

Iti Fabussa



Have you ever had a question about traditional Choctaw culture, lifeways, or history? This month's issue of Bishinik introduces what will be a new feature for the publication, "Iti Fabussa." Each month, the column will be answering written letters from readers who want to know about anything within these subject areas. The purpose is to begin a visible conversation between Choctaws young and old, from all walks of life about the things that make Choctaw people Choctaw. Together, we can strengthen our Choctaw identities and increase our knowledge about the Choctaw past, and in this way develop a more informed and culturally grounded understanding of where we are headed as a people in the future.

The writers of "Iti Fabussa" are excited about the possibilities this column offers, and cordially invite anyone who has a question about Choctaw culture, lifeways, history, food, clothing, famous people, stories, games, artwork, or anything else traditional, to write it and send it in to the Bishinik this month. Next month's column will feature the answers to selected questions from our readers.

While future additions of "Iti Fabussa" will be dedicated to answering our readers' questions, in this first month's column will answer a sample question:

"What is 'Iti Fabussa,' and why was the phrase chosen as the name of this column?"

"Iti Fabussa" is a Choctaw phrase meaning "pole," or more literally, "long, slender piece of wood." As some readers are aware, one particular pole has a great deal of importance to traditional Choctaw people.

Choctaw communities traditionally kept a record of our history

through oral stories that were passed down from elders to youth. Some of these stories explain how the Choctaw people came to exist. According to one of the two main versions of the origins account, the Choctaw originally lived far in the west. Life became difficult and the Choctaw and Chickasaw, were directed by a prophet to journey together to make a new home. Every night, the prophet placed a sacred pole in the ground and, by morning, a supernatural force would have caused it to lean in the direction they were to travel that day. Every morning for months, years according to some accounts, the pole was found to be leaning to the east, and so journeyed the group. Finally, in what is now Winston County, Mississippi, the pole remained upright all night, indicating that the people had arrived at their new home. This general area became the homeland of the Choctaw people.

The writers of this column have chosen the name "Iti Fabussa," both to honor the pole that was used to guide Choctaw people on our original journey, and because of the symbolism the pole provides. Every morning on the original Choctaw journey, the end of the pole in the ground pointed in the direction that the people had come from, towards the past. The top end of pole pointed in the direction they would be headed in the future. It is hoped that through the traditional information presented and shared in this column, Choctaw people will be able to connect with our Choctaw pasts and together create a uniquely Choctaw future.