

Choctaw Indian Fair a chance to engage community, share Gospel cross-culturally

*By Lindsey Williams
Writing Specialist*

For the first time, the Multicultural Ministries Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) will manage a booth at the 74th annual Choctaw Indian Fair from July 10-13.

Located in Choctaw, Miss., the fair presents many cultural arts, including handmade basketry and beadwork, various dances each day, and traditional foods. Wednesday night features the Princess Pageant, in which a new Choctaw Princess will be crowned based on her handcrafted dress and amiable personality. Guests also have the chance to watch the exciting World Series Stickball tournaments played daily.

Ray Duplessie, MBCB Choctaw Ministry contract consultant, sees the fair as a way to build awareness of the Choctaw people within the surrounding community.

“One thing I find interesting is that a lot of people in Mississippi are not aware that Choctaws live here,” Duplessie shared. “Those who are aware often think of a reservation as one continuous strip of land, but the Choctaw reservation in Mississippi is a little bit different in that respect. We’re divided up into several communities. There are two towns, Carthage and Philadelphia, which have a highway running between them, and that’s where the city of Choctaw sits. All the Choctaw governmental agencies are there, and it holds the largest of the communities, the Pearl River Community. Carthage and Philadelphia are towns of their own, not a part of the reservation, but other communities exist around them, and within Louisville and Laurel, too.”

Duplessie encourages Mississippi Baptists to partake in one of the Choctaws' greatest social events of the year in order to engage cross-culturally with their neighbors.

"The Choctaw Fair is an opportunity for people outside the reservation to experience some of what the Choctaw people are about," Duplessie said. "It's kind of like a county fair; they have competitions between the different communities, rides for the kids, and some Choctaw cuisine. One famous food is the Indian Taco, which is fried bread with taco meat and all sorts of stuff on it. Every night will also feature a different singer or band, including Christian artist Michael W. Smith on Thursday night."



Du
pl
es
si
e
re
co
gn
iz
es
th
e
fa
ir
as
a
pe
rf
ec
t
pl
ac
e

to
le
ar
n
mo
re
ab
ou
t
th
e
in
di
vi
du
al
s
wh
o
fo
rm
th
e
Ch
oc
ta
w
co
mm
un
it
ie
s,
to
ce
le
br

at
e
th
e
ri
ch
he
ri
ta
ge
th
ey
ho
ld
,
an
d
to
co
mm
un
ic
at
e
th
e
lo
ve
of
Ch
ri
st
to
pa
ss
er
sb

y.
Pa
rt
ne
ri
ng
wi
th
th
e
Ch
oc
ta
w
Tr
an
sl
at
io
n
Co
mm
it
te
e,
wh
ic
h
is
cu
rr
en
tl
y
wo
rk
in

g
on
a
mo
de
rn
Ch
oc
ta
w
Bi
bl
e,
th
e
Mu
lt
ic
ul
tu
ra
l
Mi
ni
st
ri
es
De
pa
rt
me
nt
wi
ll
gi
ve
ou

t
Li
tt
le
Bi
bl
es
,
tr
ac
ts
,
an
d
fa
ns
wi
th
Jo
hn
3:
16
in
Ch
oc
ta
w
on
on
e
si
de
an
d
th
e
na

me
s
of
th
e
Ch
oc
ta
w
Ba
pt
is
t
ch
ur
ch
es
on
th
e
ot
he
r.

“(The Choctaws) have a Bible that was translated back in the 1880s, but of course, it’s become outdated,” Duplessie explained. “The Choctaw Translation Committee finished the New Testament and is now working on the Old Testament. They are raising money to continue the efforts to do that, so we partnered with them to help get a new translation. One of the evident problems of Choctaw is that, kind of like the English of the United States, England, Canada, and Australia, we all have different dialects and wordings. Trying to get about six dialects of Choctaw to be cohesive has been a challenge.”

Multicultural Ministries will also use their booth as an

opportunity for children and teenagers to sign up for the Choctaw Basketball and Evangelism Camp to be held July 25-26. The camp is in partnership with the Neshoba County Baptist Association and the Church at the ARC. With Lowell Walker, MBCB African American Ministry contract consultant, as coach leader, the goal is to share the Gospel with the kids through a beloved sport. "Basketball is a very popular activity on the reservation," said Duplessie. "In fact, the Choctaw girls' team at Choctaw Central previously ranked first in the state."

Overall, Duplessie views the fair as "a great opportunity to get to know who Choctaws are and an opportunity to share the Gospel with anyone who attends. It's a chance to visit us and get an understanding of a people who live in the same state. Please pray with us that it is a safe time for everyone, and that we, as well as others, will be able to share the Gospel in some way, so that attendees can come to know the God we serve. We also want to pray for the Choctaw churches, that they may grow and continue to help others learn more about who Jesus is and accept Him as Lord and Savior."

For more information on the Choctaw Indian Fair and ticket prices, [click here](#). The parking lot for the fair is far from the entrance, but shuttles are available.