

As you may know by now, the Legislature and Judicial Departments have recently occupied new buildings located in the 800 block of North Mississippi Street in Ada. The new buildings are absolutely gorgeous; however, it is what the buildings represent that really causes me to stop in awe and wonder.

A short 27 years ago, a small group of Chickasaws and a BIA arbitrator sat together and hammered out the Constitution of the Chickasaw Nation. A short while later, on August 27, 1983, to be exact, the Chickasaw voters ratified the Constitution and our government was reborn. Pursuant to the Constitution, a Governor and Lt. Governor, 13 Legislators and three Tribal Judges were elected and sworn in. Today, some 27 years later, our Nation not only continues to bring that document to life, it flourishes with increased citizenship rolls, larger land base and diversified businesses that provide many programs for all Chickasaws wherever they may call home. We have truly come a long way!

The evolution of the new Legislative Building deserves to be remembered. We only need to visit the Council House Museum in Tishomingo to experience the first legislative building in Oklahoma, a small log building with a dirt floor. Next door to the Museum is the Historical Capitol which housed the three branches of government from its construction in 1898 until shortly after statehood (1907) when it was sold to Johnston County. Under the Constitution of 1983, the Legislature was assigned an office in the headquarters building, the first tribal building to be erected in Ada. The Legislature held their committee meetings and sessions in the large conference room. The Tribal Court shared the same accommodations so all three branches of government were under one roof again. That building still stands as our headquarters but has been renovated and re-decorated over the years. It is today the nicest tribal headquarters building around.

Twenty years ago, a simple, by today's standards anyway, building was erected on the headquarters campus in Ada and it became the new Legislative building. A few years later, it was named for David Stout, a Legislator who died young while in office. Over the years the David Stout Building became too small and not indicative of the success the Nation has enjoyed; therefore, a new Legislative Building was in order.

The Nation went above and beyond to produce a building that is spectacular to view and large enough to accommodate all perceived needs today and in the future. The new building demands total dedication to the cause of our Nation from all who work there.

But the nicest part of the new buildings is to know that they do not belong to us - the elected officials and staff of the two departments. Rather, they belong to you Chickasaw citizens who reap the benefits today and to our generations to come in the future. Please join us on April 19th, 9:30 am, to officially open the Legislative and Judicial Buildings with a ribbon cutting ceremony.