956,971. This same report notes that the United Health Foundation ranked Oklahoma’s health as 46th in the U.S. That number is actually up from 2018 which had Oklahoma ranked 47th. The overall state strengths include low prevalence of excessive alcohol use, high rate of mental health providers, and low prevalence of low birthweight. The challenges in Oklahoma include a high prevalence of tobacco use, high percentage of uninsured population, and a high infant mortality rate (Oklahoma Minority Health at a Glance, 2019).

Graph 4.0 illustrates the statistics around the data implicating significant challenges for Native Americans exist. It is important to note that Native Americans account for 9% of Oklahoma's population and two or more races account for another 6.3%. One might assume at least a portion of multiple races have a Native American bloodline ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Oklahoma," 2022). Multiracial Oklahoma citizens led in the prevalence of smoking with 32% while American Indians ranked second with 21.7%. Black Non-Hispanic came in at 21%, White non-Hispanic at 19.8%, and Hispanic at 11.6%. In terms of obesity, the multiracial ethnicity group lead the statistics with 32% followed by American Indians with 21.7%, Black non-Hispanic with 21%, White non-Hispanic with 19.8%, and Hispanic with 11.6% (Oklahoma Minority Health at a Glance, 2019). The chart also notes Native Americans lead in statistics associated with lung cancer, diabetes, and the unintentional injury death rate which could include things such as motor vehicle accidents, suffocation, drowning, fire/burns, falls and sports and recreation. These statistics are demonstrative of the significant health care challenges faced by, not only Oklahomans, but also the Native American population as a whole.

Graph 4.0 Oklahoma Minority Statistics



Source: Oklahoma Minority Health at a Glance, 2019

Other important statistics to note are the percentages associated with high school graduates in Oklahoma by ethnicity as well as entrepreneurship. American Indians are the second highest to graduate from high school in Oklahoma (82.7%) following White non-Hispanics at 83.7%. Black non-Hispanics are next at 80.3% and Hispanics at 79.3% (Oklahoma Minority Health at a Glance, 2019). In the area of commerce, non-minority-owned businesses were at 249,027 of all businesses at 327,229. Only 64,875 businesses were owned by a

minority (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Oklahoma, 2022). These numbers indicate American Indians are closing the gap on education but still show a significant lag in opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Today, Native Americans, as a population, are seeing progress in some key economic indicators. However, as an ethnic group, they actually started so far behind other Americans they still continue to experience, not only disproportionate unemployment, low educational attainment, but higher rates of preventable adverse healthcare. Tribes in general have made significant strides yet there remains much work to do to become healthier as a population (Jorgensen, 2007).

As the research looks to explore what the Chickasaw Nation has done in regard to some of the issues purported by the data, one must consider that economic conditions in Oklahoma's Indian Country have improved, at least in terms of *access* to health care, in the last 20+ years through the additions of tribes adding hospitals, health programs, and clinics as described in previous pages. That could be attributed to gaming coming on the scene as well as the revenues from other tribal efforts around diversification of revenue streams. Gaming revenues have been increasing for tribes continuously including 2.5% in 2019 for a total of \$34.6 billion (National Indian Gaming Commission, 2020). According to an Oklahoma Gaming Report on money received by the State of Oklahoma for gaming revenue jumped from \$46.4 million in 2007 to \$123.6 million in 2021 (Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit, Office of Management and Enterprise Services, 2021, p. 2). Meeting the needs of their tribal members and addressing the alarming statistics has been an evolving story. The Chickasaws are among tribes alongside the Choctaws and Cherokees as well, it would seem, that have moved away from their dependence

on the federal government for support and moving into a space where they utilize revenues for tribal services and benefits. This chapter will seek to look at, not only the history of the programs, but also program growth to meet the needs of the tribe. After a review of the data, one can observe the need for a continued purposeful effort to make a significant impact on Native American healthcare and opportunities to improve overall quality of life for tribal citizens. And the Chickasaws are contributing significant revenue to their healthcare to address health issues as well as other social challenges.

Chickasaw Nation and the Investment in Programs and Benefits:

The Chickasaw Nation and the revenue that has been described in the previous chapter, has built a financial capacity that has allowed them an opportunity. Information provided will demonstrate how the reliance on external support was not enough for tribes, at least not as far as the Chickasaws were concerned. They appear to have desired and needed to build their financial capacity in such a way that allowed them the opportunity to control and ensure their tribal citizens would have the healthcare and social service needs necessary to secure a higher quality of life than they had previously had. It is stated on their webpage citing their mission it is noted as “to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people” (Mission, Vision & Core Values, Chickasaw.net, 2023). Jorgenson suggests that “financial self-determination also means that tribal governments take measures to ensure that their programs are not overly vulnerable to changes in nontribal agencies and funders’ budgetary priorities” (Jorgenson, 2007, p. 227).

In an effort to move beyond external support, the Chickasaw Nation has utilized their perceived success in business operations and economic development, to provide opportunities

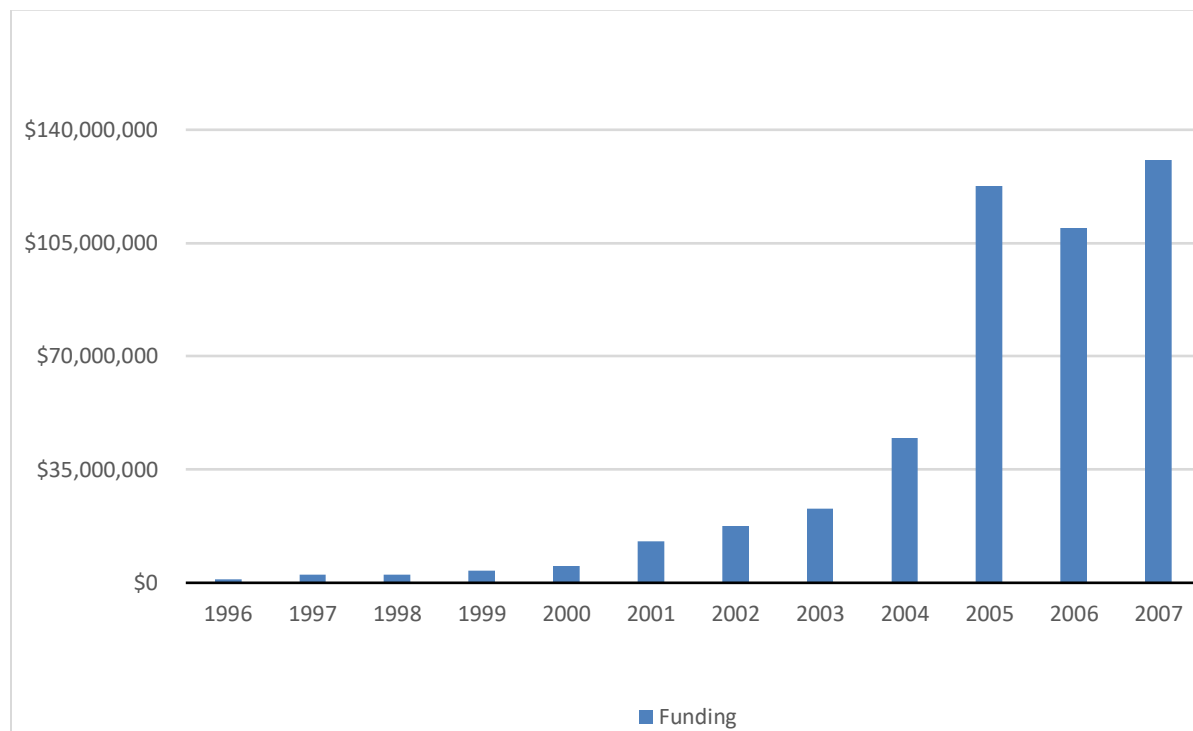
and benefits to the Chickasaw people. Governor Bill Anoatubby has often said that the diversification and the revenues created are about funding services for Chickasaw citizens. He has stated “Successful tribal business and economic development endeavors allow us to develop new and improve on existing programs and services to positively impact Chickasaws and their families. From creating educational opportunities to offering vital health care and housing services, Chickasaws have more opportunities than ever before” (Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2020, p. 1).

The mission of the Chickasaw Nation, which Governor Anoatubby references and is cited previously, is to enhance the overall quality of life for the Chickasaw people. As one reflects on what this statement encompasses it is important to note not only the growth of the revenue among the Chickasaws, but also one can observe the growth of tribal programs and services. The commerce activity, according to a message to the Chickasaw people by Governor Anoatubby, allows tribal businesses enable us to meet our mission by providing employment opportunities and funding for our many programs and services (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation, 2012). He notes in his message to the Chickasaw Nation citizens in his State of the Nation those businesses range from hotels to manufacturing to data processing and encompass a wide range of revenue-generating projects and entrepreneurial activities. Those efforts are funds that can potentially be used to support tribal programs and services.

According to a report spanning the time frame of 1996 to 2007, the funding provided by the revenues out of the Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce supported health services, elder services, educational scholarships and grants, youth programs, home ownership

programs, custom home programs, and the infrastructure supporting the Nation's programs. The funding figure for 1996 was \$1,114,334. By 2007, that same figure was \$130,898,487. There is a significant increase in funding between 2004 and 2005 on the investment into programs when it jumps from \$44,731,814 to \$122,659,921. It should be noted that the year 2004 was the year of the referendum passed by the voters of the State of Oklahoma to allow the tribes to compact with the state on gaming (Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce Progress Report, 1996-2007). Graph 5.0 shows the growth, which allowed the significant investment in tribal programs for its citizens.

Graph 5.0 Funding Provided to Chickasaw Nation by the Division of Commerce



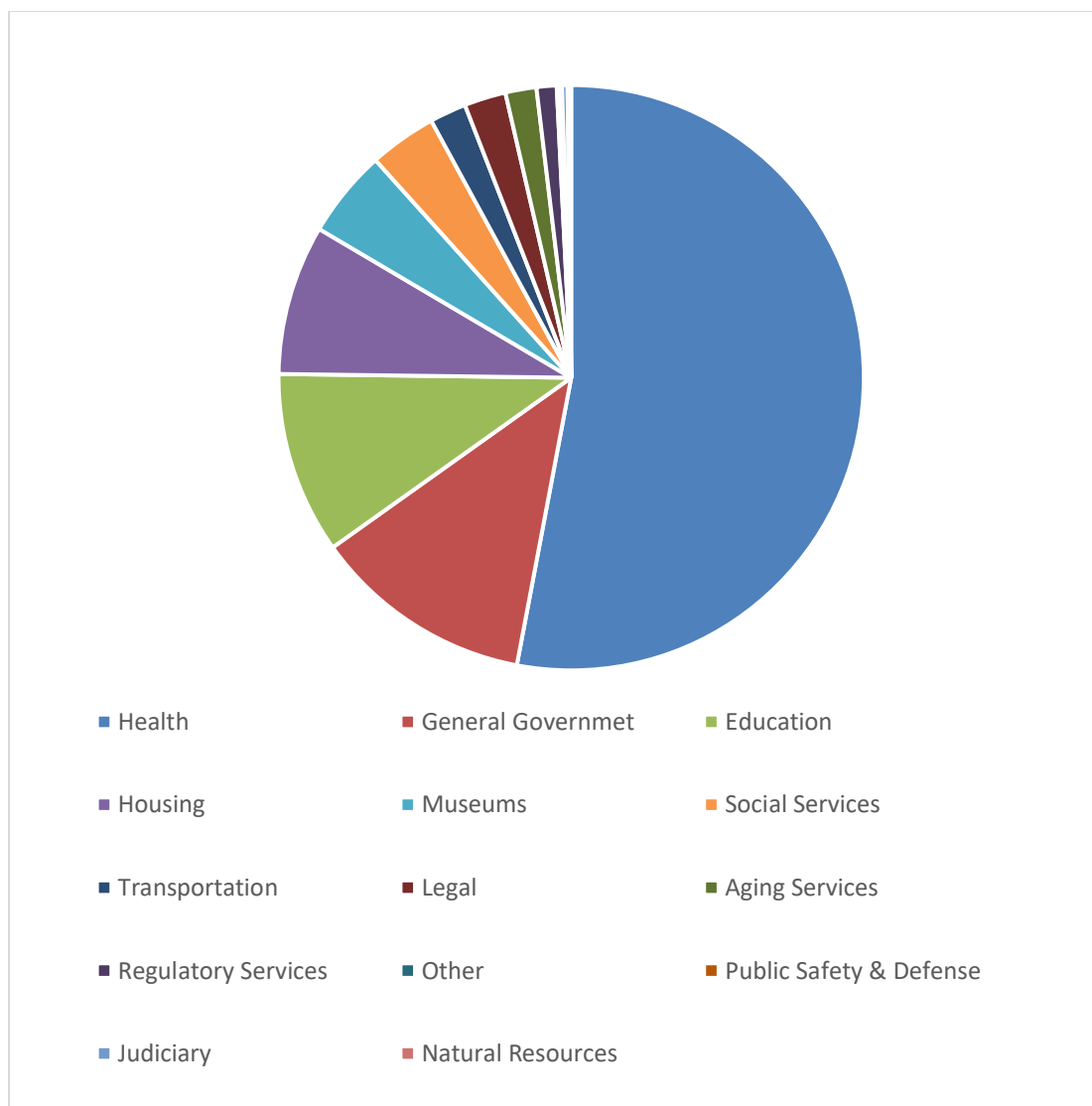
Source: Chickasaw Nation Progress Reports, 1996-2007.

The areas in which the Chickasaws have provided for the social welfare of its citizens include initiatives that have benefitted children and youth, communities, development,

educational opportunities, elders, families, government, health and wellness, and housing.

Refer to Graph 6.0. These programs have been managed through the various divisions of the Chickasaw Nation’s administration including culture and humanities, community services, commerce, communications and community development, family services, treasury, and interior services and health. Within each of the divisions, various activities and programming are demonstrated in the offerings listed in the Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory (2023).

Graph 6.0 Chickasaw Nation Expenditures by Area and Capital Reserves



Source: Chickasaw Nation Expenditures by Area and Capital Reserves, 2015

However, while today there are many services and programs, it is significant to acknowledge there were meager beginnings in terms of the benefits now derived by the citizens of the Chickasaw Nation. What one will observe as the chapter continues, is the number of services to Chickasaw citizens that has increased. There are many programs and services provided to Chickasaw citizens as has already been stated, however, one of the largest and most significant area of focus for the Nation is that of healthcare. Graph 6.0 demonstrates the significant portion of revenue being distributed into healthcare programs by the Chickasaw

Nation in the earlier years of gaming (Chickasaw Nation Expenditures by Area and Capital Reserves, 2015). And, since healthcare was one of the first and now the most significant in terms of funding by the Nation, it is necessary to review how healthcare for Native Americans has been a challenge and, in some cases, a tragedy as it transitioned over time to where it is today.

Native American Healthcare History:

While the Chickasaws are currently putting a much bigger piece of the revenue pie into healthcare and more than other services as they attempt to address the statistics around healthcare for Native Americans previously cited, the healthcare services for Native Americans as an ethnic group, have not always been accessible or even provided a quality level of care. As one reviews the legislation that allowed improved healthcare to begin its growth within Native American populations one must look to at the significant departmental transitions that occurring were and the placement of federal level oversight programs.

The Indian Health Service (IHS) was established in 1955 to oversee health care for Native Americans and Alaskan Natives. It had been previously housed within United States War Department and then the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the public health service in hopes of improving health care of Native Americans. As the 1960's came about, Lyndon B. Johnson's administration pushed to improve healthcare programs for Native Americans (Kuschell-Haworth, 1999).

As the research for the purpose of this paper has been looking at the growth period from the 1970's forward as it relates to the Chickasaw Nation, it would seem the 1970's period

was a transitory time for Native American healthcare nationally. It provided changes in Indian Healthcare which prior to that period had been an inadequate response to the federal government's responsibility for Native American health care which was codified by the Snyder Act of 1921 and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 1976, National Academies of Sciences, et al, 2022. This time period brought about the 1975 Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act, which affirmed the responsibility of the federal government to promote the facilitation of their ability to be involved in the governance of programs such as welfare, education, and health which would make the Indian Health Service more accountable.

It was during this same time period of striving to improve healthcare that the administration of Chickasaw Nation Governor Overton James was put in place. He was appointed in 1963 and improving health care for Native Americans became a priority. As previously stated, the provision of health care for Native Americans, up until this time, had been a responsibility of the U.S. Federal Government per treaty, however, the quality of care was problematic for the Indians. Governor James recognized this need and that relying on external support for healthcare was not enough. He began building relationships with the Indian Health Service (IHS) and political leaders, one of which included an Oklahoma Democratic leader in the U.S. House of Representatives Carl Albert. Speaker Albert would later go on to be Speaker of the House and would be one of the most powerful legislators to have served in that role (Green, 2014). Governor James evidently recognized the significance of the power Congressman Carl Albert would have and understood a strong relationship between him and Oklahoma's Native tribes could prove to be beneficial to Oklahoma Indians. Governor James was also recognized to be someone who had significant respect and influence within

both the White and Native American communities (Alexander, 1978). The influence of these two leaders would prove to be beneficial for the Chickasaws as they launched an effort to improve the plight of healthcare for Native American people.

A few years later after Governor James had taken office, IHS opened a health clinic in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. The year was 1968 and it was the first healthcare facility to be located within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation. The joint venture model for Indian healthcare during that period of time included a partnership with IHS and Tribes. The tribes, which entered into this type of model, were able to expand their services as well as the quality of service to its tribal members. Tribes, such as the Chickasaws did in this case, and built the hospital or clinics with their tribal dollars. IHS would then staff it and provide pharmaceuticals for healthcare. Futuristic plans at this time were to expand services with an addition of a new clinic in Ardmore as well (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

“The period of the 1970’s that followed Self Determination allowed Native Americans to have more say in what was going on with them as it pertained to health care and other programs that could make a difference in life expectancy and their health in general” (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). Native Americans were actually getting to be a participant on the federal level. Prior to that the tribes had their leaders appointed by the federal government. Self Determination changed that and one of the benefits of that was a vote of the people on their leader and that leader had the opportunity to assess the needs of the tribe and act on its best interests as he/she could. The giving back of this authority to the tribes was significant in terms of being able to negotiate their healthcare options (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

As a result of this legislation, tribes could start establishing things like Community Health Representatives, which allowed nurses and nurse's aides to go out into the various communities to check on the health of Native Americans. The Community Health Representatives could assess whether they were getting proper nutrition and healthcare, getting access to the doctors, obtaining medication as well as monitoring the medications and making sure they were taking them correctly. This was addressing an accessibility need and for a population that needed that access. As statistics have suggested diabetes had become a prominent disease among Native Americans and with that came certain care that was needed. Diabetes, not properly treated, could result in loss of limbs, decreased vision, or even loss of life. Accessible healthcare, proper treatment, and education was and is essential with this disease as well as other health challenges. This increased emphasis and follow through by the federal government was critical and provided the beginning of better health care options for Native Americans (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

Also, during this time, the Chickasaws had the Tishomingo Health Clinic and the healthcare staff housed there traveled throughout the Chickasaw Nation to meet patient needs. However, these efforts to address the healthcare issues within the Nation were overrun with patients in the different communities across the jurisdictional boundaries. The budget was limited and according to the traveling done by the staff presented a challenge in meeting health care needs across a significant rural area. If the patients required more (i.e., x-rays) they would need to travel to Lawton or Tahleah where the closest Indian hospitals were located. This put accessible healthcare as a significant challenge for many Native Americans. As a result, Governor James began to address the healthcare challenges with IHS as well as Congressional

leaders. He did this for two years while submitting the serious nature of the implications around the lack of health care options for Native American populations in Oklahoma. He requested budget increases and additional staff as needs and cited the lack of prenatal care, immunizations, antibiotics, and dental services as hugely significant to good healthcare and then cited the Native American infant mortality rate as high and life expectancy for Indians as low (Green, 2014).

In 1973, due to Governor James' and other Indian leaders' relentless efforts, they begin to see their lobbying efforts pay off with IHS announcing a new Indian hospital would be built in central Oklahoma. With Self Determination being touted, IHS allowed the Oklahomans (the Oklahoma City Area Indian Health Service Advisory Board) to decide the new location for the facility. Governor James lobbied the board to support his request for a hospital in Ada, Oklahoma, and after some political wrangling, he secured the vote needed. He then implored that the construction of the hospital be expedited and again, turned to his friend Carl Albert, now the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, who actually represented a lot of Chickasaws and Choctaws in the third Congressional District. His strategy included making sure there was a line item in the appropriations bill for it and naming the hospital after Carl Albert. Meanwhile, back in Oklahoma an attempt to move the location of the hospital to Shawnee was being organized. That failed as well (Green, 2014).

In 1975, Governor James prepared a prospectus for key Congressional leaders that included some important points regarding the plight of Indian healthcare. Those points included the fact that most of the 16,000 Indians residing in south-central Oklahoma were economically disadvantaged and experienced transportation challenges in accessing the closest

Indian hospitals. He also noted that due to the reserved nature of most Oklahoma Native Americans, they would be reluctant to visit a non-Indian facility closer to where they lived. He suggested this contributed to the average life expectancy of the Indian male being 46 years old at that time. Finally, he included that while the proposed hospital would provide educational and employment opportunities, it could also serve to encourage Native Americans to enter the healthcare field. He cited statistics around the extremely low number of Native Americans working in the health care field and the need to have better representation (Green, 2014).

While James and other United States governmental leaders were conducting the work toward accessible healthcare, the Nation was moving forward in their economic development initiatives. The focus on healthcare was only one effort that was being pursued in placing the Chickasaws in a more advantageous position. The population of the tribe in 1978 was estimated to be 5,850 (Alexander, 1978). Alexander reports they were employing around 50 people and their business enterprises included the Chickasaw Motor Inn, a trailer manufacturing company, and the Chickasaw Construction Company. It was during this time period that other programs were also developing alongside health care. Various federal and tribal projects and programs including education, health, housing, employment and training were in place and included departments such as the Chickasaw Housing Authority Board, the Title X Project, the Education Department, the Health Department, the Manpower Department, the Construction Department, the Planning Department and the Business Development Organization. Additionally, the Tishomingo Health Service was listed as well along with Departments of Information, Comprehensive Planning, Accounting, and the Kalihoma Board (Alexander, 1978).

Two grants were also in place during this time, which allowed the Chickasaws to assist with basic health, nutrition, and education needs. One such nutrition program included food distribution and health information that was provided to citizens through programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). A program out of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), it was and is a program designed to assist with healthcare and nutrition for low-income pregnant women and their children under the age of five. The Chickasaws were partners with the USDA on this venture at that time to assist their citizens but due to the requirements of the program would have been a distributor to other eligible low-income recipients besides Native Americans in the jurisdictional boundaries as the WIC program was not specific to just Native Americans (Alexander, 1978).

Alexander notes that during this period of time (1970's), there was an attempt by the Chickasaw Nation to increase local participation and establish good communication within the tribe as well. This was facilitated through the establishment of six community councils in 1975 and 1976 to assess the needs of the tribal community. The community councils were organized and led by local Indian people. Despite the perceived intent to have a grass roots effort with an active voice around such tribal initiatives as healthcare, there was some indication in Alexander's research that some felt it was an attempt to make the people believe they were having input when the councils really had no authority (Alexander, 1978).

Governor James addressing this to some degree noted in public discourse he had both the setting of policy as well as the enforcement, but he also publicly said he sought counsel from his advisory boards as well. Alexander also does in his dissertation, as it pertains to

leadership, that Governor James was perceived to be influential in both the White and Native American communities and cited an example of him being utilized to introduce a powerful speaker in the community on a legislative trip (Alexander, 1978). The perception of Governor James by Alexander may have been on target as he continued to utilize his influence on his quest for a hospital in Ada to serve Native American people.

More of James' political lobbying resulted in the planning study in the amount of \$800,000 to be passed in Congress. Obstacles now faced by the Governor included their friend and advocate Speaker Albert retiring and the urgent need to get the project done was accelerating. Even the naming of the hospital would require an exception, as there was a federal prohibition for naming federal facilities after the living. It is interesting to note that the motivation behind Speaker's Albert's support might not have been necessarily political because Governor James he seemed to feel the Speaker was helping, not for votes because so many were not in his district but rather his interests were a sincere desire to help the Native Americans. And, that help was not to be forgotten (Green, 2014).

Speaker Albert's interest continued, and they were able to get a pass on the naming and the 75-bed hospital was constructed on 15 acres adjacent to the Chickasaw Housing Authority headquarters. Congress appropriated \$4.5 million, the first of three years of financing for the hospital. Governor James proposed the hospital would serve approximately 15,000 Indians within a 50-mile radius, employ over 200 people, and have an annual payroll of \$3.5 million. Finally, in June of 1980 and after more political wrangling to Congress to get the funds needed to fully staff the hospital, the Carl Albert Indian Health Facility opened (Green, 2014).

It should be noted that the figures estimated for in-patient, and out-patient were too low, and the 130,000 square foot facility would go on to accommodate more than 10 times the original estimates provided. This was a pivotal moment for the Chickasaw people as well as other Native Americans in proximity. Healthcare was now much more accessible and gave hope to many regarding the health issues they had faced and the opportunity to seek treatment and care for those issues in a much easier way. The hope was that the figures and data around life expectancy for Native Americans would begin to change and healthcare would progress positively within the Chickasaw Nation (Green, 2014). It would seem their reliance on the federal government was shifting to, in this case healthcare, where they had orchestrated their ability to navigate and facilitate the programs, services, as well the accessibility.

Tribes had become heavily dependent, and not of their own making, on funds provided by the federal government. Decisions that impacted the tribe were being made by people of non-Indians, not residents of areas impacted, and serving multiple interests. All of this while trying to follow guidelines set by agencies outside of tribal organizations (Jorgenson, 2007). Pulling off the new hospital was a coop for the Nation, and it would seem to set them on a path to improving their healthcare options and establish some groundwork for opportunities in other areas of service outside of healthcare as well.

By 1987, in addition to the Carl Albert Indian Hospital, the Chickasaw Nation had opened a 9,600 square foot health clinic in Ardmore. Between the Nation's already established Tishomingo clinic and the new clinic, employees recorded 15,742 patient visits, 43,497 prescriptions filled, 22,931 lab tests run, and 2,313 dental visits. In addition, mental health services and public health services were also an important part of the assistance being

provided. The public health service program remained at work and included registered nurses visiting Native Americans in communities within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation to assess health needs, promote immunizations, and address preventative care issues (Chickasaw Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1988).

Fast forward to 2010, the new Chickasaw Nation Medical Center in Ada comprised of 370,000 square feet, which replaced the Carl Albert Indian Health Facility, became the focus of the system. It included 72-beds as well as an emergency department, a diabetes care center, a dental clinic, a diagnostic imaging center, a women's health center, offices for the tribe's health program, and an increase in healthcare staff (Evans, 2011). The Chickasaw Nation invested \$150 million in building the Chickasaw Medical Center under the Indian Health System Joint Venture Construction Program. This program allowed for IHS to provide additional funding for staffing and operational costs to Tribes who fund the construction of health care facilities (Chickasaw Nation Medical Center Marks 10 Years of Service to Native Citizens, *Chickasaw Times*, August 2020).

According to Bill Lance, Secretary of Commerce for the Chickasaw Nation, the Chickasaw Nation health care system now has great customer service, ratings, and has been given latitude to be competitive with salaries and benefits. Lance, previous administrator of the Chickasaw Nation Health System, has been around to watch the significant growth in health care for the Chickasaws and indicates his pride in what the tribe has done in this arena. "We are dedicated to improving the overall quality of life for Chickasaw citizens and healthcare is just one of the

ways in which we can serve the people of our tribe” (Lance, personal interview, 2016).¹⁶

Additionally, a press release from the Chickasaw Nation indicated a five-star rating for 2022 by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services which placed them in the top 15.9% of the country’s 3,093 hospitals (Chickasaw Nation Medical Center Receives Five Star Rating from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, The Daily Ardmoreite, 2022).

In addition to the hospital, other healthcare options for the Chickasaw people continue to grow with a new 53,000 square foot health clinic in Tishomingo during 2013. That new clinic saw an increase of the number of employees from 26 to 82 with additional services being provided in the new facility. That opening followed a new 66,000 square foot facility in Ardmore as well. As one reviews the totals of the 2013 year under the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health, their health care facilities provided more than 514,000 patient visits (an average of 1,400 patient visits each day) and filled more than 1.2 million prescriptions in that year. By 2015 the number of patient visits was up to 800,000 (Chickasaw Nation Program Participation, 2016).

The total of patient visits in 2015 is demonstrative of the increased number of patients being treated in the health care system of the Chickasaw Nation. Several departments within the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center host services designed to assist in promoting healthy Native Americans. Diabetes, as previously mentioned, is a disease prevalent in the Native American population. To address this statistic, eligible Native Americans are provided access to

¹⁶Lance, B., (2016), An interview with Chickasaw Nation Secretary of the Department of Commerce by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Durant, OK, 6/28/16.

a Diabetes Care Center, located on the campus of the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center. Services provided include medical, educational, nutritional, and exercise services as well as a diabetes prevention program, foot care, retinal photography, dental hygiene, and behavioral health. Medical services include the management of diabetes, gestational diabetes, insulin pump management, inpatient diabetes consultation, endocrinologist management of diabetes as well as pediatric endocrinology. Prevention programs include, but are not limited to group sessions, personal lifestyle coaching, incentives, family-oriented approaches, weight loss, increased physical activity programs, and biometric screening (Chickasaw Medical Center, Chickasaw Nation, 2017).

The Behavioral Health Services program provided by the Chickasaw healthcare system, is also addressing a significant need at the Chickasaw Nation. It provides a variety of options for those seeking assistance for mental health challenges. According to the Minority Health at a Glance, in 2019, another concerning statistic for Native Americans included mental health issues (Oklahoma Minority Health at a Glance, 2019). This is one more health challenge of Native Americans the Chickasaw Nation has chosen to address in their healthcare system. Those services include outpatient counseling, crisis intervention, and referrals for residential or substance abuse treatment. All health care workers within the behavioral health division, work alongside other health care specialists for integrated care within the system (Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, 2022).

Accessibility has also been an historical issue for Native Americans as it relates to healthcare. Transportation to quality healthcare has been one of those challenges. Programs are available within the healthcare system to address this need through their transportation

services where tribal citizens can arrange to be transported both to and from a medical visit as well as having access to delivery of prescription medication as well (Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, 2022). Additionally, a virtual medical visit program is available for those with nonthreatening injuries or ailments. Tribal citizens can access health professionals without leaving their home or business (Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, 2022). These two services have the potential to be life changing as transportation to medical facilities or prescription medication can be extremely challenging.

The Nation also provides within its healthcare system and campus facilities services that impact domestic violence and family issues as well as sexual and substance abuse. Statistics related to domestic violence are extremely alarming as it pertains to Native Americans. A study from the National Institute of Justice notes 84% of American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime compared to 71% of women in the general population. Half of that total has been an intimate partner. Psychological aggression has impacted 66% (Rossy, 2016). The Chickasaws are offering programs to address these alarming statistics including Domestic Violence Services, Batterer Intervention Services, and Violence Prevention Services, Nittak Himitta' "A New Day," Hina' Chokma "Good Road," and Sexual Assault Rape Services. The services included in these programs vary from education into a cognitive behavioral approach on culture, history and Native American traditions, assistance to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, as well as residential treatment programs (Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, 2022). Outside of the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation, the tribe has stepped forward to assist other Native American partners with healthcare needs. The Chickasaws stepped forward to contribute to the \$2 million

fundraising project, which has as its goal the construction of a 7,000 square-foot pharmacy at the Oklahoma City Clinic (Indian Country Today, 2014). The campaign will allow the pharmacy to double its capacity to provide prescriptions and have a confidential consultation site, training rooms, and a drive-through capability. Governor Anoatubby commented in the media release, “We recognize the challenges American Indian in Oklahoma are faced with when it comes to health care services. We value the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic’s role in improving access to health care and are looking forward to seeing the positive impact this pharmacy will have on the community” (Indian Country Today, 2014, p. 1).

The Chickasaws have grown their healthcare system exponentially as one can observe from the number of patients served as well as the variety of programs that now exist. In 2019, a press release noted that in addition to the Chickasaw Medical Center, there were four health care clinics, eight pharmacies, four nutrition centers, eight Women, Infants and Children offices (WIC), and five wellness centers (The Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, 2019). The offerings in the field of health are vast and growing for the Chickasaw Nation.

Housing Programs Within the Chickasaw Nation:

In addition to health care as one of the first benefits provided to Tribal citizens, housing emerged on the scene early as an opportunity to help Chickasaws. Housing for Native Americans in Indian Country is a challenge as they have had some of the worst housing needs in the U.S. Native Americans account for less than 1% of all owner-occupied homes compared to 63.8% for the total U.S. population (National Congress of American Indians, 2022). As a result of the Oklahoma Housing Authority Act of 1965, the Chickasaw Housing Authority was created in 1966, just three years after Governor Overton James had taken office. James, who had

orchestrated such a significant movement in the healthcare realm for the Chickasaws, had seen the need for Chickasaw citizens to have assistance with housing services as well. “Establishing the housing authority was the first step in our efforts to help meet the housing needs of our citizens,” Governor Anoatubby was quoted as saying in the press release (Choate, Housing Authority Marks 50 Years of Service to Chickasaws, Chickasaw Times, 2016, p. 1).

Alexander (1978) notes the beginning of the Chickasaw Housing Authority in 1966 as they coordinated the construction of some \$45,000,000 in housing and the placement of approximately 1800 families in improved housing. The goal of the Chickasaw Housing Authority at that time was to provide a quality home for Indian people. These programs were administered under the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which originated in the Lyndon B. Johnson era.

At the time of its inception into the Chickasaw Nation, the goal was simply to provide better housing for eligible lower-income families. Alexander notes the construction of 1000 “mutual help” homes where the Indian families provided the land and the assistance in building the home (Alexander, 1978). That assistance was referred to as sweat equity and included cleaning, foundation work, and other tasks that were perceived as a sort of in-kind down payment (Choate, Housing Authority Marks 50 Years of Service to Chickasaws, Chickasaw Times, 2016, p. 1).

The homes were valued at approximately \$20,000 at that time and the ability to obtain one of the Indian homes was based on income (Alexander, 1978). Low-income families or those with minimal fixed incomes were the recipients of the homes. House payments were low which was a result of the subsidizing by the federal HUD program. The Chickasaw Housing Authority

would eventually move ownership to them after a designated period of time (20 years) and payment history.

It is also noted during that period of time that there were eleven housing projects, consisting of lower rent apartments that were being built within the Chickasaw Nation boundaries. The Chickasaw Housing Authority was also involved with finding the location of rental property as well as rental payment assistance for housing when leased by private owners. In addition to the services and assistance provided, the Chickasaws also constructed a \$300,000 office for the Chickasaw Housing Authority in Ada, Oklahoma. The office was completed in 1975 (Alexander, 1978).

The current administrator of the Chickasaw Housing Authority, Wayne Scribner who serves as the Executive Director, noted that even though the government had allowed the tribes to form housing authorities the tribes were still limited by public housing guidelines. That meant, the tribes were competing with other entities for the federal funds for housing. Regardless, the tribe persisted in seeking out the funds and continuing to create housing programs that provided assistance with home ownership as well as rental property. The Chickasaw Housing Authority served all low-income residents at that time through the program, but priority for service was given to Chickasaw citizens (Choate, Housing Authority Marks 50 Years of Service to Chickasaws, Chickasaw Times, 2016, p. 1).

A significant piece of legislation was passed in 1988 with the Indian Housing Act. This Act established a separate program under the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to assist Native Americans and Alaska Natives (Fixico, 2013). This empowered tribal leaders to further develop programs for their tribal members. Governor Anoatubby was actually a part of

the testimony provided to Congress on the legislation that would be significant to Native Americans. A second piece of legislation would follow in 1996 with the passage of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA). Again, Anoatubby would serve on the “original negotiated rulemaking committee charged with developing regulations necessary to implement the legislation” (Choate, Housing Authority Marks 50 Years of Service to Chickasaws, Chickasaw Times, 2016, p. 1). “Passage of NAHASDA was a major milestone, because it allows more flexibility to tailor our housing programs to the specific needs of our citizens,” said Governor Anoatubby. “We believe it is important to listen to the people to better understand how we can best meet their needs” (Choate, Housing Authority Marks 50 Years of Service to Chickasaws, Chickasaw Times, 2016, p. 1).

As a result of that piece of legislation the Chickasaws the Chickasaw Nation put together an agreement with four different entities that would create availability of \$10 million for the purchase or rehabilitation of Chickasaw homes. The “Chuka Chukmasi” (beautiful home) program was described as the first pilot program of its kind under the new law. Through the program, Chickasaw citizens anywhere in Oklahoma could purchase a home with only three percent down. Those who struggled with the three percent down payment had the option to put one percent down and borrow the remainder from a Chickasaw Nation fund at a five percent interest rate. For the Chickasaws, this program meant home ownership was much more of an option than it ever had been before.

In the years since the passage of NAHASDA, the Chickasaw Nation has expanded its growth in their housing program. Eddie Easterling, a long-time employee of the Tribe, has observed the growth of the benefits provided to tribal citizens. He talked in his interview about

the housing program, which he now oversees, and the pride in home ownership he gets to observe when someone obtains one of the homes. “This program works to help tribal citizens get into homes with the least amount of money possible. We want to help them build equity in their homes” (Easterling, personal interview, 2014)¹⁷.

That growth for the Chickasaw Nation, in addition to the home ownership and rental assistance for low-income families, has included counseling for homeowners and home loan services, home maintenance and repairs, home improvement assistance, driveway construction and storm shelter installation. Efforts to improve the quality of home have also been a part of their effort as the years evolved as well as input from the prospective homeowner on floor plans and specifications for the home. Between the years of 1966 and 2016, the Chickasaws constructed 2,800 homes and as of 2016 offered more than 700 rentals to Chickasaw citizens. Yearly yields include 25 new homes being constructed and around 40 being signed over into ownership by the families who have been a part of the program (Choate, Housing Authority Marks 50 Years of Service to Chickasaws, Chickasaw Times, 2016, p. 1).

The infusion of federal funds was significant in the tribal programs for housing, yet the assumption that it would be enough to provide all that was needed was probably not realistic. The tribes, as money became available, would have to supplement. And, the Chickasaws have committed to that through their continued funding and adding additional programs designed to assist citizens in the process. Adding programs that create information and resources around purchasing and maintaining homes has been helpful to a population that may be the first one in

¹⁷Easterling, E. (2015), An interview with Chickasaw Nation Housing Administrator by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Ada, OK, 2/2/15).

their family to own their own home. Additionally, not everyone can or desires to be an owner, therefore by providing rental units or rental assistance, Chickasaw citizens are granted the opportunity to live in homes that provide favorable living conditions in safer community settings. Residents of these units, due to limited or fixed incomes or even physical disabilities, are less likely to be able to maintain those units in a way that is sustainable so having the Nation as the landowner or the entity that maintains the residences address that issue. The Nation can maintain and provide repairs to the home in such a way that allows it to remain in good condition. “As the housing market and desires of people change, we will continue to develop innovative and creative solutions to solve housing needs, Chickasaw Nation Governor Anoatubby remarked at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Housing program (Choate, Housing Authority Marks 50 Years of Service to Chickasaws, Chickasaw Times, 2016, p. 1). This also, in turn, assists the communities across the Chickasaw Nation as it lessens the burden on other entities to provide low-income housing.

Programs for Chickasaw Elders:

The Division of Aging describes their view of their Chickasaw Nation elders as the aged being living treasures. Interviews with leaders within the Chickasaw Nation as a part of the media pieces designed for Chickasaw television seem to be designed to demonstrate the value that is placed on the elder population by the tribe. “Chickasaws hold their elder people in very high regard, it is a great honor to become an elder in Chickasaw society,” as one interviewee (Jeanie Barbour) noted on a media presentation (Jeanie Barbour) said (Chickasaw Nation Television/Media Series, 2022). Barbour described the work put into the elders’ programs as demonstrative of the high esteem the elders have in the Chickasaw community. “The tribe as I

said, want to recognize their elders, and they have through many events and programs,” said Barbour. That recognition is reflected in their programmatic offerings to Chickasaw elders.

These programs are in addition to the health care program, which aspires to lengthen the life span of Chickasaw citizens. One of the first such programs to be offered to the elders were meals which were provided to senior citizens each workday in an effort to ensure a nutritious meal was obtained thus improving their diets. Those programs now include lunches to homebound Native American elders as well. That program has been enhanced since its beginnings and now the Community Health Program through the Chickasaw Nation contributes to the care of the elderly by providing opportunities such as educational presentations conducted at Chickasaw Nation Senior Centers. Those centers are located within the Chickasaw Nation service area where information is presented on topics related to diet, nutrition, and healthy lifestyle choices. The Centers are open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and provide services and activities. In an effort to enhance preventative care for elders, an automated blood pressure measurement machines and specified over-the-counter medications are provided as well through the Senior Centers. Each Chickasaw Nation Senior Center also has the opportunity to elect its own advisory board from their peers in that community. Currently there are 11 senior centers within the Chickasaw Nation jurisdictional boundaries and serve over 163,000 meals in 2019 (Elders, Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2020).

The Senior Centers also offer a variety of activities as well that enhance the emotional and physical well-being of their elders. Some of those activities include breakfasts, lunches, and homebound lunches to eligible tribal citizens. The Senior Centers also provide health monitoring, social activities, cultural classes, speakers, elder wellness programs, and group

activities. They tribe seem dedicated to the overall welfare of its elder citizens through their offerings of a variety of services (Elders, Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2022).

Elders are also eligible for an assisted living benefit program that can provide up to \$2,500 per month (based on client need) to reside in a state licensed assisted-living facility. The program is available to seniors aged 60 years and older who meet the medical and financial eligibility guidelines. Another valuable program designed to assist those living alone includes the Itiapela Medical Alert Program. It is designed to pay the initial costs and monthly fees for 24-hour medical alert services for Chickasaw elders that are 60 years of age or older, homebound, and live alone. This is a significant asset for those living on a fixed income (Elders, Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2022).

Often seniors on a fixed income have challenges around paying high utility bills during peak energy months of the year. One program designed to assist with that challenge offered to seniors is the Elderly Energy Assistance Program which is deployed to assist Chickasaw seniors 60 years and older who are unable to obtain assistance from other programs and have demonstrated need with energy costs. There is a one-time assistance program for those who have winter-heating or summer cooling needs. Those utilities that can be covered by this program include gas, water, electricity, or deposits for those items (Elders, Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2020).

There are numerous programs available to the seniors that are designed to assist seniors with everyday tasks that have become unmanageable and special needs as it relates to their homes and transportation, conferences, veteran services and trips, mentorship

opportunities, and burial assistance. Many of those are outlined on the Chickasaw Nation website or in the Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory which can be downloaded off of the website or mailed upon request (Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services, 2020). That same directory provides a description of a number of programs designed to serve and honor their military veterans, many of which are in the senior category now. Outreach services are available to assist veterans with obtaining their benefits as well as services from Veteran's Affairs as well as other veterans' organizations. One program, which is deemed the Chickasaw Honor Guard, provides the service of conducting military honors at funerals and memorial services. This highly esteemed group also participates in uniform at parades, powwows, ceremonies, a variety of tribal activities, and patriotic activities. Posting the colors at various events within the boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation and other events at the State and national level are also a part of their service activities. Chickasaw Veterans are also honored with eligibility for a Chickasaw Veterans jacket in honor of their service in the military.

It is evident from the number of programs offered to enhance wellness, nutrition, social needs, preventative health issues, everyday life challenges, assisted living options, as well as burial needs, that the elders of the Chickasaw Nation are held in high esteem. They are also utilized to contribute to language and cultural awareness thus the citizens continue to receive wisdom and guidance thus allowing the elders to feel they are significantly contributing to the growth of the Nation. "Our elders are our everything, they hold the knowledge, they hold the wisdom of how you get through difficult times" (Chickasaw Nation Television/Media Series, 2015). Although not uncommon in Indian Country, the Chickasaws appear to offer a number of services and various forms of monetary assistance or resources to Tribal elders.

Educational Opportunity Within the Chickasaw Nation:

There is value placed on education of the youth by the Chickasaws. It is noted by Governor Bill Anoatubby in his address regarding the importance education is to the Chickasaws. He notes the opportunities for education included 6,000 Chickasaw students receiving \$28.8 million in higher education grants and scholarships last year. He noted the building of a new Chickasaw Youth Club in Ardmore, OK and the influx of summer camps, clinics and academies hosting over 1,600 students. “It is important that we offer these invaluable opportunities for our youth to learn, grow and develop in a safe and positive environment,” (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2022).

This investment by the Chickasaws is important as there are many Native Americans in need of educational programs due to the population. According to the Education Trust on the State of Education for Native Students, nationally, there are 607,000 Native American students attending public or Bureau of Indian Affairs schools with approximately 116,597 of those coming out of Oklahoma, which is the largest. Two-thirds of that national number are attending rural schools and probably have more limited access to accelerated coursework (State of Education for Native Students, Education Trust, 2014). In 2013, Oklahoma public schools identified 130,000 Native American Students of the population as American Indian. This actually is the same number for Hispanics and tied for second as the second largest ethnic group in the Oklahoma state school system (Davenport, 2015). Access to education is important, especially in rural areas of the state, and efforts to address gaps are important.

A Culture of Health report suggest that while specific Chickasaw educational attainment data is unavailable, that more than 15% of those residing within the 13-county region that

encompasses the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation have less than a high school degree. It further notes that almost 85% have less than a college degree. These rates fall slightly lower than that of the Whites (Culture of Health, National Academy of Medicine, 2017). Finding resources and implementing those resources will help raise those statistics and improve the educational attainment levels.

From an Oklahoma perspective, there have been efforts around attempting to address disparities among educational statistics as it pertains to Native Americans and using tribal game revenues to execute on it. In 2004, the year of the gaming compact which Oklahoma voters approved with the passage of State Question 712. Exclusivity fees from the gaming activity revenue were to be rolled into education. That translates, as reported by the 2014 Gaming Compliance Report Unit, to “122.6 million given to the state from tribal gaming, with the Education Reform Revolving Fund 1017 receiving \$107.6 million” (Davenport, 2015). In 2010, the Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education was created by House Bill 2929. This council is a collaboration with representatives from various tribes as well as public school officials and is designed to address the needs of Native American students in Oklahoma. This is accomplished through recommendations by the council as well as an ongoing evaluation around “the effectiveness of the public education system” (Davenport, 2015). Further assistance was provided in 2014 when the State Department of Education introduced the Oklahoma Indian Education Resource. This resource provides education guides and lesson plan for instruction as it pertains to Oklahoma’s Indian tribes but that fall in line with the State’s academic standards. Lessons plans that are designed to meet cultural needs and learning styles for Native American students are included. One State official, Dwight Pickering who is the

Director of the Oklahoma Office of American Indian Education), noted this is forward movement for equal education for all is one step toward a bigger project: ‘Indian education for all’ (Davenport, 2015). The gaming revenue stream has been structured to assist fund and address the education issues.

It would seem through these efforts, there is assistance and collaboration with the State of Oklahoma in terms of education and the need to address low levels of educational attainment by Native Americans. Although the Oklahoma’s compact with the tribes supports education and has provided funding through exclusivity fees, the importance of improving Native American educational opportunities to the State of Oklahoma ebbs and flows depending upon those in leadership. Tribes and other entities such as universities and educational programs have recognized the value of accessible education. The State of Oklahoma appears to be making some efforts in this regard, at least through the State Department of Education while tribes are incorporating programs to enhance education, provide assistance, and incentivize students. This, however, has not always been the case. One could suggest the Chickasaws may have always valued education, but just like other tribes, they were subject to federal intervention in their educational endeavors. A review of how the current situation of education evolved is necessary.

The History of Education Within the Chickasaw Nation:

The westernized view of education may skew one’s perception of how Native Americans have come to be “educated.” Education might be considered the transfer of information, knowledge, or skills. For Native Americans, one might argue their education, though not what one might view by the same standards today, was still something that Native Americans found

important. For survival, one must learn, and those lessons must be passed down to subsequent generations. Even prior to the removal of the Chickasaw people from their homelands to Indian Territory, historically, the Chickasaw Nation has viewed education as important for their people. The 150-year period following removal was a critical time and many of the challenges the Chickasaws faced were often political in nature and stemmed from attempts by the federal government to derail tribal sovereignty for the tribes. Removal of the Chickasaw Nation to Indian Territory occurred in 1837 and the next 150 years would be a period of immense challenges and transitions for the tribe. But, as one will observe, that while other tribes were suffering under some imposing legislation, the Chickasaws began to use the education they had to build communities, schools, businesses, and churches (Cobb, 1992).

In taking a step back to consider what was occurring in Indian Country at that time, and specifically as it related to education, the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek in 1867 should be noted. It was an attempt by the federal government to assimilate Native American tribes and do away with old Indian customs while bringing Native people into the white culture. The Treaty, a result of a meeting with primarily Plains Indians (Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Kiowa Apache Nations), was enforced even though it was never ratified (Davenport, 2015). This time was a dark era for the Indians as the eradication of their cultural heritage began to be assaulted through assimilation activity in the name of education. While Native Americans had been subjected to Americanized education as early as 1617 at Moor's Charity School (later Dartmouth), Hampton Institute, and Harvard, the first boarding school was not established until 1860 on the Yakima Reservation in the state of Washington (Juneau, Fleming, and Foster,

2012). This was moving Native Americans into a period of time where their cultural ways would be discouraged while adaptation of the white man's world would be enforced.

The boarding school era had Native American families required to send their children to federal government ran educational facilities that prevented children from maintaining or practicing their cultural heritage or identity as an Indian. Those practices would have included things such as cutting their hair, preventing their Native language to be spoken, or changing their names. Many children were removed from their families to live in the boarding school environment. The boarding school practice continued to occur for some tribes well into the 1970's (Davenport, 2015). We are not that far removed in time from a troubling effort to assimilate Native American culture into that of the western world.

The boarding school practice had been established; however, the Chickasaws recognized that literacy and education could be the tool that changed their destiny from being subjected to policies and treaties not understood or validated. This propelled them to look to the future and see the importance of becoming a more educated populace. Their investment, prior to the federal government's boarding schools, included the creation of the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy for boys and four other boarding schools, which included the Wapanucka Institute for Girls in 1852; Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852; Collins Institute (Colbert), 1854; and the Burney Institute for Girls, 1859. Their boarding schools were very different from others as they founded it themselves alongside missionaries in 1852 (Cobb, 1992).

It was during this period that the Chickasaws had acquired a different form of independence. The Treaty of 1855 provided for the delineation of their tribe from the Choctaw Nation and their distinct jurisdictional boundaries were established apart from the Choctaws.

As a result of a redrafted Constitution and the empowerment of a clear identity apart from the Choctaw Nation, the Chickasaws identified the need to utilize education as a mechanism for their continued survival and ultimately economic success (Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, 2010).

The Chickasaws continued to utilize education to sustain and grow their educational offerings through the educational institutions established until Oklahoma statehood. Statehood brought about the schools being shut down (1907) except for Bloomfield (later called Carter Seminary) which actually operated until 1949 but out of control of the Chickasaw Nation (Carter County, The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, 2022). The Board contributed one third of the cost and the Chickasaw Nation took on the rest of the expenses to cover operating expenses. Interestingly enough, they also received a \$1,000 annually from interests on money General George Washington was given from the first Congress for his services during the Revolutionary War as Commander and Chief. He had placed it in an education fund and now it would be used to help with the expenses of educating Native Americans (Cobb, 1992).

The former Bloomfield Academy was rebuilt in 1917 as Carter Seminary in Ardmore, OK after Bloomfield burned in 1914 (The Chickasaw Nation, 2022). From 1917 to 1929 Chickasaw funds, which were controlled by the federal government, operated the school that was open to Chickasaw girls only. After 1929, the school was maintained by federal funds and was open to American Indian girls of any tribe, who were at least one-quarter blood quantum (Cobb, 1992). As of 2014, the Carter facility, located in Ardmore, has now been renovated and is a Chickasaw

Nation Community Center (Former Carter Seminary building transformed into community center for Chickasaw Nation, The Daily Ardmoreite, 2022).

Growth continued to occur in the education arena for the Chickasaws as Carter Seminary evolved to yet another location in 2004 and is called the Chickasaw Children's Village now. It sits on 160 acres overlooking Lake Texoma in Marshall County and still within the Chickasaw Nation's jurisdictional boundaries. It is a residential and educational care facility with the goal being to give Native American students ages first to 12th grade, a home away from home in a safe, nurturing environment. Students attend school in Kingston, Oklahoma. Some are there seeking better opportunities, and some are there due to parents/grandparents attending boarding schools and are seeking to continue that tradition. Support for the young students is presented to the students in terms of academic support, cultural activities, and language classes (Chickasaw Children's Village, the Chickasaw Nation, 2022). While there was much evolving of the boarding schools into what is now the Chickasaw Children's Academy, there is something of note to consider. The educational systems were strong enough that Oklahoma's state educational system was initially modeled after what was being utilized by the Chickasaws as well as the other Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma (Cobb, 2017).

In years during and after the Bloomfield Academy and Carter Seminary, the Nation began to reformulate and organize economic efforts in the 1960's and 1970's in different areas and education became an even more important initiative for the tribe. Formerly educated Chickasaws with advanced educations returned to work within their tribe during the 1960's when the Chickasaws were working to help formulate and modernize the tribe. As federal government contracting and programs occurred, the Chickasaws needed tribal employees that

could navigate the management of programs and services (Making Education a Priority, Chickasaw Times, 2014).

It was also during this developmental period that the Chickasaws began to explore funding to support education programs. Those first attempts to get to the significant numbers around the funding and the numerous programs the education department currently enjoys, the Nation started in governmental grants. The beginning attempts at spurring on educational pursuits in the early years meant Chickasaws partnering with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide what is known as the Head Start program. The program is designed to promote school readiness for children under five from low-income families through education, health, social, and other services. The program started in 1978 and graduated 33 children (Chickasaw Nation Head Start Students Graduate Across South-Central Oklahoma, Chickasaw Nation Media Relations Office, 2019). In 1988, there were approximately 50 students enrolled (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation, 1988). That figure in 2011 was up to 261 (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010). The Head Start program continues but has grown into an Early Childhood program that encompasses not only the Head Start programs in Ada, Ardmore, Sulphur, and Tishomingo, Oklahoma, but also school readiness instruction and parent support. The program includes family-focused and developmentally appropriate preparation all designed to insure achievement. Health, nutrition, family engagement, and cultural programming are all a part of the programs. Another significant landmark occurred in 2018, when the Chickasaw Nation Early Childhood Program obtained international accreditation through the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (Chickasaw Nation Head

Start Students Graduate Across South-Central Oklahoma, Chickasaw Nation Media Relations Office, 2019). The Chickasaws growth of programming starting in formative years is demonstrative of investing in education from the earliest opportunities.

As educational readiness was being addressed through Head Start for the tribe's young citizens, another education program was also being administered by the Chickasaw Nation to eligible Native American children and youth (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1987). The Johnson-O'Malley Program, which was authorized in 1934 by the Johnson-O'Malley Act, is a contractual grant, which was designed to promote the education of Native American students (age three to grade 12). It specifically had as its focus programs promoting culture, language, academics, and dropout prevention. The Chickasaws were recipients of the Johnson O'Malley grant and by 1988 had a presence in 27 schools within the jurisdictional boundaries serving 4,119 students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation, 1988). The Johnson O'Malley program had grown to serving 7,998 eligible Indian students in approximately 54 schools in 2013. In 2015, that figure was at 9,000. The program also serves students who are being home schooled. The program provides professional development, educational assessments, and teacher training for numerous Indian education groups. According to program data, the majority of students who are Chickasaw and receiving Johnson O'Malley programmatic assistance, are graduating from their respective high schools (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010). The educational readiness programs seemed to be producing positive results.

Both the Head Start program and the Johnson O'Malley programs were two of the first historical programs to be established within the Chickasaw Nation and have grown significantly. According to the Tribal Education Report of 2011, the "Chickasaw Constitution provides the Nation's governor with broad discretion to develop and guide the Chickasaw Nation Department of Education, (CNDE)." The CNDE, which started as the division of youth education in 1998, now includes 210 employees and includes five sub-departments under its umbrella. Those sub-departments include childcare, early childhood, office of supportive programs, education services, and vocational rehabilitation. The Division, through its programs and services, aid approximately 14,200 students. The CNDE's administrator reports directly to the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation and that division of the Nation is one of the top funded expenditures for the Nation (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

One should note these programs and facilities invested in for Chickasaw children and youth fall within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation. Not only are the additional programs an enhancement to their education but the facilities where they are housed are more modernized buildings and centers than many have in their communities. According to the Tribal Education Report (2011), the majority of Chickasaw students are attending Oklahoma public schools within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation, which is primarily rural. It is reported that in 2009 there were 63,744 students enrolled in the Nation's jurisdictional boundaries with \$14,801 being Native Americans. Again, this is challenging as issues in education are further perpetuated in these rural areas as access to support services and broadband for good internet may bring about significant challenges for the youth. A further description of the numerous programs and departments is necessary to

grasp the significant growth of offerings within the Chickasaw Nation's Division of Education since its inception that can aid in addressing the needs of the Native American population, and specifically, the Chickasaws (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

Chickasaw Nation's Investment into Children and Youth Programs:

The Child Care Department, also under the Division of Education now, provides care to approximately 225 children and is licensed to care for 242. Their goals and objectives are centered around providing a "flexible, enriching environment that will facilitate the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional growth of children from zero to five years" (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010, p. 16). Additionally, the Child Care School Age Program is conducted during summertime with children that are out of school as well as during school breaks. The program is set up for children ages four to 10 years of age. The program designs field trips for the age group, the opportunity to visit area parks, and other special events. Other activities include craft programs, storytelling, musical and theater activities, music and dance, the opportunity to do community activities, as well as science activities. The program seeks to provide a positive environment designed to promote physical, cognitive, and emotional growth in children (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

Additionally, the Chickasaw Nation now offer a Child Care Assistance Program to assist families in paying for childcare services. The design of the program is to provide the highest quality childcare environment to Native Americans within the boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation. Parents are assisted in choosing quality childcare providers from a variety of entities. Those entities must meet all licensing requirements if they are to be reimbursed by the Nation.

In 2011, 350 children were provided childcare assistance, which was open to only Native American families (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

In 2008, another service, called the Sick Child Care Facility, was added by the Chickasaw Nation Department of Education. The objectives were to protect the health, safety, and well-being of well and mildly ill children. It is one of the only tribally operated facilities of its kind in the State. The Chickasaw Nation facility will take in children with health issues such as upper-respiratory illnesses and gastrointestinal disorders. Children are separated into rooms by their diagnosis to minimize the spread of the illness. The program can take up to 35 students and a Licensed Practical Nurse is always on staff. This is a significant assistance program to those parents who must continue to work when their children become ill (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

Several programs within the Chickasaw Nation Division of Education have collaborations with public school systems to assist with transitions into educational programs. One such program is the Child Care Transition Program. The program provides services to assist families with children with special needs as they enter special education programs in public schools. The Nation's program conducts appropriate assessments and helps ensure the families have the documentation needed for the children to meet program qualifications. They collaborate with the Sooner Start Program, a program administered by the State of Oklahoma, to see children receive the correct assessments and tests before age three. The early intervention based on the assessment will assist in seeing that children can derive the most appropriate services in meeting the educational requirements of this special needs' population. These efforts are designed to assist the child in transitioning into the correct systems with a minimal

amount of confusion or delay to ensure they remain on an educational plan (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

Another challenged population that has specific needs is that of families that have children with behavioral issues. The Behavior Intervention Program provides a service to children and their parents to help them work through behavioral issues and grow in a positive way. This endeavor is deployed through opportunities to take advantage of counseling services, parental classes, behavior guidance, and other types of special needs as demonstrated by the children and their families (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010). This effort can ensure students with special behavioral issues and the families who are challenged by that receive care and assistance in working through challenges that can sometimes impact educational programs and delay or prevent academic success.

While there are programs for those who have challenges, there are programs that also are designed to reward positive behaviors as well. For those Chickasaw students who excel academically, the Chickasaw Honors Club is another program designed to provide financial incentives to students who demonstrate academic success and strong attendance in their respective schools. The Chickasaw Honors Club serves approximately 2,500 Chickasaw students annually. Students are tracked and data is collected. This data reflects that 85% of students show grade increases between grading periods each school year. Students are tracked to retain them and keep them on track with good grades during their academic tenure (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

Efforts are also being focused within the Chickasaw Nation on generating interest in fields that have been traditionally unrepresented by Native Americans. In an effort to enhance

the education of students who demonstrate an interest in technology, science, engineering, and math, a program exists to provide more skills in those areas but also to promote awareness around careers in those areas. Students can take part in activities that promote their problem-solving abilities as well as their team-building capacity. Programs offered include a Junior First Lego League for students between ages 6-8 years old designed to introduce them to hands-on basic design skills. The First Lego League is for ages 9-14 and moves them into the use of small electronics. This opportunity continues for high school students ages 14-18 and can make application of math and science concepts by robotic design and programming (Chickasaw Nation Television/Media Series, 2022).

The substantial number of programs dedicated to children and youth within the Chickasaw Nation could be indicative of the value placed on their younger citizens. A quote by Jefferson Keel, the Lieutenant Governor of the Chickasaw Nation in a report from the National Congress of American Indians in 2013 is a value statement that could serve to substantiate the tribe's purposeful efforts (and not just the Chickasaws) in this division of services. "This is the task at hand, to move together toward a more perfect union. To strengthen our trust relationship with the United States...Tribal nations have worked with the United States to uphold this promise. That trust, ultimately, is the principle that must guide us –all of us- as we go forward and do right by all of our children and grandchildren. And when we do, we'll always be able to say, the State of Indian Nations is strong, and the future prosperity of America is secure" (Keel, State of the Indian Nations Address, National Congress of the American Indian, 2013).

A purposeful effort toward that future is the leadership development opportunities within the Chickasaw Nation and is demonstrated through the addition of the Chikasha Pehilichi Ikbi program which is designed to create an opportunity for Chickasaw Nation youth to grow their leadership skills as well as enhance their cultural awareness. The programs are designed to be 12 months in length and are developed age appropriate. Many aspects of Native American culture, life and social skills, financial aptitude, and servant leadership are presented in the program. The program is also designed to provide preparation for education beyond high school as well as teaching the students to develop skills that enhance their ability to make an impact as a leader. Various presenters from the community, the tribe, and the state assist in the program as well (Chikasha Pehilichi Ikbi, Chickasaw Nation, 2017).

As it pertains to art, the Chickasaws have a rich tradition that include many highly acclaimed artists of different varieties. The Chickasaw Nation has established the Chickasaw Arts Academy. This experience, for Chickasaw children and youth ages eight through 18, provides an experience each year on the campus of East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. Cultural enrichment is also incorporated into the sessions which include a variety of opportunities in performing and fine arts disciplines. The Chickasaw Arts Academy provides a venue to highlight the rich history and culture of the Chickasaw Nation by educating students on their heritage as well as artistic instruction (Arts Academy Marks 15 Years of Developing Services, Chickasaw Times, 2019).

Another form of art the Chickasaws have chosen to support is that of a dance program. A Chickasaw Dance Troupe was formed in 1992 and has the purpose of educating, preserving, and restoring Chickasaw dance traditions. An emphasis on ancient dance arts of shell shaking

and stomp dancing, are also provided and the troupe travels to festivals and ceremonial gatherings for demonstrations (Chickasaw Dance Troupe, Chickasaw Nation, 2022).

The Chickasaw Princess program is a program designed to select tribal royalty while promoting ambassadorship through their service to the Nation. It is a cultural program that requires participants to be at least one quarter Chickasaw and predominantly Chickasaw and reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Nation. Girls (ages seven to 25) are chosen in three different categories includes the Chickasaw Princess, Chickasaw Junior Princess, and Little Miss Chickasaw. The girls have the opportunity to travel to many tribal events across the country. Many princesses are carrying on a family tradition where the genealogy includes former royalty (The Chickasaw Princess Program, Chickasaw Nation Television/Media Presentation, 2022).

A variety of camp experiences, programs, and services are available to Chickasaw Nation youth and children. Some have been previously mentioned but there are a variety of options from art and creativity to learning about the judicial system to all kinds of sports and recreational offerings. Those included but not limited to are art classes, a Saturday arts program, Chickasaw Explorers Club, the Chickasaw Honor Club, the Chickasaw Nation Choir Program, School of Guitar, Reading Programs, creative writing classes, driver education programs, environmental camps, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Programs), fishing clinic, Hinoshi' Chokma' (Good Paths Program), internship programs, public speaking classes, running clinics, soccer clinics, student tutoring programs, and tennis and golf clinics (Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2020). The investment provided to the youth and children is significant when one considers the amount of time, resources, and effort

involved in the organization, recruitment, and facilitation of each of the opportunities the Chickasaw Nation is providing.

Another project designed to prepare Chickasaws for the workplace is Toksali (successful mindsets with attitude and readiness for tomorrow) SMART program. It provides workforce training and experience to students ages 14-21. Students are encouraged to develop productive work patterns and behavior environments. Innovative partnerships with a variety of community resources develop meaningful job experiences and strengthening the community workforce. Paid training sessions are a part of the program and students can earn wages while performing on-the-job training, attain work experience while exploring career options, develop confidence, competence and workforce skills and a real-world environment (Toksali SMART Program, Chickasaw Nation, 2020).

As tribes, including the Chickasaws, make efforts to ensure the success of their younger tribal members through various enrichment activities, it is significant to mention one statistic that might suggest some success. Oklahoma's Native American students are outperforming their counterparts in other states. Oklahoma's American Indian students scored better on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) than American Indian students nationally in all subject and grades tested that year" (Davenport, 2015). Oklahoma was 2nd in the percent of 4th grade students reaching the proficient or advanced levels for NAEP performance for reading. They are second to Oregon and this raises the question as to why they are higher in these two states (The Education Trust Annual Report, 2013). Certainly, other tribes have similar offerings to their youth and children, but the Chickasaws seem to be outpacing them with offerings as the list is simply vast in terms of programs and services.

Another report from U.S. News and World Report from 2013 had Oklahoma scoring, at that time, a graduation rate of 63% and that being one of the highest in the country for graduating Native American students. RiShawn Biddle, Director of Communications for the National Indian Education Association, notes “the reason why Oklahoma stands out in many cases is because there is a closer working relationship between the state and tribes. It’s not a perfect relationship, there are issues, but...tribes such as Cherokee Nation, Osage Nation, Chickasaw Nation [are] all really doing interesting work pulling together academics and culture” (Graduation Rates Dropping Among Native American Students, U.S. News and World Report, 2013).

If a Chickasaw is unable to complete their high school education, there are opportunities when they become ready to do so. The Adult Education Program is a program that since its inception is utilized to provide academic assistance to adults within the Chickasaw Nation who have dropped out of high school and want to complete their General Equivalency Development (GED) diploma. The Adult Education Program provides tutoring assistance in helping prepare for GED tests, tutoring assistance for employment tests or educational entrance exams, and technical and vocational exams, etc. The current program serves approximately close to 300 adult learners with a reported 75% going on to college or vocational programs (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010). These programs are essential in combating the low educational attainment levels in the region of the State where the Chickasaw Nation has its jurisdictional area. Providing access and academic assistance is critical to ensuring the academic goals of this population can be achieved.

Higher Education Programs and Funding Within the Chickasaw Nation:

Chickasaws who have achieved a high school education or the equivalent and are ready for the next step have opportunities that the Chickasaw Nation has created to help them with their academic pursuits. The higher education funding program dates to the 1980's when the Chickasaws began helping with higher education pursuits to its' citizens. In an interview with one Chickasaw Nation Tribal Legislator Linda Briggs, she attributes the money they began putting into higher education at that time as one of the more exciting things they have been able to do as a Nation (Briggs, personal interview, 2015). Fast forward to almost forty years later, Governor Anoatubby noted in August of 2017 in a Facebook Post the thousands of Chickasaw students that would begin classes at schools and colleges throughout the country. He notes that as the new school year approaches the availability of the Chickasaw Nation is ready to assist citizens of all ages as they pursue their education goals (Anoatubby, Facebook Post, 2017).

One can look back into what the tribe was doing in the 80's in an attempt to see the growth. In 1988, \$216,351 was divided among 157 students attending 40 different higher learning institutions in assisting them with their academic goal of a higher education degree (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 1988). By 2011, the Higher Education Program within the Chickasaw Nation served 1,900 to 2,300 tribal citizens during the fall and spring semesters and approximately 700-900 students during the summer semester (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010). The Higher Education Program has continued to be funded substantially and has been identified by leadership as an important investment. Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said in a 2014 State of the Nation address that, "access to a quality education is one of the foundations of a successful

future,” (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2014). In 2020 and, in the midst of a pandemic, the Chickasaws were serving more than 4,900 students and contributing more than \$26.3 million in higher education grants. (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2021). The rise of students pursuing an education and the contribution levels has significantly risen over the years.

The funding is available for Chickasaw students to pursue postsecondary education, however, there have been challenges associated with Native American students and their aptitude as it relates to higher education. As one considers this statement, one should be reminded of what was stated earlier in around the low numbers in the jurisdictional area of the Chickasaw Nation having high school degrees as well as a significant majority not having a four-year degree. While these numbers are concerning, it would seem there is movement in an upward trajectory, and this may be a result of the creativity and accessibility of programs such as what is being offered through the Chickasaw Nation. Another important avenue provided for students wanting to pursue their education within Oklahoma’s Career Technology programs is available. The Chickasaw Nation’s Department of Education conducts school visits are to 89 public schools to talk about programs, services, and financial aid available not only in higher education institutions, but also through career technology (Tribal Education Department National Assembly, 2010). Tribal Legislator Linda Briggs remembers when the Chickasaw Nation also started including education funding for people wanting to go to a technology school. She noted in her interview that not everyone was higher education material and subsequently, the Nation began to help fund other types of training programs as well as higher education (Briggs, personal interview, 2014).

The Career Technology Program is available to part-time and full-time Chickasaw students attending or interested in attending a state or nationally accredited vocational facility. The career technology funding is intended to assist students by providing funding for tuition, fees, supplies, books, equipment, and other training related expenses. The field of study is not limited to any particular discipline. The primary objective of the program is to provide funding to Chickasaw students and meaningful employment or career advancement. The career technology program serves approximately 300-350 citizens annually (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010). The number of programs within the Tribe has grown exponentially in the last 40 years yet they remain focused on future opportunities to serve. Their vision for moving forward includes several initiatives. Some of those include an increase in the number of tutoring opportunities for students after school as well as more credit retention programs available for Native American students. Language retention and cultural awareness are important to the Tribe, but they also seek to see language recognition be implemented by the Oklahoma Department of Education for credit toward graduation requirements. And, in that vein, a stronger relationship and increased interaction between the department and the Oklahoma State Education Agency. Additionally, the CNDE would like to implement more disability awareness training to public school staff and more assistance with curriculum development, assessments, teacher training, and professional development for both childcare and elementary teaching staff (Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, 2010).

Based on the vision by the Chickasaw Nation Department of Education, there is still a desire to push forward, increase resources, and implement new strategies for academic

success. As long as the leadership continues to value this service and the programs offered, opportunities for more resources may be available to see the vision of the department become a reality.

Investing in Culture:

The Chickasaws have also utilized revenues to invest in ways to celebrate, embrace, and share their culture through the continued maintenance and investment in their culture and arts programs. One such endeavor included the establishment of the Chickasaw Historical Society which has been in existence since 1994 when it was established by tribal law. The mission statement of the organization includes promoting, preserving, and protecting Chickasaw culture and family traditions. The organization has a board of directors and works to preserve their culture through a variety of initiatives. Some of those include researching and documenting historical information, profiling achievements of Chickasaw citizens, promoting tribal arts, educating around Chickasaw language, and encouraging donations for archival and museum utilization (Chickasaw Historical Society, Chickasaw Nation, 2022). The Chickasaw Historical Society began hosting a conference ("Itafama Ithana" or learning meeting), each year for members and those interested in the promotion and preservation of the Chickasaw culture. The first theme was "Building on the Foundation of our Tradition," and the theme for the 2016 conference was "Valuing the Identity of our Chickasaw People." Presenters from the 2017 meeting included topics such as "Farmers, Traders, Hunters: The Chickasaws' Economic Revolution, 1797-1818" and "Linking the Past to Your Present: The Chickasaw Explorers Program," are two of the examples of the presentations included in the program (Barron, 2017). The Journal of Chickasaw History and Culture is also published by the Chickasaw

Historical Society twice a year and covers a variety of topics including pre-history to current events. There are over 150 articles and include a variety of journal submissions on topics relevant to Chickasaw History (Chickasaw Historical Society, Chickasaw Nation, 2022). These efforts would seem to be an ongoing effort to continue the study of their history and share the information with future generations.

Another strategy for the Chickasaws involves the efforts they have placed around the revitalization of their language. The identity as well as the linkage to history, culture, and traditions are rooted in language. Language loss could be attributed to the intermarriage of Native Americans with other ethnicities as well as assimilation attempts by the U.S. Government through boarding schools for Indians. Despite those challenges and due to the efforts of tribes, such as the Chickasaws to save their Native tongue, those languages are being retained and taught to the next generation. Historians, both within Native American tribes as well as within academic institutions, note the importance of retaining Native languages. “The Indigenous language doesn’t necessarily equal the English lineage because it is a traditional, cultural view of your world that has been passed down from generation to generation. And so, when you talk the language, you’re talking on behalf of your ancestors from a thousand, two thousand years ago. You’re looking at it through an Indigenous lens of generations of people” (McDermott, 2014).

For the Chickasaws, that meant starting the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program in 2007 and growing that to a department within the Nation in 2009. According to the departmental website, the Chickasaws believe that the language given to them by Cihooowa or Aba’ Binni’li’ (God) and from their ancestors. They believe they are responsible for caring for it

through learning, speaking, and teaching it (Chickasaw Nation Programs and Services Directory, 2020). The language is a Muskogean language and closely related to the Choctaw language (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2013). The language of the Chickasaws is known as Chikashshanompa and is a 3,000-year-old living language and is categorized as “severely endangered.” It is noted the last known monolingual speaker of the Chickasaw language (Emily Johnson Dickerson has died and now the significant effort to make sure the language is not lost continues (Emily Dickerson Was Last Monolingual Speaker of Chickasaw Language, CBS News, 2014).

According to Joshua Hinson, Chickasaw Nation Language Director, there were 3,000 speakers of Chickasaw in the 1960’s. He noted the last native speakers were born in the late 1940s. However, the assimilation of Native Americans into our schools and the pressures to be bilingual in English have significantly impacted the number of native speakers. At the time of publication of the news article there were only 65 native speakers of the Chickasaw language who are also fully bilingual in English and only four to five that are conversational speakers under the age of 35 (Russon, The Fight to Save a Dying Native American Language, International Business Times, 2014).

The programs and services designed to revitalize their language are numerous. They include language classes in many communities within the jurisdictional boundaries of the tribe, a language family immersion camp, a Chickasaw TV channel dedicated to language acquisition, an interactive children’s website for youth to learn the language, history, traditions and culture through games, activities, recipes, and printable color pages, a Chickasaw language Basic app, the Chickasaw Press to develop knowledge on Chickasaw history and culture, courses in high

schools and colleges, a Chickasaw language sports camp, a master-apprentice program, a martial arts program with the Chickasaw language incorporated into it and the Chickasaw language incorporated into the Chickasaw Nation Child Development Centers. Additionally, the Chickasaw Cultural Center where the Chickasaw language was incorporated at each level of the exhibit development as well as Chickasaw names for the various centers and buildings (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2013). As one can observe, this is a priority of the tribe and one they have invested in significantly to see the language does not become extinct.

The Chickasaws have also utilized revenues to invest in ways to celebrate, embrace, and share their history through the continued maintenance and investment in their culture and arts programs. One such endeavor included the establishment of the Chickasaw Historical Society which has been in existence since 1994 when it was established by tribal law. The mission statement of the organization includes promoting, preserving, and protecting Chickasaw culture and family traditions. The organization has a board of directors and works to preserve their culture through a variety of initiatives. Some of those include researching and documenting historical information, profiling achievements of Chickasaw citizens, promoting tribal arts, educating around Chickasaw language, and encouraging donations for archival and museum utilization (Chickasaw Historical Society, Chickasaw Nation, 2022). The Chickasaw Historical Society began hosting a conference ("Itafama Ithana" or learning meeting), each year for members and those interested in the promotion and preservation of the Chickasaw culture. The first theme was "Building on the Foundation of our Tradition," and the theme for the 2016 conference was "Valuing the Identity of our Chickasaw People." Presenters from the 2017 meeting included topics such as "Farmers, Traders, Hunters: The Chickasaws' Economic

Revolution, 1797-1818” and “Linking the Past to Your Present: The Chickasaw Explorers Program,” are two of the examples of the presentations included in the program (Barron, Chickasaw Historical Society Conference Set February 23, 2017). The Journal of Chickasaw History and Culture is also published by the Chickasaw Historical Society twice a year and covers a variety of topics including pre-history to current events. There are over 150 articles and include a variety of journal submissions on topics relevant to Chickasaw History (Chickasaw Historical Society, Chickasaw Nation, 2022). These efforts would be indicative of an ongoing effort to continue the study of their history and share the information with future generations.

Chickasaw Nation Investments into Museums/Culture:

Native American history is such a vital part of American history but certainly first and foremost in Oklahoma, formerly known as Indian Territory. Many of the tribe’s host museums, cultural heritage, or historical centers to honor their heritage and pass on culture and education to their own tribal citizens/members. Those museums and centers are also extended to others who have a desire to visit to learn and celebrate the culture of the Native American tribes as well. In Oklahoma, there are many opportunities to learn more about the tribes of Oklahoma. On the top Native American attractions in Oklahoma, the website lists the newly open First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City, as well as the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, Sequoyah’s Cabin in Sallisaw, the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, the Spiro Mounds Archaeological Center in Spiro, the Five Civilized Tribes in Muskogee, and the Standing Bear Park, Museum, and Education Center in Ponca City (Top Native American Attractions in Oklahoma, TravelOK, 2022). In addition to the attractions mentioned, many other tribes also offer centers or museums in their respective locations or

tribal capitols. Native tribes share much in their experiences and history but are also as diverse as they are in their tribal names. There is much to learn and experience through the cultural opportunities offered by the many tribes of Oklahoma.

Like many of the other tribes in Oklahoma, the Chickasaws see the value in preserving their language, but the tribe also places great worth in passing their Chickasaw heritage and culture to future generations. It is noted in a Chickasaw publication that the tribe is “investing substantial time, energy, and resources in preserving, promoting, and celebrating our Chickasaw heritage and culture. It is absolutely imperative we do so” (Learning your Culture is Fun, Chickasaw Times, 2015, p.3). The Chickasaws have multiple locations both new and historical, where they have invested resources to preserve and develop opportunities for cultural awareness for their own tribal citizens and others as well.

The Chickasaw White House, which was home to Chickasaw Governor Douglas Johnston who was a Chickasaw leader for 36 years. The residence, located in Emet, Oklahoma, was his residence from 1898 until 1971. It was the site of many meetings, social events, and weddings in the early 20th century. Events of note would include the home being the site of the marriage of an Oklahoma Governor, Alfalfa Bill Murray, who married the niece of Governor Johnston. Their son, Johnston Murray went on to become Oklahoma’s 14th governor in 1951. Another marriage taking place in the home included that of the granddaughter of the famed Jesse Chisholm (Chickasaw White House, Chickasaw Nation, 2022). Jesse Chisholm was a frontier trader and in the United States is remembered for the Chisholm Trail which was a famous cattle drive route through Indian Territory now present-day Oklahoma. He is also famous for his mediation with the Plains Indians in negotiation with the Cherokee Nation, the

Republic of Texas, and the United States (Chisholm, The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, 2022). Other significant events such as meetings of prominent politicians and members of the Dawes Commission were also said to have taken place in the home, which was considered a mansion at the time. It is important to note the historical significance of Chickasaw Governor Johnston as his time in office, as previously stated, marked over 36 years and included political lobbying for remaining in control of their Indian schools and pushing the federal government to honor its treaties with Native Americans. The White House, for the Chickasaws, holds much significant history during the years between when it was built in 1898 and 1939 when Governor Johnson died. Those moments in history were interwoven into the social and political life of the Nation in that period of time (Chickasaw White House, Chickasaw Nation, 2022).

The second museum, owned and operated by the Chickasaws, is the Chickasaw Council House Museum located in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. The first Council House built in Indian Territory, the museum houses one of the largest collections of Chickasaw artifacts, art, and archived materials. Among items displayed in the museum are pottery, jewelry, beadwork, and other artwork done by Chickasaw artists. (Chickasaw Council House Museum, Chickasaw Nation, 2022). The Chickasaws also have reclaimed the Chickasaw National Capitol, originally built in 1898 in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. It served as the Capitol for the Chickasaw Nation until 1907. The Chickasaws were forced to leave, and it was to be used by Johnston County as their county courthouse. In the 1960's, Chickasaw Governor Overton James, under his administration, began the process of negotiations for the structure. It was purchased under the current Chickasaw administration in 1992 for the purchase price of \$575,000. It had originally

cost \$15,000 to build. The granite blocks had come free from the rock quarries of Chickasaw Governor R.M. Harris at the time of its construction. Chickasaw Governor Bill Anoatubby noted at the time of the purchase back that it may seem like a lot of money based on the original cost of the structure, “but it’s not to us” (Hutchison, *The Oklahoman*, 2022). Tishomingo is the site of the annual meeting of the Chickasaw people every October and offers an exhibit area for Chickasaw history on its main floor. The acquisition of their original Capitol building for the tribe provided the tribe with an important part of their history.

One of the more significant additions to enhancing cultural awareness has been the addition of the Chickasaw Cultural Center, which opened in 2010. The Chickasaw Cultural Center was designed to provide educational awareness for the Chickasaw people regarding their heritage as well as share their unique culture and history with others. It has as its mission "to capture the essence of the Chickasaw culture, revitalize and share Chickasaw culture and traditions through cultural demonstrations, and community outreach activities; preserve, protect, and add to Chickasaw history through archives, collections, and research; provide educational opportunities to the Chickasaw people, and share the unique culture with the world" (Destination Chickasaw, 2016). It had been a dream of many within the Chickasaw Nation for a significant period of time. Chickasaw Nation Tribal Legislator Linda Briggs with over 25 years in that role, noted the desire was there for a place to “show people who we are, who we were, and who we are going to be” (Briggs, personal interview, 2014). The work to establish this dream of the tribe took some time and a methodical approach.

One of the steps in the process in having the \$40 million Chickasaw Cultural Center coming to fruition was a tribal-wide cultural survey which was conducted in 2000 with 1,200

tribal citizens from the Chickasaw Nation responding. It should be noted from the results of the survey that the retention of the language was important to the respondents as well as tribal beliefs, ceremonies, and customs. Also included were art and music, food, medicine, recognition of prominent Chickasaw men and women, and a living village made up of traditional Chickasaw dwellings (Chickasaw Nation Cultural Center, 2022). The discussions for such a center dated back to an early 60s article in the Daily Ardmoreite noting people needed a place to go and learn about the great Chickasaw people. A Cultural Committee was formed and from those discussions the Chickasaw Historical Society was established in 1993. Input was sought from tribal citizens inquiring around what the people wanted to accomplish and it was to tell their story, the story of the Chickasaw people with the world (Cultural Center Realization of Long-Held Goal, Chickasaw Times, 2022).

The \$40 million dollar project took six years to complete and is located on 109 acres in Sulphur, Oklahoma, which is in the heart of the Chickasaw National Recreation Area nestled within the Arbuckle Mountains of south-central Oklahoma. It consists of 96,000-square-foot cultural center which includes indoor space, theatrical environments, interactive media, and state-of-the art technology for its exhibits. A research library (the Holliso Research Center) is also available. It houses Chickasaw artifacts, objects, and stories that have been handed down through the generations (Chickasaw Cultural Center, Chickasaw Nation, 2022).

A Welcome Center is available to visitors to provide information and materials that may enhance their visit to the campus. Bronze sculptures by Oklahoma Native American artists greet visitors and depict art created to commemorate different aspects of history for the Chickasaws. Mike Larsen, a Chickasaw artist, created a sculpture that is demonstrative of the

Chickasaw arrival into Indian Territory. Enoch Kelly Haney, an artist, and former Seminole Nation Principal Chief and Oklahoma legislator, was the creator of the “Warrior” statue which represents the time prior to European contact and is to be representative of the fierceness with which the Chickasaws were said to be in battle and the “unconquered and unconquerable” spirit. Native American art continues to be displayed throughout the campus but is also highlighted in the Aapisa' Art Gallery which provides an extensive collection of Native American art and rotating exhibits within its 1,200 square foot space (Chickasaw Cultural Center, Chickasaw Nation, 2022).

Chikasha Poya which means “we are Chickasaw,” is the name given to the Exhibit Center and encompasses a variety of exhibits that include variations of light, color, and sound. The Exhibit Center includes Aaishtaya or “where our journey begins” as demonstrated through an imported Italian mosaic and etched glass replica of a 1723 deerskin map. Visitors can begin their own personal journey through the exhibits with a showing of the Chickasaw Renaissance to receive an orientation of the exhibits to come. The next experience offered is the Spirit Forest and provides the visitor with an opportunity to see how the cultural and spiritual identity of the Chickasaw people relates to the natural world (Chickasaw Cultural Center, Chickasaw Nation, 2022).

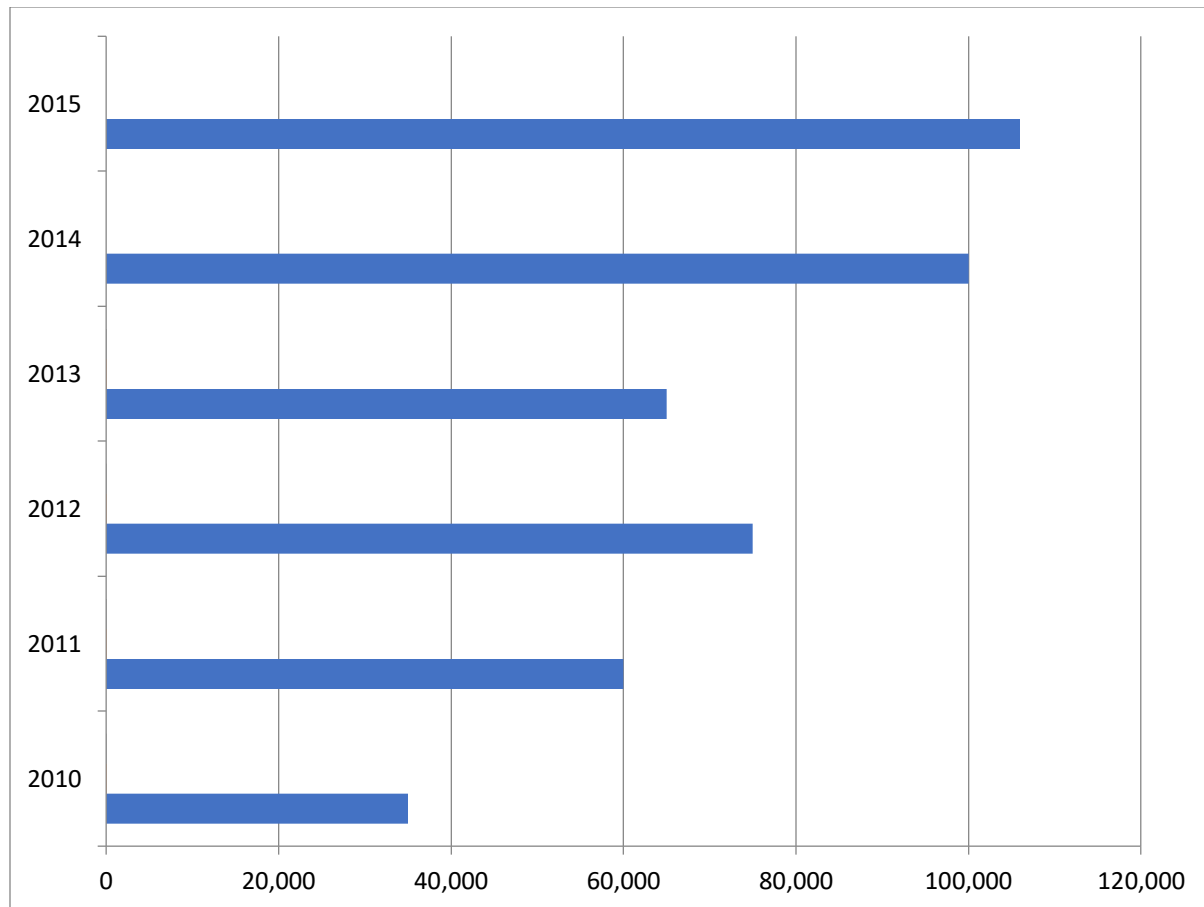
A historical exhibit is next in the experience where there are many opportunities to utilize the interactive stations as well as view many reproductions and examples of items the Chickasaws had as a part of their everyday world. The Removal Corridor provides the visitor with a look into the Removal period following the passage of the 1839 legislation that took the Chickasaws out of their homelands and on the Trail of Tears. The 360-degree exhibit comes

alive to the visitors through the multimedia effects of voices, sounds, and life-like Chickasaws telling their story through both dance and song in the Stomp Dance area of the exhibit. The exhibit is highlighted by a simulated blazing fire in the center of the room. As a personal visitor to this exhibit multiple times, the researcher believes this to be one of the most impactful regarding trying to place a visitor in this significant moment in time. Other exhibits that are a part of this Center include the Anoli' Theater which is in large format with a 60-foot-high, 2,400 square-foot screen and can seat 350 people. Outdoor spaces such as an amphitheater, sky terrace, water pavilion, honor garden, and café porch are also a part of the Center. The café offers traditional Chickasaw foods such as grape dumplings, Indian fry bread, and buffalo chili. The traditional village includes replicas of a Chickasaw council house, summer house, winder house, corn crib, ceremonial mound, and stockade fence. Cultural reenactments are provided to visitors in this area of the Center. Chickasaw Governor Bill Anoatubby has referred to the Center as "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 (Choate, Chickasaw Cultural Center Celebrates Half-Decade of Sharing, Chickasaw Nation Media Relations Office, 20215).

In 2010, the Chickasaw Nation Progress Report suggested an average of 1,000 visitors per week which would total around 27,000 with the mid-July opening of the Center, (Chickasaw Nation Progress Report, 2010). In 2013, there were 200,000 visitors and in 2015 that more than doubled to 406,000. By 2016, over 500,000 were visiting the cultural center annually. The Holisso Research Center jumped from 8,000 to 11,000 in between 2013 and 2015, (Program Participation Within Chickasaw Nation, 2016, p. 1). According to the Program Participation within the Chickasaw Nation document, (2015). One can see the growth from 2010 until 2015

in the number of visitors from Graph 7.0. On their ten-year anniversary that figure was up to 850,000 visitors from all over the globe (Rains, 2020).

Graph # 7.0 Chickasaw Nation Cultural Center Visits 2010-2015



Source: Chickasaw Nation State of the Nation Addresses and Chickasaw Nation Progress Reports, 2010-2015.

In addition to their own cultural museums and historical centers, the Chickasaws have also invested in other opportunities to bring awareness of history and culture in other venues. One should note the contributions the Chickasaw Nation has stepped up to make with the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City that has taken 30 years in coming to fruition. Designed to be a world-class tourism mecca in the heart of American, it was meant to pay homage to the rich history and culture of Oklahoma's 39 federally recognized tribes. It has been a long drawn

out and certainly, frustrating project that involved many entities. It began with an intertribal task force that had a concept of a Native American Cultural Center and endorsed by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. Two separate proposals came forward at two different locations and eventually the Oklahoma legislature established the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority to find a location for the structure. In 1996, state appropriations began, and a site was selected in 1998 at the I-35/I-40 interchange southeast of downtown Oklahoma City. A \$5 million bond was approved. In 2003, a \$33 million state bond was issued and in 2005, the City of Oklahoma City donated the site to the state. Construction on the project broke ground in 2006 and in 2008 another \$25 million bond was authorized. In 2010 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided \$6 million and kept construction from coming to a halt. This came in the wake of the national financial collapse when private contributors' funding was waning. Then the Chickasaw Nation stepped in with a \$14 million for a partnership in the project. The City of Oklahoma City agreed to accept the transfer of the project from the State and in 2018 construction resumed with \$25 million from the state bond issue authorization, \$9 million from the City of Oklahoma City, \$31 million from private donors, and \$14 million from the Chickasaw Nation (First American Museum reaches the end of a long and broke trail, *The Tulsa World*, Krehbiel, 2021). The museum opened in September of 2021 and is noted as a change in how the story of Native Americans are told. "The First Americans Museum represents the first time Native Americans will be telling the Native American story on this scale without the overbearing presence of non-native curators, board members, or directors. This is the actual story of Oklahoma's Native population – all 39 tribes who now call it home, the 31 who were relocated here from points across America and the eight either

indigenous to the area or having a historical connection to it as told by those who lived it” (Scott, First Americans Museum Opens in Oklahoma City Telling 39 Stories Simultaneously, *Forbes*, 2021). The website notes a Tribal Nations Gallery which includes the stories of the 39 Tribal Nations in Oklahoma, the Mezzanine Gallery which includes selections from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, the Community Gallery and includes architectural history and embedded cultural symbolism. A Family Discovery Center is coming soon (Exhibitions – FAM, 2021). This was an important and necessary project for the State of Oklahoma as Native Americans or First Americans as honored in the title of museum are the original landowners. Their history is unequivocally imperative to know in understanding our culture. After this researcher has driven by the site on many trips with its years of no activity due to no construction moves, it would demonstrate the stalemate that can occur when state and tribal entities are unable to meet with agreement and remain separated. It also demonstrates the power that can come from collaborations when they do come together.

Philanthropic Efforts by the Chickasaw Nation

As demonstrated in the previous section regarding the efforts by the Chickasaws to contribute to a cultural center that honors all tribes in the State as well as have the potential for generating tourism dollars, it provides some background regarding how the Chickasaws’ generosity extends beyond their own tribal citizens and jurisdictional boundaries. The Tribe not only provides significant opportunities for its people as evidenced by the vast list of services for healthcare, elders, housing, education, cultural awareness, and language revitalization, but they also provide charitable contributions and sponsorships to many community, regional, and state entities. A large number of sponsorships are given annually to institutions including

universities, local sports teams, hospitals, foundations, leadership organizations, and a vast number of other charitable organizations. This has been personally observed by the researcher as one takes part in charitable programs, sports activities, university facilities, visits hospital and health care wings, and leadership programs. Partnerships and collaborations exist, not only with local communities and within the Nation's regional boundaries, but statewide organizations that further the overall betterment of the state seem to be important to the Chickasaws as well.

Long-time Chickasaw Tribal Legislator Linda Briggs suggests in her Chickasaw Television media presentation around profiles of a nation that the Chickasaw people care about what goes on in the state of Oklahoma. She discusses the desire to make a difference. "Oklahoma is where we live. We want to be a part of the whole state. We have great respect for all that goes on in our State and we have great interest for all that goes on. If there is a need to be met, and we think we can help you meet it, we will be there, it is our concept, it is who we are" (Profiles of a Nation, Chickasaw TV, 2016). In this researcher's opinion, this goes beyond just benefitting tribal citizens but also what it means to contribute to a greater cause of quality of life in our communities and State.

Former Oklahoma State Governor Brad Henry noted that the Chickasaw Nation placed value on good will by not only investing in their tribal programs and services, but also contributing to the State of Oklahoma in a number of ways. "If you go to any charitable event or community event, you will find they are often up front and being a top sponsor. They are well known for their philanthropic philosophy, and they are well known as one of the top philanthropists in this state" (Henry, personal interview, 2014). The researcher has personally

attended many events where the Chickasaws were, if not a top level (i.e., Gold or Platinum Sponsor), they were certainly on the sponsorship lists. These could vary anywhere from \$500 to \$25,000 for the name on programs, tables, and screen time at an event. Some examples would include the Oklahoma Foundation of Excellence, which has as its mission to improve public education in the State. It is a charitable organization that encourages academic excellence in Oklahoma's public schools. If one visits the website, they will find The Chickasaw Nation – Bill Anoatubby, Governor, listed at the top donor on the Patrons of the Foundation list (Major Donors – Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, 2022). Another organization focused on leadership and impacting change in the State has the Chickasaw Nation at the top of their list of donors as a Platinum sponsor. Leadership Oklahoma has as their mission “to create, inspire, and support our member leaders whose commitment to service and excellence energizes them to positively shape our future.” The Chickasaws are committed multi-year donors as the amount of \$25,000 a year and are always at the highest level in this organization in terms of contributions (Leadership Oklahoma: Donors, Sponsors and Friends, 2022).

Two examples of the generosity that benefits more than tribal citizens include gifts to a medical research foundation and an eye institute. The Chickasaws made a significant gift to support the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation and created the Chickasaw Nation Laboratory for Cancer Research. The laboratory encompasses a team of researchers that will dedicate themselves to cancer treatment strategies. The gift provided by the tribe followed a partnership between the two entities to provide rheumatology care to a tribal clinic which will enable researchers to understand the role race plays in arthritis and related diseases (Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, 2014). The Dean McGee Eye Institute announced a

major gift from the Chickasaws to complete the renovation of its research facilities. The gift, together with support from other major donors, will allow the institute and the University of Oklahoma Department of Ophthalmology to double the size of a translational vision research center to 7,750 square feet, while providing updated technologies and facilities to more effectively conduct biomedical vision research. We are exceedingly grateful for the Chickasaw Nation's history of generous support for the Dean McGee Eye Institute," said Dr. Gregory Sluta, CEO of the eye institute and chairman of the OU College of Medicine's Department of Ophthalmology. "This most recent gift will enable our scientists to further advance our vision research programs in a world-class facility that addresses such important conditions as age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and infectious diseases of the eye. In recognition of the tribe's gifts, the institute will rename its third floor the Chickasaw Nation Center for Human Resources and Business and Clinical Support Services (Chickasaws Donate to Eye Institute, Dean McGee Eye Institute, Press Release, 2014). These donations could be surmised as an investment in research and healthcare that serve the greater Oklahoma population.

The Chickasaws have also provided gifts to educational institutions. One such gift includes the University of Oklahoma Law School which allowed for the creation of the Nation's first American Indian Law Scholar endowed chair. Dean of the OU Law School Joe Harroz, now the University of Oklahoma's President, noted that the gift allowed OU to retain the most talented Indian law professor and programs with over 11 percent of incoming first year law students being Native American (Chickasaw Nation Makes Generous Donation to OU Law School, KGOU, 2022). Another institution that resides within the Chickasaw Nation, East

Central University, has been the recipient of the generosity of the tribes through building projects and renovations. In 2014, the University honored the tribe by naming the stadium Koi Ishto Stadium which means “big cat” in the Chickasaw language (ECU Football Stadium to be named Koi Ishto Stadium in Honor of the Chickasaw Nation, East Central University, 2015). Both universities are appreciative of the contributions to assist in funding the work of their institutions.

Over the years, the Chickasaws have contributed to other Oklahoma universities including Southeastern Oklahoma State University for buildings, scholarships, sponsorships, endowed chairs, professional development for university administrators, and other initiatives. One unique program which speaks to the openness the Chickasaws have to funding learning experiences. In 2008, the Chickasaws funded the Chickasaw Academy which was an initiative to mirror a week-long college-going experience for Native American high school students housed at the Chickasaw Children’s Village. It was to be held on the Southeastern Oklahoma State University campus in Durant, OK and ran through their Continuing Education Department. Students were funded by the tribe to be on campus for the week and engage in coursework and experiential learning as well as career, financial aid, and academic counseling. A cultural experience was also provided around Chickasaw Nation cultural awareness with an archeologist funded by the Chickasaw Nation providing the education around the artifacts and their significance to the Chickasaws. The coursework was designed around educating the group on bats which included field trips to collect specimens from the area. Students were then instructed on the importance bats play in the ecosystem and then another learning experience further instructed the students in speech/advocacy in a simulated city council meeting

regarding a city's decision to rid the community of a bat colony. The academy was the brainchild of a Chickasaw Commerce CEO at the time as he desired to provide Native American youth with similar opportunities he was provided as a young Chickasaw. It was a unique opportunity for an educational experience but one in which it is demonstrative the Chickasaws can be creative in their approach to funding (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

Naming rights for endowed chairs, labs, and wings of hospitals/research facilities and endowed chairs and scholarships require generous gifts of significant funds, although amounts are not noted. However, if one reviews the Chickasaw Foundation website the list of organizations funded by the tribe is quite lengthy and inclusive. Those organizations currently listed are Abba's Tables, the Ada Area Community Emergency Services, Ada Area Office Emergency Food Pantry, Ada High School Multi Special Education Department, Allen Volunteer Fire Department, American Red Cross-Central Oklahoma Chapter, American Red Cross-Pontotoc County, Ardmore Animal Clinic, Ardmore Christian School, Association on American Indian Affairs, Bridge Builders for the Cross, Byng Volunteer Fire Department, Carter County Emergency Assistance (Ardmore), Chickasaw Nation Battered Women's Shelter, Chikasha House, Chilocco Benefit Association, Chisholm Trail Church of Christ – Duncan Area, City Rescue Mission, Compassion Outreach Center, Compassionate Care Center Food Bank in Duncan, Convoy of Hope, Cowboy Crisis Fund, First Baptist Church Food Pantry-Davis, Fittstown Volunteer Fire Department, Friends of Moccasin Bend National Park, Happyland Volunteer Fire Department, Hickory Volunteer Fire Department, House of Hope, Johnston County Food Bank – Tishomingo, K-Love, Lighthouse Worship Center Food Bank in Purcell, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Marshall County Food Bank – Madill, Meals on Wheels of Norman, Mercy Health Hospital Food

Bank – Marietta, Moundville, University of Alabama Museums, Native Youth Preventing Diabetes, Oil Center Volunteer Fire Department, Oklahoma Bar Association, Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, Oklahoma Regional Food Bank – St. Lue’s Episcopal Church, Payne Volunteer Fire Department, Pontotoc Animal Welfare Society Shelter, Pontotoc County Fire Fighter’s Association, Prevent Blindness Oklahoma, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Rush Springs Volunteer Fire Department, Sequoyah National Research Center, Shriners Hospital, Southwest Church of Christ Food Bank, Special Olympics Oklahoma, St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital, Stonewall Volunteer Fire Department, Super Storm Sandy relief efforts, The Archaeological Conservancy, University of Alabama-Moundville, The C/Sara Foundation, Inc., The Gideons International, The Refuge – Operation Christmas Child, The Salvation Army, UNICEF – United States, Vanoss Volunteer Fire Department, VFW Post 1192 , Victory Junction Gang Camp, World Strides, and the Wounded Warrior Project (Organizations Funded by the Chickasaw Foundation, Chickasaw Foundation, 2022). The Chickasaws have a significant gifting presence within their jurisdictional boundaries as can be demonstrated by the list.

One such specific example in terms of an individual community contribution within the boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation would include the community of Marietta, Oklahoma which was established in 1907 and is the county seat of Love County. It was named after one of the largest landowners of the Chickasaw tribe, Overton Love (Love County, Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, 2016). Prior to the Chickasaw Nation’s largest gaming facility, being within its county lines, Marietta had been associated with the Marietta Bakery which employed around 400 and a Siemens plant (workplace to approximately 65 employees). Both of those plants closed within a year of each other but a small group including Chickasaw Tribal

Legislator Linda Briggs, appealed to the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation regarding the first plant's closure and found him receptive to the Nation purchasing and keeping the plant in operation. Some changes were made in management practice, and it has now tripled in size and recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. The other plant was also purchased by the Nation and remains open. When Briggs talks about the stability the purchases of the plants brought to the community, she also notes how the Chickasaws have contributed significantly to the emergency service response capacity within the County with their contribution to the purchase of emergency equipment. Briggs suggests in her interview that the needs of the communities within the jurisdictional boundaries are of significant concern to the Nation. Often these community leaders meet with members of the tribe to assess and plan for improving the quality of life for its citizens. One example she cites is her enlistment of a local hospital administrator to determine a specific need in the arena of emergency response. This partnership and eventually the expansion increased the capacity for a response to an emergency (medical, fire, etc.) in the county (Briggs, personal interview, 2015).

The philanthropic efforts of the Chickasaw Nation extend well beyond jurisdictional boundaries of the state in terms of impact. As is noted by a news article in 2021, the tribal activity is the ninth-largest industry in the State of Oklahoma with a 12.9 billion impact on the Oklahoma economy. However much of that impact is felt in rural areas where tribal boundaries exist vs. metro areas as evidenced by the long list of contributions on the Chickasaw website. Additionally, 60% of employees in gaming operations are non-native. During COVID, tribes continued to employ and pay workers while shutdown to the pandemic. Tribes, including the Chickasaws, provided COVID vaccinations to all Oklahomans as the tribes were some of the first

to receive the vaccinations. These are efforts that were greatly appreciated by people within the State of Oklahoma when vaccinations were not as accessible (James, Oklahoma Tribal Activity is Ninth Largest in State, Kiowa County Press, 2021).

Recreational offerings have also been on the list of beneficiaries of the tribe. Two major sports venues/organizations have partnerships with the Chickasaw Nation as the ballpark in the Bricktown area of Oklahoma City is referred to as the Chickasaw Ballpark when naming rights were purchased by the Chickasaws in 2012. It is home to a Triple A Baseball Team, the OKC Dodgers (Bailey, Chickasaw Nation Revise Naming-Rights Deal, *Journal Record*, 2012). They are also premier sponsors of the Oklahoma City Thunder, Oklahoma's National Basketball Association's team. Secretary of Commerce for the Chickasaw Nation shares on Chickasaw TV how it makes good business sense as it is great exposure for tribal entities to be advertised in the arena of one of the state's most popular sporting team. He said that the Chickasaws also have a great deal of pride in seeing the NBA team evolve and the desire to be a part of that in supporting a great organization (Community Sponsorships, Chickasaw Television/Media Series, 2010). Both partnerships are evidence of tremendous exposure for the Chickasaws and their commerce activities and do not come without a price tag. Both are also indicative of some initiative to be included in the support and major contributions to sources of pride for Oklahomans.

This list of contributions by the Chickasaw Nation is limited by space and time in terms of exactly how many entities have benefitted from the tribe's generosity and apparent interest in providing a better quality of life, not just for their citizens but also citizens of Oklahoma. Their impact on Oklahoma's economy is significant as they are the second largest private

employer behind Walmart in the State of Oklahoma. They employ over 13,000 people in their businesses with 25% being Native American and 60% being non-Native American. Yet, their contributions to the state go beyond simply providing jobs. They are rooted in Oklahoma as it is where their jurisdictional area of the Chickasaw Nation is included. It is in their best interest for there to be good medical care, educational systems, livable communities, recreational activities, and pride in their State. It seems as if partnerships and collaborations, despite history's lessons, are where they want to be in their State.

Conclusion:

Chapter 3 has a grim beginning as one begins to review the many challenges Native Americans have experienced. Statistics are presented around poverty, home ownership, educational attainment levels, life expectancy, and specific health issues such as obesity, diabetes, alcohol abuse, and unintentional injury death rates. The issues encountered by Native Americans have been endured for multiple generations. The era of Self Determination and the rise of educational, housing, and health programs began to present themselves as opportunities for contracting those services and bringing revenue back into the tribes. That has allowed the financial capacity of the tribes, and specifically the Chickasaw Nation, to gain some momentum. Then when gaming was passed in the State of Oklahoma and the tribes began to see revenues rise, their ability to give back to the tribal members became an option. The Chickasaws, like some of the other larger tribes, wanted to invest back into more programs and services versus distribution to tribal citizens in the form of an individual check each year based on a division of revenue. This may be the difference in what they do as opposed to many other tribes.

The chapter attempts to introduce the reader to the numerous opportunities afforded to Chickasaws, other Native Americans, as well as Oklahomans through the revenue the Chickasaws have been able to acquire. But it would take many more words and pages to document the level of support. The chapter is just a glimpse of what the Chickasaw Nation does to give back. They choose to fund hospitals, clinics, wellness centers, and promote nutritional programs. Their efforts in educating their children and youth are observed in how they offer a vast number of programs and services designed to introduce them to the arts, culture, the sciences, and activities designed to develop their physical and mental well-being. Opportunities that will prepare them for a university/college experience or a technology apprenticeship are numerous, and support is provided at each level to further their educational goals. The Chickasaw's desire to educate their young adults is reflected in their scholarship programs, mentoring, and job preparation experiences. The Chickasaws have seen value in offering housing programs for their citizens that lead to home ownership and pride in such. The programs for elders demonstrate the value they place on the aged population in their culture and go far beyond any other programs offered to the average Oklahoma citizen that falls in that category. Their desire to sustain their language is a priority for the tribe and the efforts to do so remain ongoing. Cultural awareness is also outlined as a major investment in what they have placed in maintaining their historical sites and building a cultural center and research facility that further educates not only their people, but others who desire to learn and understand the culture of the tribe. Philanthropic efforts within their communities, jurisdictional boundaries, and the State of Oklahoma are numerous but not all inclusive. It would appear being a good citizen, not only of their communities, but also their State is

paramount. The Chickasaw Nation's spend off revenue seems to have the design of fulfilling the mission of the Chickasaw Nation to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people and would suggest these efforts could be interpreted as addressing the dismal statistics presented on Native Americans. Perhaps more research is needed to benchmark the impact of their programs and services in the areas of health, education, eldercare, housing, cultural awareness, and philanthropic efforts to see how the money invested changes the statistics, if it does. At best, it has and at a minimal, it seems the altruistic efforts are a form of starting to address the socioeconomic challenges of Native Americans and specifically, the Chickasaw Nation.

Chapter 4

The Formula for Success

Introduction

On the Nation's official website, there is a video of Chickasaw elders sitting around a campfire at the Chickasaw Cultural Center discussing how they lived through the revitalization of their tribe (Elders Speak Premier, Chickasaw Television/Media Series, 2017). One elder, Pauline Brown, talks about growing up during the Great Depression and how her father had to steal milk to eat. She tells the group how they slept under trees, had no transportation, and how her mother died of Tuberculosis. She reflects on her father coming home from having to work out of state only to learn the Bureau of Indian Affairs was requiring her to go to an Indian School, a school at which she would have been denied the opportunity to speak her native language and

value her cultural heritage. The group share stories about washing clothes in a tub with creek water, being poor, having inadequate health care, and no shoes. They discuss going out in the cold to catch a rabbit to eat for dinner and being thankful for food. They grew up in a period not only when discrimination towards Native Americans was common but also when tribal leaders were chosen by the United States President, rather than elected by their own people. The poverty and exclusion this group experienced was not accidental. This was the government trying to assimilate and maybe even abolish their tribe (Elders Speak Premier, Chickasaw Television/Media Series, 2017).

Yet, their culture survived. Their tribal government survived. Their language, though having fewer and fewer first speakers or those who had Chickasaw as a first language, has survived and is now taught in Oklahoma schools. They have witnessed their tribe emerge and ultimately appear to thrive. The media presentation cited above with this group of elders, and one that speaks in somewhat broken English, are proud of being Chickasaw and their Native American roots. One woman mentions the pride she has in her family still having its original allotment land. They talk of how their parents instilled in them gratitude in being Chickasaw, despite their embarrassment at school when they were unable to talk in English or were discriminated against because they were Indian. "God smiled at me the day I was born because he gave me my parents and made me Chickasaw," noted one of the elders, the Chickasaw Legislator Linda Briggs who was also one of the subjects for an interview by the researcher (Elders Speak Premier, Chickasaw Television/Media Series, 2017).

This pride is also rooted in how their generation has witnessed the Chickasaws emerge as what appears to be a successful, self-sustaining Native American model of economic

prosperity. They have witnessed the tribe build a corporate entity that is based out of its own past. The tribe has appeared to have transformed into a successful business corporation in a modern political world. They have witnessed the tribe's efforts to rally the State of Oklahoma to help them get into the business of gaming, revitalize economic development within their jurisdictional boundaries and elsewhere, use the profit margins to diversify in business, navigate the world of political networking, elect their own seemingly strong leadership over long periods of time, and settle in, purchase back, and develop the land the United States government deemed their new homelands during the Removal Era. With the proceeds of this prosperity has come additional opportunities for health care, education, housing options, and other programs designed to improve their quality of life as outlined in Chapter 3. And all that is has been achieved in a way that seems to value the Chickasaw culture, heritage and 'old ways.'

Other Oklahoma tribes have experienced success when taking advantage of the opportunities for economic development and opportunities for sustainment and social capital to be gained. However, the Chickasaws seem to be the tribe in Oklahoma that pushes out ahead with economic success and volume of programs and services. This chapter explores the why for the success the Chickasaws have experienced. Gaming may have provided the revenue, but the tribe would need to take advantage of that due to its governmental structure, the management of the resources generated by gaming, its effective networking and lobbying, its location, leadership, strategic orientation, and its sovereignty.

It would seem the Chickasaws utilized both their inherent sovereignty and three-branch government to move forward and achieve economic success. As one reviews the research. Three political factors are suggested by Cornel, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003 as difference

makers for sustainable economic development for tribes; these include self-rule, capable institutions of self-governance, and a cultural match. A cultural match suggests it cannot be simply forced based on someone's else model but must fit within indigenous concepts of how powers organize and exercise such (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, October 2003, p. 25). The authors of this research suggest the government institutions must have the support of the people as well as a degree of ownership about that institution. A fourth factor is suggested as important: strategic orientation (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003). Kalt and Singer (2004) further argue that the economic resurgence in Indian country is a direct result of their sovereignty or self-governance being exercised. While gaming is often attributed as the game changer for tribes, the aforementioned researchers suggest it is actually the self-governance of tribes that is creating economic success for these Native Nations. Sovereignty may have been recognized by nineteenth-century treaties, but it was not honored until the 1970s. Self-governance placed the power back into the hands of the tribes.

Research questions why one sovereign, self-determined nation can unite their people and bring about change while another chooses to remain without evolution. Four factors are suggested by researchers on how a self-determined nation has the capacity to do so. These are leadership, situations, culture, and knowledge. Situations could be described as the connections and circumstances that make some things more realistic for some rather than others. Culture is also suggested as important and can be a shared way of life or beliefs by a people to interpret the world around them. Knowledge comes from experience and education and knowing what is necessary to further one's efforts. The authors of the research suggest that leadership "is the secret weapon in seizing the future" (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003, p. 311). They

note that circumstances may be challenging, depth of knowledge and experience may be inadequate, and a culture of dependency may be the norm, however, a strong leader can make all the difference for a tribe. As this chapter unfolds, one will see where all four of the factors seemed to have impacted the success of the tribe.

As tribes had the power of self-governance placed back into their hands, sovereignty only works when it is accompanied by good leadership and leadership that will protect that same sovereignty. This meant, among other things, the Chickasaws had the ability to decide upon their constitution, elect their own leadership, pursue gaming as a revenue stream, enter into contracts, and develop their own natural resources.

The Chickasaws seemed to have consistently elected strong, politically and business-savvy leaders that have been able to stay in office, empower the tribe, and keep the revenue in an upward trajectory. As time progressed and the revenue began to accelerate, the executive leadership identified ways to strategize, make the hires they needed in critical positions, develop the businesses, and diversify their portfolio (Campbell, personal interview, 2015). The period of leadership in recent times has been Chickasaw Nation Governor Anoatubby. He was elected in 1987 and remains in post. He and his predecessor adopted a leadership style that reflected an Americanized approach whilst retaining some traditional Native American ways as well. The ability to uphold their sovereignty accompanied by strong leadership may be the key to success enjoyed by the Chickasaws (Campbell, personal interview, 2015).

The Chickasaws have seemingly adhered to what the research suggests to a large degree (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003). The leadership deemed it necessary to acquire the kind of revenue that would allow the tribe to develop their ability to be advocates for Native

Americans, Oklahoma tribes, and, more importantly, their own Nation. This meant lobbying and utilizing the court system to navigate ways to address the injustices done to their people, protect the natural resources, and acquire compensation for past mismanagement of those resources by the government. Lobbying was also integral to obtaining casinos within their jurisdictional boundaries and overcoming the widespread opposition to gambling, something very strong given that the state forms part of the Bible Belt, which is an informally dubbed region of the southern United States known for its conservative societal values and religious Protestantism. These successes, and the services that the revenue they enabled generated, could be interpreted as the way in which the leader could remain in office, reinforcing his power and ability to lobby and influence further. As the programs and services increase and the value of culture and their Native language is demonstrated, Chickasaw citizens receive the benefits and pride associated in being a member of their tribe. If voters are happy, the chances of the leader remaining in office are stronger. That allows the continuity to remain strong for this tribe and enables planning to stay on course rather than be interrupted or diverted by different leadership or priorities.

The nation's location, albeit not their choice, could be observed as a final element in their success. Unlike smaller tribes in remote and rural areas, the Choctaws, the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and even the Muscogee Creek were able to take advantage of their proximity to Texas and/or situate casinos on thoroughfares that gave access to large markets in a state where gambling is not allowed with the exception of two small tribal venues. The exclusivity fees, which are fees paid to the State of Oklahoma based on gaming revenue as discussed before, had these aforementioned tribes located at the top with profitability from gaming. In

FY21, exclusivity fees had the Chickasaws paying in \$63,292,502.30 based on their revenue with the Choctaws coming in at \$34,219,593, the Muscogee Creek edging the Cherokees at 11,505,125, and the Cherokees at \$11,029,498.64 (Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit, Office of Management and Enterprise Services, 2021, p. 5). There is some irony in that the land they were forced onto eventually enabled their economic rebuilding.

Finally, the Chickasaw Nation has chosen to be a tribe that manages their resources in such a way that the revenue is used to give back to tribal citizens and be reinvested back into the Nation rather than adopting a per capita payment to tribal citizens where an annual check is distributed. This is a fundamental differentiating factor for this tribe versus some of the other tribes. A culture of dependency can have a devastating effect on a people. Research suggests it can prevent a tribe from taking the necessary steps to create opportunities for economic development and diversification (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003). While it is true Native Americans were the victims of many years of discrimination and betrayal from the federal government, the culture of entitlement can be pervasive to futuristic goals and being self-sustainable. The Chickasaw Nation has chosen to take revenue from their business enterprises and place it into healthcare, education, family and children's services, housing, and other programs designed to raise the standard of living for its people. Rather than a per capita check each year, they are given opportunities to receive health services, educate themselves, learn more about their culture and language, and then utilize that to improve their well-being. This self-sustainment provides Chickasaw citizens the ability to be less dependent on governmental programs while giving them the satisfaction of their own successes.

Sovereignty and Tribal Governance Structure:

Some literature, cited below, suggests that a strong government structure within a tribal nation is critical for success. A tribe must have a strong institution of self-governance and without it, will not be able to execute on economic policies despite significant resources. Tribal governments must have institutions that allow for decisions to be made outside of political pressure. Those decisions will ensure contracts are honored and there is sound administration of programs and resources (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003). In a statement before the United States Committee on Indian Affairs, Joseph P. Kalt of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, presented the importance of why a tribe must lay the foundation of economic development through a capable self-governance. He noted that it must be able to execute on strategy and policy, assure that the political environment is one which all potential investors feel secure in the business dealings, and ensure the buy-in from the tribal community for the institutions of the tribe and strategy for development (Kalt, 1996).

The government of the Chickasaw Nation is, what appears to be a strong three-branch system of government (executive, judicial, and legislative) and demonstrate components of the attributes researchers have deemed critical. The three branches of government that emerged for the Chickasaws would eventually provide the basis for this strong system of self-governance. That foundation would allow self-governance to turn into a system that would see each branch support, sustain, and complement each other, thus reinforcing the sovereignty of the Nation. That sovereignty has been a key element in their ability to do business and grow economically strong. That three-branch system, in turn, would be a critical element in how they were able to build up strong leadership, make key business decisions quickly, sustain

economic development for the tribe, establish policy, and, ultimately, assert their sovereignty (Briggs, personal interview, 2015).

One must note the three-branch government (legislative, executive, and judicial) had to evolve to what it is today; yet influences of the old system can still be observed. The original tribal government was based on a clan system and members held their positions based on the status of the clan. A government was established within each clan that included a council of elders and within that group a chief or a High Minko was selected (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). Their first contact with Europeans was DeSota in 1540 when they formed a trade alliance with the British. That lasted until the American Revolution, but British influence still had a significant effect on the tribe. This influence would be observed in the Chickasaws as they were beginning to change their structure to mirror the British. By the year 1763, they had even changed the title of their leaders to the term governor as utilized by the British and away from the title of High Minko (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). The title of Governor is one way in which the tribe has retained remnants of its past.

The beginning of the Chickasaw Nation Constitution and the development of the three-branch system dates back to 1856 when the Chickasaws gathered in Tishomingo, Oklahoma to draft the document. That document, originally outlining three branches of government, would serve as the basis for government until 1906 when it was dissolved, and Oklahoma was becoming a state (The Chickasaw Nation Constitution, 2002). Federal legislation at that time provided for the appointment of the governors of the Chickasaw Nation by the federal government. Assimilation was the goal of the United States government as those governors

during that period were simply providing oversight for the land and the remaining details as it related to business interests (Turn of the Century, Our Nation/History, Chickasaw Nation, 2023).

During this same period of time of the appointed leadership, according to Cornell and Kalt (2006), the federal government, passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934. What would follow was a period of time where there was a significant amount of activity around the development of governments and constitutions in Indian country. Those often-ignored traditional forms of indigenous government and the new structures often conflicted with the traditions of the nations as well as supported the assimilation policies of the federal government. The power in reservation affairs was still being retained within the Bureau of Indian Affairs and self-governance within tribes was weakened (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

Despite the quest for self-governance by the tribes, including the Chickasaws, to get to the sustainability of their Nation, they would have to see some pretty significant empowering policies. Those policies would need to be implemented by the federal government for them to essentially move forward as a true self-sustaining, self-governed tribe. These critical elements that came in the form of opportunities to start building their revenue were discussed in Chapter 2 as it related to economic development. However, the essential element for success would require those policies for establishing economic development opportunities to go hand in hand with the critical piece of self-governance as well. One could not exist, in all likelihood, without the other. The establishment of the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in 1964, which came out of President Lyndon Johnson's administration and his War on Poverty and the Great Society (Cornell and Kalt, 2007), aided the efforts of the Chickasaw Nation. Community Action Programs (CAP) were developed out of the OEO office and were designed to address the

poverty issues. And Native American tribes were a part of the targeted populations the programs were designed to assist (Cornell and Kalt 2007). Additionally, other agencies were initiating programs for Native Americans including the Departments of Commerce, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Health, Education, and Welfare. Perhaps again, one of the most critical pieces, is that of the Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1971 and its policies, which would also serve to empower, as has been noted previously, the ability to expand upon the tribal self-governance (Cornell and Kalt, 2007). It should also be noted that Cornell mentions Indian political activism in this same period of time would prove to aid in these efforts. At least one of those activists (former Cherokee Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller) would come out of Oklahoma and eventually return to be a tribal leader for the second largest Indian Nation the (Cherokees) and one of Oklahoma's Five Civilized Tribes (Mankiller, 2000). This era of empowerment for tribes and political activism was shaping up to be significant it would seem, especially as one reflects on how successful these larger Oklahoma tribes would become.

As their quest for strong self-governance continued and following this extended period of governmental acts that impacted tribes, the Chickasaws constructed a 1979 draft of the Chickasaw Nation Constitution developed on the basis of the 1856 version. There were revisions made up until 1983 when an official tribal constitution was ratified. The current Constitution shows a ratification date of August 27, 1983, and amendments on June 21, 2002, (Chickasaw Nation Constitution, 2002). This Constitution of the Chickasaw Nation returns to their similar historical three-branch government similar to that of the United States Government. Each of those divisions of government is outlined in the document and delineates

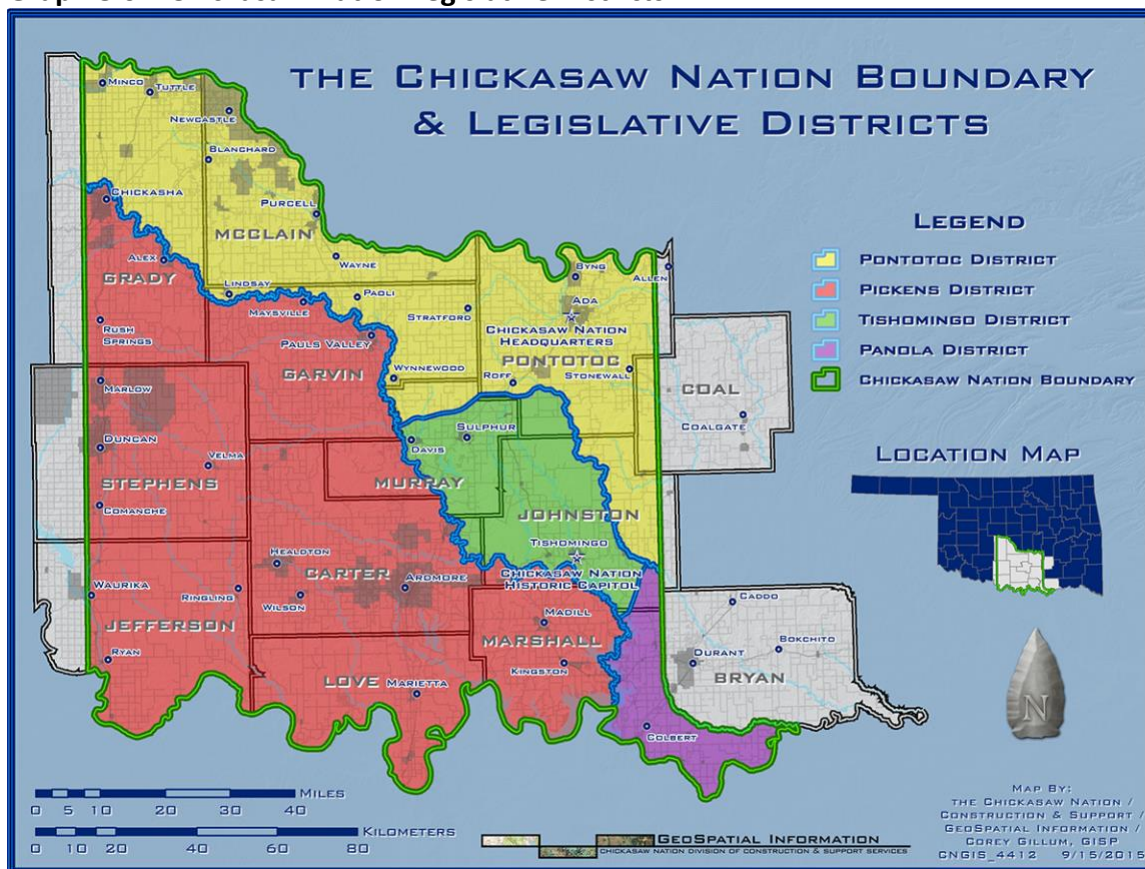
specific powers of government to each one. It is important to mention here that all of the federally recognized tribes historically have different forms of tribal government. There is not one model that is a duplicate for the other. Therefore, the potential for very different models of self-governance from tribe to tribe is inevitable to a large degree (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993).

Kalt and Singer's research supports the idea that sovereignty has been singled out by the federal government as the policy that has brought about success as it relates to tribes breaking from the dependence on federal programs and being able to reinvigorate their social and cultural traditions that aid in the sustainment of their tribal communities. This self-rule is credited with assisting more and more tribes in their success economically. It is critical for tribes (J. Kalt and J. Singer, 2004, p. 1). Twenty years of research demonstrates that Native Nations' ability to self-rule allows them to not only advance but to also flourish. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development's research has not been able to find an example of a sustained economic development model that an outside entity has developed on a Native American reservation or where a tribe has not exercised their right to be sovereign. It is the difference maker in economic development (Brimley, 2004).

As one observes the different branches within the Chickasaw self-governance system one must consider the legislative body and the significant role the legislature plays in tribal government. The legislative branch of the Constitution includes the requirements for Chickasaw Tribal Legislators, which include being a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation as well as being a residence for at least one year within the Chickasaw Nation legislative district they are representing. Legislators are also required to live in the district throughout their term of office,

which is four years. Chickasaw Legislators must be registered to vote and be at least 25 years old. There are 13 members elected within the districts of the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation. Those districts include the Panola District, Pickens District, Tishomingo District, and Pontotoc District (see Chart 8.0). Specific boundaries and lines are specified in the Constitution, which prescribes each district. According to the Chickasaw Constitution, duties and powers of the legislative branch include election of officers (Chairperson and Secretary), the enactment of rules and regulations of the Chickasaw Nation, procedures around voter registration, decisions that involve “acquisition, leasing, disposition, and management of real property, subject to Federal Law,” and impeachment cases (Chickasaw Nation Constitution, 2002, p. C-6).

Graph 8.0 – Chickasaw Nation Legislative Districts



Source: Chickasaw.net/legislative, 2017

The Constitution further outlines the duties including the right to approve the Annual Tribal Budget as prepared by the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation. The document requires a majority vote, and all business must have a quorum established (nine members present at the meeting) before business can be conducted. The Chickasaw Tribal Legislature also has the power to set salaries for all elected and appointed officials as well as employees of the Nation. They can't, however, change by increase or decrease, during their terms of office for which they were elected (Chickasaw Nation Constitution, 2002, p. C-6). These positions are a much sought-after role within the Chickasaw Nation due to the decision-making power it retains (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

The next branch of government is the Executive Branch of the Chickasaw Nation's tribal government outlined by the Chickasaw Nation Constitution. It includes the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation as well as the Lieutenant Governor. Requirements for these offices include citizens of the Chickasaw Nation who have at least one-quarter Chickasaw Indian blood, are at least 30 years old, and have not been convicted of a felony. They have the same requirements of residency as the tribal legislators and must be registered to vote. The duties and powers of the Chickasaw Nation Governor include signature authority, establishment of committees as well as delegation of members, preparation and submission of a tribal budget to the Tribal Legislature, and veto power on decisions of the legislature within five working days. However, the Tribal Legislature does have the power to override the Governor's veto. The Lieutenant Governor serves in the absence of the Governor and has the same authority in doing so (The

Chickasaw Nation Constitution, 2002, p. C-8). Again, similar to the Chickasaw Legislature, a position in the Executive Branch is a prestigious position for tribes.

The contributions of the executive body of the Chickasaw Nation in terms of their revenue, job growth, and programs have rendered tribal leaders a degree of reverence and respect. The tribes' lobbying efforts render large dollar amounts as will be discussed later in the chapter and make these leaders a political force in the State. Furthermore, efforts are made to recruit the most competent individuals to hold these high-ranking positions.

The Chickasaw legislators and Choctaw Tribal Council members are also associated with a degree of prestige. Those positions are not term limited for the Chickasaws and Choctaws but are for the 17-member legislative council for the Cherokees. The Cherokees have four-year terms and are limited to two consecutive terms. However, they can sit out one term and run for reelection (Cherokee Constitution, 1976). Again, these positions in tribal leadership within the three large gaming tribes are viewed as positions of power and contribute to the governance of the tribe in significant ways.

Tribal campaigns, especially for the big gaming tribes, can be expensive, running up to \$800,000, according to one former tribal leader. It should be noted that, at least as it relates to the bigger tribes, campaigns run in a similar fashion to federal and state government candidate elections. They are similar in how they are strategic and include multiple fundraisers, dinners, golf tournaments, opportunities to speak, the utilization of significant time commitments, door to door campaigning, people, and resources. The bigger tribes often benefit from gaming companies providing large donations and substantial support for these races in an effort to stay in the game with the tribal elected officials so the expense of an election, as well as the amount

spent by donors, results in pretty hefty dollar amounts for tribal elections (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

Tribal elections can also be highly contentious. One such race took place in the State of Oklahoma with the Cherokee Nation in a race in 2011 that pitted a 12-year incumbent Principal Chief against a 12-year Cherokee Council member. It was a race that played out in the headlines over four months as the recount issue was addressed. It took four recounts and a second election in September 2011 for the challenger Bill John Baker, a Cherokee businessman, to unseat incumbent Principal Chief Chad “Corntassel” Smith, who had been the tribal chief since 1999. Even though the election was contested by the incumbent, the Cherokee Supreme Court held up the results (The State of the Cherokee Nation: A Tale of Two Chiefs, McGirk, 2013). The aftermath of that contentious race still reverberates within the tribe.

It should also be noted as it pertains to a tribal election, the tribal voter list with addresses is a hot commodity. Part of the significance of having the list of voters is the fact that tribal members are all over the world and not just within the jurisdictional boundaries of these tribes. While targeted ads and campaign efforts can take place within the boundaries, reaching those outside is extremely difficult without the lists. Tribal law, within the Chickasaw Nation, prohibits the distribution of registered voter lists except candidates running for office (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). If a candidate is not an incumbent with the Choctaws, they can only receive a list of names while the incumbent will retain names and addresses. The Cherokee candidates, on the other hand, have access to all of this information. Distribution of campaign materials would be more of a challenge to the candidate(s) who are not incumbents. However,

with social media developments and more access to messaging individuals over electronic means, it could make this less of a challenge for candidates outside the organization.

In a tribal election, the tribes distribute ballots to all registered tribal members (those with a Certified Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) card) when a Chief of the Choctaws or the Governor of the Chickasaws is elected. In a Choctaw Council or Chickasaw legislative race ballots will only go out to their districts for which they are running to represent (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). As one considers this information as it relates to the longevity of tribal leaders, it should be noted that controlling the communication to voter lists is a significant coup to the incumbent leaders. It is also important to point out that internal communications throughout their term can be strategic, as it would be for any incumbent in a race. Information on tribal projects, initiatives, successes, and activities of the current administration are largely controlled by the internal media sources within the tribe. In the case of the Chickasaws, it would be the tribal newspaper *The Chickasaw Times*. The Cherokees utilize their newspaper the *Cherokee Phoenix* and the Choctaws newspaper would be the *Bishkinik*. Bishkinik means little Chata (Choctaw) news bird (Bishkinik) in Choctaw (New Choctaw Dictionary, 2016). Other forms of controlled communication would include their marketing efforts as it pertains to their tribal websites, Facebook posts, Twitter feed, and their television and radio ads. An incumbent, just as in any other political office, would have the power to send messages to a large degree at the tribe's expense versus an outside entity having to pay for their messaging and still not reaching at the comprehensive level an internal candidate could facilitate.

The third branch of the Chickasaw Nation government is the judicial branch which also yields power and prestige. This branch consists of a three-member court elected by popular vote within the Chickasaw Nation. The court must be qualified electors, citizens of the Chickasaw Nation, have no felony convictions, and residents of the Chickasaw Nation while in office. Annually, they select the presiding judge from among their group. This court has the authority to decide (two votes required) disputes that relate to the Constitution or the Nation's legislative actions (Chickasaw Nation Constitution, 2002). Their decisions are considered final. The Constitution of the Chickasaw Nation further outlines petition requirements, filling vacancies for all three branches, impeachment procedures, oath of office, and procedures for amending the constitution (Chickasaw Nation Constitution, 2002). Again, these positions are often sought after within the tribes and considered difficult to obtain.

As one considers the constitutional organization of the Chickasaw Nation and how it relates to their success, a potential evaluation of styles utilized by tribes and their economic development as well as the importance with which they place self-governance might be considered. Cornell and Kalt (2007) discuss approaches to the development of Native Nations including the standard approach and the nation building approach. Their research critiques the approach to economic development prior to self-determination and suggests some tribes that have yet to take advantage of self-determination and true self-governance are challenged with moving forward. The *standard* approach for some tribes can be characterized by "short-term thinking, outsider-influenced agendas, and a negative view of Native culture." In contrast, the "fundamental challenge of economic development and social progress is a political challenge" (Cornell and Kalt, 2007, p. 2). The more successful approach would suggest that practical

sovereignty, legitimate (culturally matched and effective) governing institutions, a strategic orientation, and leaders committed to nation-building are the keys to solving the development puzzle in Indian Country.

The contrasting approach tribes take regarding their self-governance is important to examine. If you draw a comparison of the Chickasaws approach to doing business to the Comanche tribe, a much smaller tribe on the western side of the state, one could deduct the Chickasaws have a less challenging approach to obtaining consensus on business decisions within their governing body. The Comanche Nation has a Business Committee made of up of seven members of the Comanche Nation who are at least 21 years of age and are elected as provided in Article VII of the constitution. They have the authority to execute on property that is owned or jointly owned by the Comanches and budget development and approval for the tribal operations (Constitution and By-laws of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, 2002). With that being noted the budget has to be submitted to the tribal membership for a 2/3 vote at least 45 days prior to the annual meeting. This can be a difficult sell, to a group that large and can be a lot easier navigated with only 12, 13, or even 17 members of a legislative body in the room such as what the Chickasaws or even the Choctaws and Cherokees have in their governing bodies (Constitution and By-laws of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, 2002).

As it relates to the productivity and ability to govern, one observation from a tribal consultant for the Chickasaws is enlightening. If one compares the Chickasaws to one of the smaller Oklahoma tribes in a council meeting versus a Chickasaw legislative meeting, one finds a difference. It was observed the smaller tribe had a very contentious discussion around who would run the operations of a facility not constructed yet followed by an agriculture debate.

Later in that same meeting, a person interjected a personal issue involving a relationship between a tribal official and another individual into the meeting. There was a significant amount of time spent devoted to issues outside of business decisions that resulted in an unproductive meeting and no business decision (Gabbard, personal interview, 2015). It would seem tribal leaders have found challenges when business decisions, governance, and personal matters are intertwined and not kept separate.

One researcher calls notice to the differences in what one could consider the tribes of Eastern Oklahoma (Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, Seminole and Chickasaw) versus the Plains Indians on the western side of the state. This could be reflective in the way they govern their tribes. While the tribes of the western side of the state were more nomadic than the eastern agriculturalists, they fall in line more with what the media has portrayed as the Indian of the movies. The tribes go so far as to say of each other, according to the researcher, “they’re not real Indians” (the eastern side) while the western side, the researcher notes, might say “they think they’re the only real Indians” (Lavere, 2000, p.5). The forms and the exercise of their governments differ as well as the eastern side seems more aligned with the United States form of government as they were, in fact, assimilated as the Five Civilized Tribes that had influence over fashioning them in such a way.

A presentation by two other Oklahoma tribal leaders also spoke of the histories of their tribes as it related to governing bodies. The Chairman of the Citizen Potawatomie tribe noted a lack of direction, a disruptive atmosphere, and a constant shifting until they were able to amend their constitution and obtain a three-branch system similar to the Chickasaws (Barrett, Native Assets Conference Presentation, 2015). This same tribe is noted in research as seeing the

value in implementing this constitutional reform. This change, put in place by the Citizen Potawatamie, would eventually propel them forward and secure an economic boom (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003). Kay Rhodes, former Principal Chief of the Sac and Fox Nation further reiterated the importance of not allowing governing bodies to micromanage as it created instability (Rhoades, Oklahoma Native Assets Conference Presentation, 2015). This would suggest governmental reforms may be necessary to keep the elected leaders of tribes from impacting the commerce and potential for economic development. Additionally, with 38 federally recognized Indian Nations in the State of Oklahoma and the individuality of each one of those tribes, lies the potential for additional research in forms and the exercise of self-rule.

And while other tribes have issues within their branches of government, the Chickasaws have not been immune to it. Early Chickasaw history also includes the presence of dissonance between two parties that developed during that period of time as a result of the challenges the tribes were facing. They were referred to as the Progressives and the Pullbacks. There is mention of dissonance in the growth era of the Chickasaws as well. Governor Anoatubby ran against Wilson Seawright and won with 54.5% percent of the votes in 1987 (Palmer, Chickasaw Election Results, news.com, 1987). The year 1991 and that election would bring about significant dissonance. A suit was brought against the Governor (Chickasaw Tribal Court, Case 9105, 1991) by a group of legislators regarding the power of the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation to censure legislators (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). Issues between the branches of government emerged during their study that reflected upon the 1991 campaign where Jefferson Keel had resigned his post as a tribal legislator to run for Governor. McCoy and Delashaw's 1993 study reported that 60% of legislative and judicial respondents believed there

was conflict between the legislative and executive branches of government within the Chickasaw Nation. The issues revolved around unopposed legislative races, legislators being only part-time, and lack of knowledge/interest by Chickasaw voters regarding legislative races. What eventually occurred was Anoatubby and Keel running together for several years. And outcomes included that the two branches put in more effort regarding shared communication and efforts to engage the Chickasaw people more through many opportunities for interaction with tribal officials (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

Methodology on political campaigns, as in other campaigns outside of a tribal nation, is an art within itself and, to a degree, demonstrative of that potential leader to get in office and remain in office. It will change depending on the perceived power of the two voting bodies and, just like other elections, a candidate's ability to court those both within jurisdictional boundaries as well as those outside of the boundaries will be critical. In the 1991 campaign, both candidates (Anoatubby and Keel) believed that personal contact with the voter was a factor in being successful in a political race. Governor Anoatubby placed emphasis on out of boundary voters using mail-outs and visits to other areas of the country while the other candidate focused on the population within the boundaries on the Chickasaw Nation. While no formal voter-election analysis was done to affirm which had made the most difference, the incumbent (Governor Anoatubby) was successful in winning reelection. It should be noted that of the voters queried in the 1993 McCoy-Delashaw study that 46% noted information regarding the campaign was received "word-of-mouth" while 49% say they relied on newspapers, specifically *The Chickasaw Times*. This period of history would predate social media. So not only were out of boundary voters dependent on campaign materials, but similar to in boundary

voters, they would have also been recipients of the tribe's newspaper as well. The study suggests that personal contacts may have been overemphasized by the candidates as the written material was also a form of dissemination of information to all voters (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). One should also note the information disclosed from the McCoy and Delashaw study of 1993 that the majority of the voters that were included in the survey believe Governor Anoatubby was "smart, a strong leader, and was able to work well on the state and federal levels" (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993, p. 82). Elected officials surveyed in the study believed he had been effective in his first term and his political experience and relationships with state and federal officials would serve the Nation well. In contrast, the drawbacks with the opponent (Jefferson Keel), was name recognition, campaign strategy, and the inability to overcome the challenges of not being the incumbent in the election. It would seem Governor Anoatubby was being perceived as someone who could navigate the campaign trail as well as be a strong leader.

As that campaign waged on, a conflict between the legislators regarding support for Anoatubby and Keel resulted in a stalemate, which Keel reported as the reason he wanted to run for Governor in his interview for the study. Keel was reported as believing the Chickasaw leadership had been "enemies of their people rather than the federal government." He alluded to Governor Anoatubby's attempt to censure the legislators and that the Chickasaw tribal court needed leadership that would stand up to the Governor as opposed to "rubber stamping his decisions" (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993, p. 85). Of note, is the change in order regarding the prioritized list of issues faced by the tribe following the election. "Governor Anoatubby moved the issue of conflict in tribal government from a fourth-place ranking to first in importance'

(McCoy and Delashaw, 1993, p. 86). One might surmise that the Governor was beginning to understand the importance of alignment of goals between the different branches of government within the Chickasaw Nation. He noted in his interview in the study that Chickasaw tribal government was “still an evolutionary process,” and emphasized the importance of role clarity (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993, p. 88). Perhaps, that lesson was critical in his early years as Governor.

It would seem easier to enlist the legislators as allies and opponents as team members rather than have conflict that would emerge in a tribal election. This strategic effort was facilitated with Governor Anoatubby and Jefferson Keel forming a team, as noted above, in 1999. One Chickasaw administrator notes the efforts to develop good relationships and provide relevant information to tribal legislators has improved since the time of the conflict. Perhaps, the Executive Branch has been more purposeful in their efforts to ensure a more collaborative relationship is in place so there is less likelihood for conflict and more opportunity for business decisions and legislation to be passed (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

In one consultant’s opinion, the Chickasaw Nation versus other tribes, notes a significant degree of professionalism, role clarity, continuity, ethics, and experience as an attribute of the Chickasaw leadership (Gappard, personal interview, 2015). Interactions were described as one with respect towards each branch of government versus the example given earlier where highly contentious meetings are characteristic of other tribes. What one could derive from this observation of other tribes is the Chickasaws have what appears to be not only a relatively healthy system of checks and balances, but also maybe a different mindset. It would seem, their leadership has set a culture of healthy discourse. Differing opinions will exist as different

executives and legislators will have different priorities (i.e., business, jobs, programs/services), however, their ability to be respectful and professional to each other provides the opportunity for health dialogue and decision-making as it pertains to their roles for the tribe.

Leadership:

It is important to consider Governor Anoatubby's ability to appeal to his constituency and not draw opponents. It would also seem that early in his leadership, themes as it pertained to economic development were already emerging. The study by McCoy and Delashaw (1993) outlined the Governor's early initiatives. Economic development had been at the top of the Governor's list in the 1991 election. Interestingly enough, it is noted in their study that Governor Anoatubby had supported the bingo establishments and that it was also supported by almost 80% of the voters. These voters thought they should try to profit from this enterprise while they could, although ironically enough, they did not believe it would be a long-term solution for economic development. It would seem gaming as an economic driver was not anticipated by the majority of the voters (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). Yet, the current outcomes of the gaming enterprise, has proven that theory wrong.

Leadership is a further element that differentiates tribes. Different periods of leadership have had different challenges. Some tribal leaders faced policy changes, wars, the Great Depression, or a new home. Others have had the devastation of external government policies that sought to break up the tribe or the benefit of external government policies that empowered and provided more opportunity. Different leaders have handled that well, and others have not.

Some researchers believe that leadership is the critical piece for why some tribal nations

succeed and others do not. It is the “secret weapon in seizing the future,” (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003, p. 19). Transformative leaders within organizations have the potential to be an agent of change. As leaders within the Chickasaw Nation are discussed, one might suggest that those leaders in the era that emerged with tribes becoming empowered by Self Determination (Governor Overton James and Governor Bill Anoatubby) were, in fact, change agents for their tribe.

Cornell and Kalt, (2007) note that the nation-building approach is where leadership works to ensure the development of an effective governing body is in place and facilitating a government where instead of infighting, there is instead a system for the facilitation of strategy and tribal objectives. They go on to suggest that a part of rebuilding the nation is about empowering the citizens of the nation around what it will take to rebuild the nation. Leaders stay in power as a result of their ability to respond to the goals of their constituency. One might derive from the literature that leadership is clearly a pivotal factor to the advancement of a tribal nation. An agent of change is necessary and one that can quiet the infighting within self-governance and execute on strategies, all the while engaging the constituency.

As one begins to examine the leadership of the Chickasaw Nation and its impact on the success one can see that historically the Chickasaws have attempted to move themselves forward in the arena of political leadership although not without dissent. The early leaders of the Chickasaw Nation engaged in strategies around political positioning designed to assist in the advancement of the tribe. Despite their valiant efforts, this era would also see the power of tribal leadership being diminished. The period from Removal to Statehood would see a limited number of leaders being elected while the tribe was beginning to polarize to a degree on

different perspectives regarding their political views especially as it related to their acclimating to the White race being forced upon them in Indian Territory. Cyrus Harris was elected in 1872 and it was during this period of time that two parties including the Progressive Party and the Pullback party was influencing Chickasaw elections. The Progressives were more open to cohabitation with the white settlers while the Pullbacks were more supportive of the old systems (Lovegrove, 2009). Leadership for the Chickasaws, it would seem, has not been without challenges.

Many changes would occur during the period leading up to self-determination. William Malcolm Guy's administration saw an election overturned and even an assassination attempt during a time when a Governor's race was being contested. A Treaty with the Santa Fe Railroad allowing it to run through the Chickasaw Nation in exchange for funds for the tribe would have also been during his tenure (H.F. and E.S. O'Beirne, 1892). Major legislation impacting the tribe included the 1887 Dawes Severalty Act and the Curtis Act of 1898 contributing to the breaking up of tribal lands and tribal governments. Also, of significance and noted earlier in the research, Lovegrove (2009), is that of the longest tenure although not consecutively, of any American Indian chief executive that was achieved by the Chickasaw Nation in Douglas Henry Johnston as governor from 1898 to 1902 and from 1904 to 1939. Johnston is credited with leadership during the cessation of tribal lands and through his efforts was able to prevent the taxation of allotment lands by the State of Oklahoma. This era of leadership would have brought about many challenges as well (Lovegrove, 2009).

Yet another significant era and perhaps the most important was developing. In 1963, Governor Overton James would be the last Chickasaw governor appointed by the federal

government. President John F. Kennedy would make that appointment (1987 Chickasaw Hall of Fame, 2023). A new era of leadership was emerging as the Chickasaws were, once again, given back their power to elect their leadership. Only two governors (Overton James and Bill Anoatubby) of the Chickasaw Nation have served since the tribe began electing their leaders again. Their tenures were during the era of Self Determination and its forward progression for the tribe. The events that would follow that era would enable growth in the tribes and a time of self-governance and economic development. Descriptions of these two leaders and their efforts are important for discussion. Governor Overton James, born in 1925, was appointed by the federal government to lead but would later be the first governor elected when tribes were given the authority to elect their own leaders again. James was credited as being a leader with vision for the Chickasaw Nation by his successor Bill Anoatubby and was the youngest to serve the tribe in that role. He served as governor from 1963 until 1987. He earned both a bachelor's and master's degree and was a teacher and coach for ten years (1987 Chickasaw Hall of Fame, 2023). He spent five years in sales before going to work for the Oklahoma Department of Education in 1965 where he would have a 12-year tenure and the title of State Director of Indian Education. A member of the U.S. Navy "Seabees" in the Southwest Pacific during the Second World War, he also served in the United States Navy Reserve and the Army Reserve. He had the distinction of being the youngest man to serve in the role of Governor of the Chickasaw Nation and would lead during a time of emergence from a dark era for tribes that had lasted from 1907 until 1971. It would seem Governor James' leadership would begin to set the tone for a positive growth period for the tribe (1987 Chickasaw Hall of Fame, 2023).

Many changes came about during the James' tenure for the Nation regarding revenue

generation and programmatic offerings to tribal citizens and his skillset would be utilized to progress the tribe. Economic growth, an era of renewed self-governance as a result of the Self Determination Act of 1975 and increased programmatic services for Chickasaw citizens were all a part of the changes that were taking place. Governor James is given credit for creating enhanced healthcare offerings and some of his accolades include the lobbying effort he put forth with the help of United States Speaker of the House Carl Albert for improved health care for Native Americans and a health care facility to be located within the Chickasaw Nation. He also played a significant role in a grass roots effort called the Seeley Chapel movement, which was designed to help the tribe reestablish and retain their sovereignty. He lobbied the federal government to include Oklahoma as a recipient of the Indian Housing Authority benefit as well as was a part of the effort in pursuing the legal rights to the Arkansas Riverbed alongside the Choctaws and Cherokees. That settlement would eventually occur in a Supreme Court victory for the tribes. He was a leader paving the way for lobbying efforts by the Chickasaw Nation. As the leader to the Chickasaws, he saw the need to work collaboratively with other tribes on matters that would have impact for the greater good for Native nations and he, in fact, became a leader in intertribal activities to push that agenda. Governor James would serve as president of the Inter-Tribal Council for the Five Civilized Tribes for five terms. His leadership would have him named as Choctaw-Chickasaw Confederation President, a stint as chairman of the State Indian Affairs Commission, National Indian Athletic Hall of Fame Trustee and a member of the Indian Education Subcommittee of the National Council on Indian Opportunity, and the National Congress of American Indians ('Visionary Leader, Irreplaceable Friend' Governor Emeritus Overton James Dies at age 90, Chickasaw Times, October 2015). Governor James was

making his mark on history for the Chickasaw Nation.

As one considers the events that occurred during Governor James' era, one can draw some correlation to the literature around leadership. It would have taken a strong leader to be able to navigate Washington D.C. with all of the changes happening around sovereignty and self-determination/self-governance. This agent of change would need to further develop the art of lobbying in that era. He was able to engage those in power that could assist him in improving healthcare as well as the access to it for Native Americans. He would also navigate a win in the federal case involving the rights to the Arkansas Riverbed. His ability to empower citizens through the Seeley Chapel movement as well as motivate other tribes to rally together for causes that impacted Native Americans are demonstrative of leadership qualities that are noted by Cornell and Kalt (2007). He was first appointed, but when tribal citizens could vote, he was elected to the post. This would demonstrate an ability to remain in power by being responsive to his constituency. And research suggests that the protection of self-governance is essential for a tribe to thrive something Governor James had fought to do (Kalt and Singer, 2004). He possessed some of the more significant qualities noted by researchers as important. Those include the qualities of the protection of self-governance, lobbying, collaborations with other tribes, responsiveness to his constituency, and the ability to begin true economic development for the tribe. All of those qualities contributed to his ability to make some advances for the Chickasaws.

While one can correlate the beginnings of economic growth, the renewed energy around self-governance and sovereignty, increased services and programs for tribal citizens, and the beginnings of social movements that would emerge as strong lobbying efforts in the

future, Governor James' era was not without controversy. He was charged with fraud and extortion by a federal grand jury in 1985. The indictment suggested he received kickbacks (bribes) from contractors who did business with the tribe's housing authority. That original indictment led to a mistrial. However, he was later convicted of the kickback scheme involving tribal funds and in early 1989 received a nine-month federal prison sentence. An article from an Oklahoma newspaper reporting the sentencing noted the Chief U.S. District Judge Ralph Thompson as admonishing the former Governor of the Chickasaw Nation yet complimenting him for his many years of service to the Chickasaw tribe (Singleterry, *The Oklahoman*, 1989).

His tenure ended in 1987 with his resignation but that same year he was named the first inductee into the Chickasaw Hall of Fame (Singleterry, *The Oklahoman*, 1989). According to the current guidelines for nomination into the Chickasaw Nation Hall of Fame, once he stepped down from his role Governor James would have been eligible for the nomination. According to the Chickasaw Nation website, the criteria to be met and submitted to the Chickasaw Nation citizenship and someone living or deceased that has distinguished themselves in their field and/or someone who has brought honor or impact to the Nation. Current employees and elected officials are not eligible for nomination (Chickasaw Hall of Fame, Chickasaw Nation, 2022). It would seem, despite the conviction of corrupt activity, in terms of a leadership record with Governor James, the Chickasaws still believed he was instrumental in moving the Nation forward and honored him the same year he resigned and was under indictment. One might question whether this was an effort to bring credibility to his leadership record and sway the courts, or simply to honor his service to the tribe before a conviction. It is interesting to draw a correlation with how the tribe reacted during a time when their leader was being indicted to

that of the United States. It had not been long since the impeachment proceedings of President Richard Nixon. While their charges were different, both had broken the law. One constituency honored their leader, while the other's public support plummeted.

As the charges and ensuing trial was playing out in the court system, the stepping down of Governor James brought about the next era of leadership that, as of this writing, is still in place within the Chickasaw Nation. Bill Anoatubby, who was second in command in the role of Lieutenant Governor under Governor James, would be the next elected governor in 1987. In the year prior to Governor James leaving office and while Anoatubby was still Lieutenant Governor for the Chickasaw Nation, Governor James provided information to the tribe's legislature of tribal trust funds being depleted. Those funds were utilized to operate the tribal government and pay salaries for elected officials. At that point, tribal trust properties were earning around \$125,000 on oil and gas leases, timber leases, and other revenue generating sources, but the cost to run the tribal government was around \$250,000. Anoatubby would be tasked with this challenge and would need to use his experienced gained in the 12 years in the Nation under Governor James in various capacities to address them. Following his 12-year stint as second in command, he would assume the position of leader with the Chickasaws (Chickasaw Nation Governor Builds on Four Decades of Services, *Indian Country Today*, 2015).

One can surmise from the economic growth outlined in Chapter 2, the cultural regeneration, and the list of programs and services noted in Chapter 3, that the era in which Bill Anoatubby has been Governor has been a period of economic growth as well as one that has created significant upward trajectory in programs and services for the Chickasaws. It seems he

has been attempting to build a legacy since the beginning as his first platforms included economic development as an initiative.

Born in 1945, Governor Anoatubby's preparation for his new role included obtaining a postsecondary education and experience in financial management. He completed an accounting degree from East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. He had spent some time in accounting and management positions before an opportunity to work for his native tribe became available. He started as the Health Services Director for the Chickasaws in 1975 before moving to the finance department as director. It took him only three years to move into the position of special assistant to the governor and controller. By 1979, he had been elected as the Chickasaw Nation's first Lieutenant Governor (Chickasaw Nation Governor Builds on Four Decades of Services, *Indian Country Today*, 2015).

However, Governor Anoatubby did not run unopposed for the Governor's seat the first time. Bill Anoatubby and Kennedy Brown ran on the ballot for Governor and Lieutenant Governor and were opposed by Wilson Seawright and Overton Cheadle for the two offices respectively. A third team was also in the race and consisted of Kenneth Keel and L.M. Cass. Anoatubby and Brown won the election with 2,010 votes at 54.5%. Seawright and Cheadle got 1,178 votes and Keel and Cass received 493 votes (Palmer, Chickasaw Election Results, *news.com*, 1987). That race would have been the closest race he would have run to date.

Anoatubby ran on economic development, healthcare, education, and senior services as a part of his political platform. Creation and sustainment of revenue generating sources as well as the tough decisions for those entities that were not making it, were a part of the challenge (Chickasaw Nation Governor Builds on Four Decades of Service, *Indian Country Today*, 2015).

Anoatubby had also pledged in the election for better communication between the Office of the Governor and the Chickasaw citizens.

Governor Anoatubby's challenges were real when he took office. Governor Anoatubby went to work for the tribe during a time when the tribal government operations budget was just \$25,000. Much of their budget included programs for Chickasaw citizens that were from federal funds. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the federal government was controlling the funds being distributed for the services provided and how they would be delivered to Indian people. Again, Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act provided the tribes the ability to contract for programs and services as well as obtain capacity building grants, which would allow them to develop their tribal infrastructure. Anoatubby's ability to lead became an integral part of their ability to develop the capacity for economic development. Despite the opportunities that came with Self Determination, the tribe would need to overcome significant financial challenges (Chickasaw Nation Governor Builds on Four Decades of Service, *Indian Country Today*, 2015)

There have been those who were around during more challenging times for the Chickasaw Nation. One individual who witnessed the growth during this period was Neal McCaleb, former Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs and noted earlier in the research. McCaleb, who served on the Indian Affairs Commission, witnessing what occurred in the late 60s and 70s with the tribes. His recollection was that the outlook was somewhat dismal (McCaleb, personal interview, 2014). He credits Bill Anoatubby for his role in creating a strategy that would allow the Chickasaw Nation to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Anoatubby used his business background to create an organized accounting system and

develop an organizational framework for sustainment. Creating a baseline for growth for the tribe would have required business acumen and strategic vision and that is what the tribe had in Bill Anoatubby. Long-time tribal legislator Linda Briggs credits Governor Anoatubby's ability to have a vision for the tribe and a strategy (Briggs, personal interview, 2014). The tribe had to start somewhere and Anoatubby paved the way with his vision and strategic planning which allowed the tribe to build the portfolio it has today. But vision and strategy were not enough, it would take someone with a degree of business savvy as well. McCaleb attributes Governor Anoatubby's ability to get the businesses established and running in the beginning and then use the revenue to improve services such as tribal healthcare for the people (McCaleb, personal interview, 2014). Anoatubby not only possessed the vision, but he also had the skill set to back it up.

After Anoatubby took office in 1987, there were challenging times ahead as it related to the protection of sovereignty as well. Vision, strategy, and business savvy were critical, but it would require someone who could be a champion for the tribe and advocate at a much higher level as well. This is an attribute he seemingly shares with former Governor James. Anoatubby was faced with something the tribes have had as an ongoing battle and especially in the last 40 years, that being tribal sovereignty. One Chickasaw Nation tribal consultant Brian Gabbard believes the Chickasaws have been diligent in their protection of their sovereignty and maybe more than others (Gabbard, personal interview, 2015). He suggests that this is critical for tribes and that a lot of time is spent educating others such as the state or federal government or business entities on the concept of sovereignty. Gabbard suggests, to Anoatubby's credit, his leadership has demonstrated the inherent need to protect tribal sovereignty.

Governor Bill Anoatubby's position on protecting tribal sovereignty seems to be supported by some of the literature as it relates to sovereignty. This literature cited, which suggests that the sovereignty of a nation must be upheld as this is an inherent sovereignty. It is not a granted sovereignty (Cornell and Kalt, 2007). It is considered important that those leading a nation understand that and fight to uphold it as it provides that mechanism for negotiations between two entities in recognizing and respecting that empowerment in conducting business. One can observe, based on some of the interviews noted in research, it is perceived Bill Anoatubby has worked during his administration to utilize their status as an inherent sovereign to do business as was demonstrated with the compacting facilitated with the State of Oklahoma on taxes, tobacco sales, gaming, water, and licenses tags just to name a few. Gabbard, who has been on board as a consultant during some of those negotiations, believes not only educating and upholding that status was critical, but being aware that other entities and even other tribes, are not as protective of sovereignty at every step, and that can make business dealings more challenging (Gabbard, personal interview, 2015). Neal McCaleb, previously mentioned as serving as Secretary of Indian Affairs for the United States government, is one of those who believes protecting that sovereignty was important and associates that piece with good leadership. He credits Anoatubby with having courage to take on state government on the issues of sovereignty (McCaleb, personal interview, 2014). Those who have been both inside the Nation and working within the federal government appear to reflect the importance of a leader that believes sovereignty is essential for a Native Nation.

The period associated with Governor Anoatubby as leader of the Chickasaw Nation has been one that has been associated with the tribe's greatest economic gains from an economic

standpoint. Under Anoatubby, the Chickasaw Nation now has an annual economic impact of more than \$2.4 billion in the State of Oklahoma, they are a significant Oklahoma employer in terms of jobs, and their portfolio has 100+ businesses (Chickasaw Nation Governor Builds on Four Decades of Service, *Indian Country Today*, 2015). The success enjoyed by the Chickasaw Nation has resulted in a significant provision of programs and services for the Chickasaw people. But, with this success Governor Anoatubby has had to evolve regarding his priorities. Not only would he build healthcare and its programs and services in an effort to provide better quality of life to Chickasaw citizens, but he would also prioritize education by increasing that expenditure exponentially.

Cultural regeneration was another important priority of Governor Anoatubby and one in which one can observe the way he has evolved with priorities during his leadership as he has acquired, renovated, and built culturally significant structures and implemented programs and services designed to sustain the Chickasaw culture and language. However, that wasn't always the case. In a study of tribal politics, it was found in 1989 that he had ranked economic development as a primary issue on his political agenda but had not ranked tribal culture or tribal government at all. This was a contrast to his agenda in 1991 where he reflected that the political experience he had attained while in office led him to realize the importance of the significant connection between the culture of a tribe and its government (McCoy and Delashaw, 1993). He may not have recognized that at first, but by listening to his constituency, he was responsive and recognized the value of culture to his people.

One story demonstrates a personal interest for the Governor in that linkage to culture, but it also demonstrates he possesses the expertise on how to make things happen. A former

CEO of the Chickasaw Nation Commerce Division relayed his experience regarding how important he believes the future of information and retention regarding Chickasaw culture is to the current Governor of the Chickasaw Nation. He recalls a trip made to New Mexico where he accompanied Governor Anoatubby to recruit a Chickasaw author and college professor at the University of New Mexico (Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham) to further the vision of the Chickasaw Cultural Center. Governor Anoatubby not only communicated the importance of having a place to visit and learn about Chickasaw culture, but he also wanted part of the center to be a scholarly research center that would be highly regarded by the academic and research community. He recruited Dr. Cobb-Greetham to come back to Oklahoma and build the facility and make the vision happen. And she did (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). The Center for Study of Chickasaw History and Culture (Holisso Research Center) is recognized as a repository and place for scholarship (Cole, Holisso Center Offers Archival Research, Clues to the Past, *Red Lake Nation News*, 2014). It is noted as an integral part of the Chickasaw Cultural Center, which is lauded as one of the largest and most comprehensive of tribal cultural centers (Adventure Road Destinations, 2018). This happened as a result of Governor Anoatubby's ability to recognize talented individuals, and in this case a Chickasaw, who could facilitate the development of an enterprise that would aid in not only helping Chickasaw citizens learn about their heritage but would also serve as a mechanism for others to learn about the tribe. It is a crown jewel of the tribe and one that is envied by other Native Nations as one understands how important culture is to their success. It is also a classic example of the Governor's ability to execute on a plan (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

Governor Anoatubby's desire to enhance their cultural programs is a characteristic that

scholars recognize as important in successful tribes. Research suggests this linkage to culture is important and that building an economically successful nation does not mean changing a tribe's culture. More importantly, it is tying the efforts to culture and an awareness of the culture as it relates to power, authority, and consent. Some of that cannot be passed in things that can be read, but rather how culture is lived. Tribal nations place great value on culture and their shared identity and more effective nations, as the research suggests, value this and integrate it into their success models (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003).

Anoatubby has also navigated a handful of federal lawsuits to acquire funds or resources for the Nation. Those were often a result of mismanagement of tribal assets by the federal government including the Arkansas Riverbed, the land resources suit, and water rights cases. Governor Anoatubby recognizes that tribes have been denied a lot of their inherent rights and that laws and treaties can address those rights, when upheld. His political acumen does not go unnoticed through his ability to lead through negotiations with both state and federal governments (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

He also recognizes the value of being a partner with the State of Oklahoma. He leads his tribe through many philanthropic efforts as mentioned in Chapter 3 but demonstrates the tribe's investment in Oklahoma through, not only the \$2.4 billion impact on the tribe annually through economic development, but also through giving back to other Oklahoma projects and initiatives. This philanthropic attitude and purposeful attribute have been a positive aspect of his leadership. His ability to recognize how important it is to be a good partner with the State of Oklahoma has been recognized at many levels. While some tribes have often been in an adversarial role with their states or local governments, Anoatubby adopted a different strategy,

and it brings him and the tribe some significant benefits. Representative Tom Cole, who represents Oklahoma's Fourth Congressional Districts and is also Chickasaw, illustrated how the Chickasaw Nation puts that philosophy into action in remarks published in the Congressional Record. He referenced how the Chickasaws have helped Oklahoma and reiterates the quote Anoatubby is known to use regularly which is "a rising tide lifts all boats." This quote personifies what Cole believes the Chickasaws have done in contributing to Oklahoma's economy not only through the infusion of capital and jobs, but also their ability to partner on many Oklahoma projects. The mindset is that things that are good for the Chickasaw Nation can be good for Oklahoma as well (Chickasaw Nation Governor Builds on Four Decades of Service, *Indian Country Today*, 2015)

A former State of Oklahoma Governor echoes this sentiment as he suggests that the respect Anoatubby has garnered has helped him and his tribe in their success. This respect is not only evidenced in interviews within the tribe or Native American community, but also within other organizations. As a result, Governor Anoatubby, has been asked to serve on numerous boards, received many awards, and is known for his quiet spirit but great intellect. Former Oklahoma State Governor Brad Henry, who did a significant amount of work with the tribes during his administration, believes when one reflects on leadership that Governor Bill Anoatubby will be viewed as one of the greatest Native American leaders in the State and maybe in the country (Henry, personal interview, 2014). Much of that respect can be linked back to his ability to balance his advocating for the tribe when necessary but to also establish and sustain good relationships that further partnerships and collaborations.

Additionally, Governor Anoatubby manages to remain in office, and this speaks to his

ability to be responsive to his constituency (Hardgrove, 1996). Simply put, if a constituency believes they are being led by a strong leader that responds to their concerns and issues important to them, they will, in all likelihood retain them in office. This is significant as one considers the continuity of leadership; he has been privy to in his role.

A number of leadership traits have been highlighted in the material that both Governor James and Governor Anoatubby both possessed. It would seem similarities would include the preservation and exercising of sovereignty, vision and strategy, business acumen for sustained economic growth, political acumen, the valuing of culture, and the importance of sustained relationship building and partnerships. One could surmise the Chickasaws benefitted from the continuity of these two strong leaders.

Longevity of Tribal Leaders:

As one considers the resumes of tribal leaders as well as the time in office for the Chickasaws, it would seem they are among the leaders in terms of length of service for tribal nations. It is important to evaluate their continuity of leadership and how that compares to the other big gaming tribes in Oklahoma but also to other successful tribal leaders. Short biographies and some of the highlights of their tribal careers will be noted and then an analysis of why the long tenures of leaders can contribute to tribal success will follow in this chapter.

The Chickasaws tout long periods of office with their leaders. Of note in the earlier years is former Governor Douglas Johnston of the Chickasaw Nation, who had a 40-year term during the period of 1898 to 1902 and then 1904 to 1939. Lovegrove (2009) suggests Johnston had the longest tenure of any American Indian chief executive, although not consecutive. Harry

J. W. Belvin of the Choctaw Nation had 27 years during the time period of 1948 to 1975 when chiefs were being appointed (Chiefs, Choctaw Nation, Choctaw nation.com, 2022)

Most stints as a Chief or Governor would have been as short as one day to eight years after the 1900s. The one-day appointments are found within the Cherokee tribe as they were put in office for the purpose of signing needed documents. There were seven appointed chiefs for the Cherokee Nation ranging from one day to 17 days. There was one Cherokee Chief with a lengthy tenure, William W. Keeler, who was appointed Chief for 22 years (1949-1971), when he was then elected and served another four years (Cherokee Nation History, Cherokee.org, 2022).

The period of time following Self-Determination in 1975 brought about an increased number of years in elected office for the leadership of the two most successful gaming tribes in Oklahoma, that being the Chickasaw Nation and the Choctaw Nation. The Chickasaws do have the longest runs at leadership within the Oklahoma tribes as they can tout tenures of 24 years from Governor Overton James and 36 years (and counting) as of 2023 from current Governor Bill Anoatubby. The Choctaws are the closest to those periods of leadership with former Chiefs Hollis Roberts and Gregory E. Pyle at 19 and 17 years, respectively (Chiefs, Choctaw Nation, 2022). The Cherokees follow that with former Principal Chief Chadwick Smith at 12 years (1999-2011) and two others former Principal Chiefs Ross Swimmer (1975-1985) and Wilma Mankiller (1985-1995) with 10 years each as the Cherokee leader (Cherokee Nation History, Cherokee.org, 2022).

Despite a tumultuous end to one of the Choctaw Chief's careers, their tribe produced two long-term leaders during the modern period of economic growth for the tribe. Both leaders have been viewed as progressive for the tribe. The first was Choctaw Chief Hollis

Roberts who brought his experience as a publicly elected official (former Hugo City Councilman and an Oklahoma State House Representative) to the role. He had also served as Secretary and Treasurer for the Arkansas Riverbed Authority. He became Chief in 1978 and was a part of the movement within the Choctaw Nation, and tribes in general, when programs and services increased for tribal members as well as the period of time when the tribal nations experienced a return to self-governance. The increases in programs coincided with a six-million-dollar settlement from the U.S. government regarding tribal lands that had been given to early-day railroad companies. His era as Chief ended in 1997 when he was convicted of one count of Aggravated Sexual Abuse and two counts of Abusive Sexual Conduct (Chiefs, Choctaw Nation, Choctawnation.com, 2022).

Another former Choctaw Chief Gregory E. Pyle led the Choctaw Nation through a monumental era of success for the tribe and out of a dark period after their former Chief had been convicted of his crimes. Pyle, after being appointed to Assistant Chief in 1984, served Chief Hollis Roberts for 13 years before assuming the role of leader when his former boss was sent to prison. He had been instrumental in work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and securing Head Start funds as well as beginning to do work in Washington D.C. (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). According to the Choctaw Nation website Chief Pyle “negotiated millions of dollars in new contracts for the tribe, as well as expanded existing programs and initiated many innovative services” (Chiefs, Choctaw Nation, Choctawnation.com, 2022). He even secured the Choctaws as being one of the first of two tribes to do a joint venture with the Indian Health Service in building a clinic. One of his most significant accomplishments was his role in getting gaming started for the Choctaws. Pyle worked to expand gaming and Indian Health Services,

and he and the Chickasaw Nation leadership worked together to bring in a California legal expert who had been successful in that state with their institution of Indian gaming. The joint effort resulted in getting gaming on the ballot in the State of Oklahoma. When it passed, the Choctaws had already built a casino and were ready to go when it became legal. This dramatic increase in revenue positioned Chief Pyle to lead the tribe through a significant growth period (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). Following Pyle's tenure, Assistant Chief Gary Batton was appointed by Chief Pyle at his retirement.

As gaming took off and revenue was continuing to build every month, the Choctaws were able to grow, and Chief Pyle would rise in popularity and prominence. In addition to securing the new hospital for the tribe, several health clinics, a Diabetes Wellness Center, a Women's Treatment Center, and a Recovery Center, Chief Pyle was also able to increase the ability to obtain third party insurance payments through healthcare and increased that to \$15 million a year for the tribe. He improved services for elders and children and created several tribal businesses as well as made incredible strides in education for the Choctaw people. He implemented the Choctaw Language Program and increased the capability to provide scholarships to approximately 5,000 students (Chiefs, Choctaw Nation, Choctawnation.com, 2022). He accumulated many honors and awards including a 2007 induction into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and under his tenure the Choctaw Nation received the Pro Patria Award and the 2008 Freedom Award. His appointments include United States Secretary of the Interior Task Force given direction to reorganize the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He testified in many congressional hearings including the topics of the World War I Choctaw Code Talkers, sovereignty, the Arkansas Riverbed, and health care (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

People were beginning to recognize the significant work and the expertise that was becoming evident in this tribal leader.

The current Choctaw Chief, Gary Batton, has been in office since 2014 and on a nine-year run at this point. Interestingly enough, he began his career at the Choctaw Nation the same year (1987) Governor Anoatubby became Governor of the Chickasaw Nation (Five Civilized Tribes, 2023). The next Chief (and current as of 2023) Gary Batton brought 28 years of experience including the positions of Executive Director of Health and Assistant Chief during the growth period under Pyle. He remains in office as Chief with nine years in that role as of 2023. Under his administration the tribe has expanded health clinics, wellness centers, restaurant franchises, travel plazas, casinos, community centers, food distribution centers, country markets, independent living communities for Choctaw elders and homes for families (Chiefs, Choctaw Nation, Choctawnation.com, 2022). A \$600 million expansion to the Choctaw Casino and Resort providing 1200 jobs and a 500,000 square feet, five-story Choctaw Nation Headquarters in 2018 and a Choctaw Cultural Center in 2021, has been facilitated under his leadership (Skores, Choctaw's Massive \$600 million expansion is nearly ready to Welcome Texas Gamblers, NBC5, 2021) He is also poised to be another tribal leader with significant years of experience for one of the largest tribes in Oklahoma as he continues to demonstrate progressive and strategic visioning regarding opportunities to enhance and grow the enterprise of the Choctaw Nation (Choctaw Nation, Choctawnation.com, 2022).

The next leader to be considered for his longevity of tribal leadership is Chad "Corntassel" Smith who served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1999-2011. During his tenure the Cherokee Nation saw their assets increase from \$150 million to \$1.2

billion, “increased healthcare services from \$18 million to \$310 million; created 6,000 jobs, and advanced education, language, and cultural preservation, dramatically” (Chad “Corntassel” Smith, APB Speakers, 2017). Former Principal Chief Smith ran for re-election after 12 years and lost in a highly contested race. He ran in the next cycle and was also defeated. Again, that period of time in which Principal Chief Chad Smith served was a time of significant growth and prosperity for the Cherokee Nation.

Two other Principal Chiefs from the Cherokee Nation served ten years each and assisted in the progression of their tribe. Ross Swimmer brought a background of real estate with the Cherokee Nation Housing Authority prior to becoming in-house counsel for the Cherokee Nation. He began working there in 1972 and became Principal Chief in 1975 (Chief Ross Swimmer, Putnam City Schools Foundation, 2018). He worked there until 1985 when he became Assistant Secretary of the Interior – Indian Affairs. When Ross Swimmer left the Cherokees for Washington, D.C., Wilma Mankiller took the role and the title of being the first woman elected chief of the Cherokee Nation. Mankiller had been known for her Indian Activism in the American Indian Movement before moving back to Oklahoma and working to improve rural community services. Prior to her election as chief, she had served as the first woman deputy chief of the Cherokees. As Chief of the Cherokees, she served approximately 140,000 members and had the responsibility of a \$75 million budget. She was responsible for “increasing tribal membership and revenues by almost 200%, opening three rural health centers, expanding the Head Start program for Cherokee children, and starting a center for prevention of drug abuse” (Wilma Pearl Mankiller, Oklahoma Historical Society, 2017, p. 1). Cherokee leaders were also utilizing their time in office to make significant contributions to

their tribes in leading them in a progressive way.

As one reviews the long-term tenures of tribal leaders it is important to consider how those lengthy terms in office contributed to the success of the tribes of which they represent, yet some turn negative in the end. There is the premise that leaders who stay in office for long periods of time wield too much power and often become corrupt. And, when one reviews the biographical information that has been presented there are those tribal leaders whose careers ended in either being removed from office or being convicted of a crime. Some nations, and not necessarily tribal, even have leaders who will set out to change their country's constitutions so that they may remain in office. Election fraud, an attack on the opposition, and meddling in voting processes can all be associated with powerful leaders who turn despotic.

Another consideration of the negative impact a long-term leader might have on a tribe is the lack of creativity or innovation as it pertains to organizational, technological, and/or economic development. This could be demonstrated through a resistance to change or implementation of strategies or processes that would prevent a deviation from the status quo. One might find this characteristic of a leader with a long-standing regime or significant period of power where new ideas, processes, or people are not welcome. The tribal nations of today continue to face challenges around leadership and it requires innovative strategy. The roles of tribal leaders are daunting as they seek to protect their sovereignty, navigate their political system as well as that the U.S. government, grow and sustain their economic interests, retain their culture, and provide services to their people. This requires leaders who recognize the value of change and are not threatened by a new situation or initiative. It requires a leader to have a pattern of action and be a doer (Jorgensen, 2007). When one considers the Chickasaw

Nation and for the most part, some of the other tribal leaders noted for continuity of leadership, one sees innovation and the welcoming of new ideas. For the Chickasaws, Governor Anoatubby has been a stabilizing factor while pushing the organization to be creative in their pursuit of other businesses as well (Henry, personal interview, 2014). One could argue that Chickasaw Nation Bill Anoatubby's innovative leadership is demonstrated through their extensive business offerings within the tribe's portfolio as well as his leadership in building up a cache of vast programs and services for Chickasaw citizens.

These long-standing leaders have built or are building legacies beyond what once had been thought a modern-day tribal nation could do. Examples such as Choctaw Chief Gregory E. Pyle, Cherokee Chief Wilma Mankiller, and the current Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby appear to be something that reflects a positive legacy in Indian Country. Continuity in a business environment is critical in that often organizations can accomplish more. More change politically pushes the organization to manage the political environment more and less focus on the returns on your investments. Continuity provides the opportunity to focus on business returns (Gabbard, personal interview, 2015). It is speculated growth and prosperity of the organization of the Chickasaw Nation has a lot to do with the culture set by the leader and having the establishment of leadership over a long period of time allows for more continuity. Those nations who do not have that continuity will probably encounter more political battles and inherit issues held over from other administrations. Complacency does not seem to be a factor with the Chickasaws. And, while one observes from some of the long tenured leaders have had their share of legal issues, this does not appear to be indicative of Anoatubby's administration. His administration has also been void of scandal and attributes that to a strong

testament of leadership not (Henry, personal interview, 2014).

A significant length of time in office provides a leader with the opportunity to leave a legacy and can be one of the most important things a leader can do as it relates to their career and the capacity for impact for the future (Wade-Benzoni, 2016). One could consider the legacy of United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as it pertains to unprecedented terms of office for a Nation's leader. His 16-year stint as President enabled him to lead the Nation through a dark time in history but also solidify some significant programs for the people of the United States. Many citizens during this era couldn't remember the White House without him being in it (Brinkley, 1982). Long terms of office by leaders, and in some cases tribal leaders, gives time for initiatives and programs to be implemented and a legacy to be built.

There are differing views on whether long-term office holders are beneficial to a Nation. Harry Truman, who had to finish Roosevelt's fourth term due to the President's death and after being elected one time, opted not to run for re-election as he was not in favor of his predecessor's example in lengthy terms of office. Truman noted, "there is a lure in power. It can get into a man's blood just as gambling and lust for money have been known to do" (Brinkley, 1982, p. 80). He went on to note other examples from American history in former Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson who both declined to seek more time in office. Another author suggests Roosevelt's length in office made him one of the greatest leaders and credits him with emancipating the economic and political systems through things such as humanizing the American Industrial System, his New Deal, works programs, unemployment, relief and restoring faith in the United States banking system. The author also

cites his ability to connect with the United States citizenry through his famous fireside chats as well as demonstrate courage in some difficult days for the country (Corea, The Aspen Institute, 2017). Nevertheless, in 1951 the ratification of the 22nd Amendment was completed and setting up the inability for no one to be elected more than twice to the Office of the President preventing the FDR era from occurring again despite any contributions a long term of office may have had for the country. For all the difference FDR may have made, the United States saw the need to prevent an extended term beyond eight years to be prevented from occurring again.

Experience is a sought-after quality in leadership. Tribal government is not unlike any other institution in this manner. One researcher suggests as it pertains to tribal governments, they should be led by “sophisticated and seasoned leaders” but purports this is challenging for Indian Nations as their leaders often transition in and out of their offices to frequently before they can gain the experience they need (State of the Native Nations, The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 2008, p. 31). Two of the Five Civilized Tribes (Choctaws and Chickasaws) were able to secure long tenures of leadership with Gregory E. Pyle and Governor Bill Anoatubby, respectively. In the case of these tribes, that leadership era has coincided with significant economic gains and increased programs and services and both Pyle and Governor Anoatubby were able to secure the vote of the people, it would seem, enough to retain their positions for long periods of time. This is important to note as maintaining a level of satisfaction over a long period of time would not be an easy task for anyone. One could compare their ability to do this to FDR. FDR utilized his fireside chats to inspire his populace in a period of time before advanced communication. Now, tribal leaders of today can connect

instantaneously and repeatedly with their constituencies through various media outlets. The tribes also host what is termed as listening sessions or community meetings across the country to update members or citizens of a tribe as well as hear from them regarding their needs. Chief Gregory E. Pyle believed connecting with the Choctaw people was of the utmost importance and did so in a variety of ways but mostly through his unselfish acts and humble spirit (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). Governor Bill Anoatubby seems to utilize communication as a way of relating to people as well. He is observed at multiple Chickasaw events each week throughout the Chickasaw Nation and Facebook posts often capture that activity. Connecting with their tribal members/citizens and remaining connected to them to be able to hear their needs but to inform as well appear to be strategies utilized by both leaders.

Governor Anoatubby is a leader with tenure among the Oklahoma tribes with the longest elected term of leadership and been, to date, without accusations of corruption. The success of his tribe as it pertains to revenue from gaming, one that has number of programs and services, and seemingly their contributions back into the State of Oklahoma. He has been able to have uncontested races for his role for the majority of his elections and his tribe continues to grow its economic endeavors. One could argue his ability to stay in office has allowed him the opportunity to grow his legacy to be unparalleled, at least by Oklahoma tribe standards.

Information has been presented on leadership tenures for Oklahoma tribal leaders. Research also consisted of reviewing the tenures of tribal leaders outside the boundaries of the State of Oklahoma but that could create more opportunities for more study. It is also noted qualities of leaders in other areas of business and government demonstrated similarities to

leaders of these tribal nations.

By focusing on long tenures of tribal leaders in Oklahoma, one can see the success that can be attained when leaders (good leaders) are in office long enough to pursue visionary economic development activities that generate revenue. That revenue can be used to diversify businesses as well as expand programs and services. Those opportunities create success. For a tribal leader to be strong, that success must include political acumen, the valuing of culture, relationship building, and the protection of sovereignty for the tribe. Having those qualities provide the opportunities to establish a legacy.

Execution of Strategic Planning/Visioning:

Discussion has been provided on leadership qualities and the difference longevity can have in a role for a tribal leader, however, research has also supported a tribe need to have a strategic orientation. Tribes do better when they are proactive rather than reactive and look for ways to address challenges strategically (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003). The Chickasaws seem to utilize strategic approaches in their business planning within their Division of Commerce. Their legislative body provides guidance on big picture items and approves a budget. Additionally, there is much time invested in informing and preparation for a meeting where those decisions will be voted on which is similar to an approach utilized by the Choctaws as well (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). It was inferred by one former tribal leader that one should never walk in a room where a business decision or legislative action is taking place and not know what the outcome of what the vote is going to be (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). Both tribes, per interviews with these tribal administrators, appear to not only think strategically but have acquired the ability to prepare and build consensus within governing

bodies and business committees and therefore seem to have the mechanism to make the timelier decisions within real time in a corporate environment versus depending on a larger, uninformed group that hasn't been vetted and has more opportunity to vote down business decisions.

Two leadership approaches within two successful nations seem to value strategy. Some research continues to suggest this is critical with tribes. Cornell and Kalt (2003) have delineated two different approaches to how tribes have executed on moving out of poverty to that of successful business models. They describe development processes for both the standard and nation building approach. The standard approach, which they deem doesn't work effectively, suggests that the leadership essentially conducts the identification process regarding business ideas and revenue sources, seeks whatever sources of funds are available, and then appoints supporters to run the projects and micromanage the businesses. This is in contrast to the nation-building approach where there is much more of a strategic approach in building objectives and policies that support those objectives as well as choosing appropriate projects to pursue and implement. Whether it is the Chickasaw legislature, the Chickasaw Commerce Division, or the Choctaw Nation business committee, both of these tribes have utilized strategy and consensus building for budgets and business decisions thus executing on what is described as a Nation Building Approach by the researchers. This is in contrast to other tribes' approach which would be more akin to the standard approach. One might deduct from the observation and the literature, the importance of nations placing great value on visioning process, strategic thinking, and looking for ways to engage the support of their legislative bodies, councils, and business committees has proven beneficial.

One article in the *Chickasaw Times* further demonstrates the Chickasaws are purposeful in their pursuit of the development of a strategic plan, their utilization of resources, and being financially independent and seeking other funding sources. The information presented suggests that the Chickasaws believe a workable plan is essential as is the commitment and execution through completion. Goals and objectives are broken down and their strategies are based on a way of doing things rather than just a specific project. At all times, the desire to address needed services is important while evaluating those as well. They believe that by keeping their strategic objectives in mind the Nation will be empowered to assess the opportunities and make the right decisions that will benefit the Chickasaw people the most (*Chickasaw Times*, 2018).

Similar to the Chickasaws, the Choctaws, under Chief Gregory E. Pyle, initiated a 100-year plan. Chief Pyle knew the significant revenue the tribe was acquiring with gaming would need to be taken care of and provide for future needs. His vision was the 100-year plan. When Chief Pyle retired there was \$1.4 billion in investments not including assets (actual cash) with a great deal of it ear-marked for tribal social services and health care. It is noted, at the point of Pyle's retirement, the tribe could have operated for seven years without funding from any other source. The Choctaw leader believed, at that point, that having a vision and executing on it would serve their tribe well (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

It could be inferred by the research that the Chickasaws and the Choctaws have utilized strategic visioning processes. The adherence to strategic planning is not only their alignment of business initiatives with the needs of the tribes, but also the continuance of looking for funding sources and the development of new businesses, partnerships, and initiatives has seemingly

been successful for the Choctaws and the Chickasaws. Again, this strategy seems to fall in line with the Cornell and Kalt (2007) literature. That literature suggests the nation building approach empowers while the standard approach may result in failed enterprises and among other things, a chaotic approach and one that may not serve to maintain sovereignty (Cornell and Kalt, 2007). Both the Choctaws and the Chickasaws have embraced this, and it has reaped economic results as they end up in the number 1 and 2 in gaming revenue per the exclusivity fees. However, for the Chickasaws, it has been much more evident as they have had no break in leadership, their vision remains on course, and their revenue exceeds other tribes in Oklahoma, even the Choctaws.

Allocation of Resources:

The way tribal governments distribute resources to their members/citizens and can be vastly different. Chapter 3 presented a look at how the Chickasaw Nation spends its money. Their revenue, it would seem, is predominantly spent on the Chickasaw citizens for programs and citizens such as healthcare, education, family and children's services, and programs for the elders. They seem to pursue a diversified portfolio and one they pursue in an effort to prevent dependence on gaming. The Chickasaws, noting a 1.44 billion in revenue in 2017 at their highest ever, report they continue to place those revenues back into existing businesses to diversify their portfolio as well as place it back into their governmental programs and services (Chickasaw Nation Gaming Revenues Hit \$1.44 Billion as Enterprise Keeps Going, IndianZ, 2017). This is a pivotal piece in economic development within tribes as researchers who adhere to a strategic approach in seeing resources be invested for growth and distributed in such a way that benefits the entire tribe, believe this makes the difference in sustainability. Jorgensen

(2007) notes that the nation-building approach will be more productive in the access to and the utilization of resources than the standard approach in that there will be a much more effectual outcome and increase the probability of more economic development. Unlike the Chickasaws, some tribes use a significant amount of revenue to simply distribute checks to their tribal members and there is significantly less of an effort to invest, build other businesses, or put resources in programming.

In an effort to address these two approaches, it is important to provide some information around allocation of resources as it pertains to tribes in the form of per capita payments versus a benefits tribe or right by member approach. To be able to receive benefits from a tribe, one must first be enrolled as a member or tribal citizen. Tribal members within all Five Civilized Tribes require a Certified Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) card to become a citizen or member to receive benefits. The tribes do not have a blood quantum requirement as long as lineage from the Dawes Roll is in place. None of the Five Civilized Tribes allow dual enrollment in both tribes even though many people do have lineage in more than one tribe (Dawes Records, National Archives, 2023). Members/citizens have to designate a primary tribe. The citizenship card never expires for the three largest tribes (Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws) however, the Muscogee (Creek) tribe expires every five years and the Seminoles' card must be updated whenever a new Chief takes office as the signature of the current Chief must be on the card (Partain, Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief Lists Several Goals in State of the Nation speech, 2016). Once a member or citizen of a tribe has been established, they are subject to the allocation of resources as set up by the tribe with which they are affiliated. Tribal revenue, and often revenue obtained from casinos, is sometimes distributed in

what is termed as per capita payments to established tribal members as opposed to what has previously been discussed with the revenue going back into economic efforts to diversify the portfolios of tribes and provide programs and services to tribal members. According to an article in *The Economist*, per capita payments have increased alongside the upward trajectory of gaming revenue. Per capita payments from tribes can vary from as little as a few hundred dollars each year to more than \$100,000. The size of the payment depends on the size of the tribe as well as the amount of revenue generated. In some tribes, tribal members receive one large sum when they turn 18 years old (Gambling and Poverty – Of Slots and Sloth, *The Economist*, 2015). When a tribe chooses to distribute checks they are essentially depriving themselves of the opportunity to invest that money back into other growth opportunities as well as collective programs and services that could benefit the tribal citizens in a more effective way. What if gaming goes away for tribes as a major revenue stream? Will they have created enough of other types of revenue generators to sustain themselves? In all likelihood, the tribes like the Chickasaws, will be better positioned to sustain than those who have distributed the checks to members over the years. As one considers the contrast of the per capita tribe with the benefits tribe one should note that all the Five Civilized Tribes are right by members' tribes and tribal members, or citizens receive benefits of varying degrees in healthcare, education, and housing as well as a variety of other services.

Cornell and Kalt (2007) point out that when there are challenges around socioeconomic resources within jurisdictional areas, tribal members are more inclined to want those resources distributed in the short term rather than in long-term investments, which could ultimately benefit the tribe. The Chickasaws offer an array of services to tribal members as opposed to an

annual disbursement check. While it is important to reflect on the significant degree of expenditures going into tribal programs and services as outlined in the earlier chapter, one must consider that while their revenue is higher, the number of Chickasaw citizens is significantly less than the other two big gaming tribes (Choctaws and Cherokees). Simply put, there are more resources for fewer tribal citizens, yet they remain vested in putting their revenue back into tribal services versus a per capita check (Chickasaw Nation Progress Report, 2022 and National Congress of American Indians, 2023).

If the Chickasaws were to go to a per capita system while maintaining their current economic success, distribution to fewer tribal citizens would transfer into a much higher check disbursement amount as opposed to the other two gaming tribes. The populations of the Five Civilized Tribes include Cherokee (450,000); the Choctaws (223,279 tribal members); the Chickasaws (73,000); the Muscogee Creek (69,162), and the Seminoles (17,000) (National Congress of the American Indian, 2023 and Chickasaw Nation Progress Report, 2022). Again, despite their population the Chickasaws have remained a benefits tribe versus a per capita tribe.

Tribes have very specific guidelines from the Indian Gaming Regulatory Association (IGRA) as it relates to their dispersal of revenue. Gaming profits can only go to “fund tribal government operations or programs, provide for the general welfare of their members, promote tribal economic development, donate to charitable organizations, and help fund operations of local government agencies” (Robertson, *The Myth of Indian Casinos*, *Indian Country Today*, 2017, p. 2). Essentially infrastructure, social programs, and education are the ways in which a tribe can distribute revenue from casinos. This is a decision made by each tribe

per their sovereignty as a Native Nation. The approach to allocating resources, regardless of the population numbers, for the Chickasaws has been to reinvest their revenues into expansion of businesses and develop/facilitate programs and services for the tribe. However even with observing the success of these larger tribes, there are smaller Oklahoma tribes that have chosen to distribute checks rather than use the money in the manner utilized by the larger tribes.

In 2006, the Comanche Nation, which is a smaller western Oklahoma tribe, voted to receive financial benefits from their casino operations. At the time of the vote there were more than 8,000 tribal members and their checks were a little over \$1,000 per year. That distribution was 40% of the casino's yearly profits. Other tribes taking part in per capita payments were the Fort Sill Apache, Otoe-Missouria, Absentee Shawnee, the Delaware Nation, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. Payments in that group ranged from \$7,200 a year to \$125. It should be noted the Chairman of the Comanche Tribe, at the time, opposed the move to the per capita system citing the tribe's reserve funds would be eliminated as well as the continued development of a large hotel and convention center that was being planned (Thornton, Comanches to Receive Annual Funds, Tribe's Casino Profits Provide Money for More than 8,000, *The Oklahoman*, 2006). The vote for the Comanche Nation was the third in two years but finally succeeded and was forwarded to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for approval. That approval must come after a revenue allocation plan is submitted to the Department of the Interior Secretary to be signed off on before distribution of per capita checks can be implemented (Robertson, The Myth of Indian Casinos, *Indian Country Today*, 2017, p.2). It would seem that the pursuit of checks for the membership or citizenry has been the

methodology utilized by some of the other tribes despite the examples of other tribes returning revenue back into the services and programs.

And, as the success of the tribes who have distributed gaming revenues have grown for tribes, so have the per capita payments and some question its effect on Indian Country.

Research suggests this approach is detrimental to tribes. One article notes a study conducted from 2000 to 2010 cited in the American Indian Law Journal on the increase in poverty which includes a 59% increase in poverty for tribes studied that give cash from casinos to memberships versus 29% for those that don't (Guedel, 2014). In a separate article one law professor from Washington State who is also a tribal judge and member of the Squaxin Tribe, notes that "these payments can be destructive because the more generous they become, the more people fall into the trap of not working" (Gambling and Poverty – Of Slots and Sloth, *The Economist*, 2015, p.1). A 2008 report noting disapproval from tribal leaders in that "payments lead to citizen dependence on tribal governments, undermine the work ethic, and discourage young citizens from finishing their educations" (Robertson, The Myth of Indian Casinos, *Indian Country Today*, 2017, p. 2). Tribal members become dependent on the disbursement from the tribe and instead of working to sustain themselves, live in poverty. Despite the research, some tribes remain in the per capita system. As one can observe, resource allocation remains an issue for tribal nations.

As one further considers the effect the per capita system is having on tribes it should be noted that sometimes resources, whether it is a per capita payment or another type of resource, are utilized for political motivation as well. Cornell and Kalt point out in their work

there could be a propensity for tribal politicians to utilize resources within their control to stay in office. Nepotism, cronyism, and corruption can all be byproducts (Cornell and Kalt, 2007).

It is a cultural shift for a tribe to move from distributing resources individually to an economic machine that puts the revenues back into more businesses to continue to grow programs and services. If there are generations of tribal members or citizens that have become accustomed to the allocation, it becomes harder for tribal leaders to advocate for in a way that would secure constitutional change to reinvest or put the money into a more collective effort for programs and services. And, if revenues are increasing and the allotted funds continue to grow, one can see how challenging a cultural shift would be even when the collective results.

Navigating the Courts:

Some tribal leaders in the last fifty years have seemingly pushed themselves forward, increasing revenue by bringing a more business-like approach to the nation but by also using a more corporate strategy to political lobbying. The tribes have engaged in this strategy while continuing to align that work with understanding and promoting the traditional needs and inherent rights of the tribe. These outside entities had usurped, infringed, or encroached upon their interests but the leadership of the tribes understood the value of engaging these same entities in a long-term program of political lobbying of communities and state and federal government. In some cases, this also meant a willingness to resort to legal action or at least threaten to in an effort to champion their cause. The efforts that will be discussed are examples that demonstrate how the tribes and the Chickasaws, specifically, were engaged in what might seem like a very American style of political lobbying. It was their success in these areas that not just strengthened the sovereignty and economic viability of the tribe but also

demonstrated the effectiveness of its leaders. The lobbying effort began with tribes and tribal leaders advocating for themselves but as the course of time goes on, there will be federal acts, political leaders, legal litigators, state legislators, special interest groups, and federal lawmakers that will become a part of the lobbying efforts for the tribes.

The Chickasaw Nation's lobbying activities were beginning during a period of time when the United States was beginning to see Native Americans forced to campaign against, renegotiate with, and resist the actions of government. Similar to the African American ethnic group, some degree of this Native American activism began to emerge in the late 1960's in the United States. The American Indian Movement (AIM) was organized in 1968 in Minnesota (American Indian Movement: Overview, 2016). The civil rights legislation paved the way for this era of social change and protest. Organizers of AIM believed that the traditional challenges of advocacy through lobbying stated, and federal leaders had not been productive.

One such protest for Native American rights was the confiscation of Alcatraz, which was an abandoned federal prison. Depending on the account, it is estimated 90 to 200 Native Americans sailed to Alcatraz Island located in the San Francisco Bay to begin what would be a 19-month occupation of the island. The Native American activists wanted to draw attention to the conditions of America's Indian Reservations and suggested the same conditions of the federal penitentiary mirrored that of the tribal reservations (i.e., lack of water, sanitation, health care facilities, unemployment, bad soil, etc.) (Mintz and McNeill, 2018). Interestingly enough, Oklahoma's former Cherokee (and only female tribal chief for the Cherokees to date) Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation Wilma Pearl Mankiller, was one of the protestors that inhabited Alcatraz in her earlier years. The effort lasted 19 months (Mankiller and Wallis,

1993). Two more occupations occurred in 1970, one at Mount Rushmore and the other at Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts. Other protests, occupations, and movements during the '70's and early '80's included the Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan arriving in Washington, D.C. (1972), AIM opening a Survival School (1972), the Occupation of Wounded Knee (1973), the taking over of the Bonneville Power Administration (1975), the Longest Walk beginning (1978), and the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation celebrating the Orme Dam Victory (1981) (Cooper, 2018). The occupations and protests were drawing attention to the plight of the Native American people and tribes were beginning to be empowered to fight their battles for their rights, their land, and their ability to self-govern.

While this national movement was taking root across the states, Oklahoma was no different. The tone began to be set for more empowerment for the tribe. A grass roots effort had begun within the Chickasaw Nation as a group met to discuss their current situation. Tribes were beginning to see the value in uniting to address their challenges. This group of concerned Chickasaw citizens saw the need to address some of the issues and met at Seeley Chapel in Connorville, Oklahoma, in 1960 (*Chickasaw Times*, 2017) which had been a site of a community school for Chickasaw children at one time (Seeley Chapel United Methodist Church – Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, 2018). The *Chickasaw Times* reported those meetings were during the times when their budget was small and very dependent on federal funds. One of those meetings included a visit from the United States Speaker of the House Carl Albert, who, as Governor Anoatubby noted, was a friend to the Chickasaws. One might interpret the willingness of a United States speaker at a meeting such as this as evidence the Native Nations had the attention of the government or at least a government official that saw

the value in attending. Those meetings would set off a progressive movement for the Chickasaws (Roots of Chickasaw Renaissance Began at Seeley Chapel, *Chickasaw Times*, 2017).

Overton James, one of the Chickasaws noted as involved with the Seeley Chapel movement, had emerged as a leader and the Chickasaw Nation would begin to see how his leadership would be significant as it pertains to lobbying and obtaining resources for the tribe. At the time of his death in 2015, Governor Anoatubby credited his leadership being “vital to the birth of a political and cultural resurgence which is continuing to transform the Chickasaw Nation” (Choate, ‘Visionary Leader, Irreplaceable Friend’, Governor Overton James Dies at Age 90, *Chickasaw Times*, 2015). He particularly noted that while some of the federal funding that was being targeted towards poverty was initially focused on Indian reservations, Governor James worked to obtain that money for Chickasaws, as well as other tribes in Oklahoma. He became a leader within the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes, serving five terms as President of the Council (Choate, ‘Visionary Leader, Irreplaceable Friend’, Governor Overton James Dies at Age 90, *Chickasaw Times*, 2015). Not only would Governor James emerge as a leader, but this organization would serve as a venue for the tribes, through Governor James at the time, to collaborate on Native American issues and push their agendas at the next level.

The leadership of James, as well as other tribal leaders, would seemingly prove beneficial for the tribes as is noted in the history of the Inter-Tribal Council (ITC). The documents outline significant contributions that emerged following the formation of the Council in 1949. The Council had as its objectives

“to secure ourselves and our descendants of the rights and benefits to which we are entitled under laws of the United States of America and the State of Oklahoma; to

enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian race; to preserve Indian cultural values; to enhance and promote general education opportunity among members of the Five Civilized Tribes; to seek equitable adjustments of tribal affairs; to secure and to preserve rights under Indian Treaties within the United States; and otherwise to promote the common welfare of the American Indians” (Five Civilized Tribes, 2017).

Other leaders of note within the Five Civilized Tribes during this same time period included Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Claude A. Cox for his work in 1977 with IHS, as well as the Department of Health, Education and Welfare as he was able to secure the assistance of Indian Health Services (IHS) for an elderly housing project within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as it related to adequate and safe water. Principal Chief Cox was also cited as facilitating the emergence of the first tribe to do contracting for clinical services under the Indian Health Service (IHS) (Five Civilized Tribes, 2017).

While the changes for tribes and their rights were occurring, challenges still existed. Operational issues at their health facilities due to the limited amount of money given by IHS presented concerns. They were also seeing Indian Health Services (IHS) staff members departing the rural areas of Indian Country once they were no longer employed in government facilities. Limited funding and staffing issues were creating barriers for the tribes as they sought to maintain quality of care for their people. The tribes needed to be able to recruit, albeit with a limited budget, staff that could address the needs of the Native American population. The changes had brought about more authority, but as they began to navigate this era, they were

also experiencing management and operational issues that come with running an organization (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

Despite the challenges, James and his fellow tribal leaders continued working to ensure their voices were heard, not only at the federal level, but also within the State of Oklahoma.

Chickasaw Governor James' lobbying continued as he was named chair of that initial Eastern Oklahoma Indian Health Board (Five Civilized Tribes, 2017). James is also noted as leading the Inter-Tribal Council leaders and tribal housing directors to a trip to Washington, D.C. to discuss issues related to housing funds. That group met with federal officials including James A.

Joseph, Under Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and Martin Seneca, Acting Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), to confer about issues as it related to the BIA, the Oklahoma State budget, taxation, and contractual funds (Five Civilized Tribes, 2017).

The group advocated for monetary grants to come directly to the tribes versus awarding a set number of house units. This would allow each tribal housing authority the ability to construct as time permitted each year, but also allow tribes to retain leftover funds, should issues occur during housing construction. This was taken under consideration, however, during the time they were waiting for a decision, word got back to the group that housing units were going to be reduced significantly. The ITC responded by passing a resolution in opposition to the reduction. Governor James recommended to the group that the resolution not only go to HUD and national legislators, but also to then President Jimmy Carter. Not long after the resolution was sent, the ITC received word the unit numbers would not be lowered (Five Civilized Tribes, 2017). Governor James' political positioning was obtaining a reputation for being able to get the job done.

While lobbying had started with federal agencies to push for tribal programs and services, other battles were ensuing on the legal front and involving other entities. Again, the relationships that were being forged, albeit with challenges, would prove beneficial in asserting their legal rights, once again, for land and natural resources. The Chickasaws, alongside the Choctaws and the Cherokees, were demonstrating their ability to assert their sovereign rights to the land and its resources as will be discussed. They addressed mismanagement by the federal government in the courts and had emerged victorious in several battles. In the beginning these efforts were carried out by tribal leaders, but as the tribes would become more successful and politically sophisticated, legal teams and state and federal lobbyists would also assist in the efforts.

One such effort that came out of the administration of Governor James involved the work to secure the legal rights of the Arkansas riverbed which included both oil and gas revenues obtained from the land (Choate, 'Visionary Leader, Irreplaceable Friend', Governor Overton James Dies at Age 90, *Chickasaw Times*, 2015). The Chickasaws, Cherokees and Choctaws had filed a lawsuit against the federal government regarding the Arkansas Riverbed for the utilization of a section of the Arkansas Riverbed, which was owned by the tribes. They won when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the three tribes in 1970 on the lawsuit, which was filed originally in federal court. However, it would take 32 years in the system to see any type of damages awarded (Choate, 'Visionary Leader, Irreplaceable Friend', Governor Overton James Dies at Age 90, *Chickasaw Times*, 2015). Despite the Supreme Court ruling in 1970, the tribes did not see a monetary award or the concession to give up claims to disputed lands until 2002. The law, referred to as the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Claims Settlement Act,

passed in the House of Representatives earlier in 2002 and then passed through the Senate in November of the same year.

Historically, the United States government had made effort to address the issue of reparation to the Native Americans as the Indian Claims Commission would have been created by the Act of August 13, 1946, with its “chief purpose of the [Act was] to dispose of the Indian claims problem with finality” (Lead Up to the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946, 2017). This Act was designed to hear claims from tribes against the United States. There were five types of claims which included language that included those for “unconscionable consideration, the government’s payment of an amount of money for the cession of Indian land significantly below the market value of this land at the time of cession,” and “claims for breach of “fair and honorable dealing that are not recognized by an existing rule of law or equity” (Lead Up to the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946, 2017, p.1). The significance of bringing this to the attention of the reader at this point is these claims were to have been made within five years of the date of approval of the Act. One must consider the period of time this Commission was put in place to address these wrongs as tribes were being dissolved and the leaders being appointed by the federal government. Despite the appearance of the government’s attempt to address, it would have been extremely difficult for tribes to move forward with a claim while their tribal governments were dissolving, and their leaders were being appointed.

Fast forward to the time period after the Arkansas Riverbed payment settlement had finally occurred and it was posed to the tribes, they should consider pursuing other claims including that of the natural resources litigation on the grounds they would have been unable to have done so during the time period the government had granted for such claims (McDaniel,

personal interview, 2018). Dissolving of tribes and challenges of leadership would later be used by litigators for the tribes in a case in United States District Court where the Chickasaw Nation and the Choctaw Nation were suing the Department of the Interior. They would, in fact, argue that the tribes were not given opportunity to lay claim to the land and resources that were confiscated or taken control of by the United States government (National Indian Law Library, 2022).

The settlement over mismanaged lands raised the question of the tribe's entitlement to natural resources within the tribal boundaries of the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations and they were empowered to move forward on another reparation issue (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). The suit, filed against the United States government in 2005, "centered on the federal government's alleged mismanagement of hundreds of thousands of acres in southeastern Oklahoma and south-central Oklahoma where the tribes were relocated in the 1830s after being removed from their ancestral homelands in the southeastern United States" (Ellis, Tribal Lawsuit Claims U.S. Government Mismanaged Assets, *The Oklahoman*, 2015, p. 1). The ten-year dispute ended with a settlement agreement in which the federal government would pay the tribal nations \$186 million with the Chickasaw Nation receiving \$46.5 million and the Choctaws obtaining \$139.5 million. Terms of the settlement also include both Nations dismissing the current lawsuit and future litigation against the United States government and its management and accounting of the tribes' funds and natural resources, which were held in trust. It is noted as the fifth largest tribal trust settlement to date (Secretary Jewell Announces Historic \$186 Million Settlement of Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations' Tribal Trust Lawsuit, U.S. Department of Interior, 2015). Of note is the commitment of both parties to seek better communication

processes and information sharing as it pertained to the tribal trust funds and natural resources. It also gave responsibility to all parties to utilize “alternative dispute resolution procedures to reduce the likelihood of future litigation” (Secretary Jewell Announces Historic \$186 Million Settlement of Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations’ Tribal Trust Lawsuit, U.S. Department of Interior, 2015). The U.S. Department of Interior Press Release notes a signing ceremony was held to commemorate the agreement and was attended by Secretary Jewell, Interior’s Solicitor Hilary C. Tompkins, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Lawrence S. Roberts along with Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, and Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Patton at the Choctaw Nation Tribal Headquarters in Durant, Oklahoma. United States Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell noted in an article written in a local Durant, Oklahoma newspaper that the government was relieved to get to this point and ready to move forward. “As for the U.S. government, we can uphold our treaty obligations and support the work that these two gentlemen have done on behalf of their tribes” (Pennington, United States Settles with Tribes, *Durant Democrat*, 2015). In that same article, Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, notes, “We’ve done what you asked us to do and that’s to protect the interests of our people. We did come to terms. I believe our people, the things from decades ago, would be very happy. I think we’ve done what they would have wanted us to do” (Pennington, United States Settles with Tribes, *Durant Democrat*, 2015). Once again, one more win had occurred for the tribes as they continued their quest to right the wrongs brought about by the American federal government as it related to tribal resources and Governor Bill Anoatubby was among those fighting for the tribe.

The issues that required the tribes to engage both the federal and state government in

lawsuits enabled them to voice concerns, raise important questions, and remain vigilant in protecting their rights to the resources. Their success required two tribes to unite and literally fight, not on a battlefield, sometimes in a courtroom, and often in a boardroom for their place at the table as it pertains to future sustainability of their people and the economic opportunities within their region as it relates to natural resources. They persevered and demonstrated their ability to negotiate, and do not only what was perceived right for their tribes, but ultimately the state in which their tribes reside. It became clear in the water settlement, they were not out for money, but sustainability and futuristic opportunities. What one might derive from this includes how challenging it has been for the tribes to continue to retain what has always been theirs. In some situations, it requires they unite. This is what the Chickasaws did, alongside the Choctaws for the most part. The expertise of their legal team along with other law specialists were instrumental in the results being favorable. And their perseverance in this arena demonstrated they were a force to be reckoned with when it came to a legal battle.

Tribal Lobbying:

While the ability of the tribes to navigate a courtroom seems demonstrative of an organized effort to continue to position themselves, one must also consider how their lobbying political entities fared for them as well. The highly significant lobbying effort conducted by the tribes as it related to gaming, and largely attributed to the Chickasaws and Choctaws in the State of Oklahoma, has been discussed previously. The enormous effort and meaningful dialogue between the tribes and the State of Oklahoma had to take place and a variety of constituencies had to work together to bring gaming to a vote of the people. The Chickasaw and Choctaw

leadership orchestrated a number of strategies in this effort. The two tribes brought in litigators that had success in other states with tribal gaming. Tribal members were requested to write letters to state legislators to enlist their support of gaming. The horse racing industry became involved due to their ability to profit from gaming in Oklahoma. Education administrators were sought to advocate for the effort as they would reap the benefits from an exclusivity fee placing on gaming to be funneled into the state's education fund. Those in opposition (i.e., religious or special interest groups) were lobbied for support in very targeted ways to keep the noise from any naysayers quieted. And, within the legislature itself, there were important leaders who fought for it. This strategizing and combined effort was successful as State Question 712 was approved after failing in previous years two other times. Oklahoma would form a partnership with the tribes and have Indian gaming. It had been a very successful lobbying effort by the tribes and the revenue that was about to hit the tribes would propel them to the next level in the arena of political lobbying (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). Once the gaming revenue began to roll in and it continued to increase, campaign contributions and lobbying became a much more viable resource to the tribes and a significant expenditure.

The lobbying the tribes would begin to reach beyond the border of the State of Oklahoma to a more lucrative market. The efforts would include contributions to legislators. According to the website followthemoney.org the Chickasaw Nation has given approximately \$12,319,826 to 1,313 different politicians filing for office over a span of 19 years. Those donations span from amounts of \$50 for an Oklahoma legislator to \$106,000 for 2010 Republican Texas gubernatorial candidate Rick Perry (Followthemoney.org, 2018). In 2011, when the state budget presented a challenge for Texas, those that were lobbying for gambling

put more resources into the gaming effort as the political climate in the state seemed to become more conducive for it. At that time Governor Rick Perry, who had the Chickasaw Nation as one of his significant contributors to his campaign, was in opposition to gambling in Texas (Ramsey, Stars Align Better this Session for an Expansion of Gambling, *Texas Tribune*, 2011). The proximity the Chickasaws (and the Choctaws as well) to the Texas border and its higher-income population with the perceived ability to have more discretionary funds for recreational gaming activities is a significant element of their success in gaming. According to Followthemoney.org, the Chickasaws, who were watching the efforts of Texas gaming very intently at that time, contributed \$41,500 to the election year campaign of Governor Rick Perry in 2006, and another \$106,000 in 2010. The Chickasaws continued their support with his successor Governor Greg Abbott at \$75,000 in 2014. This was also during the same period of time that the Chickasaws were trying to purchase Lone Star Park, a horse racetrack located in Grand Prairie, Texas. According to a news article, after three years of work attempting to purchase the company, the Global Gaming Solutions LLC, a Chickasaw Nation subsidiary, bought the track for \$47.8 million. That same article notes “under Texas law, racetracks can be held by either a public company or Texas residents of at least 10 years who are U.S. Citizens. Racing Partners of Texas, of which Ricky Knox is the principal, has a 51 percent interest in Global Gaming LSP, while Global Gaming has a 49 percent stake.” Texas does not allow casino gambling so currently the establishment, unlike the Chickasaw’s Oklahoma racetrack Remington Park, does not have that component (Evans, Chickasaw Nation Group Buys Texas Racetrack, *Tulsa World*, 2011). However, the purchase of Lone Star Park would seem to be a way for the Chickasaws to position themselves to compete in Texas if, in fact, casino gambling

should eventually get passed through the Texas legislature. One visit to Texas in 2010 in this same time period being discussed, had the Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce head having multiple meetings that included Austin-based Chickasaw Nation lobbyist, a Texas leading democratic contributor, and attendance at a National Republican Governor's Convention. Those conversations were all focused on efforts to prevent Texas from adopting gaming (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). The Chickasaws, through their lobbying efforts, were working to keep Texas from getting gaming, but if they did eventually pass it, they would be able to compete in that market as well.

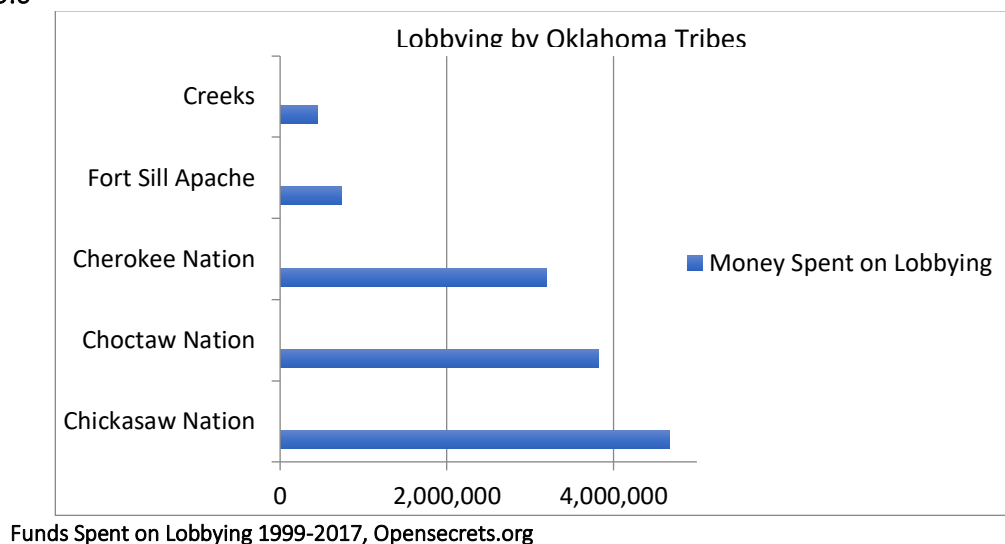
As one expands a review on lobbying on a national front, one organization reports on information and can trace the money trails as it relates to different industries, and in this case, Indian Gaming. Open Secrets.org and the Center for Responsive Politics describes the work they do as nonpartisan, independent, and a nonprofit organization. It is a research group that tracks money being spent in United States politics and is designed to provide information around the role money plays in politics as well as policy in an effort to see that the knowledge can strengthen the democracy. Dissemination of information, engagement, and transparency are all touted as having a role in their mission (Opensecrets.org, 2017). Of note, leading the top contributors for lobbying for 2017-2018 in Indian Gaming was the Chickasaw Nation with a total of \$273,888 with \$158,112 going to Democrats and \$115,751 received by Republicans. The Chickasaws were joined by 19 other tribes on this list and number 20 on that list contributed \$92,690 (Industries, Opensecrets.org, Industries, 2017). Some of the statistics noted around Indian gaming is the industry's significant increase in the past decade. The 2000 campaign cycle netted contributions as around \$4.3 million. Ten years later in the 2014 cycle it was \$14

million. It notes a trend around Democrats receiving about two-thirds of the contributions but notes that is on the decline as Democrats were the recipients of 66 percent of contributions in the year 2012 and only received 57% in 2014 (Opensecrets.org, Industries, 2017). This could be attributed to the balance of power in the United States shifting to the Republican Party in this time period as well. Nevertheless, donations were flowing to influence lawmakers.

The site also reported contribution trends have showed a significant upward trajectory demonstrated in two-year intervals going from zero in 1990 to 15.2 million in 2016 and some of those who benefitted from the contributions would be big players at the national level. The year 2018 was already reporting 4.9 million only ten days into the new year. The top recipient for contributions was a Republican (Congressman Todd Rokita) out of Indiana at \$55,200 and was followed by Oklahoma's own Congressman Tom Cole who is a Chickasaw citizen. He received \$47,100 at second on the list (Opensecrets.org, 2017).

The site also provides information on other lobbying tribes and their efforts and while most of it pertained to gaming, there were other issues for tribes. Of the Five Civilized Tribes, four of the five have contributed to lobbying efforts with the Chickasaws leading that group and the Choctaws and Cherokees not far behind (see Graph 9.0). The Chickasaws led list on money spent on casino gambling lobbying efforts with list \$4,671,275 since 2003. That year they only spent \$20,000. Their total in 2016 was \$280,000. The Choctaws started in 1999 with \$20,000 and in 2016 spent \$245,000 for a total of \$3,820,000 from 1999 to 2017. The website shows Cherokees spent \$80,000 in the year 2000 and \$245,000 in 2016. Their total was \$3,194,000 from 2000-2017. The other tribal nation within the Five Civilized Tribes contributing was the Creeks (Opensecrets.org, 2017).

Graph 9.0



The site reports for top contributors for 2021-22 the Chickasaws are third on the 20-member list of top contributors with a total of \$449,868 contributing almost equally by political party with Republicans receiving \$228,689 and Democrats receiving \$220,263. The Cherokees are 13th with \$222,243 and Republicans receiving \$133,221 and Democrats \$88,995 and the Choctaws come in at 20th with \$166,430 spent. Democrats receive the majority with \$143,785 and Republicans at \$22,616. The Chickasaws are ranked number five on the list of top lobbying clients for 2021 at \$480,000 while the Gila River Indian Community gives \$3,530,000 and is ranked #1 (Opensecrets.org, 2022).

As one turns to the academic research to consider the impact lobbying efforts can have on decisions made by lawmakers, it is important to acknowledge it is a significant component of the United States political system and one that can prove lucrative in navigating an issue for an organized entity. In evaluating the information presented around the investments being made, it would seem that Native American tribes have realized the importance of engaging in lobbying to address their needs and further their causes as well. But, how much impact can this activity

have for other entities, and specifically, tribes? The Chickasaws have invested large sums of money but is that money well spent? It would seem, per the research, that it may be good strategy. In a study conducted in 2014 titled “Perspective on Politics, Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” it is suggested that “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence” (Gilens, and Page, 2014). Other researchers also validate those entities that have significant expenditures spent on lobbying provide a significant return on investment. In one case it was suggested that the return on investment for every \$1 spent on lobbying resulted in an excess of \$220 return (Alexander, Mazza, and Scholz, 2009). It would seem the Chickasaws have been wise to get involved in this political activity and are reaping the results from their strategy.

Contributions and lobbying have been a definitive approach by the Chickasaws; however, they have also developed a strategy around hiring the right lobbyists or those that already understood Native American programs or had a position in a key role in state or federal government. Obtaining lobbyists and key staff members in roles where their experience within a political system or a governmental department as well as their already established relationships can be viewed as very strategic on the part of the tribes. There is less time spent in getting an employee up to speed on a political climate or Native American issue, and, in all probability, a much higher success rate in getting key meetings and policies implemented (Campbell, personal interview, 2015).

This particular strategy utilized by the Chickasaws is also one that is researched to some

degree in what is referred to as a revolving door phenomenon. One research article suggested that it is the movement of federal public employees into lobbying and note that “56% of the revenue generated by private lobbying firms between ’98 and ’08 can be attributed to individuals with some type of federal government experience” (Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen, *Revolving Door Lobbyists*, *American Economic Review*, 2012). Their findings suggested that these connections these individual lobbyists would have proved more beneficial than having expertise in a particular arena in which they were lobbying. Essentially, the connections in Washington, D.C. were much more valuable. Another research article suggests this group could be significantly powerful in having influence over lawmakers due to their social networks already in play (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi, *Is it Whom You Know or What You Know*, 2011). Research supports the strategy the Chickasaws have utilized by hiring those leaving office to come on board in hopes of that sphere of influence and their political network could pay dividends regarding tribal interests. And, in Oklahoma, the Chickasaws have utilized this strategy.

In the courtroom the Chickasaws have engaged litigators who could pull off some huge wins as it related to natural resources in getting what was rightfully theirs, but they have also implemented financial contributions and lobbying efforts to address other concerns as appropriate. Other tribes have joined that effort, where applicable. Collaborating from the beginnings of their fight back into self-governance has proven beneficial. And, it would seem in a lot of those cases, the Chickasaws were the drivers of those efforts. Their sustained political acumen is demonstrated by how they have grown themselves in becoming such a significant political force, not only within the State of Oklahoma but also on a national level. It is only in

recent years that they have had the capacity to spend the kind of money they have on these efforts, where before it was simply political prowess and pushing their agendas without the financial backing. One lobbyist for the tribe suggests this has evolved from having tribal officials or commerce division employees conducting the advocating to a much more comprehensive effort. He is the son of a Chickasaw legislator and the brother to a former state legislator who is now a current Chickasaw legislator. The family is immersed in, not only Chickasaw politics, but also in the State of Oklahoma. They have been part of the evolution, which currently employs lobbyists at the state and federal levels as well as a lobbying team in Texas (Johnson, personal interview, 2014).¹⁸ The Chickasaws have utilized their resources to gain access to politicians and influencers. It is thought that political connections are the difference makers when it comes to getting things done in Washington, D.C. That could also be said of advocating at the state level as well. Relationships are important.

Another dominant political leader in recent United States history would also reap results from relationships he forged. Henry Kissinger is known as a “geopolitical grandmaster moving pieces on a global chessboard in pursuit of what he saw as American interests” placed great importance on developing strong personal relationships and rapport with important entities. He emphasized the importance of focusing on those relationships with specific people before the need came about for negotiation and, in turn, had a vast network that moved beyond just the political realm but also moved into the press, academicians, and cultural figures. “This carefully nurtured network proved to be a formidable asset (Sebenius, Kissinger the Negotiator,

¹⁸ Johnson, Frank, (2015), An interview with Chickasaw Nation Deputy Secretary of Governmental Affairs by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Ada, OK, 2/5/2015.

2018, p. 211).

Like Kissinger, Governor Anoatubby's emphasis on the cultivation of those relationships as well as sustaining them seems to play a significant role in their success as well. As Tribal Lobbyist Frank Johnson noted, "It is very important to build relationships as soon as you can with political leaders...educating them on sovereignty, self-governance, tribal issues, and economics" (Johnson, personal interview, 2015). And, the Chickasaws have seemingly learned money buys time and the ability to work to develop and sustain those relationships with political leaders and other powers that be.

Location. Location. Location:

Historically, Native American tribes have been uprooted from their homelands and moved to other locations forced to learn a new way of surviving and thriving yet, yet one must consider was the new location provided for the Chickasaws fortuitous in ensuring their success in their new home? The Chickasaws had, after a series of treaties, ended up within the boundaries of the United States and eventually Mississippi Territory (O'Brien, 2003)

The United States government passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830 and Chickasaw officials met with United States government representatives including President Andrew Jackson in Franklin, Tennessee. A treaty was signed that same year and the Chickasaws were forced to give up their land. In exchange, they would be given the same amount of land in the west. After suitable land was not found, more negotiations occurred in 1832. A second treaty was signed in October of that year that provided each adult Chickasaw a temporary allotment, which was to be sold with the funds to be utilized to go towards their removal (O'Brien, 2003).

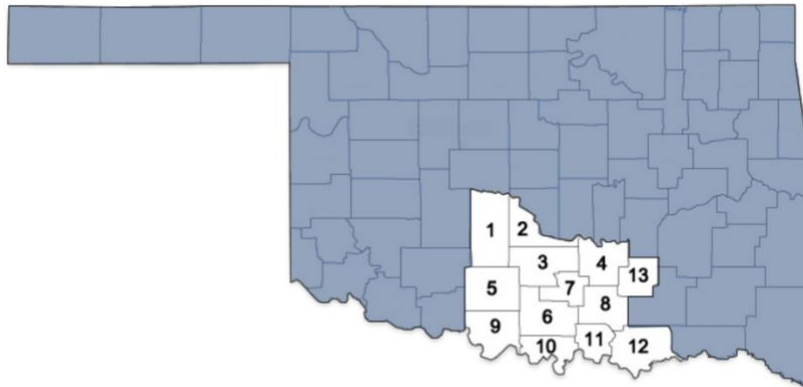
It is important to note the mental and physical strength it would have required to endure the journey from their homes that brought the Chickasaws to where they call home today. The significant impact that would have had on their Nation as well as their culture and their ability to sustain themselves is one to be noted. The Chickasaws were being forced to give up their homelands and their culture while their economic systems were being usurped. Life was changing rapidly for the Chickasaws. History would have the Choctaws and the Chickasaws partnering early as a new land for the Chickasaws was not found until 1837 and this event brought about a meeting with the Choctaws in Doaksville in Indian Territory and where the

Choctaws would sell the western part of their territory to the Chickasaws (O'Brien, 2003). The need for the Choctaws and Chickasaws to work together was already emerging.

The federal government moved the Chickasaws, as a result of those Nineteenth Century treaties, from their native homelands to their current location west of the Mississippi River where they were forced to learn to thrive again in a new location. Their new land now included 13 counties in south central Oklahoma (Chickasaw Nation Response Letter to Department of Interior's Dear Tribal Leader Letter, 2017). Following their forced removal, the Chickasaw people worked to rebuild from comprehensive social, cultural, and economic trauma. In accord with the constitution, they first ratified in the 1850s, the Chickasaw people built a tribal republic and established a general government to provide for the public welfare throughout the new homeland. Throughout this era, the Chickasaw Nation oversaw extensive economic activity, including natural resource development, agriculture, and small businesses operated by tribal citizens as well as non-citizens licensed to live and work within the Chickasaw Nation.

The new location for the tribe was in Indian Territory, which is now a part of the State of Oklahoma. According to the Chickasaw Nation website the jurisdictional boundary of the Nation includes 7,648 square miles of south-central Oklahoma and encompasses all or parts of 13 Oklahoma counties (Chickasaw Nation, 2017). The Oklahoma map below outlines the jurisdictional boundaries of the tribe.

Chickasaw Nation Jurisdictional Boundaries County Map



Counties

- 1-Grady
- 2-McClain
- 3-Garvin
- 4-Pontotoc
- 5-Stephens
- 6-Carter
- 7-Murray
- 8-Johnston
- 9-Jefferson
- 10-Love
- 11-Marshall
- 12-Bryan
- 13-Coal

The total population for the jurisdictional area is \$360,798 and includes 13 Oklahoma counties (see Graph 10). Bryan and Coal County are shared with the Choctaw Nation, (Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010, to July 1, 2016” (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Population numbers are indicative of the Nation’s rural location; however, it is also in close proximity to the Texas line and one of the largest metro areas in the country (Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex) as has been a critical element in the success of the tribe.

Graph # 10 Population of Counties Within the Chickasaw Nation

Grady County	54,655
McClain County	38,682
Garvin County	27,838
Pontotoc County	38,330
Stephens County	44,090
Carter County	48,556
Murray County	13,918
Johnston County	11,087
Jefferson County	6,230
Love County	9,997
Marshall County	16,191
Bryan County	45,573
Coal County	5,651

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2017

As one considers the linkage of the location to the success, it is important to note some of the major economic drivers for the area. In a 2007 study of a regional economic development strategy, a description of the area that included nine of the 13 counties that fall within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation was a part of the report. It described some of the major regional characteristics including the Oklahoma-Texas boundary to the south as Red River as well as Lake Texoma, an 89,000-acre reservoir managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (Bridging the Red River, A Regional Economic Strategy for the Texoma Regional Consortium, 2007). There is note of a major highway corridor that runs through the heart of the Chickasaw Nation being Interstate Highway 35, which runs from Duluth, Minnesota to Laredo, Texas (Interstateguide.com, 2017). This corridor runs in between two major metropolises, one of which has been named the second largest in the United States, the Dallas-Fort Worth area. It grew from July of 2014 to July of 2015 by approximately 145,000 and as of early 2016 the Census Bureau reported an estimated 7.1 million lived in the DFW metro area (Steele, 2016). The average income for the DFW metro area is \$61,059, compared with Love County's median income (\$25,844), which lies just over the line and home of the Chickasaw's largest casino (U.S. Census.gov, 2022). Lying at the other end of the corridor is Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the State's Capitol and largest city, which projects a population of almost 1.4 million has undergone a major renaissance following the Murrah Federal Building bombing in 1995 aided by a sales tax initiative that has transformed a downtown district (Bestplaces.net, 2022). When one considers the rural nature of the region, it is important to note the natural resources associated with it as well. One might remember that some of those natural resources were the source of contention in court cases with the tribes and other state and federal entities. Some of

the natural resources being extracted include agriculture and mining (oil and gas). These are all sources of employment for the area as well. The new home the Chickasaws were assigned and forced to move into, may very well be one of their biggest assets and essential to the thriving gaming industry for the tribe.

The Chickasaws have utilized their placement in the area as well as their resources to launch a major tourism campaign. Although much of the area can be considered rural, the placement of the Chickasaw Nation's jurisdictional boundaries between these two major cities positions them well to draw traffic and tourism from this corridor. Three micropolitan areas also lie in the boundaries of the south-central Oklahoma home of the Chickasaw Nation. They include Pontotoc County (population 38,341) and Carter County (48,081). Bryan County (population 46,906) lies just inside the western boundaries dividing the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations (Oklahoma.hometownlocator.com, 2017). With the advantage of being positioned on a major interstate highway and a substantial tourism thoroughfare, the Chickasaws have maximized their efforts by the placement of their businesses, primarily Casinos, travel stops, and a Bedre' Chocolate Factory and Retail store. The WinStar casino sits right on the border between Oklahoma and Texas, and it's the closest legal gambling to Dallas. Even on a Tuesday night, the vast parking lot is filled with Texas tags. Reaping the benefits of I-35 traffic, in addition to their largest casinos, WinStar and River Wind, there are smaller casinos located at their Chickasaw Travel Stops (convenience stores) on this thoroughfare. They include the Thackerville Travel Stop, two Davis Travel Stops (Davis East and Davis West), and the Washita Casino in Paoli. Others are anywhere from 15 to 20 miles off the major highway but still easily accessible (i.e., Ardmore, Wilson, Newcastle, and Sulphur). Visitors to Oklahoma are also

greeted upon crossing the line in Thackerville, Oklahoma (home of the WinStar Casino) to a Welcome Center for Tourism. Formerly ran by the State of Oklahoma, the Chickasaw Nation took it over in 2011. A few miles down the road, in addition to the casinos located adjacent to travel stops, visitors can stop to view the candy being made at the Bedre' Chocolate Factory, receive free samples of the product, as well as make retail purchases as well. Additionally, in the middle of that corridor and a few miles off Interstate 35 is the Chickasaw Nation Cultural Center and revitalized Artesian Hotel. The Chickasaw Recreational Area (a national park) is now operated by the Chickasaws as well. All of these resources have contributed to the Chickasaw Nation utilizing its location to become a tourism destination and driving patrons to their establishments and more purposefully, their casinos.

Other tribes have benefitted by their placement as well as the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma enjoys a close proximity to the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area on nearby Highway 69/75. The Choctaws placed their largest casino, the Choctaw Resort, on this thoroughfare and their travel plazas also are adjacent to casinos along this well-traveled highway. Just like the Chickasaws, they took advantage of the opportunity to take over a state-ran welcome center as people enter the State of Oklahoma on the highway that runs through their tribal nation's jurisdictional boundaries. The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, which comprises land, located 100 plus miles further north have their largest casino on Interstate Highway 44. These tribes' contrast to other Oklahoma tribes whose placement isn't on some of these major thoroughfares (i.e., Comanche, Kiowa, Seminoles, etc.) One could surmise that the placement of these tribal nations in what would turn out to be major highways and close proximity to large populations with money to spend has been beneficial to their businesses and placed them in a

position to obtain business and acquire a consistent revenue stream from a region that is viable.

Conclusion

Many would argue that the Chickasaw Nation's success has been only because of gaming as it accounts for over 90% of the revenue the tribe generates. But other tribal nations have had gaming as a significant revenue generator, but they have not experienced the level of economic success, as previously noted, of the Chickasaw Nation nor do their websites reflect the vast list of programs and services to their people. Gaming, by in large, funds those programs and services but a vision had to exist. Strategic efforts with the entities that could assist with the passage of gaming in Oklahoma had to take place. Someone had to lead that effort. Someone had to understand that the effort had been voted down twice in previous elections, so this lobbying effort had to be different to be successful. Then a team had to be in office long enough to implement and grow it, and then continue the efforts to secure its future. It would be difficult to not make the inference it is largely the significant reason the Chickasaws have the resources to invest in the programs and services, philanthropic efforts, lobbying, and diversification efforts. Yet, other Indian Nations have had the opportunity of generating revenue through gaming and still not developed their tribes to the level of the Chickasaws.

As we consider Native American tribes and their plight, suffrage, and success, we see the leadership and sense of culture that have held the tribes together at least in part. The Chickasaw Nation is constitutionally organized in much the same manner as many Native American tribes, as well as the United States of America, with its three branches of government. The importance of self-rule has been discussed (Kalt and Singer, 2004). A quote

from President Abraham Lincoln “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from Earth” (Lincoln, The Gettysburg Address, 1863), could be said to describe the Chickasaw Nation especially as it pertains to their perseverance. Governor Bill Anoatubby has said of his predecessor, “Overton James helped lead the Chickasaw people out from under the control of the federal government into a new era a self-governance” (Chickasaw Nation, 2015). Governor James has been given credit for serving during this critical era. He was also the first leader, which Governor Anoatubby now does as well, to start his speeches with, “Greetings from the great unconquered and unconquerable Chickasaw Nation” (Chickasaw Nation, 2015). This quote demonstrates in short form what the Chickasaws perceive about themselves that despite the battles on and off the battlefield, they have remained unconquered and sustained their government.

As a result of that history, the Chickasaws have realized the importance of not only strong leadership but sustained strong leadership. That has, again, been demonstrated by having two of the longest-serving tribal leaders in the United States as Governor James served eight years appointed and 16 years elected, and Governor Anoatubby was once again named the “Most Powerful Oklahoman” (Gov. Anoatubby Once Again Named ‘Most Powerful Oklahoman’ in Annual Survey, Chickasaw Times, 2020). Their eras of leadership have given the Chickasaws the opportunity to establish crucial relationships, build economic success, retain their culture, provide critical programs and services to their people, demonstrate value to their communities, region, and state for their existence in their new homeland, and finally become a nationally recognized powerful and respected organization. That secret weapon of leadership

and being strategic in the face of challenges researchers purport is critical (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, 2003).

Chickasaw Governor Bill Anoatubby's frequent quote that "a rising tide raises all ships," has been utilized from the podium many times as he gets up to speak. They have demonstrated that in numerous ways by the investments within their jurisdictional boundaries to fund and support regional and state projects and initiatives. They have been proactive at marketing with their commercials enlightening the general public to their contributions through history as well as the Chickasaw people and their talents in aeronautics, art, government, education, etc. They seem to be about the business of selling, not only their own people on having a sense of pride for being Chickasaw but informing others outside the tribe of the significant contributions the Chickasaw Nation has made and the significant value they bring to the state. And, they seem to have done that purposefully. Tribes, and not only the Chickasaws as one can observe from billboards up and down US Highway 69/75 and Interstate 35, have recognized the need to do a better job of telling their story regarding impact. This is just another example of a strategy as it relates to vision for the Chickasaw Nation.

Some have credited Governor Anoatubby with an altruistic spirit of leadership in terms of the why in the success. He certainly didn't join the tribe during a period of success. It was a meager annual budget, had few employees, and many challenges. After his over three decades of service, the endurance of multiple court cases fighting the U.S. Government for sovereignty and inherent resources, trailblazing the addition of programs and services, the onset of gaming, and ultimately the over three-billion-dollar impact on the state's economy, one can see it has been an effort that took vision, strategic planning, and probably some altruistic motivation for a

tribe, his tribe. Governor Anoatubby has used and protected sovereignty, perhaps more than any other leader, due to the battles he has fought with the United States Government, the State of Oklahoma, and various other entities that have taken the tribe on. The protection of sovereignty some would argue, is the most important strategy for a tribe (Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation Address, 2004).

The Chickasaw Nation has never been a per capita tribe and they have remained vigilant in their efforts to allocate tribal revenue to enhance programs and services for the tribe. Some would argue this is critical for a tribe to be successful. Dependence on tribal governments can undermine efforts to develop work ethics and empower younger tribal citizens. Cornell and Kalt (2007) suggest the negative impacts that can occur when tribal resources are not utilized to empower. The Chickasaws have been seeing that these revenues went back into the tribe for the citizens of the Chickasaw Nation and to grow their ability to sustain themselves. And, their location is much more beneficial than the majority of tribal nations, outside the Choctaw Nation, for garnering a large populace with a significant expendable income. Many tribes have the casinos but very few have it strategically located on a major interstate thoroughfare.

The Chickasaw Nation has utilized the profits to create a healthcare system with modern facilities, educational programming for advancing the levels of education attained by their citizens, a state-of-the-art cultural center, and a myriad of programs and services. And it would seem there is more than one factor that put this Nation in the forefront of at least, Oklahoma tribes. One might suggest it is the perfect storm with ample revenue, sustained strong leadership, strategic planning, an altruistic allocation of resources, political acumen, the protection of culture and sovereignty, and a perfect location to execute on their efforts.

Chapter 5

Future Challenges for Tribes

Introduction

Native Americans have *always* been challenged by groups of immigrants as well as other tribes that arrived in their homelands. The efforts that have been engineered and executed upon to assimilate and annihilate have taken their toll on these First Americans. Mass murders and pillaging of a population in their own homelands left them struggling to survive and retain their families, culture, economies, and lives. Then the intent began to assimilate into a different culture and make them “like us.” We required they not honor their cultural traditions and speak their languages. We forced tribes to move from their homes and ways of life and to become more dependent on governmental resources. One would like to think we have progressed since that time, but Native Americans are still fighting battles in courtrooms. They have used government contracting, utilization of natural resources, potential opportunities to be entrepreneurial in diversifying their businesses, and finally gaming to try to regain economic security but still face courtroom battles for these very things.

Gaming became a significant path for revenue, as we have discussed at length in the research. Can a tribe afford to depend only on gaming when there are other venues for gambling, and other entities vying for the profitability it brings. What if gaming is legalized in close proximity to the Indian Casinos, does that revenue stream diminish significantly? Probably so, and, with gaming comes societal implications of what other problems it can bring to a Native community.

Dismal statistics around gambling and substance abuse, previously mentioned, cause one to pause when considering the long-term impact of gaming.

Tribes are also struggling with what is happening as their Indian blood quantum is reduced through intermarriage with people outside of the tribe. Native nations are having to look at blood quantum in terms of membership and in terms of electing leaders. Is it simply a descendency model or will there be a certain quantum required to be a tribal member? Tribes are struggling with what that means for the future and their children's future.

Tribal leaders need long term strategies to address this issue as well as how they will navigate economic development. This becomes a challenge with term limits when continuous leadership and strategic plans are not given time to make a change. Leaders with integrity that possess enough vision to weather these storms are needed. And they need someone vested in protecting their sovereignty. Navigating the court system and the political environment is ongoing. Tribes have continuously been challenged on their homelands, their natural resources, their rights as citizens, and ultimately, their sovereignty as tribal nations. This researcher believes the latter has been demonstrated as the most important but most of the challenges outlined in this final chapter are tied in with that protection.

Political Climate and Impact on Native American Tribes:

Many of the challenges Native Americans have faced over the years will remain their challenges. Critical to moving forward is their continued need to be acknowledged as sovereign nations and retention of their own tribal government structure. Acknowledgement of that at the highest executive level of the United States government is critical. The development of policy informed and collaborative decision-making, and recognition of cultural heritage will determine how valued the Native American people are in American society. That valuation will

shape what takes place in court systems, law making, and, generally, the culture of acceptance for the value the Native American people have to the United States as a Nation.

Differing political climates have existed throughout history as it pertains to Native Americans both at the state and federal levels. Looking back in history, one can observe outright historical blatant discrimination and policies designed to annihilate Native Americans such as that of President Andrew Jackson who was dubbed Indian killer by the Cherokees for his role in the Indian Removal Act of 1830. That Act forced the relocation of over 60,000 Native Americans under the harshest of conditions to pave the way for America's westward expansion. President Donald Trump honored Navajos in front of President Andrew Jackson's portrait, causing somewhat of a stir in the media (Rosenberg, Andrew Jackson was called 'Indian Killer,' Trump Honored Navajos in Front of his Portrait, *The Washington Post*, 2017). This, in contrast to President Richard Nixon, who was a vigilant supporter of Native Americans paving the way for the Self Determination Act of 1975. This Act was critical to helping tribes regain their sovereignty and their tribal governments. He laid the foundation for that era of economic development for the tribes that has been pivotal in their rapid growth period (Chickasaw Nation Television/Media Series, 2019). As political leaders differ, subsequently so does the treatment of Native American people.

In Indian Country Today, an article was written regarding who the best presidents have been for Native Americans. Leading that list are President Barack Obama and President Richard Nixon. President Nixon, as previously mentioned, is lauded as a champion for Native Americans citing the self-determination plan laid out and his role in stopping a policy of forced termination. Electing their own leadership as well as growing their capacity for economic

development, were important parts of the Act as well. Also cited at the top of the list is President Barack Obama who was dubbed “One Who Helps People Throughout the Land” by the Crow tribe. He is credited in the article with “brokering passage of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act reauthorization, the Tribal Law and Order Act, and the \$3.4 billion Cobell settlement.” He also created an annual White House Tribal Nations summit and appointed multiple Native Americans within his administration (R. Capriccioso, Barack Obama and Richard Nixon Among Best Presidents for Indian Country, *Indian Country Today*, 2017). Others noted on the list include President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal and the Indian Reorganization Act and President Bill Clinton’s efforts to strengthen government-to-government relationships with his executive order regarding tribal consultation as well as his acknowledgement of what had been done to Native Hawaiians had been wrong. President Ulysses S. Grant acknowledged Native Americans as “the original occupants of the land” which many leaders up until that point had failed to acknowledge. His peace policy was meant to bring Indians closer to white civilization by placing them on reservations and engaging in agriculture. Although this relocation turned out to be bad policy, his attempt to do something other than conquering was different from previous administrations. Despite that, American Indians experienced terrible massacres and injustices while he was in office. Others noted in the article for the treatment of tribes during administrations included President John F. Kennedy noted for his efforts to push for Indian education initiatives and President George H.W. Bush who signed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act into law in 1990. Bush also created the first national Native American heritage month and proclaimed 1992 as the “Year of the American Indian.” Despite those efforts, it has been found that while

he served as United Nations Ambassador, he continued with spending U.S. money to sterilize low-income women, including some Native Americans (Capriccioso, Barack Obama and Richard Nixon Among Best Presidents for Indian Country, *Indian Country Today*, 2017). It would seem there have been attempts by U.S. leaders to impact positive change yet, some changes were negative or were coupled with harsh results.

As one moves into the modern era and reflects in a more detailed manner on the past administrations of (Democratic President Barack Obama) and (Republican President Donald Trump), one observes a vast difference in the attitudes, efforts, and policies towards Native Americans. During President Barack Obama's administration one observed an election in 2008 where President Obama had campaigned significantly for the vote of Native Americans and what followed seemed to honor that promise. He vowed change noting that Native Americans were among the populations that had been ignored by the federal government. He promised to address governmental mismanagement as it pertained to the tribes and the government's failure to honor treaty obligations (Editorial Board, Candidate Obama Kept His Promise to Native Americans, *New York Times*, 2016). According to the Democratic National Platform, President Barack Obama received 69% of the Native American vote in the 2008 election (Democratic National Committee, 2018). President Obama's contributions to tribes during his eight years in office appeared to have been significant for Native Americans in addressing many of the issues tribes have been challenged with throughout history. President Obama's efforts included a variety of initiatives to address the challenges of Native Americans and according to a tribal leader, the work he had done during his tenure was a significant part of his administration. To open the lines of communication, he established an annual White House

Tribal Nations Conference in which Indian leaders joined together to discuss Native American issues. According to the New York Times article, his administration orchestrated lawsuit settlements with 17 Native American tribes from federal mismanagement of fund and lands totaling \$492 million. “The government holds more than 100,000 leases to manage about 56 million acres of tribal lands rich in mining, timber and oil resources that have historically been exploited at the tribes’ expense”. And one of the hallmarks of his administration was the settlement of a 13-year-old lawsuit that which came to a resolution in 2009 which resulted in a 3.4 billion in compensation regarding “federal mishandling of hundreds of thousands of land trust accounts” (Editorial Board, Candidate Obama Kept His Promise to Native Americans, *New York Times*, 2016). It would seem Obama’s efforts were demonstrative of an administration that supported Native Americans.

Of the previous administrations mentioned regarding their political affiliation, the contributions to impactful legislation or policy by United States Presidents are relatively equal. President Bill Clinton, President John F. Kennedy, and President Barack Obama were all Democrats while President Richard Nixon, President H.W. Bush, and President Ulysses S. Grant were all Republicans. It is interesting to note, Native Americans have traditionally voted Democratic in elections. Likely, the Democrats seemingly purposeful inclusiveness of a platform that supports the tribes could be the reason. The Democratic Party Platform, as it relates to Native Americans, notes “we recognize the inherent sovereignty of Indian nations and will work to enact laws and policies that strengthen, not reduce, the powers of Indian nations over people who interact with them in Indian Country” (Party Platform, Democrats.org, 2018). In a presentation to the National Congress of American Indians in February of 2018,

Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez spoke of his work under President Obama and the aspects of the job he missed. He noted his former boss (President Obama) as being someone who worked for help tribal communities become strong and of his strong commitment to nation-to-nation relationships. He noted his adherence to the sovereignty of tribal nations and the work that was put into the restoration of “over half a million acres of tribal trust lands.” He referenced the committee that had been formed to open communication lines between the tribes and the White House and the “provision to the Violence Against Women Act that gives tribal courts the jurisdiction to try non-Indians for domestic abuse.” He also referenced the “protecting Native resources from climate change, and who expanded health coverage for Native Americans under the Affordable Care Act” (National Congress of American Indians, 2018). One could derive the Democrats, in this scenario, believed Native Americans had reaped significant wins under the Obama Administration.

As of the writing of this research, the Democratic National Committee was critical of the President Donald Trump administration as it pertains to tribes. They noted that the Republican (Grand Old Party or GOP) has not been good for Native Americans. They credit the Republicans with preventing legislation to be passed that would raise the minimum wage noting the low median household income of Native Americans and Native Alaskans (\$16,061) reported by the 2012 Census Data. They also noted the GOP’s opposition and votes against the Affordable Care Act, equal pay legislation and the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Other factors that would impact Native Americans would include their proposed legislation to reduce the number of student eligible for Pell Grants to assist with higher education expenses and preventing legislation that would allow students to refinance student loans at lower rates (Party

Platform – Democrats.org, 2018). Those votes against Native American concerns could be viewed as hurtful to tribes, however criticism between both the Democrats and the Republicans on their voting records is quite common.

What do the Republicans say about their position on Native American issues? In the Republican Platform 2016, the GOP party suggests their party believes the United States government must honor the government-to-government relationship as well as the trust responsibility to Native American governments. They note in their platform documents that many social and economic problems have worsened and still present significant challenges as well as the impact of the inefficiency of federal programs to address services needed by Native tribes. The GOP notes the importance of economic self-sufficiency. It is noted that federal and state regulations that prevent developing resources on their native lands are of concern and prevent the creation of jobs. And the GOP faults the Democrats in saying the party “has persistently undermined tribal sovereignty in order to provide advantage to union bosses in the tribal workplace” (Republican Platform, Republican National Committee, 2016, p. 29). On this matter, the GOP advocates in their platform for the tribes to have the same authority as the states in matters of labor and to be able to take on the unions and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) so tribal authority is not undermined. Finally, they suggest they want better partnerships to assist with economic opportunity, the education of future generations, build infrastructure in Indian country, and improve healthcare in Indian Health Services (Republican Platform, Republican National Committee, 2016, p. 29). Like the Democrats, the Republicans suggest they are vested in their relationship with American Indians.

Former Republican President Donald Trump has had an interesting history with Native American Tribes. Trump courted a tribe, the Cowlitz tribe in southeastern Washington. Concerned with what might be out in the public regarding statements he had made about Native Americans, he wrote a letter to explain and assured them he was attempting to see that casinos were only operated by “legitimate” Indians (Tanfani and Bierman, Trump’s Art of the Deal with Native Americans: Racial Insults of Flattery, whichever was Good for Business, *Los Angeles Times*, 2016). The Cowlitz tribe was warned by other tribes and in the end decided Trump wanted too much of the deal. He did, however, manage to make a deal with the Twentynine Palms Band of Mission Indians. That casino became the Trump 29 Casino, “where the desert meets the Donald” (Tanfani and Bierman, Trump’s Art of the Deal with Native Americans: Racial Insults of Flattery, whichever was Good for Business, *Los Angeles Times*, 2016). His Atlantic City investments were plagued with debt and bankruptcies, and he needed another source of cash. The relationship did not last, and the tribe grew weary of paying his 30% management fee. They paid Trump off to get out of the deal early and the casino became Spotlight 29. Trump’s attempt to do business with another tribe had failed and had left another tribe unhappy with his business practices (Tanfani and Bierman, Trump’s Art of the Deal with Native Americans: Racial Insults of Flattery, whichever was Good for Business, *Los Angeles Times*, 2016). The President’s history with tribes has been somewhat plagued with deals that went bad.

Donald Trump continued to set off controversy with his repeated comments regarding Senator Elizabeth Warren (Democrat from Massachusetts) referring to her as “Pocahontas” regarding her claims, although undocumented, of Cherokee heritage (Trump calls Elizabeth

Warren ‘Pochahontas’ while hosting Native American War Heroes’ event, *USA Today*, Estepa, 2017). Pocahontas was a famous daughter to a Native American Chief in the 17th Century. One such time where he chose to make a derogatory statement was during an event honoring Native American war heroes. Rather than honor the heroes, he stood in front of a painting of President Andrew Jackson, who signed the Indian Removal Act and is viewed by Native Americans as an enemy to their people, and noted, “you were here before any of us were here...although we have a representative in Congress who they say was here a long time ago. They call her Pocahontas” (Trump calls Elizabeth Warren ‘Pochahontas’ while hosting Native American War Heroes’ event, *USA Today* Estepa, 2017). Again, the insensitivity regarding the Native American heroes with the usage of the inference to the Senator coupled with the placement of the ceremony in front of a picture of President Andrew Jackson has drawn sharp criticism and questioning of President Donald Trump’s valuation of Native Americans.

In an interview with the former CEO of the Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce the political climate as it related to the tribes was discussed and the impact those have on tribes moving forward. “We have over 200 years of Presidents that the Chickasaw Nation has weathered, and we are never completely safe from differing views” (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). Campbell noted the hostility the tribes have experienced over the years from different leaders over the Nation’s history. Campbell said, “Once we get something, they are poised to take it away from us and still try today. Our greatest danger is when we do well.” He suggested the best strategy to address this challenge with political climates is to get more involved. That strategy was noted in Chapter 4 as the research demonstrated political lobbying and navigation through court cases as well as political positioning by the Chickasaw Nation.

Campbell suggested that tribal citizens must be involved in communities, tout the positives, and run for office. He noted that originally tribes fought with bows, arrows, and guns. It is different now, but there is still an ongoing political battle. “We must fight to protect the tribe” (Campbell, personal interview, 2019).

Negotiating with State Government:

As with the federal government, the pendulum of political parties in office will have an impact on tribal and state negotiations as well. The negotiations around the future of state compacting between the State of Oklahoma and the tribes took place under the purview of a Republican governor versus the Democratic Governor that was in office almost 20 years ago when the original negotiations were conducted and the vote for gaming approved by the people of the State. One could expect most issues that develop between a compact with the state and a tribe will arise around the type of gaming that will be allowed in the state. And in this case, the Indian Gaming Regulation Association requires the states to negotiate with the Native American tribes in good faith. The term good faith is not specifically defined but “the court may look at the public interest, public safety, criminality, financial integrity, and economic impacts on existing gaming activities” (Thompson, American Indian Law Review, Volume 37, (No.1), 2012, p. 239). And it is also noted in the American Indian Law Review article that any effort to tax a Native American tribe is indicative of a bad faith negotiation. The misinterpretation of sovereignty, Native American tribes, and taxation continues to be a challenge and one that requires a continuous education effort. It will be important that the powers in office understand the sovereignty of the tribes, regardless of their party, as the negotiations take place.

It is significant to note that the Governor was to oversee the next round of negotiations on compacting is also the first Native American Governor, not only of Oklahoma, but also of the United States following the historic November 2018 election. Governor Kevin Stitt is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and when asked about the impending negotiations with the tribes and the State around compacting, he said, “as a registered Cherokee, I know first-hand what a tremendous benefit the tribes have been to our state, creating tens of thousands of jobs, expanding health care options in rural Oklahoma, and more” (Poll shows Cherokee citizen in tie for Governor’s race in Oklahoma, *Indianz.com*, 2018, p.1). In Governor Stitt’s role, he was to have played a major role in navigating the gaming compact and economic future of tribes and one must consider how his Native American ancestry would impact the effort. He began his term inclusive of bringing Native Americans into his administration and important committees. He named a Chickasaw Nation legislator and former Oklahoma House Representative Lisa J. Billy as the Secretary of Native American Affairs. Billy, while a State Representative, formed the Native American Caucus in the Oklahoma Legislature and remains involved in Native American Affairs and a voice among the Chickasaw Nation (Stitt Announces Secretary of Native American Affairs, *The Oklahoman*, 2019). In an announcement regarding an advisory council designed to promote Oklahoma’s business recruitment and economic development efforts, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce also included a Chickasaw on their Advisory Council. Bill Lance, Secretary of Commerce of the Chickasaw Nation, experienced in tribal economic development and building stronger partnerships with tribal entities to the Council (Krehbiel, Pinnel, Business Leaders Named to Commerce Department Board, *Tulsa World*, 2019). One could derive there appeared to be a purposeful effort to involve Native Americans in State leadership and planning

around economic development. And, in this case, it was the Chickasaws that were brought to the table.

The Chickasaws being a part of the leadership and in critical roles could aid the tribes in the imminent challenge in 2019 around the future of gaming in Oklahoma as it relates to the State Compacts with Tribes. These compacts between the State of Oklahoma and tribes were to have been renegotiated by January 1, 2020, when the current compacts expire. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and 25CFR 293.4 require compacts made with the State that allow Tribes to engage in class III gaming activities be subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. Also, subject to approval include what will “provide for the application of existing revenue sharing agreements to the additional forms of Class III gaming and designate how the State will distribute revenue sharing funds” (Indian Gaming: Approval of Tribal-State Federal Gaming Compact Amendments in the State of Oklahoma, Department of Interior, Federal Register, 2018). The year 2020 brought the time for tribes and the State to renegotiate these compacts, and after almost two decades of gaming in Oklahoma, it would be interesting to see how the two entities change the current compacts, if at all.

What transpired has been a whirlwind of legal battles. When no negotiation took place between the State of Oklahoma and the tribes on gaming compacts, the majority of the tribes believed the Model Gaming Compact already negotiated automatically renewed. While this discussion was ongoing, Oklahoma’s Governor Kevin Stitt entered into an agreement with three other individual tribes and noted “moving forward, the state will continue to negotiate with individual tribes, leaving behind the one-size-fits-all approach to the gaming compacts” The Attorney General of Oklahoma at the time, Mike Hunter, communicated through a letter to the

United States Department of the Interior noting that the Governor did not have the authority to do so. Additionally, four tribes including the Chickasaw Nation, the Choctaw Nation, the Cherokee Nation, and the Citizen Pottawatomie filed a suit in August of 2020 against the federal government, the Governor, and four other tribes in Oklahoma that had entered into a compact with the Governor. Oklahoma legislative leaders questioned is authority to make such agreements without the joint efforts of both the legislative and executive branches. In July of 2020, two different rulings including the Oklahoma Supreme court rules the compact Stitt had signed with two of the four tribes named in the suit was invalid. And a U.S. District Court judge ruled against Stitt in the dispute regarding the tribal gaming compacts noting they automatically renewed in January of 2020. These series of events have put a strain on the relationship between the Governor's office and the tribes (Herrerra, Oklahoma Gov. Stitt Resurrects Gaming Compact Fight with all Tribes, Hires New Outside Legal Counsel, *KOSU News*, October 24, 2022, p. 1).

The future of compacting between the State and the tribes was uncertain and one might suggest that many citizens of the State of Oklahoma do not realize that over 75% of all gaming machines in tribal casinos are Class II machines. The negotiation and exclusivity fees paid to the State are for the usage of Class II machines. The tribes have been careful to not place all revenue generating machines in their casinos that are dependent on a negotiation with the State of Oklahoma. This could have had a significant impact on the negotiation and ultimately what the State receives through its exclusivity fees the tribe now pays through certain percentages on fees for electronic games (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). According to

the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services and as mentioned previously, those fees are paid monthly and include:

- Four percent of first 10 million of annual adjusted gross revenues (AGR)
- Five percent of the next \$10 million of AGR
- Six percent of AGR over 20 million

The State has opened roulette and dice games in hopes of keeping the tribes vested in the compacts. Fees for table games include 10% of the monthly net win (Gaming Exclusivity Fees, 2022). These exclusivity fees provided to the State of Oklahoma from the tribes (Fiscal Year 2005-2018) have accounted for \$1,227,601,481.92 for the Education Reform Revolving Fund, \$167,400,202.09 for the General Revenue Fund, and \$3,354,166.13 for the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. In a State that struggles to diversify from its dependence on the oil and gas market, this boon to the economy is significant for funding many programs and services (Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit, Office of Management and Enterprise Services, 2018).

Changes in Class II machines have made them much more attractive to the casino patron and have created the opportunity for the tribes to be less inclined to be dependent on Class III machines. Those are a “very viable and powerful class of gaming over which states have no say” (McBride, Class II Gaming, Turtle Talk, *Indian Gaming Magazine*, 2010, p. 14). According to McBride, the utilization of the Class II machines provides the tribes with significant leverage in the negotiation efforts between them and the State of Oklahoma as well as another option if those negotiations are not successful. Other compacts currently existing with the

State include the fuel tax compact and the tobacco compact (McDaniel, personal interview, 2018).

Tribes, and most certainly the smaller tribes that struggle with financial security due to their size, will be impacted should gaming go away. The fear of once again becoming completely dependent on the federal government is significant for these small tribes and especially because federal assistance has decreased dramatically in the last 15 years. Unlike the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Cherokees that sit on border state lines and closer to metropolitan areas, they lie in rural areas of Oklahoma where the economy is more stagnant and there is less opportunity for major economic drivers. And, the State of Oklahoma, which has had its own budget and economic issues due to a downturn in oil and gas revenues, fears losing profits made from Indian gaming as well. Again, revenue sharing is permitted by the U. S. Secretary of the Interior, but taxation is not. It is imperative that both the State and the Oklahoma tribes find a way to continue to be good partners while they navigate the challenges of both of their respective economic strategies.

The tribes and the State of Oklahoma also need to remain open to other viable collaborations such as those projects that have been explored outside of the State-tribal compacts. Some Oklahoma Native American tribes, in recent years, have taken on the operations and management side of state-run properties to relieve the state budget of those entities. Those projects include State Welcome Centers and State Parks that risked closure as a result of potential agency budget cuts. The Chickasaw Nation and Choctaw Nation share Boggy Depot, which has historical significance to both tribes as it was shared by them after they were forced into Indian Territory. It was also a stop on the Overland Butterfield Stagecoach route

bringing mail. The Chickasaws now operate the park while the Choctaws maintain the cemetery where headstones, including that of a Choctaw Chief, range from the 19th – 21st centuries. The tribes, through cooperation with the State transferring the park, have been able to maintain this important part of their history (Layden, Tribes Save Boggy Depot Park After State Spending Cuts, stateimpact.org, 2011). The Chickasaws also took the land from the Chickasaw National Recreation Area in a land exchange in the Chickasaw National Recreation Area Land Exchange Act of 2004 which included a federal land exchange as well as non-federal land which was owned by the City of Sulphur. This exchange revised the boundaries of the Chickasaw National Recreation Area and provided the Chickasaws with the opportunity to begin planning for their Chickasaw Nation Cultural Center on a portion of that land. They are also responsible for the protection of watershed and riparian resources. This is another example of partnerships not only with the federal government, but with city government as well, for the benefit of all (Senate Report 108-369 – Chickasaw National Recreation Area Land Exchange Act of 2004).

The Choctaw Nation has also partnered with the State of Oklahoma to manage a welcome center, formerly operated by the State. It is in a key area where those traveling into Oklahoma via Highway 69/75 from Texas can have a rest stop from their travels and see more about the Nation. It is now dubbed the Choctaw Nation Welcome Center and where the Choctaws can now share part of their history as well as have cultural items and art by Choctaw artisan displayed and available for purchase. It can also serve as an opportunity to interest travelers in visiting their resort/casino just a few miles up the road (Grand Opening Held at Choctaw Nation Welcome Center, *Biskinik*, 2013). The Cherokees partnered with the State as

well in August of 2011 to run an Oklahoma Welcome Center in east Tulsa on Interstate 44. It is now called the Cherokee Nation Welcome Center and was another center being threatened for closure to due State budget cuts. It was reported more than 1.3 million patrons visit Oklahoma's tourism information centers each year. Each of these examples have given both the tribes and the state the benefit from transferring operations to the Native Americans and keep this vital tourism effort going in the state. Most tribes are open to this as a possible collaboration but a spirit of partnering for the good of both entities will be critical (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017).

Future discussions are imminent and must be negotiated government to government in a spirit of cooperative policymaking and for the purpose of collaborative economic development for the State of Oklahoma. In the spirit of collaboration and being good partners, it is important that the state negotiate in good faith around the tribes' rights to conduct gaming as outlined by the vote of the people in 2004 as well as look at potential collaborations that will benefit all parties involved while protecting the sovereignty of the tribes.

Navigating the Courts:

A section of Chapter 3 was dedicated to how the Chickasaws and other Oklahoma tribes have navigated the court system to protect their interests, their resources, and ultimately their sovereignty. History is demonstrative of the numerous battles Native Americans have fought to protect their tribes. Now, those battles occur often in a courtroom with the federal and sometimes the state government. Tribes have often joined each other to protest their rights such as the Native American rights protest at Alcatraz that started in 1969. The Chickasaws have the Seeley Chapel movement dubbed as a grass roots effort in 1960 to address some of

their challenges. And they joined with the other Five Civilized Tribes in 1949 to, among other things, secure their rights and benefits to which they were entitled to by the United States, enlighten others on their culture and race, seek equitable treatment, preserve their rights as it related to Indian treaties and promote their common welfare. The Arkansas Riverbed dispute ended⁰ after ten years in which the federal government would pay the tribal nations \$186 million with the Chickasaw Nation receiving \$46.5 million and the Choctaws obtaining \$139.5 million (Secretary Jewel Announces Historic \$186 Million Settlement of Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations' Tribal Trust Lawsuit, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2015). It is apparent, tribes have had to be vigilant in protecting their rights as it pertains to the United States government honoring treaties and maintaining and preserving their resources and their sovereignty. This approach will need to continue as tribes seek to protect their interests.

In the case of *Carpenter vs. Murphy*, one should note that neither the State of Oklahoma nor the Muscogee Creek tribal government engaged the court. It was an effort for a new trial by a condemned prisoner. However, now that the case is in court, Oklahoma's largest tribes, including the Chickasaws, as well as several current and former politicians from the state weighed in on the case and requested the court to uphold the ruling that the Muscogee (Creek) Nation reservation remains in existence in Oklahoma. A brief from the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and a handful of politicians, stated the tribes "exercise of sovereignty on their respective reservation has been good for Oklahoma." They note the path in which sovereignty has provided for "inter-governmental agreements that benefit all Oklahomans," citing the areas of gaming, taxation law enforcement and water rights." The tribes believe this upholding of the reservation would not result in upheaval, but rather continue to make a path for success as it

relates to the tribes' ability to exercise sovereignty (Wingerter, Oklahoma Tribes and Prominent Politicians' side with Creeks in Reservation Case at the Supreme Court, *The Oklahoman*, 2018). Despite the fact, that the Indians in Oklahoma did not begin this court battle, they believe their sovereignty must be upheld.

Another court case that caused a significant amount of angst across the State of Oklahoma was the *McGirt vs. Oklahoma* case. It centered around whether Oklahoma maintains criminal jurisdiction if crimes are committed on Indian land/reservation boundaries. In this case, it was the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Both the State of Oklahoma and the Trump Administration held that the Tribe's reservation did not exist and as a result, Oklahoma held jurisdiction over McGirt. The Supreme Court in a 5-4 vote, did reaffirm that the Muscogee Creek Nation's treaty reserved reservation boundaries and that the State did not have criminal jurisdiction. "With the Muscogee (Creek) Nation facing opposition from the Trump Administration, this Court made clear that treaties mean something – that they are the supreme law of the land." Oklahoma's Attorney General Mike Hunter at the time, noted "The State, the Muscogee, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminole Nations are committed to ensuring that Jimcy McGirt, Patrick Murphy, and all other offenders face justice for the crimes for which they are accused. We have a shared commitment to maintaining public safety and long-term economic prosperity for the Nations and Oklahoma" (Roberts, American Indian Policy Institute, Arizona State University, 2023, p. 1). While criminal cases being potentially retried in tribal courts where a law was broken on Indian land would be daunting for tribes to manage, it seemed like they understood if the treaties were broken by deeming their reservations

provided by treaties no longer existed, the implications would have been monumental and life changing for the Nations.

Tribes must remain vigilant in their efforts to preserve their inherent rights if they are to continue to exist and be self-governed and self-sufficient. One Chickasaw tribal leader noted that many people do not understand that sovereignty is not granted, it is inherent and that two hundred years of case law recognize the tribes as sovereign. Despite that the challenge continues. "Throughout history, individuals and governments have been chipping away at our sovereignty. Without it, we do not exist. We determine our own destiny. We cease to exist as a tribe without it" (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

Gambling in Texas

As has been previously discussed the Chickasaws invest a great deal of resources into preventing gaming to occur in the State of Texas where they draw significant patronage from Texans with expendable incomes to their border casinos. Both the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations contribute large sums of money to influence politicians in Texas to keep the gaming industry from starting in that State. As was noted in Chapter 4, the Chickasaws contributed \$41,500 to the election year campaign of Governor Rick Perry in 2006 and then 106,000 in 2010. The Chickasaws followed suit with his successor Governor Greg Abbott at \$75,000 in 2014, (Followthemoney.org, 2018). The Houston Chronicle reported that the Chickasaw Nation donated \$670,000 in the 2014 election cycle while the Choctaws donated \$260,000. Both tribes have casinos that set on the southernmost Oklahoma-Texas lines yet still reside within their respective tribal jurisdictional boundaries (Tribes Contributed \$14 Million to Politicians

Amid Gaming Fight in Texas, *Indianz.com*, 2015). Both tribes rely heavily on their Texas customers and are intricately invested in keeping Texas gaming out of their neighboring State.

Efforts to address the threat of gaming in Texas also include the previously noted purchase of Lone Star Park, which is the horse racing track in Grand Prairie, Texas. The \$47.8 million dollar track was purchased by Global Gaming Solutions LLC, which is a Chickasaw Nation subsidiary (Evans, Chickasaw Nation Group Buys Texas Racetrack, *Tulsa World*, 2011). This helps the Chickasaws be positioned to be ready with their own gaming facility right there in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex should gaming ever pass in Texas.

Another strategy utilized by the tribes is that of billboards and various forms of sponsorships in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex to promote the casino located just over the Oklahoma line and approximately a 1.5-hour drive. The billboards are plentiful, and it is not unusual to attend a sporting event or visit a large facility to find the Chickasaws, and even the Choctaws promoting their casinos.

The Dallas Cowboys pro football team call the DFW Metroplex home and WinStar World Casino and Resort in Oklahoma has been dubbed the “official casino of the Texas-based Cowboys” (Chickasaw Nation Lands First Ever Casino Partnership with NFL Team, *IndianZ.com*, 2018). According to the IndianZ article, recent changes in law and NFL policy paved the way for this designation and has allowed for NFL rules to provide the opportunity for association with gaming facilities, although currently, the Chickasaw Nation does not authorize betting on sports at this juncture in time. Regardless, this designation allows for significant public relations opportunity in the State of Texas where such a large part of their market crosses the line to gamble.

Tribes that have a proximity close to the state are very aware of the threat Texas gaming places on them. A former tribal official discussed the research that had been done during his tenure at the tribe and indicated an independent consultant found that if Texas were to get gaming it would result in a 30% cut into business for the Choctaws. The numbers from 2016 indicated the Choctaws netted \$428 million so the total impact in 2016, had Texas got gaming, would have been \$128.4 million (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). The figures currently being touted by the Choctaw Nation indicates a jobs figure in 2018 of 10,346, (Clark, Choctaw Nation.com, 2018). A significant decrease in services, jobs, and even loss of revenue to local businesses, city taxes, and state tax collections would have an impact if Texas were to get gaming. A Chickasaw Nation tribal leader that was CEO of the Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce when Texas got very close to gaming in the early 2000's, notes that should be State of Texas get gaming it would radically shift the equation. "One should be concerned that Texas will be competitive in time, and this will hurt all of our southern Oklahoma markets" (Campbell, personal interview, 2019). The prospect of gambling becoming legal in Texas produces one of the most significant challenges to both the Chickasaws' and the Choctaws' economic stability since the parking lots at those border casinos are full of Texas license plates and the people gambling on the inside have the expendable income to do it. A fast-growing population in north Dallas is also contributing to the vast numbers of Texas patrons. The Chickasaws and the Choctaws both will have to remain vigilant in their fight against gaming in Texas to sustain their gaming operations located on the border.

Societal Implications of Gaming for Tribes:

The introduction of gaming on Indian land has brought significant economic growth for tribes, however, it has also brought about many gambling opportunities for Native Americans and sometimes the gambling is not a positive thing. The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) reports an estimated 240 of 562 Native American tribes in the United States participate in gaming and, those that do operate around 400 casinos and bingo halls within 28 states. Even though it would seem that there is not much research on the prevalence of problem gambling among Native Americans, some limited research suggests that the opportunity for gaming poses a threat to Native Americans as they have twice the rate (19%) of problem gambling as the national sample (8%) (Patterson, Wolf, Welte, Barnes, Tidwell, and Spicer, 2015).

Opponents of gaming on Indian lands believe the socio-economic issues that have plagued Native Americans could be exacerbated by gaming and could lead to other bigger issues for the tribe as well. There is concern that it could serve to accelerate a decline of Indian culture and increased tribal infighting (Ferber and Chon, 1994). Another study suggests that it is eventual destruction of the culture or the tribe and its people suggesting the Nation would become a corporate entity focused on profits rather than being a tribe (Partnerships for Native Health, 2014).

There are also population studies that suggest issues with problem gambling and alcohol abuse go hand in hand where gambling and three other substance abuse measures were present (Barnes, Welte, Tidwell, and Hoffman, 2015). And there is research on alcohol use among Native Americans indicating consistent findings that American Indians/Alaskan Natives have higher rates of substance abuse and mental health issues as it compares with the United States population (2018). The rate of alcoholism on Indian reservations is suggested to be over

six times the national average. The suicide rate is more than double and education levels around 6th grade level (Ferber and Chon, 1994). Certainly, Native American statistics are alarming around some of these societal problems as it relates to alcohol and issues that may accompany the abuse of it.

One might consider other reasons why gambling is more of an issue for Native Americans, especially those on reservations. A study was conducted on problematic gambling behavior (Zitzow, 1996) and notes conditions that contribute to problematic gambling include:

- Lower socioeconomic status – Native Americans are a greater risk for gambling problems when income was equalized between ethnic groups. The study also noted that as it pertains to ethnicity, those in the \$0 to \$10,000 levels of income were at a much higher rate than other income groups for gambling issues.
- Legacy of exposure to modern gambling – Due to the proximity to gambling establishments on reservations, Native Americans had a much longer and intense exposure to the gaming industry.
- Feelings of powerlessness and alienation – Native Americans' minority status may increase their feelings of a lack of control over their lives.
- Unemployment – Due to unemployment in Indian Country, there may be a greater likelihood of looking for a solution to money issues through wins in the gaming facilities.
- Depression – Rural, reservation communities coupled with the increased evidence of depression in Native Americans may predisposition for tribal members to look for a way to avoid those feelings through gambling.

- Mystical thinking – There is a suggestion that a mystical or magical thinking from cultural heritage may lead one to consider fate or luck as a draw to gambling.
- Need for immediate gratification – This study suggests that Native Americans being dependent on government programs historically may predispose them to a need for immediate gratification that some consider gambling might provide.
- Prevalence of major historical trauma – Native American issues that have been prevalent in Indian country may also incite tribal members to turn to gambling as a coping mechanism.
- Dependency cycle – Dependency cycles with other addictions (alcohol, food, sex) may lend itself to another form of addiction in gambling.
- Low self-esteem – Addiction issues, depression, unemployment, etc. may all contribute to issues related to low self-esteem and may, in turn, create a need to experience a “high” through a gaming win.
- Limited social/recreational options – Opportunities for recreational opportunities on reservations is limited. Gambling offers that opportunity for recreation.
- Sensation-seeking benefits – Individuals on reservations may look to gambling to escape family dysfunction brought on by the social problems presented on reservations. It may be away to mask and cope, although possibly leading to another addiction, some of the negative in their world.
- Addictive behaviors – Addictions can lead to other addictions which due to the increased opportunities for gambling, could be a gaming addiction in addition to other forms.

To further substantiate the negative changes brought about by gaming on Native lands, one study suggests there has been a 10 percent increase in auto thefts, larceny, violent crime, and bankruptcy within four years of a casino opening and an increase in bankruptcies in a 50-mile proximity of casinos (Gorman, 2018).

While tribes are dealing with several socioeconomic issues and challenges associated with addiction and dependencies, it would seem the Chickasaws have adopted a strategy to at least attempt to mitigate behaviors that are destructive to their citizens. In Chapter 3 there is significant discussion regarding the many programs and opportunities the Chickasaw Nation affords its citizens as it relates to health, fitness, family and children's services, education, addictions, domestic violence, etc. Over half of the revenue acquired by the Chickasaw Nation is spent on healthcare with education, social services, housing, and cultural programming accounting for significant shares as well (Chickasaw Nation Expenditures by Area and Capital Reserves, 2015). A comprehensive healthcare system including a 370,000 square foot Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, numerous health care facilities located throughout the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation, wellness centers, a Women's Recovery Center, a Violence Prevention Center, as well as an investment in an Oklahoma City Indian Clinic, offer quality healthcare and resources to tribal citizens to assist and promote good health and well-being. Many family and children's social service programs as well as educational programming also provide options to enhance the lives of the Chickasaw people. Investments in educational funding for Chickasaws to further their education provide another venue to enhance the quality of their lives. Housing funding increases the capacity for a higher standard of living and cultural funding investments provides Chickasaw citizens with the

opportunity to learn more about their culture and value their native heritage. It would seem the Chickasaws see the challenge of the dismal statistics for Native Americans enough to facilitate significant resources into addressing those through focused programming. “There will always be drug addictions, alcoholism, but there are programs available to our citizens. We also believe education is critical to the process of being self-sufficient, having self-respect, and creating a better living environment for Chickasaw families” (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). The question remains, however, will the investment of resources into these programs designed to promote the health and well-being of the tribal citizen be enough to mitigate the issues brought upon them by the accessibility of gaming to their communities?

The Challenge of the Dilution of Blood Quantum for Tribes:

The issue of blood quantum of Native Americans presents a very unique situation for tribes and one that could eventually produce challenges. At this point, Native Americans, unlike other ethnicities, are the only race forced to establish their membership within their tribes.

Historically, tribes identified by family relationships and culture. Prior to that the first mention of blood as it related to Native Americans was during pre-colonial times when referring to mixed blood. As the United States began to make treaties and there is reference around 1817 to half-bloods, half-breeds, and quarter bloods as it pertained to granting benefits to mixed individuals. During the Reservation Period (1871-1887) it became more about assimilation of the Native Americans into Indian society, however, the Allotment Era (1887-1934) was where the blood quantum became “officially integrated into the legal status of Indian identity for the purposes of dividing communal tribal lands into individual parcels called allotments” (Schmidt, 2011). The General Allotment Act, also referred to as the Dawes Act) of 1887, brought about

disbanding tribal entities and dividing up the land for individual family farming. As one might surmise, there were tremendous inconsistencies and contradictions around the determination of individuals' Indian status. Many were left off rolls who should have been considered Native American. In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act or the Howard-Wheeler Act was passed by Congress. This Act was a movement toward the establishment of tribal governments and self-determination. As a result, the Bureau of Indian Affairs pressured tribes to establish constitutions based on the United States model and, in turn, these constitutions would create enrollment requirements. In turn, the United States government would grant benefits for things like education and health, based on eligibility criteria. Membership roles were encouraged, and this is largely what most tribes have utilized to trace lineage and blood relationships (Schmidt, 2011).

As tribal members and citizens continue to intermarry with other ethnicities, eventually the dilution of tribal blood quantum will become more and more of a challenge in determining citizenry and electing leadership based on degree of blood line. Currently, tribes vary in how they measure blood quantum as it pertains to their members or citizens. Some tribes require as much as 50% while others are significantly less. Florida's Miccosukee Tribe is a part of a small group that requires 50% while others require much less, (Adams, 2011). Some tribes, such as the Cherokee Nation, trace ancestry based on the Dawes Rolls from 1893 versus the blood quantum. This measure of identity becomes more complicated as full blood Indians become more and more a thing of the past.

Schmidt (2011) raises questions around the increased number of Native Americans marrying non-Native Americans and the implications of that for group membership established

by blood quantum, heritage, and identity. He cites that Congress has estimated by the year 2080, eight percent of American Indians will have one-half or more Indian “blood.” And, often times, Native Americans marry Native Americans of other tribes, and the children are forced to choose a tribe to identify with as a member or citizen. How long will it be before this “racial admixture” eliminates the Native American race? What happens when the bloodline is eliminated to the point, it no longer meets tribal criteria?

One should note Native Americans are the only minority group that must present proof of their identity. This occurred during the late 1800’s and it was done by blood quantum or the degree of Indian blood. Tribal governments are given authority to determine who or who is not a citizen or member of their tribe and enroll them within the tribe (Wall, 2015). This determination is made by the following potential ways including ‘degree from Indian ‘blood,’ community recognition, genealogical lines of descent, language, self-identification, cultural affiliation, and place of residence (Thornton 1997, p. 25). One could surmise that the blood quantum classification system is extinguishing people of Native American heritage. Unless a tribe chooses to go to a descendency model as the tribe mixes with other populations the degree of Indian blood depletes.

As Native American first speakers and those that have been raised in a traditional Native American home become more and more scarce, the threat to cultural awareness and languages is real for tribes. With those Native speakers and those raised in a cultural environment growing older, the threats to the heritage Native American becomes more and more of an issue for tribes. Efforts exist in many tribes to attempt to sustain the old ways and the cultural traditions as well as revive the languages by offering courses and ways to learn, but one should

consider how long can this be sustained. One such suggestion suggested possibly a form of a citizenship act that requires a knowledge of the language, the culture, and a return to the home of the tribe (Blood Quantum Influences Native American Identity, *BBC News*, 2011). Certainly, the threat of extinction remains viable to tribes, and one in which inevitably will need to be addressed.

The dilution of blood lines also presents a challenge as it pertains to eligibility for tribal leadership as many tribes require a significant degree of Indian blood for their elected officials. As has been noted the Chickasaws require an individual to be one quarter Chickasaw before they can be in the executive leadership roles. The Cherokees and the Choctaws require the same amount. As fewer and fewer individuals meet the criteria for leadership the pool of potential Native American leaders becomes smaller. The blood quantum restricts the number of qualified candidates and as the population continues to dilute with marriages outside the tribes this is become a restrictive issue among the tribes. It would take a change in their constitutions to change the blood quantum requirements. Cherokees do not have a blood quantum minimum for Chief, the Creeks and Seminoles require 1/4 blood quantum to be eligible to seek and hold the office (McDaniel, personal interview, 2017). Another Oklahoma tribe, the Delaware Nation, requires a blood quantum of 1/8 for their leadership. One tribal member believes descendency vs. blood quantum is imminent and needed. “When we go to descendency, it should bring in more intellectual capital (Keechi, personal interview, 2018). If tribes were to move beyond blood quantum, the potential for a larger pool of leadership candidates exists.

Blood quantum will probably always be an issue within tribes. Perhaps, as tribes are faced with the challenges around delineation of blood lines, one will see more efforts around constitutional reform being undertaken. As for the Chickasaws, “we are self-governed, and we let the Chickasaw citizens decide that. Their view and their choice are what it is today – if it becomes an issue, we will deal with it” (Campbell, personal interview, 2014).

The Challenge of Strong, Continuous Leadership Within Tribes:

A significant section of Chapter 4 was dedicated to the importance of longevity of strong leadership for a tribe. We have considered the success of the Chickasaw Nation could be directly tied to them having two of the longest-serving tribal leaders with Governor James serving 24 years and Governor Anoatubby in his 36th year. One Chickasaw Nation tribal leader notes the reason the Chickasaws are successful is the continuity of strong leadership.

“Governor Anoatubby cares so much about the people and has dedicated his life to the Chickasaw people and the continuity of his strong leadership, made the difference” (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). Campbell believes the continued election of great leaders who are passionate, care about people, and are smart, has made the difference.

It would seem tribes are presented with the challenge of a) electing good leaders, and b) sustaining good leadership in an effort to be more successful. One Delaware tribal member believes that many people get into power in tribes and lack a business background and business savvy. The limited number of tribal members who have the blood quantum to be a leader in a lot of tribes exacerbates the issue of limited intellectual capital for leadership positions. And, due to the lack of opportunity to place and sustain good officials in office, tribes find themselves with a lack of institutional memory. As it is in business and politics, one can’t find a

lot of success if every two to three years one is reeducating a leader. “Continuity of effective leadership is critical and for growing a business, it is essential (Keechi, personal Interview, 2018).

Tribal leaders believe that the wrong leader can set you back. It is incumbent on the tribes to have strong, educated people who are passionate about serving the tribal citizens, protecting the tribe, understanding the history and the culture, and being successful (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). And, with power, often comes corruption, as history has demonstrated. Tribes must be vigilant amount ensuring appropriate checks and balances are in place to prevent this from occurring or the effects on the tribe can be devastating.

The Chickasaws have been able to have that long term longevity in their leaders in the last 40 years and one has found that through that leadership they have been able to build critical relationships, foster economic success, develop more of an appreciation and valuing of their culture not only by their own tribe but by others as well, develop and sustain a vast amount of programs and services for their people, and demonstrate value to not only their own tribe, but to their communities within the Chickasaw Nation, the region, and the state.

Strong, continuous leadership is not always enough for a tribe. Tribes must be strategic in their planning. “Governor Anoatubby always had a vision. We never saw what he could see” (Campbell, personal interview, 2014). Long range planning is essential for economic development and sustaining the tribe. As some researchers have noted, that “secret weapon” of leadership and executing on strategy in the face of challenges is critical for Native Nations (Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt, and Spilde, October 2003).

Conclusion:

As one reflects on the research presented, it is noted that literature presents historical data the Chickasaws weathered significant challenges from the beginning of their European contact. Removed from their homelands, challenged with assimilation and government policies designed to annihilate their existence, and relocated and forced to fight to prosper, the Chickasaws prevailed. Self-Determination provided tribes the opportunity to govern themselves again. “The value or importance of the status of sovereignty concerning Native American Nations is that as codified under the Self-Determination Act is with the support of the United States government in outright funding and artificially giving advantage to Native American Nations in the world of contractual bidding for federally sponsored government contracts” (Southard, personal interview, 2019).¹⁹ The advantage status included support by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in the creation of the 8(A) status and supported by the Small Business Administration (SBA). This Act also, as has been discussed, created the opportunity for tribes to author their own constitutions, elect tribal leaders, and govern and manage federal support programs.

The Chickasaw Nation regrouped, and not only did they prevail, but they also began to become strategic and set upon a course for accumulation of revenue. One Oklahoma Delaware tribal member notes the ability to diversify is critical for tribes. “Diversity is the name of the game. Gaming may have got your foot in the door, but it won’t keep it open,” (Keechi, personal interview, 2018). Regardless of a tribe’s business or political acumen, diversification has to be part of the planning for tribes.

¹⁹Southard, C., (2019), An interview with Comanche Tribal Elder/Delaware Nation Investments Board Chair/Delaware Nation Industries Vice Chair/Economic Developer by G. Michele Campbell Hockersmith, Chickasha, OK, 3/14/19.

The Chickasaws diversified their efforts. Some were successful, some not as much. Yet, they continued on until compacting with the state became a reality. Gaming in Oklahoma passed, and the needle began to move on the dial. Their upward trajectory of revenue was moving faster than they were able to establish the infrastructure, yet they worked to garner the support of their people to invest back into the tribe with the revenue, and place people equipped for the journey in the right positions. They had established their three branches of government which garnered a checks and balance system and continued the fight for their sovereignty as a Nation. Leadership was consistent and allowed strategic efforts to continue. This was somewhat different from other tribes that had term limits and a lack of continuity in leadership.

The Chickasaw Nation took steps to embrace their culture and began to work at teaching, not only themselves, but others, the value of being “Chickasaw.” Revenue was placed back in the tribe rather than dividing it up among the members. Programs and services evolved to be vast offerings in healthcare, education, children and youth, housing, cultural awareness, elder care, health and wellness, and community all designed to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw citizen.

Other tribes were afforded the same opportunities but what is the reason so many believe there is something different about the Chickasaw Nation? This researcher believes the continuity of good, altruistic leadership, business and political savvy, and the pursuit of sovereignty has been something the Chickasaws have been able to tout for the last 40 years but probably significantly so in the last 20 years. They have navigated court battles, the onset of gaming, tremendous growth, and challenges to their sovereignty. The Chickasaw Nation has

been able to persevere, but they have also been able to strategically plan, place the right people in the right positions, diversify their portfolio, and grow revenue exponentially to pour into services for the Chickasaw people.

A strong tribal government operating apart from the commerce side of the tribe is essential. Business decisions that are not influenced by politics must be made every day. It is important that intelligent and altruistic leadership be elected in all three branches (judicial, legislative, and executive). The ability to see the big picture, act on the strategy long-term vs. considering short-term political ramifications is what will move a tribe forward.

Finally, and foremost, tribes and tribal leaders must be cognizant of the importance of retaining their sovereignty. "Sovereignty is not just a legal fact; it is the lifeblood of Indian Nations" (J. Kalt and J. Singer, March 2004). Kalt and Singer note without the ability to self-govern, tribes lack the ability to exist as a sovereign nation within the United States federal system. "Tribal sovereignty is recognized and protected by the United States Constitution, legal precedent, and treaties, as well as applicable principles of human rights" (Kalt and Singer, 2004, p.4).

They suggest that sovereignty is built upon on the foundation of treaties made between the United States and tribes and honoring those treaties as binding contracts as well as the Constitution's recognition of Native American nations as sovereigns, U.S. Presidents' policy statements over the years, and Congressional Acts. Inherent awareness of the battles that have been fought to sustain sovereignty is essential for all.

This ability to self-govern has been one of the single most effective policies that has served as a catalyst for the economic growth of tribes. Preserving the status of sovereignty is

important to sustain self-governance for tribes. However, it is imperative as it relates to economic development. This was a critical element of the Self-Determination Act as it provides Native Nations to enter into the world of economic development under an advantaged status. Federal management of reservations created many issues for tribes economically, socially, and culturally. "Self-determination has turned out to be the only policy that the U.S. has found which has shown real prospect of reversing these disaster and mistakes. As such, sovereignty holds the prospect of being a win-win strategy for all contending parties" (Kalt and J. Singer, 2004, p. 43-44). And, in the current political landscape, with the successes enjoyed by tribes, there is more resistance to the concept of sovereignty. If one garners too much attention and too much success, localities look for more revenue and/or control. Their success holds tribes vulnerable so the importance of fighting for the sovereignty they have enjoyed in recent years must be paramount to their strategy.

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: [REDACTED]

Date: 4/10/23

Statement I

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed: [REDACTED]

Date: 4/10/23

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for electronic sharing after expiry of a bar on access approved by the Swansea University.

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