

## Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma donates \$1 million to Dean McGee Eye Institute

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has contributed \$1 million to the Dean McGee Eye Institute Capital Campaign. Proper vision is a major goal of tribe, Choctaw Chief Gregory E. Pyle said.

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The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has contributed \$1 million to the Dean McGee Eye Institute Capital Campaign, putting the institute within \$2 million of its \$46 million campaign goal to help fund its new research facility and renovate its original building constructed in 1975.

“We are extremely grateful to the Choctaw Nation for this very generous gift,” said Gregory Skuta, chief executive of Dean McGee. “Our ophthalmologists, led by Stephen Fransen, have enjoyed a long and meaningful relationship with Choctaw leaders since 2001 in working together to preserve vision for the Choctaw people through the Diabetic Retinopathy Outreach Program clinic in Talihina.”

He said the gift will help expand the institute's clinical and research capabilities in treating and preventing vision loss from diabetes and other disorders in tribal members.

Fransen and other ophthalmologists have treated more than 3,000 tribal members at Talihina and Oklahoma City clinics, performing nearly 600 retinal laser procedures in the Talihina clinic alone. The Choctaw Nation's health system crosses a wide area of southeastern Oklahoma to serve a large rural population.

“Encouraging American Indians to seek vision care is a major health goal of the Choctaw Nation, especially considering the high risk of diabetic retinopathy in this population,” Choctaw Chief Gregory E. Pyle said. “The Dean McGee Eye Institute has proactively dedicated itself to working with us to help diagnose and treat retinal problems earlier in the disease process and thereby achieve better outcomes.”



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