

May 2004

New facilities criss-cross the Chickasaw Nation

Tradition now includes scissors, shovels, ribbon and dirt

What do scissors, shovels, ribbon and dirt have in common? Tradition.

It has become a tradition of the Chickasaw Nation to celebrate the initial building phase and opening of all Chickasaw facilities. At the beginning of a building project, we bring out the golden shovels and meet over the hallowed site to turn that treasured first shovel of dirt. Tradition has it that tribal officials, citizens, contractors, and employees meet together over these pieces of property. We turn over dirt in locations that will house future tribal businesses, health clinics, nutrition sites, and much more. It is not uncommon for us to eat and drink refreshments at these events. Always, the event is begun by prayer that is usually offered by a Chickasaw elder and often prayed in our own Chickasaw language. To tell you the truth, we just have a lot of fun. Those of us turning that shovel of dirt loosen our little plot of soil prior to Governor Anoatubby's traditional one-two-three count. We are all to dig at three. After the shovel activity, we all crowd together and take a picture. Those pictures are usually shown right here in our own *Chickasaw Times*, and sometimes in local newspapers. I encourage you all to try to make it out to one of these events.

To complete the journey, come back to a grand opening. It is truly amazing to stand at that same location months later inside a new building. The tradition here is the ribbon cutting. Our old wooden scissors that you see in all of the pictures have crisscrossed the Chickasaw Nation many times over. What was once a grassy field is now a beautiful new tribal facility, and we are ready to cut that beautiful crimson red ribbon for the official grand opening. The ribbon is always red. A tribal employee hands out a pair of red handled scissors to all of those lucky enough to make the cut. Again, Governor Anoatubby counts "one-two-three," with a grin on his face, he will often tell us not to cut too early.

Ribbons, scissors, dirt and shovels have been a part of our tradition for longer than I have been a part of the Legislature. Traditions are predictable and they give us a sense of family. As members of the Chickasaw Nation, we are family.

I encourage you to come out to one of these events. You can check with Sheila Brashier, Special Projects Coordinator, at 580-332-1165. I can't promise food, but we can promise a good, memorable time. Make this a part of your summer activities and please e-mail me at jparker@mailclerk.ecok.edu if you have questions or comments.

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