

## **PRINCIPAL CHIEF BILL JOHN BAKER**

Bill John Baker is the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the largest sovereign tribal government in the United States. Born and raised in Cherokee County, Chief Baker has devoted much of his life in service to the Cherokee people.

He spent 12 years as a member of the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council and was elected Principal Chief in October 2011 and re-elected in July 2015. As a member of the Tribal Council, Chief Baker worked tirelessly to improve education, health care and job creation throughout the Cherokee Nation.

Chief Baker believes in integrity, accountability and honesty. Those are the things he brings to the office of Principal Chief. During his tenure as Chief, he has made a commitment to homes, health and hope for Cherokee people. Under his leadership, new home construction resumed for the first time in a decade, and now more than 500 new homes have been built for Cherokee Nation citizens. He also advocated for a \$100 million allocation from Cherokee Nation Businesses' casino profits, which was directly invested to expand the tribe's health care system.

In 2017, Cherokee Nation broke ground on a new, 470,000-square-foot health care facility in the tribe's capital city of Tahlequah. The Cherokee Nation has also expanded and built new health centers across the 14-county tribal jurisdiction, which means no Cherokee has to drive more than 30 miles for quality health care.

Over the past six years, more academic scholarships have been awarded than ever before in the history of the tribe, and every eligible applicant who applied was awarded a Cherokee Nation academic scholarship last year. As Principal Chief, he authored an executive order to raise the tribe's minimum wage and he established the tribe's maternity leave program for expectant mothers.

Chief Baker secured a historic hunting and fishing compact with the state of Oklahoma, and he negotiated an expanded car tag compact for Cherokee Nation citizens statewide. The sale of Cherokee Nation car tags provides more than \$5 million annually for public education in northeast Oklahoma.

With about 350,000 tribal citizens and more than 11,000 employees, Cherokee Nation and CNB remain among the largest employers in northeastern Oklahoma and have an annual economic impact in Oklahoma of more than \$2 billion. Today, more Cherokees work for the tribe and its businesses than at any time in history.

Chief Baker is a graduate of Tahlequah High School and Northeastern State University. He earned degrees in political science and history. He has also been a small business owner for more than 40 years. Chief Baker resides in Tahlequah with his wife, Sherry (Robertson) Baker. They have been blessed with six children and are the proud grandparents of 13 grandchildren and one great-grandson.