

## **Herbert G. Johnson, Sr., Principal Chief of The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Walks On**

It is with profound sadness that the Tribal Council of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas reports that Herbert G. Johnson, Sr., the Tribe's Mikko Choba Skalaaba - Principal Chief, passed away after a brief hospital stay on August 9<sup>th</sup>. He was 79 years old and had served as Mikko Choba Skalaaba since January 1, 2020.

A member of the Beaver Clan, Mr. Johnson served his people in many capacities throughout his entire life. He was twice elected to the Tribal Council and worked as the Tribal Security Director for over twenty-one years. He was elected as the Tribe's Second Chief on October 5, 2013, and remained in that position until he was installed as Principal Chief following the passing of the then Principal Chief – Mikko Colabe III – the late Clem Sylestine in 2019. A deacon and elder at the Indian Presbyterian Church, Mr. Johnson also served on the Big Sandy (Dallardsville) School Board for 48 years.

Herbert G. Johnson, Sr. was born on April 3, 1942, on the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas Indian Reservation near Livingston, Texas. After high school, Mr. Johnson enrolled at Jacksonville College in Jacksonville, Texas. A Jacksonville College legend, he earned All-American status in Basketball following the 1963 season. Although he stood only 5'6", he set a then all-time national record when he scored 67 points in a single game. He went on to average 33.5 points a game for the season in an era that did not feature a 3-point shot. Jacksonville College honored Mr. Johnson as a Distinguished Alumnus in 2020. Mr. Johnson also attended the University of Houston and played for Coach Guy V. Lewis for one year.

When asked by the Smithsonian National Museum of American Indians what message he would like to share with Tribal youth, Mr. Johnson stated, "Our future lies with you. Choose a good path, follow it, and fulfill your dreams. Keep your traditions alive. Make good choices. Always stay positive and make a difference."

"Our Mikko Choba Skalaaba was an inspiration for us all," said Nita Battise, Chairperson of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. "He was always respectful of all people and listened carefully before forming a decision. His leadership and guidance were a great asset to the Tribe and he will be deeply missed."

The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe will be observing a period of mourning.