



## Chief Ethel Cook

August 9, 1951 - September 17, 2023

Chief Ethel Cook, beloved chief of the Ottawa Tribe passed away on Sunday, September 17, 2023, at her home at the age of 72. As a direct descendant of Chief Joseph Badger King, Ethel was born and raised in Miami, Ottawa County, OK. She married her high school sweetheart, Sam W Cook III, 53 years ago, who served in the Air Force and one year in Vietnam. They welcomed three daughters, Tonya Cook, Samantha Cook, and Sherrise Starkey, with husband Andrew. She also has three grandchildren – Levi, Sam, and Casidee who light up their world.

She became actively involved in the Ottawa Tribe by being on the Election Committee, and in 2003, she and Sam moved back to Miami to spend time and be closer to aging parents. Their relocation allowed Ethel to become even more involved with the Tribe by becoming the Election Committee Chairperson. In addition, she continued to serve the Tribe on the Gaming Commission for High Winds Casino. Ethel also used this time to attend classes in the Ottawa Tribal Language while learning more about the history of the Tribe and its people. She ran for Second Chief in 2007 and was elected for a term of 3 years to become the first female Second Chief in Ottawa Tribe's history. Shortly after becoming Second Chief, the late Chief Charles Todd became ill, and Ethel was able to fulfill his duties as Chief. In May 2011, she was elected Chief and became the first female to hold the position of Chief in Tribal history. Cook has been Chief for the past 12 years (4 Terms).

During this time, Chief has assisted and watched the Tribe build a successful High Winds Casino, Otter Stop Convenience Store, Adawe Travel Plaza, and the most recent addition Otter Cove Diner. In addition, our tribal businesses have continued to progress in their public awareness to promote each business better and become known locally and nationally.

She was awarded, in 2019, the Modern-Day Warrior award by the Oklahoma NIGC for her tireless efforts to support the Tribal Gaming Government, and the NEO A&M American Indian Center awarded her the Distinguished Leader Award for service to their organization.

In 2021, the Miami Regional Chamber of Commerce presented Chief with the Impact Award, then, in 2022, she received the #LoveLocal Award, she continued to serve on the Claremore Indian Hospital Executive Board, was nominated and elected Inter-Tribal Council (ITC) President by the other nine local Chiefs for four years and Chairperson of the Miami Chamber Board as well as the Miami Area Economic Development Services Board (MAEDS). Chief also served on the EPA Region 6 Tribal Operations Committee as Tribal Co-Chair.

The family will begin receiving friends at 10:00 AM on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at the Ottawa-Peoria Cultural Center on Eight Tribes Trail. Chief will be laying in state until 4:00 PM on Friday for friends and Community members to visit.

Graveside services will then be on Saturday, September 23, 2023, at 2:00 PM at the Ottawa Indian Cemetery. Services have been placed in the care of Brown-Winters Funeral Home and Cremation Service in Miami.

Friends and family may send the family notes of encouragement by viewing

Chief Cook's Tribute Page at [www.brown-winters.com](http://www.brown-winters.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Ottawa Indian Cemetery

61400 E 115 RD  
Miami, OK 74354

# Previous Events

## All day visitation

SEP 20. 10:00 AM (CT)

Ottawa/Peoria Cultural Center  
114 S Eight Tribes Trail  
Miami, OK 74354

## All day visitation

SEP 21 (CT)

Ottawa/Peoria Cultural Center  
114 S Eight Tribes Trail  
Miami, OK 74354

## All day visitation

SEP 22 (CT)

Ottawa/Peoria Cultural Center  
114 S Eight Tribes Trail  
Miami, OK 74354

## Graveside Service

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SEP **23**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Ottawa Indian Cemetery  
61400 E 115 RD  
Miami, OK 74354

# Tribute Wall



“ *My Mama and I made so many memories on her journey of leukemia. I will cherish every one of them as well as all of our girls trips that she took w/us girls. Her laughter, her smile, her heart, her presence is so terribly missed! Thank you to everyone for all their love, support, kind words in this time of need from our whole family! We appreciate all of you! We can't thank you all enough! Hugs from our family to yours! May God Bless you all!*



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**Sam Cook** - September 27, 2023 at 04:51 PM

BT

*Did you establish a place to give a memorial in memory of Ethel? We couldn't make it to the service and I didn't get flowers sent, but would like to give to an organization in her memory. Ethel was so very important to the extended family since she is the one who always communicated with us on things about the family. We didn't see all of you often, but you and especially Ethel have been in my prayers after I learned of her leukemia. Betty Tautfest and Cook family*

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**Betty Tautfest** - October 02, 2023 at 11:44 AM

JU

*Do you guys happen to know a renee whitfield its my mom and my grandmother was a holocaust survivor and my mom was born in the hospital there the native had an affair and thats how my mom started she told me she used to get checks but they stopped , i was wondering because i remember an ethal coming to my courtcase in ca when i was a little boy after me and my mom escaped human trafficking , my mom left the reservation when she was in her teenage years and she lived there with her dad so i have no idea where i come from*

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**Justin** - December 25, 2024 at 06:40 PM

KM

“ Dear Sherrise,  
Praying for you and your family at this most difficult time. Your mom was a real special person, and you have a lot of her special qualities. Keeping you and your family in prayer.



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**Karen Meade** - September 24, 2023 at 01:55 PM

KM

“ To the Cook family , my sincere sympathies. May God's light shine upon your mom perpetually. May all your loving memories give you comfort.



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**Karen Meade** - September 24, 2023 at 01:51 PM

SC

“ Lovely lady. Enjoyed working with her. Her family and friends are in my prayers.

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**Shelly Crossley** - September 23, 2023 at 02:39 PM

VF

“ Vicki F. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

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**Vicki F.** - September 22, 2023 at 06:31 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.



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September 22, 2023 at 02:18 PM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.



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September 22, 2023 at 12:28 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

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September 22, 2023 at 12:28 PM



“ *Sorry for the families & Tribes loss*

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**anonymous** - September 22, 2023 at 09:51 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.



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September 21, 2023 at 03:18 PM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.



September 21, 2023 at 10:27 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.



September 20, 2023 at 05:43 PM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.



September 20, 2023 at 03:08 PM



“ A grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

September 20, 2023 at 02:49 PM

TF

“ *Tabitha Langston and family purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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**Tabitha Langston and family** - September 20, 2023 at 12:41 PM

-L

“ - *Laura Leis purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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**- Laura Leis** - September 20, 2023 at 11:36 AM

-L

“ - *Laura Leis planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.*

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**- Laura Leis** - September 20, 2023 at 11:36 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 20, 2023 at 08:38 AM

JN

“ *Ethel always had a smile. I enjoyed our little visits in the Garden Plain Post Office. I know she will be missed by many but her legacy will live on. Prayers for the family.*

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**Jean Nance** - September 19, 2023 at 11:31 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

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September 19, 2023 at 05:15 PM



“ *Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 04:25 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

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September 19, 2023 at 04:25 PM



“ *Fairest of All was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 02:53 PM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 01:37 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

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September 19, 2023 at 01:37 PM



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 01:21 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

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September 19, 2023 at 01:21 PM



“ *Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 12:43 PM



“ *Heavenly Heights Bouquet was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 12:40 PM



“ *Chief Cook was an amazing woman. I feel blessed to have known her.*

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**Sherri Clemons** - September 19, 2023 at 12:34 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 12:02 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.*

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September 19, 2023 at 12:02 PM



“ *Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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September 19, 2023 at 11:22 AM



“ *I didn't know her well, but I was lucky to work on a few things with her. I could see her love for her people and the community in all she did. She will be deeply missed.*

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**Callie Cortner** - September 19, 2023 at 10:59 AM



“ *Sending thoughts and prayers to Ethel's family and the Ottawa family!!! We will sincerely miss Chief Ethel. Amcon Distributing*

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**David Lamb** - September 19, 2023 at 10:58 AM



“ *The Amcon Distributing Family purchased the Treasured Lilies Spray for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.*



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**The Amcon Distributing Family** - September 19, 2023 at 10:43 AM

TF

“ The Amcon Distributing Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Chief Ethel Cook.

The Amcon Distributing Family - September 19, 2023 at 10:43 AM

VH

“ I knew Ethel for years she was a good friend and she helped me lots of times and was there to listen if I picked up phone to talk her memories will always be with me and her smile God bless family zee you one of these days

Vickie Herrin - September 18, 2023 at 09:12 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Chief Ethel Cook.



September 18, 2023 at 07:09 PM

EB

“ She was a good, kind and caring person. She was unbelievably strong. I have never known anyone who fought to live for so long. She give her all and lived it well.

Edra Buckmaster - September 18, 2023 at 06:26 PM

TA

“ I spoke with her a few times and she was always so kind and helpful. She will be truly missed. Rest well Chief Ethel Cook 🌸🌺🌻



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Tamra - September 18, 2023 at 02:31 PM

KU

“ I remember Chuck telling me early in Chief's tenure about her asking questions and one of the men told her “You need to choose your battles.” She looked him in the eyes and said, “I did. I choose this one.” It was on an issue of tribal sovereignty, before many people even considered that an issue.

Many times Chuck came home late because Chief would want to talk with him about a situation and get his thoughts on it. I never knew what was said, all he said is “Sorry, Chief wanted to speak to me.”

She was supportive of Berkeley in his activities around the area and always encouraged him and me.

Chuck doesn't show emotions, but he loved, respected, and admired Chief. The way he spoke of her, his feelings became our feelings for her. Our thoughts are with the family and friends. I know her memory is a blessing for all who knew her. She was a community builder and a great leader.

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Kit Waters Ulrey - September 18, 2023 at 01:03 PM