

Choctaw headquarters construction on target

By: Molly M. Fleming The Journal Record May 19, 2017 0

OKLAHOMA CITY - When Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton was put into office in 2014, his goal was to bring more economic diversity to the Durant-based tribe.

He kept the office in the 2015 election. He has overseen the tribe's expansion of its business ventures with new travel plazas, a Chili's franchise, additional amenities at its casino resort, and even opening a grocery store. And that's only a few projects.



Workers walk toward the Choctaw Nation headquarters building under construction in Durant. (Courtesy photo)

As of December, the tribe had 40 projects under construction. One of the largest developments is the 500,000- square-foot headquarters building. Construction started in January 2016.

"This is our stake in the ground," Batton said. "We're not going to move to Mexico. We're proud and honored to be here."

He spoke Tuesday at the Downtown Oklahoma City Rotary Club meeting.

He said the tribe has a long history with Durant. When the tribe was looking for a place to put its headquarters, no other city welcomed its people. But Durant offered the tribe the former Oklahoma Presbyterian College for Girls building. The Choctaw Nation constructed a building next door, but even with that space, all the related offices do not fit.

The nation leases space in 32 locations across Durant. There are 9,000 people who work for Choctaw Nation, but they are not all in Durant.

Oklahoma City-based Frankfurt-Short-Bruza Associates architecture firm designed the new headquarters. Manhattan Construction is the general contractor.

FSB's Native American Market Principal Jason Holuby said the tribe's employee base is growing so quickly that he already had to redesign the third floor, which was originally kept empty. But the change hasn't affected the project's timeline because the office space is being built with moveable walls. Also, the technical systems were already routed to the third floor.

Holuby said a majority of the building will be ready by year's end. Batton said the tribe will move in next March.

"They're going to have a phased move-in because there are a lot of moving pieces," Holuby said. "They don't want to shut down services."

The next addition to the campus will be the judicial building. Batton said the tribe is growing its judicial branch. Holuby said the judicial building wasn't part of the master plan, but there was space for it. It will have one large court room and two smaller court rooms.

The campus also has a 800-space parking garage and a data center. The data center can withstand 250 mile-per-hour winds. "For such a large project, the headquarters building has gone smoothly," Holuby said.

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