



DEC 15, 2022 | "RVFO RAKKO" BIG WINTER MONTH | VOL. 52, ISSUE 24

# MVSKOKE NEWS

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## SUPPORTERS ATTEND CREEK FREEDMAN CIVIL LAWSUIT HEARING

PLAINTIFFS APPEAR IN DISTRICT COURT IN HOPES OF SUMMARY JUDGMENT

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma - A jury trial has been scheduled for Apr. 4, 2023, in a civil lawsuit seeking Muscogee Creek Nation citizenship for two Creek Freedmen descendants.

The petition filed with the MCN District Court on Mar. 11 alleges that Rhonda K. Grayson and Jeffrey Kennedy applied for MCN citizenship and were denied.

The petition seeks a declaratory judgment from the court that all Creek Freedmen's descendants are Creek citizens under Article 2 of the 1866 treaty.

On Dec. 1, a hearing was held on a motion for summary judgment filed by the plaintiffs in the case, but MCN District Court Judge Denette Mouser has yet to issue an order granting summary judgment as of the publication of this update.

Damario Solomon-Simmons, who represents Grayson and Kennedy in the case, spoke to the media after the conclusion of the hearing.

"We put on a compelling case, a clear case, a specific case that said that article two of the Creek Treaty of 1866 says 'Creeks of African descent are entitled to full citizenship rights and benefits as any other Creek,' Solomon-Simmons said. "That's the case."

MCN AG Geri Wisner issued the following statement after the hearing.

"Muscogee (Creek) Special Judge Denette Mouser heard arguments today in the case of Rhonda Grayson and Jeffrey Kennedy vs. the Citizenship Board of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

The Plaintiffs' application for citizenship in the Muscogee



Freedmen supporters stand outside of the Mound Building where they awaited to hear if a judge would make a summary judgment on a recent Creek Freedman civil lawsuit filed in district court. Due to a full-court capacity, some supporters had to wait outside. A jury trial for the case is set for Apr. 4, 2023. Okmulgee, OK. Dec. 1, 2022. (Braden Harper/Reporter)

(Creek) Nation has previously been denied by the Citizenship Board because petitioners did not meet constitutionally imposed eligibility standards that require demonstrating Creek ancestry by blood. As allowed by Muscogee (Creek)

law, petitioners appealed the Board's decision for administrative review by the Muscogee (Creek) District Court.

The legal scope of today's hearing was narrowly confined to consideration of the Plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment requesting a finding that the Citizenship Board had not acted consistent with Muscogee (Creek) law and administrative procedures in denying petitioners' application for citizenship."

FREEDMAN - 2

## ERNEST CHILDERS MIDDLE SCHOOL HOSTED THE ANNUAL VETERANS DAY ASSEMBLY

MUSCOGEE CITIZEN VETERANS SPOKE TO THE STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES SERVING THEIR COUNTRY

by **KAYLEA BERRY**  
REPORTER

BROKEN ARROW, Oklahoma - Ernest Childers Middle School hosted its annual Veterans Day assembly to show its appreciation for Veterans and invited Muscogee citizen veterans to speak to the students on Nov. 15. Roughly 1,000 students, staff members, guests, and veterans in attendance for the event. The students wrote letters for the veterans, learned about patriotism, and built a valor wall.

Muscogee citizen veterans that spoke during the assembly included U.S. Air Force Veterans Kaylea Berry and Grover Wind, U.S. Army Veteran Jim Chalak, and U.S. Marine Corps and



A banner created by students at Ernest Childers Middle School hangs in a hallway for the Veterans Day assembly on Nov. 15, 2022, in Broken Arrow, Okla. (Kaylea Berry/Reporter)

Army Veteran Charles Melton. Each veteran briefly shared their

ASSEMBLY - 2

## NATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS CALLS MUSCOGEE RAPPER BEST MALE ARTIST

STEN JODDI TAKES HOME MULTIPLE AWARDS AS THE "BEST" TITLE OF TWO DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

NIAGRA FALLS, New York - The Mvskoke Rapper Sten Joddi took home two major awards from the Native American Music Awards held at the Seneca Casino and Hotel commemorating Native American Heritage Month in November.

He was awarded the Best Hip-Hop Recording and the Best Male Artist of the Year awards. The ceremony occurred after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, with the last in-person show taking place in 2019.

"The music I got the awards for was actually behind in submissions," Sten Joddi said to explain the show's hiatus.

The collaborative song "Itz a



(1) Sten Joddi pictured with his awards at the NAMA. (Submission: Facebook)  
(2) Sten Joddi performing at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Festival 2022. (Morgan Taylor)

Native Thang" won the best song of 2019. The song features other native artists, including Adrian Harjo, Chase Manhattan, the Native, and Joey Stylez.

Sten Joddi dreamed of performing at the NAMA since his first visit watching MikeBone perform in

STEN JODDI - 2

## MUSCOGEE EDUCATOR NAMED OKLAHOMA COUNCIL FOR INDIAN EDUCATION TEACHER OF THE YEAR

CHOLAKOCEE WERITO HONORED FOR NATIVE CULTURE CURRICULUM

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
REPORTER

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oklahoma - Education is an essential topic across every culture. This includes where you send children to school, who instructs them, and what they will learn. The students in Cholakocce Werito's (Mvskoke) classroom receive a quality education while learning about Native American Cultures. In light of these efforts, Werito was recently named the 2022 Oklahoma Council for Indian Education Teacher of the Year.

Werito is a kindergarten teacher at Eugene Field Elementary in the Oklahoma City Public School System. She is a Muscogee (Creek) Citizen and has Navajo ancestry. She has taught at OKCPS for twelve years and serves as the Native American Student Services Teacher Representative. Werito's teaching method is unique in how it authentically represents different Native American Cultures.

Her grandfather inspired Werito to pursue a career in education. He saw it as a way to give back to his people. When Werito started her college education, she was not quite sure what career path to follow but knew she enjoyed working with children.

"I really like working with younger children," Werito said. "Early childhood fit perfectly."

Growing up in the Oklahoma City Public School System herself, Werito did not have a lot of Native influences outside of her family. She understands what it means for students to see a woman of color as a teacher and role model.



Cho Werito was named the 2022 Oklahoma Council for Indian Education Teacher of the Year. She currently teaches kindergarten at Eugene Field Elementary in Oklahoma City. Werito uses a unique curriculum that teaches children about Native American Cultures. (Submission)

"I know the importance of having Native teachers in an urban school," Werito said. "That has really led me to stay within the district."

Werito has found creative ways to implement Native Culture into her curriculum. She believes that representation is essential not only for the Native students she instructs but the non-Native students as well.

"A lot of the literature and a lot of the curriculum doesn't have a huge Native presence," Werito said. "I think there's an increase now, but before, there was not."

EDUCATION - 2



FREEDMAN

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After a nearly two-hour hearing that featured arguments from the Plaintiffs’ attorneys and the Muscogee (Creek) Office of Attorney General, Judge Mouser stated that she would consider the arguments and issue a ruling at a later date.

“It is clear that the Citizenship Board followed the law in denying Plaintiffs’ applications for citizenship. The Muscogee (Creek) Constitution sets forth clear standards that make no provision for extending citizenship to non-Creek individuals,” Attorney General Wisner said.

Addressing arguments that failure to enroll non-Creek individuals as citizens is discriminatory, Attorney General Wisner

said, “Efforts to make this case about race are legally unfounded and morally reprehensible. Race is not a consideration in the citizenship process. Petitioners for citizenship are not asked to identify their race, only to validate their lineage as a Muscogee (Creek) person. This case is about lineage-based citizenship, and any assertion otherwise is blatantly false.”

Pending the outcome of Judge Mouser’s ruling on the motion for the summary judgment, the trial is scheduled to begin on Apr. 4, 2023.

Both parties will now proceed with the discovery process in anticipation of the Apr. 4 trial date.

Mvskoke Media will have ongoing coverage of this developing story.

EDUCATION

Continued from Page 1

A missing element of the standard curriculum Werito noted was how Native people were not correctly differentiated by tribe; instead, they were depicted as monolithic. As a Native herself, Werito makes sure each tribe she discusses is appropriately identified. This includes correctly identifying the tribal affiliation of her Native Students as well.

Some of the ways Werito teaches about Native Cultures is through pop-up books and maps. Specifically, she will point out the location and tribal affiliation of the authors of the books that are read in her class. The Muscogee (Creek) and Navajo nations are commonly featured in her lessons. One of the most important lessons she teaches is that Native People are still here; they are not merely relics of the past.

“I had a student a few years ago tell me that Native Americans were extinct, so we had to go on this long journey saying that’s not true,” Werito said. “I am Native American. I am not extinct; I am Muscogee.”

To create a more personal

connection to modern-day Natives, Werito shares personal pictures of her and her family in traditional Muscogee clothing. Specifically, she believes her students must see other children their age in traditional attire.

Werito also teaches the Mvskoke language as part of the cultural lesson. Although Werito is not a fluent speaker, she still teaches Mvskoke words and phrases.

When she was selected as the 2022 Indian Educator of the Year, Werito said that although she does not typically seek out praise, it was nice to be recognized for her work in the classroom.

“Having that is seeing that people recognize the work that I put into it,” Werito said. “My biggest thing is helping children learn and helping them get more knowledge about Native Americans in the process.”

Werito continues to further her educational career by pursuing a Master of Arts in Social Foundations of Education at Oklahoma State University. Her research interests include Native American representation in early childhood literacy, professional development, and early childhood advocacy in education.

ASSEMBLY

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military time and what it meant for them.

Leighanna Davis, Childers Middle School Principal, said, “By having Mr. Grover Wind and the other speakers share their experiences serving in the different branches of the United States Armed Forces, students were able to learn about the impact the Muscogee Nation has had not only in Oklahoma but in the United States.”

All 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade students wrote thank you cards to the veterans during an Advisory class. This class is not for a grade but helps students relate school activities to outside events.

In Mrs. Debbie Romo’s 8th grade Language Arts class, students read the novel “Nothing but the Truth” by Avi, learned about the “Star Spangled Ban-

ner,” used poems such as Johnny Cash’s “Ragged Old Flag” to learn annotation, and learned how to fold the flag and what each fold represents.

“Nothing but the Truth really gives me a chance to spend time with the kids discussing patriotism and what it means to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth,” Romo said. “These activities give them ownership of our flag, anthem, and country.”

The Junior National Honor Society helped set up and clean up for the Veterans Day assembly and is responsible for putting up the Wall of Valor every year. The wall displays a star with a veteran’s name, rank, student’s name, and relationship to the student.

“There is just something about seeing a family member’s name on that wall that makes us all stand a little taller,” said Romo. “Even as old as I am, it gives me such a sense of pride to see my family members’ names

up there all year.”

Childers Middle School leadership class, sponsored by Mrs. Williams, worked with the Blue Star Mothers to raise items for troops. Romo said that the students did a great job gathering items to donate.

According to the Blue Star Mothers website, their mission is “We are mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, foster mothers and female legal guardians who have children serving in the military, guard or reserves, or children who are veterans. We support each other and our children while promoting patriotism. Our organization focuses on our mission every day and will never, ever, forsake our troops, our veterans, or the families of our Fallen Heroes.”

More information about the organization or donations can be found at [www.bluestarmothers.org](http://www.bluestarmothers.org).

STEN JODDI

Continued from Page 1

2017, and after years of requesting his performance, he finally got his time to shine.

“I always wanted to perform there,” he said. “I wanted to represent not only hip hop, but I wanted to represent our tribe, and I wanted to perform.”

Whether he is performing at the most significant awards show for Native Americans, portraying his character, “Punkin Lusty” on the famous FX TV series Reservation Dogs, or returning to the reservation to perform at the Muscogee (Creek) Festival, Sten Joddi keeps the crowd poppin’ like hot fry bread grease no matter the setting.

His name, “Sten Joddi,” was his version of the Muscogee term “este cate,” meaning Native American.

“When I decided to use that name, I was getting in tune with the culture and our tribal ways,” he said. “I wear it with pride, and I wear it with honor.”

The meaning behind it carries a lot of weight for him as a representation of himself and his heritage.

During the 90s, as the Hip-hop

scene was expanding, it still lacked the path for Native Americans. “We didn’t have the representation,” Sten Joddi said. “I didn’t really have anything to relate to as far as musical wise other than the rap and hip hop culture.”

Sten Joddi felt a kinship with characters in the movie Boyz in the Hood growing up. Sten Joddi could see much of himself in the characters.

“They were four friends trying to survive the world they lived in,” He said. “I could relate to that so much. The music told a story, the story in hip-hop music and the struggle was something I could apply to everyday life.”

Before the fame, he was just another kid off the Muscogee Reservation, causing havoc in his hometown Glenpool, OK.

Sten Joddi started tapping into music writing and drawing abilities at 14. That led him to start tattooing.

“These two things were something the creator was always trying to push me towards throughout my life,” he said.

The rural setting didn’t impress him much, and he started to get into trouble. Trouble led to incarceration, drugs, and alcohol. Sten Joddi

recounts experiencing addiction, homelessness, and even hunger.

But he learned that art and music were more than a hobby. His artistic ability and creativity would feed and house his family.

According to Sten Joddi, “Tattoos and music have always literally saved my life.”

He claims that music gives him a way to tell this story.

“My music is full of struggle and things that I have overcome,” he said. “Even anger issues and problems that I have with myself, including mental health; all these things that I had to fight through to be where I am now, to be a better father, a better husband, better friend, and a better person.”

Finding the energy to push through is what keeps him going. He claims his family and late mother are that energy. Regarding shows, he says he needs to take his family or at least one family member.

Sten Joddi now has his own label he calls TattooMuzik. He owns a tattoo shop in Iowa, where he now lives. Fans can go to <http://www.tattoomuzik.com/> to view his merchandise, his music, link to his socials, and even book Sten Joddi for performances.

AUTUMN STAR SERVES UP CHRISTMAS ON THE RESERVATION

NATIVE AMERICAN CHRISTMAS MARKET MARKS ITS TWELFTH YEAR

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
REPORTER

GLENPOOL, Oklahoma – December begins the countdown to the holidays when shoppers need to start making a game plan to find the right gift for everyone on their list. Autumn Star Catering provided an opportunity to shop locally and Indigenous with a Christmas Market on Dec 3. The market featured local art vendors, music, and Indian tacos.

Tricia Fields (Muscogee) owns Autumn Star Catering, a small business that caters traditional Native American foods across Indian Country. Fields said the Glenpool Christmas market was quite popular and kept her staff busy. The event took a lot of preparation and teamwork to pull off successfully. However, Fields said the result was worth it.

“It’s a blessing, it’s a stressful blessing, but I’d rather be too busy than

not busy,” Fields said.

The Christmas market is a big hit because they bring people together with loved ones. According to Fields, it is something people wait for in anticipation year round.

“People have been excited to see what items are for sale, to see friends and family,” Fields said. “I’ve had some people say it’s like a homecoming.”

The deep connections among the organizers, vendors and customers make the Christmas Market special. Fields has personal links to many of the vendors. Many of the vendors are Christmas market veterans. For others, it was their first time. Many described the event as having a “good vibe,” one that could be attributed to the family-friendly atmosphere.

One of those first-time Christmas market vendors was Two Feathers Beadwork, a small business operated by Jennifer Necochea (Muscogee) and her daughters. The

company brings her family together around the holiday season. The Two Feathers booth was notable for its beaded Christmas bulb ornaments, a design Necochea has been beading for ten years.

“We just get together and do a normal Christmas. We do a lot of beadwork around this time, particularly Christmas bulbs,” Necochea said.

Like many other vendors, the holiday season is a busy time for Necochea when market patrons want to find something for their loved ones. The Underwood/Blaylock family were some of the many patrons roaming the market looking to see what it had to offer. Leni Underwood (Chickasaw) was particularly impressed by the market’s selection.

“I didn’t think I was going to buy anything,” Leni Underwood said. “But I ended up coming back with less money than I expected.”

One of the items Leni Under-



Colorful beaded Christmas ornaments dangle from a rack at the Two Feathers Beadwork booth. Operated by Jennifer Necochea (Muscogee), the booth also featured beaded lanyards and hats. This was one of the many art and craft vendors found at the Native American Christmas Market. Glenpool, Okla. Dec. 3, 2022. (Braden Harper/Reporter)

wood purchased was a white feather that her mother, Shannon Underwood, fastened in her hair.

“We like to come here and see the same, see what other people are doing, and it’s always nice to see them and get ideas and support your local Native American tribes,” Shannon Underwood said.

The Christmas markets would not be possible without the interest

and patronage of the community. Even just sharing information about the event went a long way for Fields.

“I couldn’t make this event successful without community support from everyone showing up and inviting someone and telling them about it,” Fields said. “Just spending their dollars here, supporting local artists and local native artists and businesses.”

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## LIFE OF MUSCOGEE MATRIARCH HONORED AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY EXHIBIT

JEAN CHAUDHURI’S CAREER COMES TO LIFE THROUGH ARTIFACT COLLECTION

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
REPORTER

PHOENIX, Arizona – Arizona State University has exhibited several artifact collections from Native Leaders, including Simon Ortiz and now Jean Chaudhuri. The Jean Chaudhuri exhibit, “What’s Life all About,” was featured at ASU from Nov. 9-23.

Jean Chaudhuri is a jack of all trades. She was a writer, storyteller, and political advocate for the Muscogee People and Native Americans. According to Jean Chaudhuri’s son Jonodev Chaudhuri (Muscogee), the family accumulated many primary source materials throughout her lifetime.

“Mom really had a very mosaic mind. She would pull ideas from various sources and have documents, photographs, and exhibits that she would pull together for various purposes,” Jonodev Chaudhuri said.

Some of the artifacts on display include poems, playwriting, political advocacy documents, and photographs. Organizing the collection took a team effort.

Jerome Clark (Navajo) is an ASU Assistant Professor of the ASU New College. He lectures on English and Literature at the ASU School of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies. The ASU Interdisciplinary Arts Program manages a showroom that features different exhibits of notable figures. When planning an exhibit for Native American Heritage Month, the departments knew they wanted to feature someone special who had made significant contributions to Native American rights.

“The spirit of her work was always involving people, getting people involved,” Clark said. “One of the jokes that a family friend

said was, ‘you couldn’t go near Jean without her getting you to do some work.’”

Clark was joined by colleague Vina Begay (Navajo), an assistant librarian, archivist, and curator at ASU. They were also joined by ASU Labriola Center Program Coordinator Yabitzta Largo-Anderson and Director Alexander Soto (Tohono O’odham). Over time, they carefully pieced together the exhibit with key artifacts from Jean Chaudhuri’s life. The organization of the collection stems back 20 years. One of the earliest researchers to look into the Jean Chaudhuri collection was ASU student Elizabeth Quiroga (Tohono O’odham).

“I approached it in a way that would tell her story because everything about Jean was in this collection,” Begay said. “I wanted to tell her story from what she provided by her collecting all these documents in her fashion.”

After Jean Chaudhuri’s passing, her life’s documents and materials were kept in unorganized boxes around the family house. A few years later, they would be donated to ASU’s library by Jean Chaudhuri’s sister, Richinda Sands, and Jean’s husband, Dr. Joyotpaul Chaudhuri, to be extensively organized and cataloged.

“He felt that her work and contribution to Indigenous People would benefit the incoming generation,” Begay said, “and probably inspire future activists.”

Initially, the Chaudhuri family was unsure exactly how the exhibit should look. After many Zoom calls with the exhibit’s curators, the family felt confident that Jean Chaudhuri’s life materials were in good hands.

“They told us repeatedly that the same phrase kept coming up that ‘mom was so far ahead of her



The Chaudhuri family and curators from Arizona State University are pictured in the Jean Chaudhuri exhibit, “What’s Life All About.” It featured photographs and documents donated by the Chaudhuri family. The exhibition was a collaboration between the ASU Interdisciplinary Arts Program and the ASU Labriola Program. Phoenix, AZ. Nov. 9, 2022. (Submission)

time,” Jonodev Chaudhuri said.

This phrase would refer to Jean Chaudhuri’s work as an activist throughout her lifetime involving issues like boarding schools, insensitive sports mascots, and healthcare.

Although Jean Chaudhuri served Native people from all tribes across the country, she was proud of her tribal cultural identity.

“She was rooted in Muscogee traditions. Her first language was Muscogee,” Jonodev Chaudhuri said. “By the end of her life, she was such a powerful orator and such a powerful advocate she could talk circles around lawyers and politicians.”

When asked what the best advice his mother gave him was, Jonodev Chaudhuri said it was the life she lived and modeled for others. He also recalled a Muskogee Story she liked to share; the Turtle

and the Possum.

The story refers to a time when all animals could speak with one another. The turtle was proud of his appearance and abilities but was not humble about it. One day, his friend Possum could no longer stand the turtle’s incessant bragging and cracked the turtle’s shell into a million pieces. Saddened by this action, the pair went to the medicine man to fix the turtle’s shell. While the medicine man could not restore the turtle’s shell to its original shiny appearance, he restored it to what a turtle’s shell looks like today.

For Jonodev Chaudhuri, what he took from this story was how you will use the gifts the Creator gave you and use them to better your community. He hopes what people will take away from the “What’s Life is All About” exhibit is that while Jean Chaudhuri

achieved many things in her lifetime, she was still a normal person with normal struggles.

“Most people can relate to having those types of challenges in their lives,” Jonodev Chaudhuri said. “The takeaway from the exhibit is one example of a life well lived that was dedicated to service that navigated those challenges that we all face in order to do something positive for fellow Natives.”

Jonodev Chaudhuri and his wife, Mary Kathryn Nagle, continue to share Jean Chaudhuri’s legacy. They are currently producing a play, “On the Far End.” The one-woman play details Jean Chaudhuri’s remarkable life and advocacy work. It’s set to run Mar. 28-May. 7 at the Round House Theater in Bethesda, Maryland. Tickets are available for purchase on the Round House Theater website.



Chief David Hill, Speaker William Lowe, Representatives Anna Marshall, Joseph Hicks, Mvskoke Royalty, and Mvskoke women veterans met in the council’s chambers immediately after the conclusion of the regular session to sign NCA 22-142 into effect Nov. 9. (Kaylea Berry/Reporter)

## NATIONAL COUNCIL APPROVES LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING THE ESTE CATE HOKTVKE SULETAWV HONOR GUARD

ESTE CATE HOKTVKE SULETAWV RECEIVES A STANDING OVATION AFTER NCA 22-142 PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

by **KAYLEA BERRY**  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma - The Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv, honor guard, was adopted into legislation and held its first meeting on Nov. 9. According to the Language Department, “Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv” translates to the “Indian women’s army.” The Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv honor guard is the first all-women’s honor guard in the five “civilized” tribes and is backed by Tribal legislation.

A few facts that were mentioned in the legislation include:

A. Native Americans serve in the Armed Forces at five times the national average, have served in every major conflict for over 200 years, and Native Americans have the highest per-capita involvement of any population to serve in the U.S. military.

B. Nearly 20% of Native American service members are women, compared to approximately 15% of all other ethnic groups of women service members.

C. There is a need for a women’s honor guard to be established to represent the Muscogee (Creek) Nation at parades, mili-

tary funerals, and other various gatherings.

The National Council unanimously passed NCA 22-142, which established the women’s honor guard, Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv, and appropriated the funds for its implementation. Representative Anna Marshall sponsored the legislation from the beginning.

The legislation moved through the Health, Education, and Welfare committee on Nov. 9 with a 4-0 vote. During that meeting, Rep. Joseph Hicks and Speaker William Lowe requested to co-sponsor it. Before vot-

ing on the legislation during the regular session, Rep. Leonard Gouge asked to co-sponsor it, and Marshall agreed.

Rep. Sandra Golden started the discussion by saying, “I didn’t really want to support this because it makes women separate from the men, and it looks as if the men can’t acknowledge the women because of something different, but they should be the same.”

She continued, “If this is the only way we’re going to get that attention and that acknowledgment, then I’m going to vote for it.”

This legislation passing is a historic event for Muscogee Nation and its citizens. After a 15-0 vote, Speaker Lowe had the women veterans stand for recognition, which received a standing ovation from those in attendance. Rep. Anna Marshall opened the floor to the women veterans to comment on that moment.

“I am so excited to be a part of this, and I’m so excited to see our sisterhood, not only those who are here today but as we grow,” Muscogee Nation Attorney General and United States Marine Corps veteran Geri Wisner. “I hope that with your support and our Nation’s Veterans Affairs support, we can reach those, and we can stand arm in arm with our Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv honor guard.”

Veterans continued to share their experiences and gratitude for the decision.

“This is monumental to give us a separate voice, not for us to fall underneath our brothers, whom I’ll always love serving with, but it gives us a voice,” said Sarah Wilson-Perez, United States Air Force veteran. “Giving us this chance, you also make a statement to the rest that have served, are serving, that will serve that we matter.”

Chief David Hill and Speaker William Lowe wasted no time signing the legislation. Chief

Speaker, Rep. Marshall, J. Hicks, Mvskoke Royalty, and Mvskoke women veterans met in the council’s chambers immediately after the conclusion of the regular session.

Eight Mvskoke female veterans attended the first meeting, ready to get things started. They discussed the budget, uniforms, possible upcoming events, meetings, and more. Veterans came from all over to participate in the historic decision and to join Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv.

Duties of the Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv include funeral rites, honor guards at events and parades, and public outreach for other women veterans and the communities on our reservation. Being a part of an honor guard takes dedication, commitment, integrity, and humility.

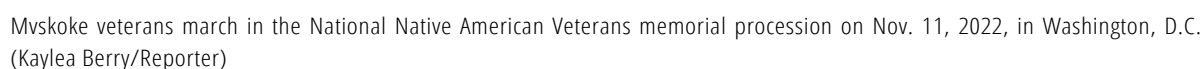
Lowry said, “We are going to make our own traditional regalia that reflects our branches and will continue our military service ethos by serving our Nation with the values of honor, dignity, and respect.”

Requirements to join include being a female veteran, having an honorable discharge (other than honorable discharge are considered on a case-by-case basis), being a committed, active member by participating in meetings, making regalia, attending drills, events, and funeral rites, and assisting with public outreach.

“We also know that it was not necessarily traditional for women to join the military, but we did, just as our male peers, and served with courage,” said Lowry. “Hope drives us now, a hope for the 246+ to have a home and healing path that has not been offered before.”

“To all the Mvskoke Women Veterans – Welcome Home.”

To join the Est Cate Hoktvke Suletawv honor guard, scan the QR code to submit your information. Meetings are in-person at the Attorney General’s office and via Zoom.



MVSKOKE VETERANS PARTICIPATED IN THE NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL DEDICATION CEREMONY AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ON VETERANS DAY, NOV. 11

WASHINGTON D.C. - Mvskoke veterans participated in the National Native American Veterans memorial dedication ceremony at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. More than 1,500 Native Americans from all over North and South America participated in the procession and dedication ceremony.

The memorial came into existence because congress passed legislation in 2013 approving the NMAI to create a memorial that gives “all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of

Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States.” Therefore, in 2017 the museum began an international competition for the memorial’s design.

Harvey Pratt (Cheyenne/Arapaho) designed the “Warrior’s Circle of Honor” after being unanimously selected in 2018. Pratt is a self-taught artist who finds inspiration for his artwork from Native American History, the Cheyenne people, and customs. He served in Vietnam as a US Marine in Air Rescue and Security stationed at Da Nang Air Base from 1962 to 1965. According to the NMAI website, he was inducted as a traditional Peace Chief, the Cheyenne Nation’s highest honor, and is regarded by the Cheyenne People as an exceptional Southern

Cheyenne.

Walking up to the memorial, there is a wall with the seals for five military branches. The "Warrior's Circle of Honor" is a steel circle sitting upon a stone drum, water constantly flows from the center of the drum, and a fire is lit at the bottom of the circle for ceremonies. There are also four spears that visitors can tie prayer cloths to and benches.

The National Museum of the American Indian opened the memorial on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2020. However, the memorial dedication ceremony was postponed for two years because of covid.

Despite the rainy weather, the dedication ceremony commenced with a march around the National

Mall, starting in front of the museum and ending at the ceremony stage in front of the U.S. Capitol. Tribes from all over came together to march in unison, representing their people who made the sacrifice and the people who have inhabited this land for generations.

"I really enjoyed it, it felt like a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and it was awesome," said U.S. Army Veteran Jackie Miller. "It was a good feeling marching and the crowd cheering for us."

John Herrington (Chickasaw) and Wes Studi (Cherokee Nation) emceed during the ceremony. Dignitaries from all over spoke on the significance of the memorial dedication. After the ceremony, the memorial's fire was lit for the first time.

When asked what he thought about the memorial, Miller said, "I thought that was about time, but I thought it was a big honor for everyone, the Native Americans."

The Myskoke veterans also got to visit many monuments and memorials around D.C. The Vietnam Wall memorial had the most significant influence on them. Six of the nine veterans that attended served during Vietnam. The memorial brought back many memories but hopefully brought some closure as well. A couple of the veterans knew names engraved on the wall.

"It was good to see them firsthand instead of reading about them or seeing them on tv," said Lasley McIntosh, U.S. Army veteran. "Seeing how it touched some of those veterans' lives, how it brought back memories of their lost comrades, not only comrades, their cousins, their brothers, nephews, nieces,"

Regardless of what era someone served, there is still a connection. The sense of camaraderie is inevitable for those who have taken the oath. They are forever brothers and sisters in arms.

“To see how everyone interacted with each other, to listen to the stories they were telling about

different times and places,” said McIntosh. “How some of them experienced the same things as I did, it was really interesting to see that and hear it.”

Although many of these men and women have spent time overseas, this was the first time many of them visited the United States Capitol. The gratitude for the opportunity was unquestionable.

"I'm so proud that I got picked to come out here," said David Francis, U.S. Marine Corps veteran. "I did my best to represent our tribe."

It has been decades since most of these men and women have worn the uniform. However, these veterans even now would put one on and defend their country.

"I've been praying 'God, this is your country, not my country, but I'm here and willing to defend it if I have to,' said Francis. "I told this guy I'd go back and defend this country if I have to."

Indigenous people have fought in every major war for over two centuries. They played essential roles leading to victories, such as the Code Talkers during World War II. Even when Natives were not considered citizens of the United States, they still stood up and defended their homeland.

About 12,000 Native Americans served during WWI, 44,000 in WWII, 10,000 in Korea, and 42,000 in Vietnam. Most of them volunteered to participate during the draft.

"A lot of our people have gone," said Francis. "They sacrificed their lives to keep the United States of America alive and keep our people free."

When the chance presents itself, thank a veteran for their service or listen to their story if they are willing to share. They stepped up and put everything on the line for this country and its people.

Active duty, Guard, Reserve, and Veterans can enroll with the Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs Services Offices by calling 918-732-7739 for more information.

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A Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council Regular Session was held on Nov. 19 at the Mound Building in Okmulgee. (MM File)

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECEIVES \$3M GRANT

ESTE CATE HOKTVKE WOMEN’S HONOR GUARD ESTABLISHED

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
*REPORTER*

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma – A Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council, Regular Session meeting was held in person and via teleconference on Nov. 19 at the Mound Building. The National Council addressed the following legislation, the interpretation of which is attributed to language in the bills:

**TR 22-163**

Authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a contract with RMM Plus for the benefit of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Health. The bill was sponsored by Representative Robert Hufft and was unanimously approved 15-0.

The contract will provide information security software and an annual payment of \$4,080.00 to MCNDH.

**TR 22-164**

Authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a programming agreement among Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, National Park Service, Georgia State Historic Preservation Office, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation regarding the undertakings implemented under the comprehensive trails management plan HP-210330-

002. The bill was sponsored by Representative Galen Cloud and was unanimously approved 15-0.

The CRNRA plans to implement a trail management plan to address trail construction and maintenance for developing and managing a parkwide trail system. The programming agreement will be executed in accordance with stipulations related to the effect of the undertaking on historic properties.

**TR 22-165**

Authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a real estate contract for a property in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma. Representative Joseph Hicks sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The property and facilities will be used to benefit MCN Realty Trust Services for additional office and storage space.

**TR 22-166**

Approving a construction contract for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Housing. Rep. Cloud sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The day-to-day operations will cost \$250,000 and will be used to complete the interior build-out of the Sunrise Trail Apartment building #1.

**TR 22-167**

Authorizing the Principal Chief to submit a grant application to the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Economic Development, and Division of Economic Development for the Tribal Tourism Grant Program for the benefit of the Marketing and Tourism Department. Representative Randall Hicks sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The grant will fund a feasibility study to increase MCN’s capacity to plan, develop and manage tourism and related infrastructure. It will also create a tourism business plan.

**TR 22-168**

Authorizing the Principal Chief to submit a grant application to the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Economic Development, Division of Economic Development for the National Tribal Broadband Grant for the benefit of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal Utility Authority. Representative Nelson Harjo Sr. sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The grant will fund a feasibility study on installing or expanding high-speed internet (broadband) and identify broadband deficits in each county within the MCN reservation.

**TR 22-169**

Authorizing Traden Anderson to use the Great Seal of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Representative Darrell Proctor sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

**TR 22-170**

Amending TR 19-076 (A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation to suspend all special appropriations and donations) as amended by TR 20-150, TR 21-080, TR 22-128, TR 22-143, TR 22-150 and TR 22-155. Representative Joyce C. Deere sponsored the bill, which was approved 10-5.

**NCA 22-127**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of the National White Collar Crime Center Grant Award for the benefit of the Muscogee

(Creek) Nation Lighthouse Police Department. Representative Sandra Golden sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The grant will award Lighthouse Police \$39,060.00 in funds for fourteen Panasonic Toughbooks.

**NCA 22-139**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the Oklahoma District Attorney’s Council (DAC) Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant. Representative Hufft sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The grant will award the MCN Health Department \$66,808.00 for crime victim services.

**NCA 22-140**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the Oklahoma Health Care Authority Money Follows the Person Tribal Initiative. Grant. Rep. Hufft sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The grant will award the MCN Health Department \$3,253,871 for adults with functional or cognitive impairments.

**NCA 22-141**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of tribal opioid response funds awarded from the Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Rep. Deere sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The grant will award \$1,648,750 for addressing the overdose crisis in Tribal communities by increasing access to FDA-approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder and supporting the continuum of prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery support services.

**NCA 22-142**

A Muscogee (Creek) Nation law amending MCNCA Title 15 Chapter 1 entitled Official Honor Guard to Establish a Women’s Honor Guard and appropriating funds for the Este Cate Hoktve Suletawv Honor Guard. Repre-

sentative Anna Marshall sponsored the bill. It was co-sponsored by Speaker William Lowe and Rep. Joseph Hicks. It was approved unanimously 15-0.

The women’s honor guard will represent the Muscogee (Creek) Nation at parades, military funerals, and other various gatherings. The cost for the establishment will be \$105,000.00 for the first year, then \$40,000.00 annually after that.

**NCA 22-143**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending MCNCA Title 37 § 2-123 entitled “Este Cate Veterans (Mvskoke Nation) Honor Guard.” Rep. Marshall sponsored the bill, which was approved unanimously 15-0.

The bill will amend an annual appropriation from \$40,000.00 to \$80,000.00 beginning in the 2024 fiscal year.

**NCA 22-144**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the benefit of the Office of Environmental Services Department. Rep. Harjo Sr. sponsored the bill, which was unanimously approved 15-0.

The grant will award \$467,000.00 for environmental programs for air, water, land, and data quality; pollution prevention.

**NCA 22-145**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation appropriating funds to be used toward the purchase of property located in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma. Rep. Joseph Hicks sponsored the bill, which was unanimously adopted 15-0.

The property will cost \$425,000.00, and additional costs will include title insurance, title opinions, surveys, environmental studies, and applicable taxes.

**NCA 22-148**

A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing a donation to Bacone College. Rep. Deere sponsored the bill, which failed to pass 9-6. This particular bill required a ⅔ majority vote of the full council.

The meeting, agenda, and full legislation can be viewed at [www.mcnn.com](http://www.mcnn.com).

## GREATER TULSA AREA INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION AWARDS DR. JAMES KING

THE AWARD WAS PRESENTED TO KING AT THE DREAM KEEPERS AWARD CEREMONY

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
*MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER*

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma - College of Muscogee Nation Regents Director of Institutional Effectiveness Dr. James King received the Rennard Strickland Educational Leadership Award with honors from the Greater Tulsa Area Indian Affairs Commission at the Tulsa City Hall on Nov. 15, 2022.

Each November, the ceremony is held in conjunction with Native American Heritage month. The award was presented to King as part of the 25th Annual Dream Keepers Award Ceremony, which awards nominees and chosen leaders in the Native American Communities who exemplify strong character and have made a difference through solid dedication to public service.

Rennard Strickland was an Osage/Cherokee lawyer known for his leadership in Native American Law. Winning many awards for his service, he is now honored through this award given to a nominee for their service to public education.

“I feel very humble to know that my name will be included with others that have been selected,” King said.

King worked with former and late CMN President Robert Bible to



College of Muscogee Nation Regents Director of Institutional Effectiveness Dr. James King received the Rennard Strickland Educational Leadership Award. (Morgan Taylor)

get initial accreditation to the college before stepping into his position.

“Muscogee Creek Nation is unlike any place in the world. It is home,” King said.

For King, his most rewarding times have been serving native people.



The contest will take place at the Looped Square Processing Meat Co. on Jan. 28. (Shutterstock)

## DEPARTMENT OF AG AND NATURAL RESOURCES TEAM UP FOR THE BIG BUCK CONTEST

DANR HAS ISSUED OVER 300 HUNTING PERMITS FOR THE CURRENT HUNTING SEASON

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
*MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER*

BEGGS, Oklahoma - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources is inviting all hunters, natives, and non-natives who harvested deer on the reservation to bring their potential prizewinners to the Looped Square Meat Processing Co. at 11 am on Jan. 28.

Prizes will include a cooler, feeder, optional European mount, free deer processing for the following year, and more to choose from for the first five places.

According to the DANR Wildlife Project Coordinator Jacob Rippy, the game’s antlers and at-

tached skull plate must be in hand the day of the competition, along with the carcass identification tag, limited for the 2022-23 season. Participation is also limited to one submission per participant. Pictures submissions are allowed; however, they are not the winning determinant.

Scores will be determined using the Boone and Crockett scoring system, which mathematically measures the antlers to give the size of the deer; gender is not a factor.

“We just ask that everybody bring out a clean skull so we can score them,” he said.

Rippy said gross scores would be calculated for data purposes,

and ultimately, the gross score will also determine the winners.

It has been requested that “high-fence” deer harvest not enter the competition. Rippy claims that other hunters are disadvantaged as high fence harvests are in an area where they are controlled.

“Archery, muzzleloader, rifle, as long as it says that is legal in the conservation regulations that we have posted, they are good to go,” Rippy said.

All game must be harvested on the reservation. DANR is looking to gather data for further research and investigate the reservation game and wildlife.

“We are looking to see where the deer are coming from and who is using the land in our registry,” Rippy said.

The department has issued around 300 hunting and fishing permits for the current hunting season and projects that more will come as the hunting season continues until Jan. 15.

“We are interested to see what everyone comes up with,” Rippy said.

He jokingly states that deer hit by vehicles do not count as harvested deer.

This is the department’s first time holding a contest of this kind.

“We thought it would be a great addition to the program and get people to understand a little bit more about what we’re doing with our program and get some citizens involved.”

Rippy said there are no age limits on the contest; as long as contestants can hunt, they can participate.

For more information, please call Rippy at 539-244-2220.

# NAMES, HERITAGE RETURNED, HONORS

NAMES -GOOD AND BAD; ARTIFACTS COMING HOME, HONORS NAMED

by GARY FIFE  
RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Okmulgee, Oklahoma—It’s the end of the fall (Rvfo Hakof) and get ready for the winter (Rvfo), right? You can tell by the colder temps and the disappearance of all those lawn care trucks towing trailers carrying mowers....and..radio stations switching to all-Christmas formats.

Another one bites the dust. The Colorado Geographic Naming Advisory Board announced in early August that the name of a mountain will be changed from Mount Evans to Mount Blue Sky. The old name was removed because the old one was “considered offensive”, according to the agency. A territorial governor, Evans was instrumental in the infamous 1864 massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho people at Sand Creek.

The new name is Mount Blue Sky to honor the tribes.

And more on the subject... the Kansas Board of Education reported that it recommends the removal of American Indian themed mascots from state school districts. This one may take a while because the school districts have the final say in such matters. The arguments will undoubtedly sound familiar.

Are you an “Indigenous Creature”? The ABC TV network thinks so. That’s according to a email sent from the Four Directions Native Vote group. They say the networks news coverage of Native American Heritage Month November 4th referred to us as “Indigenous Creatures”. That’s worse than when CNN used the term “Something Else” during some of its election coverage.

In this day and age, news people are supposed to be educated enough to use a non-insulting name for the First Americans.

Remember when we used to be “Others?”

I don’t know if you caught it or not, but the Google website marked their website with some artwork depicting a tribal stick-ball game. The text read: ““In celebration of U.S. Native American Heritage Month, today’s Doodle celebrates Indigenous North American Stickball, a ceremonial sport invented by Native American tribes,” Google said. “The artwork was illustrated by Saint Paul-based artist Marlena Myles who is a member of the Spirit Lake Dakota/Mohegan/Muscogee tribe.”

A familiar subject, but one worth mentioning anyway. The Colgate Maroon-News, the college paper of Colgate University reported, on November 9th, the university returned over 1,500 cultural artifacts to the Oneida Indian Nation.

The artifacts had been removed from gravesites by a non-Native ‘amateur’ archaeologist in the first part of the last century. (Should we use the term, ‘graverobber’ here?) School staff bought the collection in 1959. University President Brian Casey and Provost and Dean of the Faculty Lesleigh Cushing confirmed that 1959 purchase, but reservedly added, “It never should have been acquired.”

You said it, guys. While we’re on the subject, the Founders Museum in Barre, Massachusetts has been in the process of returning about 150 objects to the Lakota peoples. Some of them were connected to the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890.

Smithsonian magazine reported, “Ann Meilus, president of the Barre Museum Association, tells the Globe that Saturday’s ceremony culmination of of grappling with the artifacts’



future and “trying to come to a positive conclusion was a long time coming—the culmination of roughly three decades of grappling with the artifacts future.” The Smithsonian said, Meilus added, ““I think the museum will be remembered for being on the right side of history for returning these items.”

Founders Museum is a privately owned museum and not covered by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Way to go. It is the right thing to do, more power to you.

The National Monument for Native American veterans has been dedicated. Our own Kaylea Berry participated, marching with the Mvskoke delegation. Proud of all of you.

Change of subject: Joy Harjo has a new honor added to her impressive resume: Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

She was inducted, along with seven other Oklahomans, on November 17. Well-deserved, Lady!

O.K., it’s that time of the year to be thinking about our kinfolk and others who may have it tougher this year. The economy is the pits making it harder on all of us. There are many ways to help out.

Enjoy your holidays: Afvcke Nettvcakorakko, Ohrolope Mucvse Afvckvs. Hvtvm Cerecares.

**Disclaimer: The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.**

## OBITUARY



Nickie Coffee

Nickie Coffee, a resident of Tulsa, passed away November 26, 2022 in Tulsa, OK at the age of 48. He was born Friday, April 26, 1974 in Claremore, OK.

Nickie worked as a carpet installer for 33 years. He enjoyed cutting trees when he wasn’t falling out of them. He enjoyed listening to music, going to the casino, camping, fishing and hanging out with family. He had a contagious laugh and a funny sense of humor. He was a man who was proud of his culture. He loved to be around his family

cutting up telling jokes reminiscing about the old times. He’d laugh until he needed another breathing treatment. He was just an all around fun guy. He had a big heart, never complained about anything or anyone. He appreciated the life he had and the ones he shared it with. We will miss you and you will always be in our hearts.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Amos and Fannie Coffee, uncle, Crawford Coffee, aunt, Dinah Loma Coffee, uncle, Don White, brother-in-law, Sonny Buzzard, great niece, Elisha Coffee.

Nickie is survived by his children; Cara Coffee, Nathan Coffee, Trey Coffee, and Brooklyn Coffee Fultz & husband Fidel, grandchildren; Lorenzo Coffee, Victoria Bustos, Timothy Knickerboker, Lucius Coffee, Alessandro Fultz, Angel Fultz, Kayden Coffee, and J.D. Coffee, mother, Rosemary Hendrix & husband Charles of Tulsa, sister, Rebecca Buzzard of Tulsa, sister, Samantha Garcia & husband Freddie of Sand Springs, and brother, Jimmy Hendrix & wife Karen of Tulsa, as well as a host other relatives and friends.

## LEGALS

### Thlopthlocco Tribal Town Cancels Scheduled Election

The Thlopthlocco Tribal Town Business Committee has cancelled the upcoming January 28<sup>th</sup> 2023 Elections of their own offices. The reasoning just provided to Thlopthlocco Citizens is “in order to review membership files for completeness & accuracy”.

Thlopthlocco is a sovereign Nation of 1000 members with dual enrollment with the Muscogee Creek Nation. Subsequently, after 15 years of active litigation and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent in attorney and court fees, the MCN DC/SC recently dismissed all litigation which outlined enrollment infractions and leadership disputes with no resolve citing “Thlopthlocco is entitled sovereign immunity and orders case dismissed for lack of jurisdiction” in their latest order.

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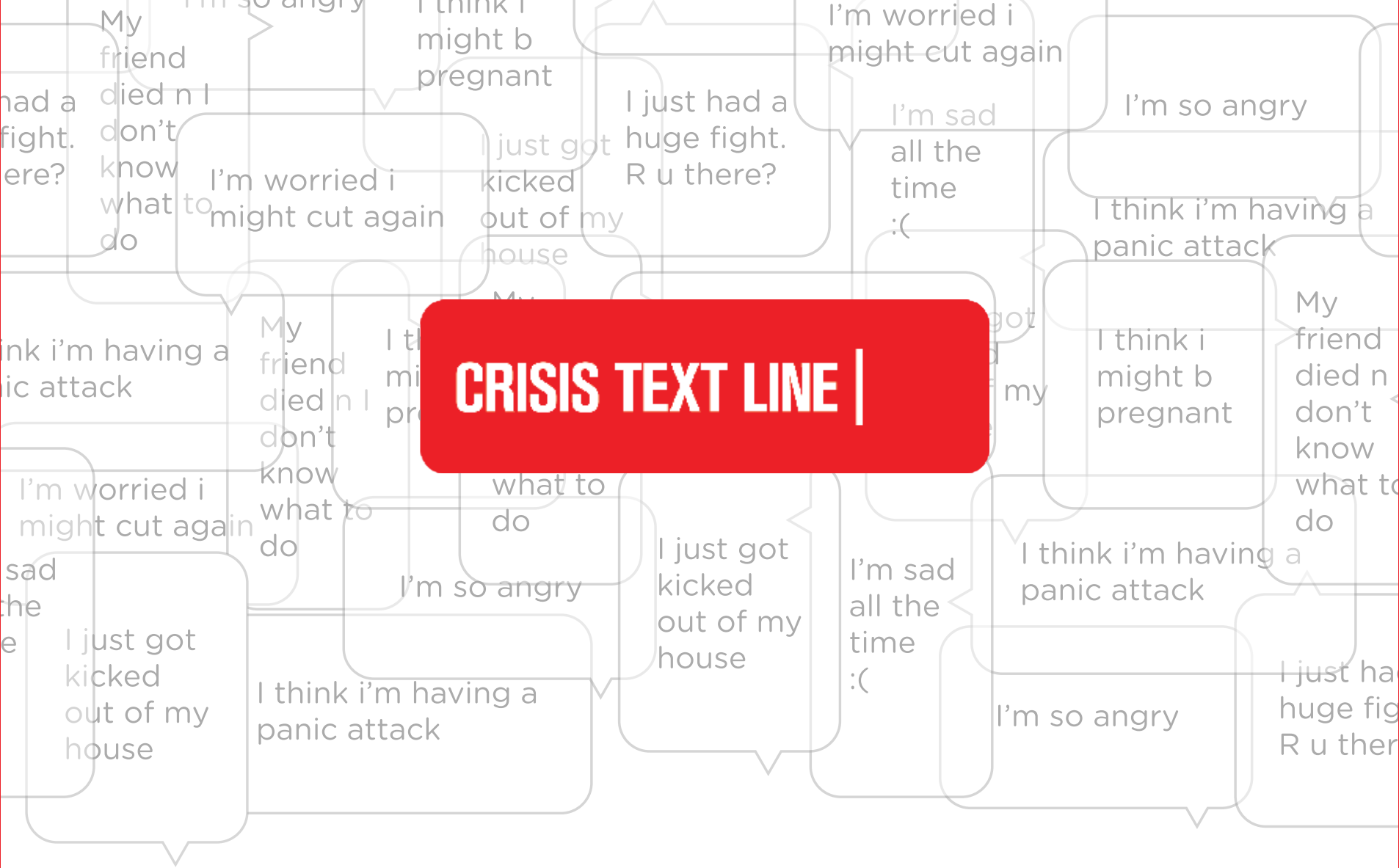
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