

Principle Chief Bill John Baker

Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker currently serves as the 17th elected Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the largest Indian tribe in the United States. Born and raised in Cherokee County, he is married to Sherry (Robertson) Baker. Principal 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.

During his time on the council, Principal Chief Baker worked tirelessly to improve education, health care and job creation throughout the Cherokee Nation. The first piece of legislation he signed as Principal Chief was an act he co-authored during his time on the council. The Health Care Dividend Act mandated an additional 5 percent of Cherokee Nation's gaming profits be directed to contract health care programs, a change that will help strengthen Cherokees for generations to come.

His first year in office, 750 new Cherokees were hired and new home construction resumed for the first time in a decade. Principal Chief Baker is currently working on a comprehensive plan to renovate and expand the Cherokee Nation health care system, which is the largest tribally operated health system in the United States.

With more than 300,000 citizens, and nearly 9,000 employees, the Cherokee Nation is one of the largest employers in northeast Oklahoma. A recent economic impact report showed Cherokee Nation has a \$1.2 billion impact on the area.

Principal Chief Baker is a graduate of Tahlequah High School and Northeastern State University. He earned his bachelor's degree in political science and history, with minors in psychology and sociology. He has been a small business owner in Tahlequah for more than 40 years. As the son and grandson of educators, his passion for education also led him to complete the requirements for his teaching certification.

Principal Chief Baker still resides in Tahlequah, Okla., with his wife, Sherry. They have been blessed with six children and are the proud grandparents of nine.