



MVSKOKE NEWS

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Pictured above is the Bad Press crew and subjects fielding questions after receiving a standing ovation from the audience at the film's world premiere. (Photo by Amber Harris-Strickland)

MUSCOGEE (CREEK) CITIZEN-DIRECTED FILM PREMIERES AT SUNDANCE

BAD PRESS CAPTURES THE STORY OF PRESS FREEDOM IN INDIAN COUNTRY

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

PARK CITY, Utah – Bad Press is a documentary covering Mvskoke Media's historic journey to becoming a citizen ratified constitutionally protected free Press through a ballot initiative and is premiering in the Sundance Film Festival 2023 starting Jan. 22- Jan. 27.

The film depicts the ups and downs of the Muscogee Nation's election season after the MCN National Council repealed the media's free Press law. The film follows a Mvskoke Media reporter's stewardship for truth and transparency. It documents the outreach and advocacy for press freedom that the Muscogee (Creek) voters ultimately decided.

Native American Journalist Association Executive Director and film Co-Director Rebecca

Landsberry-Baker and Co-director Joe Peeler joined Mvskoke Media Livewire hosted by Jerrad Moore with Director Angel Ellis to talk about the upcoming film and the festival.

Ellis is the film's main focus as cameras follow her through her transition from Reporter to Director while advocating for the department. Mvskoke Media's Jerrad Moore is also prominently featured.

The documentary captures those off-camera, hidden moments of the tribal journalist when faced with devastating circumstances. Viewers may see funny and emotional reactions from the small news crew like they have never seen before.

"It's taking off the veil a whole lot for me, personally," Moore said.

For Ellis, the documentary journey allowed her a safe space to put on her advocacy hat.

"You see who we are as people," Ellis said. "I always assumed that this was to get protection for advocacy. I never assumed this film would mean anything to anyone, and the cameras are here to protect me while I do my job."

She felt over four years of filming, miracles were caught on camera.

It was a full circle moment for Landsberry-Baker, who was once an employee of the department when it was called Mvskoke Nation News. She had first-hand experience in the department as she worked in various capacities.

"Obviously, I knew what I was getting myself into," Landsberry-Baker said. "It's so exciting for me as a community member to share that with the world."

The premiere is a month shy of the fourth anniversary since

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NATION-TO-NATION AGREEMENT WILL MAKE JUSTICE ACCESSIBLE ACROSS THE MCN RESERVATION



The Seminole Nation courtroom is located within the Muscogee Reservation at 206 E. 2nd St. Wewoka, Okla. (Submission)

TRIBAL DISTRICT COURT JUDGES SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE COURT HEARINGS ACROSS THE MUSCOGEE RESERVATION

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

WEWOKA, Oklahoma – The Seminole Nation purchased a building to hold district court hearings that resides just 200 feet within the Muscogee Nation reservation boundaries at 206 E. 2nd St. Wewoka, Okla.

Instead of building a rift over the purchase, the judges of each court saw this as an opportunity to work together to provide justice with the full support from the National Council passing TR 22-177 (<http://www.mcnn.com/images/pdf2022/bills/22-177.pdf>) during the Regular Session on Dec. 17.

The Resolution includes a Memorandum of Understanding between the MCN District Court and the Seminole Nation District Court for shared use of courtrooms to conduct judicial hearings.

The Seminole Nation Chief District Judge Steve Barnes said that this would allow his court to

remain in session inside the reservation boundaries of the MCN.

"This would require a special authority for the MCN to allow us to hold our court there," Barnes said.

According to Barnes, in addition to the building purchase, the Seminole Nation plans to construct two more courtrooms that the MCN District Court can use as a satellite space.

The building will contain a 13,00 square feet area and another 5,000 square feet area with the ability to house jury trials and the other side for non-jury trial hearings. An office space will be available for the visiting judge and the judge's clerk.

Barnes said the space would be able to accommodate both courts' needs.

"The Agreement is to benefit both tribes," Barnes said.

Each tribe would still hold its sovereignty and the ability to apply its laws upon individuals

NATION-TO-NATION - 2



Zechariah Harjo spoke about the VITA Tax Program available to tribal and non-tribal citizens for this upcoming tax-filing season on Mvskoke Radio. (Shutterstock)

MCN HOSTS VITA TO ASSIST IN FREE TAX FILING

MCN IS ONE OF TWO RECIPIENTS, ALONG WITH THE CHICKASAW NATION, TO RECEIVE THE VITA GRANT FROM THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma – Tax season is among us now that the holiday season has ended, which can be another stressor to add to the list. Are you still waiting to file? How can you be sure you are getting every penny you

should?

On an episode of Mvskoke Radio, Acting Secretary of the Nation and Commerce for the Muscogee Nation Zechariah Harjo spoke about the VITA Tax Program forthcoming to tribal and non-tribal citizens for this upcoming tax-filing season for 2022 on Dec. 28. Harjo has been

the primary sponsor of the program for four years now.

The MCN is one of two recipients, along with the Chickasaw Nation, to receive the VITA grant from the Internal Revenue Service out of all applicants' tribal and non-tribal entities in the state, Harjo said.

"In our region, the Muscogee Nation is one of the largest providers, especially in rural regions outside of Tulsa," Harjo said.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance is a free tax filing assistance for citizens making below \$59,000 annually per household that Congress established in the 1970s. The VITA program has offered an online filing option, and with that option, the annual income is extended to the maximum of \$77,000 per household or return.

"As a federal program, anyone within the nation's jurisdiction is eligible, as long you meet the income guidelines, come and get your taxes filed for free," Harjo said.

Harjo said each household composition might be different.

"The term per household is a little bit confusing."

He said that even if people

TAX FILING - 2



Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum and Principal Chief walk and talk about the upcoming project along the Riverwalk Crossing in Jenks, Okla. (Submission)

TVLSE, Oklahoma – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the City of Tulsa, and the City of Jenks held a press conference for the official announcement and agreement signing for the Tulsa/Jenks Low Water Dam Project along the Arkansas River that is a part of the "Vision Tulsa 2025" on the Riverwalk Crossing in Jenks on Jan. 12.

The National Council held an emergency session

OVER \$8 MILLION FOR DAM PROJECT ON THE ARKANSAS RIVER

AN EMERGENCY SESSION WAS HELD TO APPROPRIATE FUNDING FOR THE SOUTH TULSA-JENKS LOW WATER DAM PROJECT

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

to address TR 22-182, which would pledge \$8,192,000 towards the South Tulsa/Jenks Low Water Dam Project on Dec. 28.

The project will create a new lake in the Arkansas River and construct a pedestrian bridge from 71st to 101st streets. The resolution executes the Memorandum of Understanding between the MCN, the City of

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BAD PRESS

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filming began in 2019. When the free press law was repealed during National Council Emergency Session in 2018, the department was placed under the authority of the Secretary of the Nation and Commerce, executive branch cabinet member to the Principal Chief.

According to Landsberry-Baker, the story goes back much further than that, but the film covers the last four years in depth.

From the Council electoral candidates to rogue reporter Ellis and her colleagues, the term Bad Press had multiple meanings on the press spectrum.

“Some of the national Council members effectively didn’t like bad press coming their way, and you (Mvskoke Media) weren’t able to do your jobs

becoming bad press,” Peeler said.

“I think the perception of the outside world is we’re all kind of “bad” or have our own agendas,” Ellis said. “This is survival and healing and telling our stories.”

Censorship and the battle for free Press for the Muscogee Nation lasted over 1000 days. Mvskoke Media could not accurately do its job under the repeal, which goes against the general ethics of a journalist to report accurate news to provide the community with transparency.

Peeler’s involvement in the film was his connection to Landsberry-Baker through her husband Garrett, a film producer who helped in the documentary’s production. He saw this as a huge opportunity to educate people and shed light on tribal journalism and the

free press topic.

“If I had no idea about the struggles related to a free press in Indian Country, then I think a lot of people don’t know,” Peeler said.

Bad Press got its name during a brainstorming session when the team tried to pick something encapsulating the film’s overall message. Peeler’s girlfriend said, “why don’t you just call it Bad Press?”

The title stuck.

“We were looking for a provocative title that might have multiple meanings,” Peeler said. “This kind of echoes throughout the film in different ways.”

Full of humor and humanity, the film tells the story of the thousand-day fight that is entertaining and educating for any viewer.

Visit the Sundance Film Festival’s website to find out how to watch the documentary.

DAM PROJECT

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Tulsa, the City of Jenks, and the Indian Nations Council of Governments.

The resolution passed with a vote of 8-6.

The idea called “Vision Tulsa 2025” came across voters’ ballots in 2016 with one goal of investing in the Arkansas River by building a dam with a total of \$64 million coming from Tulsa and \$17 million Jenks in 2016 towards the project. At the cost of nearly \$100 million, the voters did not approve the funds needed leaving the project at a standstill for over half a decade.

The project would only move forward due to the lack of funding with the Council’s approval. Apparently, the Council’s decision “saved” the project by pledging what was needed to fulfill the budget submission to the Department of Transportation just two days before the deadline on Dec. 31.

The DOT announced that Tulsa would receive grant funding from them to create a multimodal trail system in conjunction with the dam in August 2022. INCOG had committed \$8 million to the project before determining the entire funding situation in early 2022.

INCOG Executive Director Rich Briere stated the investment as a significant step forward for the organization’s shared vision of a series of river lakes on the Arkansas River.

Okmulgee District Representative Nelson Harjo Sr. sponsored the legislation saying that he sees this as an opportunity for the tribe to generate revenue that can be poured back into the tribal citizens.

Harjo believes the dam will make the area more “family-friendly” with more development opportunities.

Even before his constituency, Harjo was interested in the project. Before its first announcement when the cities (Tulsa and Jenks) asked the Nation for funding in 2015.

At that time, the Arkansas River Infrastructure Task Force planned to ask the NC to pay a portion of \$242.7 million towards the project, which was not feasible for the tribe after a \$365 million investment in their own project in the same area.

After the initial request, longstanding Tulsa District Rep. Robert Hufft told Muscogee Nation News, “The Council’s not really going to contribute to something like that,” further stating the MCN’s benefit to the project was much less than what it was worth. “It benefits the city and the state more than us to some degree.”

Mayor G.T. Bynum claimed to have met with (former) Principal Chief James Floyd regarding the project in early 2016.

Two days later, news reports circulated that the MCN and the City of Tulsa entered a private partnership where the MCN would fund the long-term maintenance of two low-water dams (proposed as part of the Vision 2025 mea-

sure) if Jenks and Tulsa voters approved the Vision package.

It was later confirmed the MCN did not enter the partnership with a statement on Feb. 15, 2016.

The Nation’s official statement was sent to the former Mayor of Tulsa, Dewey Bartlett, stating the inability to invest in the project. Following the initial announcement, the MCN sent two more statements explaining their position with the support of the project without monetary contribution.

“I know the price back then wasn’t feasible for us,” Harjo said. “But based on the discussion we had and looking at it now, I knew that to develop a little more economically as far as the Riverwalk and our casino (Riverspirit Casino and Resort) is concerned, to make it more attractive, the low water dam was necessary.”

Harjo claims that due to history, some of the Council may have held a little grudge of distrust when it came around to voting for the resolution.

Despite the rift, the Council has given trust back to the City of Tulsa with the allocation and agreement for a return of infrastructure. The Nation believes this agreement is an important step forward in the joint plans between the tribe and cities.

Principal Chief David Hill responded to the Council.

“I want to thank our National Council for its diligence in working toward a plan that takes care of the nation while joining in the shared vision for the future with our partners,” Hill said.

For Jenks Mayor Cory Box, the years of discussing and planning can now be implemented.

“We are excited to see this low-water dam project become a reality,” he said. “We are thankful to the voters who overwhelmingly supported this years ago and our Tulsa, INCOG, and Muscogee Nation partners.

“We consider this project the biggest in our city’s history.”

Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum agreed that the partnership should yield more benefits than just the lake and trail system.

“I look forward to working with them, not just in establishing this lake but also in developing the Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s adjacent business holdings, which will benefit tribal citizens far beyond the Tulsa metro,” he said.

“The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is always willing to sit down and work with our partners in the cities of Tulsa and Jenks to advance development, growth, and prosperity on our reservation,” Principal Chief David Hill said in a statement. “This agreement is a win-win for all parties and an example of what we can achieve when we work together.

Survey, design, and engineering work is expected to begin in early 2024 and continue through 2025, with construction starting in mid-2025. A completion date is expected by mid-2027.

NATION-TO-NATION

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inside their court.

The Muscogee Nation houses a single courtroom in the Mound Building on the Nation’s main complex in Okmulgee, where court cases flow through and, at this time, are piling up as the court as a result of reaffirmation of the jurisdiction to tribes.

For the MCN, additional space would allow the District Court to “enhance and strengthen the timely and secure administration of justice” to the citizens. For the Seminole District Court, this would allow them to continue pursuing justice in the courtroom, although it lies within the Muscogee Reservation.

Nothing in the Agreement transfers additional rights, jurisdiction, responsibilities, or obligations of either party other than the time and space of said courtroom.

Former District Court Judge Shannon Prescott expressed the considerable need for courtroom

space in the Business, Finance, and Justice Meeting on Dec. 8 and again during the Regular session.

“The court is definitely overwhelmed with the number of cases,” Prescott said. “At this point, we’re using any place we can put them; I did court in the hallway one day.”

While the MCN is looking to expand services within the District Court, Prescott said that the Nation should utilize existing resources and even be open to partnerships with other tribal courts to use their spaces.

“That saves us money in the interim while we’re looking to build a new court,” Prescott said.

Still determining when a new courthouse could be built, Prescott said that the Nation should consider each county within the Reservation as judges can travel with their means and jurisdiction to provide services.

Citizens with court cases would benefit highly from the idea by having the opportunity to attend a hearing much closer to home instead of coming to

Okmulgee.

Some citizens have to travel far for court, and some face barriers to transportation. Prescott claims this has resulted in warrants and additional charges to an individual’s case in the past.

“We have to go to our people. It doesn’t do us any good to help our fellow citizens if we’re not providing that service to them,” Prescott said.

Prescott said the criminal docket has increased from 30-40 cases Pre-McGirt to the latest docket containing over 500 jury trials.

“Space is important,” she said. “Utilizing those existing resources, especially with one of our Five Civilized Tribes, is a great idea. I don’t see why it would be bad.”

Some of the details are yet to be determined as far as scheduling court hearings or jury trials. They will be announced at a later time.

For more information, contact the MCN District Court at 918-758-1400.

TAX FILING

Continued from Page 1

house together, they may have separate forms, meaning each tax filing form should meet the maximum income threshold for assistance eligibility.

“Per return is probably a better term than per household,” he said.

According to the IRS website, taxpayers can file from Jan. 23 to Apr. 18, giving a three-day extension for submissions.

The IRS urges people to have all the information they need before they file a tax return. Filing a complete and accurate tax return can ensure timely processing and refund delays and the possibility of needing to file an amended tax return.

Gather important documents and organize all documents related to income during 2022. This is especially important for people who may receive one of the various Forms 1099 from banks or other payers reporting unemployment, dividends, pension, annuity, or retirement plan distributions. Most income is taxable and should report correctly to avoid any discrepancies.

Tax filing can be a complicated process. Some tribal citizens may even question the McGirt ruling tax exemption; others may question farming exemptions or even Earned Income Tax Credits.

The IRS suggests that individuals file electronically and provide a direct deposit account to speed up the process. Most taxpayers will receive their refund within 21 days of the electronic filing if everything runs smoothly with their tax return. Taxpayers should check Where’s My Refund? on IRS.gov for their personalized refund status, which will show an updated status by Feb. 18 for most.

IRS cannot issue a refund that includes the Earned Income Tax Credit or Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC) before mid-February due to the 2015 PATH Act law preventing fraudulent refunds.

During the filing season, VITA will have professionals ready to help by appointment at the MCN Housing building and various outreach trips at multiple community centers across the reservation.

The volunteers are highly qualified and skilled to help, Harjo said.

The program has made visits to Okemah, Muskogee, Tulsa, Glenpool, Sapulpa, and Eufaula during past program years, Harjo said. The River Spirit Casino and OSU-IT campus in Okmulgee are familiar locations for the program.

“The invitation is open to all centers with the capacity to do so and must have Wi-Fi connectivity,” Harjo said.

The Nation is currently searching for a permanent home for the VITA Tax Program and has been since Harjo’s involvement in 2019. “My goal since I came on was to get us to this place,” he said.

Megan Doss will serve as the Site Coordinator, and the services should be entirely housed within the following year. Harjo claims Doss is highly qualified and equipped to run the tax site. He claims that the MCN Tax commission has the capacity and contention to house the VITA Program long-term to assist with Tax services year-round.

To make an appointment for free tax filing through the VITA program, call 918-549-2607. For more information about the filing season, visit www.irs.gov.



- Angel Ellis, Director | aellis@mvskokemedia.com
- Jerrad Moore, Assignment Editor | jmoore@mvskokemedia.com
- Morgan Taylor, Multimedia Producer | mtaylor@mvskokemedia.com
- Braden Harper, Reporter | bharper@mvskokemedia.com
- Kaylea Berry, Reporter | kberry@mvskokemedia.com
- Gary Fife, Contributor | gfife@mvskokemedia.com
- Chelsie Rich, Mvskoke Market | crich@mvskokemedia.com
- Mark Hill, Layout & Design | mhill@mvskokemedia.com



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To submit a change of address or a letter to the editor, call: 918-732-7720 or email: info@mvskokemedia.com.

MUSCOGEE(CREEK)NATION ELECTION BOARD

2023 MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION ELECTION PRINCIPAL CHIEF, SECOND CHIEF & NATIONAL COUNCIL SEAT A

Primary Election September 16th, 2023	Early Voting for Primary September 13th & 14th, 2023	General Election November 4th, 2023	Early Voting for General November 1st & 2nd, 2023
7:00A.M-7:00 P.M	7:00A.M-7:00P .M (each day)	7:00A.M-7:00P. M	7:00A.M-7:00 P.M (each day)

A mass mailing of absentee ballot request forms will be mailed to voters in February

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Voter Registration form can be found on the Election Board website
or
Camphouse Portal users
may use the election board tab to update or register to vote



For questions please contact us at 918.732.7631 or email us at Election@mcn-election.com

For more information please look at our website
<https://www.muscogeenation.com/election-board/>



MCN Caregiver Services provides a lending closet that provides equipment to caregivers within the tribe. The closet includes items like walkers, canes, and shower chairs. The program accepts donations that are either brand new or in decent, usable condition. (Submission)

NATIVE AMERICAN CAREGIVER PROGRAM RECEIVES GENEROUS EQUIPMENT DONATION

CONTRIBUTION MADE BY THE HOLLEYMAN FAMILY IN MEMORY OF MIKE HOLLEYMAN

by **BRADEN HARPER**
REPORTER

WETUMPKA, Oklahoma – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Native American Caregiver Program, managed by MCN Community and Human Services department was the recent recipient of a generous equipment donation by the family of Mike Holleyman (Mvskoke). The donation will benefit the department’s lending closet. One of the many services offered by the department, the lending closet, consists of items caregivers might need, such as walkers, shower chairs, and adult diapers. The term caregiver refers to

caring for others who can not support themselves. It refers to people that take care of senior citizens with disabilities and can include those who care for anyone who can not live on their own without a caregiver. Caregivers often provide essential care for children, spouses, or neighbors. In addition to providing equipment and periodic caregiver assistance, the department also provides counseling in group and individual sessions. Eric Yahola is a caregiver advocate within the Native American caregiver program. While his department is small, they support those caring for

others. “We provide respite for them,” Yahola said. “We can pay someone to come in and take their place if they need a break or run errands. The respite worker will come in and relieve them.” Yahola has worked with the nation for 11 years. Initially working in food distribution, he would eventually find himself serving citizens in a different capacity through caregiver support. “It’s gratifying. It’s not like work when you enjoy what you’re doing,” Yahola said. “It just feels like a part of what I’m supposed to do, just a part of life.” Holleyman family donation Kerri Hibdon and her sister, Melanie Blankenship (Mvskoke), were aware of the nation’s services from their father, Mike Holleyman. According to Hibdon, Holleyman was a proud citizen of his tribe and had a passion for fellow Native Americans. Holleyman was originally born in Kansas City, Missouri. His family would later move to Norman, Oklahoma. After graduating from Norman High School, he attended the University of Oklahoma and enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He served two tours during the Vietnam War. When he returned home from the war, he resumed his studies at OU, completing a degree in architecture. He opened his architecture firm in Oklahoma City, Holleyman Associates. Throughout Holleyman’s career, he designed buildings for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, constructing buildings on Native American reservations across the United States. Holleyman served two terms

as President of the American Indian Council of Architects and was a proponent of hiring and mentoring Native Americans professionals. According to Holleyman’s family, his proudest achievement was being invited to consult on the design of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. “That was the crowning achievement of my father’s life,” Hibdon said. “The building you see there now in D.C. is the building my father had a hand in creating.” During his last couple of years, Holleyman suffered from late-stage Alzheimer’s. Unfortunately, his battle with the disease made it hard for him to live independently, making it necessary to move into a memory care facility. Holleyman passed away on Dec. 10, 2022. To honor their father’s wishes, Hibdon and Blankenship wanted to pay it forward by donating to the tribe for which he cared deeply. “We were fortunate enough to buy things (equipment) for my father, so we thought we would donate them to the nation.” Unfortunately, before Hibdon and Blankenship had the opportunity to donate their late father’s equipment to the nation, it was donated elsewhere by another family member. However, that did not stop the sisters from purchasing brand-new equipment for caregiver support. Their donation included a shower chair, a walker, and other supplies for seniors. Hibdon said she understands caregivers’ struggles when properly providing for someone who can not

care for themselves because her family also struggled to find equipment when they needed it for their father. “She (Hibdon) told me about the situation with her father, how he had passed away,” Yahola said. “He had a passion for the Creek Nation and elders. He wanted to give back. One of his wishes was to donate to the Creek Nation.” Hibdon said her family intends to make this donation an annual occurrence. One benefit of the lending closet is how it directly supports the community. “This has helped folks feel like they’re giving like they’re helping someone else too,” Yahola said. “When they donate to us, they know somebody can use it.” Hibdon said the process of donating was easy and efficient. Most items the lending closet uses can be found on sites like Amazon. This is also advantageous because items can be sent directly to the caregiver program’s office. “I hope they see that it’s not hard to give back,” Hibdon said. “It’s so easy, and it doesn’t even take five minutes to purchase it and have it sent.” The lending closet is open to donations from anyone from the community that is able. The department will take anything that is in decent working condition. Most requested items include roller walkers, shower benches, and wheelchairs. For more information about the MCN Native American Caregiver Program or how to donate to the lending closet, the program can be reached at (918)-549-2459.



Jalen Herring is projected on the jumbotron at the U.S. Bank Stadium during the 2022 Indigenous Bowl. It is an exclusive event that featured some of the top Native American student-athletes from across the United States. The event allows players to exhibit their skills and learn new ones from professional players and coaches. Minneapolis, MN. (Submission)

INDIGENOUS BOWL MAKES DREAMS COME TRUE FOR NATIVE STUDENTS

MVSKOKE CITIZEN JALEN HERRING’S FOOTBALL TEAM WINS THE 2022 BOWL

by **BRADEN HARPER**
REPORTER

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota – Not many Native American high school students can say that they have played football in a professional-level stadium. However, that is not the case for athlete Jalen Herring (Mvskoke). On Dec. 11, 2022, Jalen Herring had the opportunity to play in the Indigenous Bowl. In this premier event, high school seniors of Native American descent from across the country can demonstrate their skills on the gridiron. Even a month after the Bowl, Jalen Herring and his family were still excited over the experience. According to Jalen, it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. “It was awesome,” Jalen Herring said. “It’s not even just playing in the bowl; it’s all these other experiences I had while there.” Those other experiences included meeting fellow native student-athletes from all over. Jalen Herring said he enjoyed learning about their cultures and forming bonds in the short time he participated in the Bowl. This year’s event was hosted in the U.S. Bank Stadium, home of the Minnesota Vikings. It was sponsored by the 7G Foundation, the National Football

League (NFL), and the Minnesota Vikings. The four-day event included football clinics where participants worked with professional coaches and players to improve their skills on the field. Jalen Herring played “both sides of the ball” at the Bowl, playing center and defensive tackle. His team, Bad Medicine, overcame the opposing Red Knights, winning the Bowl 33-16. “Coming off the field, getting to know that we won, and just celebrating with the other guys, that was a great feeling,” Jalen Herring said. Among the other tribes represented at the Bowl, Jalen Herring’s heritage was on full display. After contacting the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, they provided him with a box of various Mvskoke brand items, including t-shirts, a flag, and, most meaningful, a letter from Principal Chief David Hill. This was not the first time Jalen Herring participated in an exclusive event such as the Indigenous Bowl. Last spring Herring participated in the first Indigenous Football Combine in Phoenix with his brother, Cameron (Mvskoke). Football has always played an integral role in the Herring household. It was significant for

Jalen to experience this opportunity with his whole family, including his parents, Derek and Patrice. Jalen’s next chapter Born and raised in the Phoenix area, Jalen Herring currently attends Desert Vista High School and plays defensive tackle for their football team, the thunder. It’s a sport he has played and enjoyed watching with his family since he was young. Patrice Herring has watched her son grow as a young man and a skilled athlete. She said Jalen puts just as much effort on the field as he does off the field. He volunteers with his church and works at Danzeisen Dairy, a local creamery. In his final high school semester, Jalen continues pushing forward toward graduation. It can be a lot of work involving university applications and team tryouts. “It’s a little stressful,” Patrice Herring said. “It’s also sentimental for me as a mom because I see him maturing, getting ready to go off to college, and leaving the house. It’s sad, but it’s exciting too.” High school extracurricular activities like football can be a big commitment. However, according to Patrice Herring, that has not prevented her son from finding balance in sports and academics. He has excelled in both. He currently holds a 3.55 grade point average. When asked about his next chapter, Jalen Herring said he plans to attend college. He’s already been accepted to New Mexico State University and is considering the University of Oklahoma and Baylor University. Overall, Patrice Herring said her family had a positive experience with the Indigenous Bowl and would encourage other Native American high school seniors to apply for the next one. “I felt so much pride, and I was so proud of him, and I was just so happy to be there,” Patrice Herring said. “You could see how proud they were of their Native heritage.” The Indigenous Bowl welcomes donations. Those wishing to donate or even volunteer for the 2023 bowl can visit their official website.



The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program staff stands behind their booth as they celebrate 15 years of serving Indigenous families. The program has come a long way, expanding its offices in the Safe Space building and opening satellite offices in Jenks and Wetumpka. The 15-year celebration provided food and department-branded freebies for anyone who stopped by the booth. (Submission)

TANF CELEBRATES 15 YEARS SERVING THE MCN

DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO PROMOTE SELF-RELIANCE AMONG INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

by **BRADEN HARPER**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma – For families in need across the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, they have been able to rely on the Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program for the past 15 years. The department celebrated this achievement with a come-and-go event, providing informational materials and department-branded freebies. The event was an opportunity to reach out to the community and recognize how far the program has come since it first opened. Mark Pendergrass is the program manager for the Tribal TANF program. He is familiar with the history of the tribal program as he has been with it since its inception in the MCN. “I started the first day we became operational,” Pendergrass said. “January 2, 2008, is the day I started and is the day that TANF actually opened its doors.” According to Pendergrass, Tribal TANF began in a single room with a staff of fewer than ten members. They would later move to the main tribal complex, expanding services. Pendergrass initially started with the department as a case aid. Eventually, he would be promoted to program manager, which allowed him to gauge the department’s ability to help families become self-sufficient. According to Pendergrass, one of the program’s most critical services is equipping families with the skills to become self-sufficient. The program increases self-sufficiency by providing monthly cash assistance on a limited-time basis. This requires families to engage in weekly

work activities. The activities can apply to single-parent households or households where an extended family member has guardianship of a child. As a one hundred percent federally funded program, it serves all citizens from any federally recognized tribes within the program’s boundaries. The specific services may seem small and simple, but they go a long way. This includes covering school supplies or clothes costs, car repairs, and personal workplace necessities. These services also extend to housing and food assistance, dependent on income restrictions. As a family service, TANF serves adults as well as children. Youth services include SAT testing, extracurricular activities, and cultural camps. “We serve everybody that we can,” Pendergrass said. “Our main focus is children, someone has to have children in the household” Regardless of what will come in the future, Pendergrass wants to see it succeed because it is a vital resource in helping Indigenous families get by and learn how to provide. “I’ve dedicated more or less my work life to this program,” Pendergrass said. “Because I’ve been in it so long, I’ve always wanted to see it succeed because I know the potential of it. I want to ensure that it continues to grow even after I’m gone.” TANF’s services are available for all citizens of federally recognized tribes. For further information regarding eligibility for their services or to schedule an intake appointment, you can contact their Okmulgee or Wetumpka office at (918) 549-2880. Their Jenks office can be reached at (918) 549-2484.



Langston University School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences presented the first course at the Mvskoke Fund in Okmulgee, Okla. (Morgan Taylor/Multimedia Producer)

MVSKOKE FUND PROVIDES AGRICULTURE GRANTS FOR RESERVATION FARMERS AND RANCHERS

PARTICIPANTS CAN LEARN TOOLS THAT WILL HELP THEIR PROFITS

by MORGAN TAYLOR
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma – The Mvskoke Fund is wrapping up the Agricultural Business Training Series for citizens who applied for the Agri-business Loan through the department. A series of five courses were held at various locations across the reservation, including the Mvskoke Fund Building in Okmulgee, River Spirit in Tulsa, Thlopthlocco Tribal Town in Okemah, Muskogee Indian Community Center in Muskogee, with the last session to be held back at the Okmulgee location on Feb. 8.

The course was open to all reservation citizens, but the grant is only available to members of a federally recognized tribe. The grant will fund Muscogee citizens state-wide and tribal members within the reservation.

Each individual learned how to operate FIN Pack Software and was provided with access specifically for farm and agricultural finance and accounting management. The software allows farmers to compare themselves to other farms of the same size and see where they stack up nationally.

Participants will be educated on

developing a business plan, understanding cash flows, and estimating projections and other tools to help profits rise and reduce failing businesses.

Interim CEO of the Mvskoke Fund Robbie Deer said that the type they are seeing come in for agricultural loans is low-skilled in the business sector of the industry.

“What I’ve seen is pretty much just notes on paper, so the purpose is to bring this to a more formal level,” Deere said.

The goal is to help participants identify their needs when they may need help understanding where they could be having the most trouble when it comes to accounting.

“Many of them will come in not sure where they need help. They realize that they are having a struggle,” Deere said.

There are many risks to owning and operating a business; one of the most common outcomes is failing and becoming bankrupt.

Deere claims there is a difference with ag businesses.

“What we see with AG is usually it has been passed down or already have their hand in it. There’s a lot more legacy in it.”

Individuals sometimes start in agriculture, with the land passed down for generations.

Over the last two years, the MCN has built the Looped Square Meat Processing and purchased a ranch where livestock is raised to supply the plant.

Deer said one client of the Mvskoke Fund provides livestock for the meat plant. Calling this client a prime example, no pun intended, of the success of the Mvskoke Agri-business grant.

Representative Mark Randolph is an ex-officio on the Mvskoke Fund’s board and even sponsored NCA 22-150 granting the department Native American Agriculture Fund Grant.

Randolph believes that using land for food sovereignty is essential.

He said, We regressed from food sovereignty and hope the Nation will return to that.

For Randolph, it’s just a hobby now, but he claims he may again resort to using his love for gardening and the outdoors to feed himself and his family. Growing up, he remembers eating straight out of his grandmother’s garden. Even now, he loves to plant things here and there around his home.

“You look at the prices of vegetables and eggs,” Randolph said. “I better get some chickens again.”

Deere and Randolph both agreed that this could be a way to innovate jobs and food sovereignty for the Nation.

“There is a lot of area for agricultural expansion and livestock services that citizens can benefit from long-term,” Randolph said. “Especially those that have land, we have to look at ways to use our excess land”

Randolph said this program and the meat plant could complement each other while recycling money and keeping it within our community.

“We have a ways to go,” Randolph said. “But this is a good start”

With courses of this nature, the Mvskoke Fund can determine the needs of the participants by collecting data and information, creating more funding opportunities.

For more information, call the Mvskoke Fund at 918-549-2603.



Stephanie Rogers poses for a photo with the Wetumka Indian Community Fantasy Football Championship trophy as confetti falls on Jan. 12, in Wetumka, Okla. (Kaylea Berry/Reporter)

WETUMKA INDIAN COMMUNITY HOSTS FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE

STEPHANIE ROGERS TAKES HOME THE W IN THE WICFFL
by KAYLEA BERRY
REPORTER

WETUMKA, Oklahoma – Wetumka Indian Community Center wanted to build fellowship within their community in person and virtually. They achieved this by starting a fantasy football league, Wetumka Indian Community Fantasy Football League (WICFFL). This was the first time WICC set up a fantasy football league.

Initially, the center invited members over 18 to participate but ultimately opened it to anyone who wanted to join. To participate, no experience was required, and prospects only had to sign up with Eric Yahola, WICC Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. Attendance was optional, but WICC fed those who did attend.

Ten people, called “owners” in fantasy football, participated from Wetumka, Okemah, Holdenville, and Henryetta. Players downloaded the “Sleeper Fantasy Sports” app, created an account to play, and then were invited to the WICFF.

“We randomized the draft order, then each owner picked players until each had a full roster,” said Yahola. “Teams accrued points based on how well the players they picked performed during the season.”

Aug. 20, 2022, kicked off the draft day, and the last games players could get points were played on Jan. 8. The league lasted for 17 weeks ending in a championship tour-

nament. Fantasy sports are no different regarding trash-talking, and players could do so in the league’s group chat.

The WICC purchased a league championship trophy, and the inaugural champion was Stephanie Rogers. Her name was engraved onto a plate and added to the side of the trophy. She will hold onto it until next season, when she must defend her title.

The center is already considering what can be added for next year since the event was successful. One inspiration stemmed from the fact that many national fantasy football organizations charge a small entry fee for charities.

“Great things are being done locally by volunteers that could always use support,” said Yahola. “This could be something we do even as soon as the upcoming 2023 Football season.”

Yahola also said, “most leagues rarely retain all of their owners year to year, so some will have to be replaced.”

League size ranges between 6 – 32, but WICC would like to keep theirs between 8 and 12. However, more leagues can be created under the Wetumka Indian Community Fantasy Football League (WICFFL). Anyone interested in joining the 2023 fantasy football season can email Eric Yahola at teyahola@live.com or call/text 405-712-4831.

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The Muscogee Nation Veteran Affairs Services Office, River Spirit Casino Resort and Creek Brothers Films partner to create a benefit concert for Mvskoke Veterans. This special event is open to all ages and starts at 8 p.m. on Feb. 4 at the Cove. (Shutterstock)

MVSKOKE VETERANS BENEFIT CONCERT FEB. 4 AT RIVER SPIRIT

HEADLINING THE EVENT IS TANYA TUCKER WITH C. THOMAS HOWELL

by **KAYLEA BERRY**
REPORTER

TVLSE, Oklahoma - The Muscogee Nation Veteran Affairs Services Office, River Spirit Casino Resort and Creek Brothers Films partnered to create a benefit concert for Mvskoke Veterans. This event aims to enrich Mvskoke Veterans’ lives. This special event is open to all ages and starts at 8 p.m. on Feb. 4 at the Cove.

The transition from military life to civilian life is not always an easy one. Thousands of veterans struggle to find their purpose again, cope with their experiences, and live with bodily and psychological scars. These organizations have teamed up to assist with career and benefits counseling along with the battle

against homelessness, hunger, and physical and mental health.

“These veterans have different needs. Not everyone has the same needs,” said Mike Harjo (Mvskoke), co-owner of Creek Brothers Films. “We’re going to initiate new programs with the money that comes in, and we’re going to help many areas requiring assistance.”

Harjo served as a medic in the Army Reserve for eight years and came from a military family. He is a film producer and director with years of experience in Native films in California and Utah. Harjo has been working with the VASO to produce the concert and will also direct part of the event.

“There’s a lot of veterans’ causes, there’s a lot of exposure for veterans, but I have never seen anyone focus on Native

American veterans specifically for a cause, and that’s what I’m trying to do,” Harjo said.

The proceeds from the event, apart from the cost to put on the show, will go directly back to the VASO to help veterans in Indian Country.

“The benefit’s strictly for our office here, and that’s so that we can do some things that we can’t do now,” said Grover Wind, VASO Director. “That will allow us to help with some of the homeless veterans we can’t now.”

Ticket prices start at \$50 for the Upper Bowl section and increase for the Lower Bowl and Floor sections. Anyone can also donate \$100 in exchange for a seat for a service member. All donations are tax-deductible, and the seats available to soldiers are in sections 101 or 103. Corporate sponsorships are also available, with packages starting at \$1,000.

The opening ceremony will begin with the Mvskoke Nation Honor Guard and Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv Honor Guard presenting the colors. Headlining the event is Tanya Tucker. Joining the event, the 1983 film The Outsiders stars C. Thomas Howell and Darren Dalton will be the Master of Ceremonies. There will also be other bands and special guests.

Veterans can sign up to receive one or two donated tickets for the event at www.creek-vaso.org. Those selected will be notified Monday, Jan. 30, and the tickets will be available for pick up at will-call Sat. Feb. 4 at River Spirit. Anyone can also purchase tickets, donate, or sign up to be a corporate sponsor on the VASO website. For more information or questions, contact the VASO at (918) 732-7616.



Participants of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Temporary Occupancy Program check out of the Days Inn by Wyndham Hotel. The program allowed citizens to lodge in the hotel for up to 90 days temporarily. However, federal funding for the program ran out before the 90 days expired. Jan 6, 2023. Okmulgee, OK. (Braden Harper/Reporter)

CITIZENS ON TEMPORARY HOUSING GRANTS ARE LEFT TO FIND NEW LODGING ACCOMMODATIONS

ARPA FEDERAL FUNDING FOR MCN TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY PROGRAM RUNS OUT BEFORE THE ANTICIPATED PROGRAM DEADLINE

by **BRADEN HARPER**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma – Over a dozen Muscogee (Creek) Citizens participating in the Temporary Occupancy Program had to find new lodging accommodations after federal funding for the program ran out. The Indian Community Development Block Grant funded the program under the American Rescue Plan Act.

Two MCN Citizens utilizing the program, Heaven Bonitz and Terri Baldridge, said they were unprepared for the federal funding to run out. Both stayed at the Days Inn by Wyndham Hotel in Okmulgee since late October or early November. Baldridge found out over breakfast that she had to check out of the hotel the same day.

“Communication is a big deal, and everyone stresses out,” Baldridge said. “If someone had picked up the phone and let us know last week, ‘hey, we’re out of funding, y’all get ready,’ but here now, everyone is sitting here twiddling their thumbs.”

An official with the Days Inn by Wyndham said he was informed at the last minute that the citizens under the temporary occupancy program would have to check out on the morning of Jan. 6.

Baldridge utilized the temporary occupancy program because her house had broken windows and no running utilities. She said it was her understanding that she would be able to stay in the hotel for a full 90 days.

“There was no communication,” Baldridge said. “We were told three months to be able to get started again.”

Bonitz said she reached out to the housing department, the Chief’s office, and national council members to see if the program would be extended but was unsuccessful in making contact.

MCN Department of Housing Admissions Manager Jamie Moore provided the following statement regarding the issue:

“The Department of Housing offered the Temporary Occupancy Program for a short

period to provide temporary and transitional shelter to those Citizens and their families currently experiencing homelessness to protect themselves from the infection of COVID-19. The homeless population faces great difficulties, which create obstacles in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The Temporary Occupancy Program experienced an overwhelming response and assisted as many eligible Citizens. The Admissions Department interviewed every Citizen that came to the office to fill out an application and offered resources to help them in their journey. Applicants were informed of the available Housing Programs and eligibility requirements to assist them in finding permanent housing. The ICD-BG-ARPA grant funding for the Temporary Occupancy Program was \$300,000.

Each Citizen signed an agreement acknowledging they understood the terms and were informed it was temporary and encouraged them to be actively seeking options of finding permanent housing. The Admissions Department made referrals to many of the Nations’ resources such as; Behavioral Health, Social Services, Citizenship, Food Distribution, and Transit.”

The response went on to state that the admissions department received 82 applications, 62 received assistance for a motel, and 25 on a waitlist in the event that more funding became available for the temporary occupancy program. It also stated that the citizens utilizing the program were given advanced notice of their check-out date and that the program would end.

The Okmulgee County Homeless Shelter is an available resource for those facing immediate housing insecurities in the Okmulgee area. The shelter is open to citizens of all ages and provides services that help others break the cycle of housing insecurity. The shelter is located at 214 N. Morton Ave. and can be reached at (918) 756-9098.



The Indigenous Readers Series is a collection of online video sessions where narrators read books by Indigenous authors. The series includes sessions for elementary and middle school students. All Native American and Alaskan Native students residing within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Reservation are eligible to participate. (Submission)

ACE ENRICHES STUDENTS BY READING NATIVE AMERICAN BOOKS

INDIGENOUS READERS SERIES BEGINS ITS SOPHOMORE YEAR

by **BRADEN HARPER**
REPORTER

MUSCOGEE NATION, Oklahoma – “Butterfly in the sky, I can go twice as high. Take a look. It’s in a book. A reading rainbow.” If those lyrics sound familiar, you might recognize them from the highly successful children’s television program “Reading Rainbow.” While the show has not been in production for several years, many have carried on its well-known legacy of providing educational programming that encourages reading.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Accessing Choices in Education Program continues this legacy through the Indigenous Readers Series. Now in its sophomore season, the series enlists educators, authors, and special guests to record themselves reading children’s books written by Native Americans. It is a modern format for modern Indigenous audiences.

Although this series is not broadcasted on television, it is accessible online. The program format is online videos that involve a Mvskoke language lesson, a history lesson, and the featured book. Illustrations from the book are seen through slides along with text read by a narrator.

Shannon Barnett is the MCN ACE Cultural Academics Specialist. According to her, the goal of the program is to be easily accessible for everyone that uses it.

“It’s made so that it can be done with students through email so that it can be viewed by their siblings and family because we want to encourage literacy at home,” Barnett said.

The series serves students from pre-K to eighth grade and is available to all Native American and Alaskan Native students living within the MCN reservation. At the end of each video, students are directed to take a survey which allows them to receive a free book bundle. According to Barnett,

book bundles can either be mailed, picked up, or delivered to the student’s school site.

The book bundle includes the book read during the online video, an additional book, and items that encourage literacy.

Similar to “Reading Rainbow,” the Indigenous Reader Series has featured many narrators eager to serve the next generation of readers through storytelling.

“The first one that we did, we had the secretary of education, Kaila Harjo. She read our first book for us, Fry Bread,” Barnett said. “We also had our Mvskoke Royalty read last year, Claudia McHenry and Gabby Noriega.”

The series has featured books like “Joshua and the Biggest Fish” by Kaylee Morrison and Nancy Smith and “We Are Water Protectors” by Carole Lindstrom. The former is Barnett’s favorite from the Indigenous Readers’ Series.

“Joshua and the Biggest Fish” features English text in yellow while Mvskoke words are highlighted in green, inviting the reader to pay close attention to the spelling and meaning. This story, in particular, features familiar staples of Mvskoke cultures, like fishing, irrigation, and sharing a community meal.

“We want to spark our students’ interest in guided and independent reading,” Barnett said. “Giving them access to maybe opportunities with not only Native authors and books but getting to know some of our dignitaries and people around our nation that are also getting to read and introduce themselves to our young Native youth.”

Anyone wishing to sign up for the Indigenous Readers Series can visit their website, mcnaceservices.com. Barnett said it is beneficial to visit the site to stay updated on services provided by ACE.

Reading continues to be revered on the reservation. When young Indigenous students listen to stories written by Indigenous authors, they may believe that “I can be anything.”

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A Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council Natural Resources & Culture Preservation Committee was held at the Mound Building in Okmulgee. (MM File)

MCN NC AUTHORIZED THE EXPENDITURE OF GRANT FUNDS

THE GEOSPATIAL DEPARTMENT WAS AWARDED THE CERCLA GRANT OF \$93,620

by **KAYLEA BERRY**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma – A Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council Land, Natural Resources & Culture Preservation Committee meeting was held on Jan. 10 at the Mound Building.

TR 23-001 A MCN Tribal resolution supporting the addition of new routes, as identified in attachment “A” - MCN NTTFI 2023, to the Nation’s existing National Tribal Transportation Facility Inventory (NTTFI) and requesting the Bureau of Indian Affairs add these new routes to the Nation’s NTTFI. Representative Galen Cloud sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

The MCN has existing routes on its NTTFI, and new routes have been identified within the Nation’s reservation. These new routes are eligible for inclusion in the NTTFI.

TR 23-002 A MCN Tribal resolution approving the update of the MCN Long Range Transportation Plan with the addition of the routes listed as attachment “A” - MCN NTTFI 2023.

Rep. Cloud sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

The MCN has completed and adopted a Long Range Transportation Plan under 25 CFR Part 270 Regulations. New routes have been identified within the Nation’s reservation that the Nation intends to add to the Nation’s NTTFI. It is in the MCN’s best interests to utilize the Nation’s share of the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) funds to assist the Nation with future road design, environmental, construction, maintenance, and planning costs.

TR 23-003 A MCN Tribal resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a separate Memorandum of Understanding with eight Oklahoma counties for the maintenance of roadways and associated rights-of-way constructed or improved by the MN TTP. Rep. Cloud sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

The Nation’s TTP has an inventory of proposed public roadways and associated rights-of-way located in Hughes, Wagoner, Okfuskee, McIntosh, Creek, Muskogee, Rogers, and Okmulgee counties.

The Nation and the above-listed counties in Oklahoma have memo-

rialized their understanding that the Nation should construct TTP Routes in a county as mentioned above, and each county agrees to maintain such routes and right-of-way. The Nation will enter into a separate Memorandum of Understanding with each county.

TR 23-004 A MCN Tribal resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a separate Memorandum of Understanding with five Oklahoma Schools for the maintenance of parking lots and associated rights-of-way constructed or improved by the MCN TTP. Rep. Nelson Harjo Sr. sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

The Nation’s TTP has an inventory of proposed public parking lots and associated rights-of-way located at Paden, Okemah, Weleetka, Midway, and Wilson Schools.

The Nation and the state of Oklahoma have memorialized their understanding that should the Nation construct TTP Routes in an aforementioned school, each school will agree to maintain such routes and right-of-way. The Nation will enter into a separate Memorandum of Understanding with each school.

TR 23-005 A MCN Tribal resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation for the maintenance of roadways and associated rights-of-way constructed or improved within Okfuskee County, Oklahoma, by the MN TTP. Rep. Charles McHenry sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

The Nation’s TTP has funds available to improve various sections of roadways within Okfuskee County, Okla., that are owned and maintained by the ODOT. TTP has an inventory of proposed improvements to multiple sections of roadways within Okfuskee County, Okla., that are owned and maintained by the ODOT and are an integral part of the road system serving tribal members.

The Nation and the ODOT, in the state of Oklahoma, have memorialized their understanding that should the Nation contribute to the improve-

ment of a section of roadway within Okfuskee County, Okla., owned by ODOT, more specifically described as the improvement of a 1.5-mile section of Highway 48 and depicted on the attached map, that the ownership and maintenance of the section of roadway shall continue to rest with the ODOT. The Nation will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding for the section of roadway depicted on the map.

TR 23-006 A MCN Tribal resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a separate Memorandum of Understanding with four Oklahoma cities for the maintenance of roadways and associated rights-of-way constructed or improved by the MN TTP. Rep. McHenry sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

The Nation’s TTP has an inventory of proposed public roadways and associated rights-of-way located in Okemah, Weleetka, Dewar, and Coweta cities.

The Nation and the above-listed cities have memorialized their understanding that should the Nation construct TTP Routes in aforementioned cities, and each town agrees to maintain such routes and right-of-way. The Nation will enter into a separate Memorandum of Understanding with each town.

TR 23-007 A MCN Tribal resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a separate Memorandum of Understanding with Okfuskee and Seminole counties for gravel road maintenance projects by the MN TTP. Rep. McHenry sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

The Nation’s TTP has funds available to improve various public roadways designed as TTP Routes located in Okfuskee and Seminole counties in Okla.

The Nation’s TTP has an inventory of proposed public roadway projects in Okfuskee and Seminole counties.

The Nation and the above-listed counties in the state of Oklahoma have memorialized their understanding that should the Nation construct TTP Routes in an aforementioned county, and each county agrees

to maintain such routes and right-of-way. The Nation will enter into a separate Memorandum of Understanding with each county.

TR 23-008 A MCN Tribal resolution amending TR 21-071 (A MCN Tribal resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a Memorandum of Agreement between the Nation and the ODOT for a drainage improvement project located at U.S. Highway 75 and SH-56). Rep. McHenry sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.

There is a need to amend TR 21-071 to change the estimated project cost and funding source. The new estimated cost of the project is \$3,278,568 and will be paid by the ARPA funding approved by NCA 22-069.

NCA 23-001 A MCN law authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the benefit of the Geospatial Department. Rep. Cloud sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0.


The Geospatial Department was awarded the CERCLA section 128(a) State and Tribal Response Program Infrastructure Grant for \$93,620. The bipartisan infrastructure law funding under the CERCLA section 128(a) State and Tribal Response Program Infrastructure Grant was awarded for the Geospatial Department to continue to review projects that address climate change and tribal environmental codes and to contract with vendors to review Current and existing tribal environmental regulations to assist in the maintaining the framework for the MCN Brownfields Program.

Authorization from the National Council is required to expend grant funds necessary to administer the CERCLA section 128(a) State and Tribal Response Program Infrastructure Grant.

This Act aims to authorize the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the benefit of the Geospatial Department.


For video of committee meetings, visit www.mcnnn.com.

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▪ **It's ok to say no to add-ons, or at least ask the price.** Add-ons are extra things dealers offer along with the car, like extended warranties and service contracts. Make sure you know what they are, how much they cost, and how they'll change your monthly payment.



▪ **Review the terms before you sign for the purchase and financing.** Make sure everything you agreed to is in writing. Spoken promises are hard to enforce.



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The HEW Committee meeting was held on Jan. 11. (MM File)

LANGUAGE PROGRAM REVITALIZATION THROUGH VIDEO GAME DEVELOPMENT

HEW APPROVES AGREEMENTS TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKUMLGEE, Oklahoma – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council held a Health, Education, and Welfare committee meeting at the Mound Building on Jan. 11. All passed legislation will go

before the full Council during the regular session on Jan. 26. HEW addressed the following legislation, the interpretation of which is attributed to language in the bills:

TR 23-009 Authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a Provider Participation Agreement with

United Healthcare Insurance Company for the benefit of the MCN Department of Health. Representative Robert Hufft sponsored the resolution, which passed, 4-0.

United Healthcare Insurance Co. provides healthcare services for some patients within the MCN Healthcare system.

TR 23-010 Authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a Master Subscription Agreement and Data Processing Addendum with Brightly Software for the benefit of the MCN Department of Health. Rep. Robert Hufft sponsored the resolution, which passed, 4-0.

The MCN desires this agreement to improve workflow and security.

TR 23-011 authorizes the Principal Chief to execute an Order Form and Master Agreement with Maven Clinic Co. for the benefit of the MCN Department of Health. Rep. Mary Crawford sponsored the resolution, which passed, 4-0.

The agreement provides virtual option appointments for expecting mothers and supportive fathers.

TR 23-012 Approving the early in-person voting sites for the 2023 Election Cycle. Rep. Anna Marshall sponsored the resolution, which passed, 4-0.

The Election Board has deter-

mined four locations to serve as early voting sites: Eufaula Indian Community Center, Okmulgee Indian Community, Okemah Indian Community Center, and Tulsa Indian Community Center.

NCA 23-002 Authorizing the expenditure of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fiscal year recovery funds for the purchase and creation of a Mvskoke language video game. Rep. Galen Cloud sponsored the Act, which was passed, 3-1. Rep. Leonard Gouge and Hufft were added as co-sponsors. Rep. Crawford voted against the legislation.

ARPA funds of \$3,700,000 are being mobilized for the MVskoke Language Department to utilize in the language revitalization to create a video game if the whole Council approves.

NCA 23-003 Authorizing the expenditure of third-party funds to the MCN Department of Health for the operations, goods, and supplies for the council oak hotel Sponsor. Rep. Crawford sponsored the Act, which was passed, 4-0.

The MCNDOH is receiving third-party funds with the NC approval needed to expend the funds in the amount of \$518,980.

NCA 23-004 Authorizing the expenditure of the U.S. Depart-

ment of Homeland Security FY 2021 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant for the benefit of the Emergency Management Department. Rep. Crawford sponsored the Act, which was passed, 4-0.

The funds of \$58,128.32 will benefit the Storm Shelter Program.

NCA 23-005 Authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the National Indian Health Board for the benefit of the Eufaula dormitory Rep. Crawford sponsored the Act, which was passed, 4-0.

The \$11,468 will be used to purchase supplies for two isolation rooms and for COVID information posters to be distributed throughout the dormitory.

NCA 23-006 Authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the United States Department of Agriculture to benefit the Food Distribution Program. Rep. Crawford sponsored the Act, which was passed, 4-0.

The grant funds of \$4,375.00 will be used to create and disseminate culturally relevant nutrition education resources that can encourage American Indian/Alaskan Natives to learn essential nutrition, food safety, meal planning, and healthy living.

The meeting can be viewed at www.mcnn.com



Pictured are the Huie family, Carrie Replogle (left), Bob (left center), Abby (right center), and Rhonda (right). Standing behind them are coaching staff from Howe High School and Oklahoma Wesleyan University. Abby has also been selected to play in the Oklahoma All-State league. Howe, OK. (Submission)

MVSKOKE HIGH SCHOOL SOFTBALL PLAYER COMMITS TO OKWU

ABBY HUIE SET TO GRADUATE WITH A DIPLOMA AND AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE

by **BRADEN HARPER**
REPORTER

HOWE, Oklahoma – Abby Huie (Mvskoke) has had quite a busy senior year of high school. She has been selected to compete in the All-State softball team, maintained a 4.55-grade point average, and will be graduating with an associate degree in addition to her diploma this year. Most recently, she signed her official letter of intent to play softball at Oklahoma Wesleyan University. Her current schedule requires discipline and astute time management skills.

“I’ve been taking college classes since I’ve been a sophomore,” Abby Huie said. “I can stay home and do the classes and get what I need to get done for that day, then I have to go to practice and games, so that takes up my nights.”

Abby has been active from an early age. Growing up, she enjoyed playing T-ball, slow-pitch, and fast-pitch softball. She also participated in travel ball, where players and their families travel all over to compete. Although Abby Huie takes the competition seriously, her favorite aspect of the sport is the connections she makes off the field.

“I have lifelong friends from travel ball,” Abby Huie said. “It’s so cool to see people from other backgrounds and to be able to be friends with them for the rest of my life.”

According to Abby Huie, her softball career began at Hodgens middle school, where they won state for the first time in the softball program’s history. She started as a third baseman in her first year. She would go on to play shortstop in her junior and senior years. As her career progressed, Abby moved districts to Howe.

Abby Huie’s talents on the diamond have been seen at all-conference, all-district, and all-region competitions. She has played alongside and against some of the best softball players in the state. Allstate, in particular, is a special honor for high school seniors.

Abby Huie’s mother, Rhonda (Mvskoke), has been one of her biggest supporters and has been with her every step of her career. It was nothing less than astounding for Abby to be selected for all-state in her final year of high school.

“It’s the biggest honor you could receive,” Rhonda Huie said. “We’re a small 2A school in southeastern Oklahoma; we do not have a lot of representation.”

When it was time for Abby Huie to sign her letter of intent to play softball at Oklahoma Wesleyan University, it was a culminating moment she had been working toward her entire career.

“It was kind of emotional honesty,” Abby Huie said. “It felt like I didn’t just do it for nothing. It was the best feeling in the world.”

Concurrent college courses

“I’ve always set high goals for myself,” Abby Huie said. “Once I set my mind to something, I can not stop thinking about it. With my associate’s degree, once I knew I wanted to do it, there was no turning back.”

Abby Huie discussed what inspired her to pursue a college degree in high school. The concurrent program at Howe allows her to take college classes through Carl Albert State College. This will give her a leg up post-graduation as she begins to pursue a career in nursing at OKWU.

“They have a really good program,” Abby Huie said. “Hopefully, one day, I will become a traveling nurse or a nurse practitioner.”

She further explained that she wants to follow in her mother’s footsteps working in tribal healthcare to serve fellow Native Americans. Rhonda Huie currently works as a physician assistant at the Choctaw Nation Diabetes Wellness Center. She has served the Choctaw Nation for over 20 years. Before that, she had previously worked for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

The waning months of high school can be an emotional experience as students approach the graduation milestone and move forward into the next chapter of life. For their families, it is no different, especially reflecting on what it took to get there. Abby Huie’s letter of intent signing was more than just a celebration. It symbolizes the hard work and sacrifice made by her and her family.

“It was that final sense of we completed that circle,” Rhonda Huie said. “We finally got that affirmation that this kid has worked hard and she has that ability. It’s just an amazing feeling as a parent.”

Abby Huie is set to graduate in the spring of 2023. She will hang up her Howe Lions jersey and switch it out for an OKWU Eagles jersey as she begins her college career next school year.



Bacone College Lady Warriors and Haskell Indian Nations University Fightin' Indians "Battle on the Hardwood" Jan. 7 in Haskell, Okla. (Kaylea Berry/Reporter)

MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION RECREATION HOST BACONE VERSUS HASKELL BASKETBALL GAMES

FIGHTIN' INDIANS TOOK THE W FOR BOTH GAMES

by **KAYLEA BERRY**
REPORTER

HASKELL, Oklahoma - For the second year, Muscogee (Creek) Nation Recreation hosted the men’s and women’s basketball games between Bacone College and Haskell Indian Nations University Sat. Jan. 7 at Haskell Public Schools. The Warriors and Fightin’ Indians are conference rivals, but the game between the two is more than just a rival game. It is also an excellent opportunity for Bacone and Haskell alums and Natives throughout Indian County to come together.

According to Mike Sans, MCN Rec Manager, Bacone reached out to the department last year in hopes of using the Mvskoke Dome for the season. Unfortunately, Bacone’s gym has been out of commission, but the teams can still play home games at the Dome.

The “Battle on the Hardwood” was initially scheduled to take place at the Dome, but a water line break caused immense damage and could not be repaired in time. This left the Rec staff searching for a gym that met college basketball requirements in a short amount of time.

One of those requirements is a shot clock which is not something most high schools have. However, MCN Rec Project Specialist Lucas Taylor and Haskell Public School Superintendent Rodney Luellen (Mvskoke) worked together to move the game to Haskell Public Schools.

“I immediately got a hold of my athletic director about my coaches, and all four were in 100% agreement to help out,” said Luellen. “Lucas has helped us a lot over here, and so has the [Muscogee Nation] tribe.”

The advantage that HPS had is that they have shot clocks in their gym. They are not typically used, though, so additional equipment was needed.

“We had to borrow Haskell’s console to run our shot clocks because we don’t use shot clocks in high school basketball, and we taped out the 3-point line to meet NCAA standards,” Luellen said.

MCN Rec wanted to incorporate other tribal traditions along with Mvskoke ones.

“We do stomp dances, so to connect with all tribes, most of them do pow-wow, and they enjoy that,” said Sans. “Some people have never seen it, so that’s just something the Natives want to bring out so that everybody can enjoy it.”

This year, the Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv Honor Guard presented the colors while the Moose Hill Singers performed a flag song. The Moose Hill Singers are a three-person drum team, Robbie Boston (Mississippi Choctaw), James Green (Kansas Kickapoo), and Moses Starr (Sioux). Green’s daughters Kendall and Savannah (Kansas Kickapoo) danced as they played during half-time of the games. The concession stands sold Indian Tacos, and Native vendors set up in the lobby.

Bacone College and Haskell Indian Nations University are both four-year Tribal Colleges. Alums from both schools came to show their support for the current players.

“The thing about it is, especially in Indian Country, with these two schools, you always have some kind of connection,” said Taylor. “Either you went there, and your parents went there, your grandparents went there, your cousins or whatever, there’s a common link between these two schools.”

“To me, the importance of this game is just getting the community involved,” Taylor continued. “Each year, we’re trying to do it bigger and better.”

The Fightin’ Indians took the W for both games. The women’s final score was 75 – 43, and the men’s 92 – 68.

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IN MEMORIAM



LINDA KAY FRANCIS

Linda Kay Francis, born November 11, 1948, to Ples Clarence and Emma Cleo (Harjo) Muirhead departed this world December 12,2022. She was preceded in death by her husband, Sam Finley, daughter, Sammi; parents, Ples and Cleo Muirhead; Brother, Jimmy, Joe and Alex.

Linda gave her heart to Jesus at a young age. She was a devout student of the Bible, she and her mom spent many hours together studying God’s Word. Many of her favorite scriptures were found in her Bible. (John 11:25 Whosoever believes in me shall never die. 1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your care upon Him for He cares for you.)

Being homebound for a lengthy time she had her favorite media pastors. She loved prophesy, listened daily to the 700 Club, Michael Youssef, David Jerimiah and Robert Jefferies. Her tithes went to the 700 Club. She also contributed each month to the Regional Food Bank.

Linda’s family was her pride and joy, she would “light-up” when her children or grandchildren called or came to visit. She loved family gathering like birthday, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Linda was comical and could turn bad situations into laughing matters. As a child she was a serious player of

Cowboys and Indians...she once tied her sister’s new doll to a tree and set it on fire.

Linda attended Butner High School. She was a big Thunder fan. She loved music, making jewelry, crocheting and spent much time reading and watching Documentaries. Her family and friends will miss her nightly news alerts telling them to flip over to such-and-such channel, when it was good, she wanted everyone to know.

Linda was a Muskogee Creek Indian. She was proud of her heritage that was passed down from her grandfather, Pete Harjo. She was of the Deer Clan.

Linda leaves a legacy of love and cherished memories with her surviving family and close friends: son, Chance Finley; daughter, Gwen Finley; son in law, Teddy Rhyne; grand children, Majecska, Emma, Izzy, Sam and James; brothers and sisters, Deane Mosley; Carolyn Pumphrey; Norma Sanchez; Rick Muirhead; many Nieces, Nephews and Cousins.

Linda will be missed, our loss is her gain.



GLEN E. VAIL

Glen E. Vail. 1949~2023. Surrounded by his loved ones and extended family, Glen Edward Vail, 73, of Wilburton, went

to be with his Lord on Tuesday, January 03, 2023. He was a member of the Freewill Baptist Church in Hitchita, Oklahoma.

Glen was born on August 30,1949 at McAlester General Hospital, to William Colman “Coley” and Delia “Tinsey” (Gray) Vail and grew up in Canadian, Oklahoma.

Glen was a Truck Driver by trade and worked for railroads in his earlier years, an avid outdoorsman, a Coon Hunter, a Boxer in his earlier years. Many knew Glen by his story telling days, many adventures were told. He played Basketball for Canadian Cougar’s and baseball for independent teams. He always fought hard and succeeded in everything he did.

Glen had one of the biggest Hearts, he especially enjoyed mentoring and giving to others.

Glen was predeceased by his Father, Coley Vail and by his Mother Tinsey Vail, His wife Cynthia “Cindy” (Bogges) Vail, his Grandparents Joseph “Joe” and Minnie (Carter) Vail and William Elmer and Viney (Pemberton) Gray, as well as his niece Charyl Schultz.

Glen is survived by his siblings, Phyllis Hailey and Robert of Canadian, JoAnn Cable of McAlester, Faye Taylor and Mike of Glenpool, Denise Sinclair of Catoosa, Uncle Ronald Gray and Sue of Eufaula, Aunt Imogene “Midge” Robertson of Del City, Survived by host of niece’s, nephew’s, cousins, extended family and friends, and extended family at Latimer Nursing Home in Wilburton, Oklahoma.

A memorial service will be announced at a later date. Arrangements are entrusted to Schaudt Okmulgee Funeral Service. Family and friends may send memories and condolences to the family at www.schaudtfuneralservice.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

“Stonkon fullatskat! First off, I would like to extend a sincere MVTO to those who have helped me thus far in my life. Those who have shared with me cultural knowledge, taught me crafts, worked with me on the language, and just seen something in me to be worth talking to and teaching. My hope is to share our culture respectfully and, to the best of my knowledge. We are beautiful people and deserve to have our values of Eyasketv, Vnokeckv, and Vrakkueckv shown to the world. With that being said family, friends, and community I am thrilled to announce that I am a contestant for the 2023 Miss Indian World Pageant! I am so excited to participate in this prestigious competition that honors Indigenous women across the world! This will be the largest stage I’ll ever cross and I am so blessed that I will do it representing the Mvskokvvlke.

I am the 24-year-old daughter of Arlene Isham and Joe McHenry. My maternal grandparents are the late Christine and Billy Wolfe and the late Clarence Isham. My paternal grandparents are Jessie Cox and Arthur McHenry. I am descended from the late Martha (Bruner) and Chaparney Davis. I am Wind Clan and my Tribal Town is Tvlwvmocvse. My ceremonial ground is Helvpe. I graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma in 2020 with a bachelor’s in Business Administration and Legal Studies and I more recently graduated from the College of the Muscogee Nation with a certificate in Mvskoke Opunakv in the spring of 2022.

My platform through this journey is protecting and utilizing the Indian Child Welfare Act, this is something I would advocate for if I were to win the title. This subject is important to me because growing up I have always seen my family care for those in need, especially stepping up as caregivers to children who need better stability. It is all that I know and is the reason I have so many sister-cousins, just kidding! But this is something that really speaks to my heart at this moment, I feel it is imperative for tribes to support its protection and to engage in more programming that shares cultural aspects

with foster/ICWA children. I am passionate about this because as Mvskoke people we all belong somewhere, and it is important to know how and where you belong. Knowing our clans and tribal towns shows Vnokeckv and Vrakkueckv for our ancestors, caring to know this is the most utmost way to show love. We are oral traditionalists, as we live and breathe, we become a part of history. Our work here is for the benefit of the next generation of leaders. Leaving these ICWA children in the hands of non-natives erases them from that history and from what will be taught and passed on.

Choosing to run for this prestigious title has come with a lot of contemplation and it is something I have mulled over for a couple of years. It is a tremendous duty to even simply state myself as a contestant and it takes a lot of responsibility as I am representing the Mvskoke people, my family, and the community I come from. Striving to be an ambassador that promotes and makes change is something that I take great pride in and I would love to do it in areas beyond my current reach. It has always been a dream of mine to participate in this pageant to learn from and meet many other Indigenous women who also make it their goal to promote positivity and better quality of life. I am excited to embark on this journey and appreciate your support in any way whether that be words of encouragement, prayers, good thoughts, or financially!

In lieu of a fee for participation in the pageant I am asked to sell 500 raffle tickets priced at \$2.50 USD and \$3.00 CAD. I will have some tickets set up at the Southwest Trading Company in Tulsa, OK for sale or you can contact me directly at 918-758-6764 if you would like to purchase. I can accept cash payments as well as PayPal, Venmo, Facebook Pay, and CashApp. There are 20+ prizes available and you do not have to be present at the drawing to win. I will also be doing some personal fundraisers for traveling costs, costs of making my regalia and my hotel stay. One of the fundraisers I plan to host is a Wild Onion Dinner on March 18th, further details are TBA. I am very appreciative of any and all support on this upcoming journey. MVTO!”



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LEGALS

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF Oklmulgee COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

In re the Marriage of:
Brendan D. Harjo
Petitioner,
and
Mandy B. Harrison/Harjo
Respondent.

FD-2022-1478

FILED
IN DISTRICT COURT
MAY 24 2022
OKMULGEE COUNTY, OKLAHOMA
CHARLY CRINER, Court Clerk

PETITION FOR DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE By

COMES NOW the Petitioner, Brendan Harjo
and, for cause of action against the Respondent, Mandy Harrison/Harjo states:

1. At the time of the filing of this Petition (check one):
☒ The Petitioner had been a resident of Oklahoma for the past six months, and had been a resident of Oklmulgee County for the past thirty days, or
☒ The Respondent had been a resident of Oklahoma for the past six months, and was a resident of Tulsa County at the time of the filing of the Petition.

2. Petitioner and Respondent were married on the day of in Oklmulgee (County), State of Oklahoma and have been since that time and are at the present time husband and wife.

3. There are 04 children, currently minors, born to the parties. The initials and dates of birth of these children are:
ADW H dob May 4, 2017
43EEN dob June 8, 2018

10. During the marriage, the parties acquired marital property. Petitioner requests that this Court equitably divide the marital property between the parties.

11. During the marriage, the parties accumulated debt. Petitioner requests that this Court equitably divide the debt between the parties.

12. (Use if applicable) Respondent should be ordered to pay Petitioner alimony for support.

13. (Use if applicable) Petitioner requests that she be restored to her former name of Mandy Beth Harrison.

WHEREFORE, Petitioner requests that this Court grant the following relief:
a. A dissolution of the marriage;
b. (Check one) ☒ Sole ☐ Joint Custody of the minor child;
c. Child support;
d. Award the Petitioner all separate property acquired prior to the marriage;
e. An equitable division of marital property, and debt;
f. (Use if applicable) Alimony for support;
g. All other relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,
Brendan Harjo Print Name
Harjo, OK 74437 Address
 City, State, Zip Code
 Telephone Number
Petitioner, pro se

4. Check one of the following:
☒ The Wife is not pregnant.
☐ The Wife is pregnant, and is expected to give birth at approximately the date of

5. Petitioner requests: (check one)
☒ Sole Custody of the minor child awarded to the Petitioner, with Respondent having the right of visitation.
☐ That this Court award Joint Custody of the child to both parties.

6. This Court should order the Respondent to pay child support to the Petitioner.

7. Check one of the following:
☐ The Petitioner has not received assistance from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS). To the best of the Petitioner's knowledge, the Respondent has not received assistance from DHS.
☒ DHS has provided assistance to the ☒ Petitioner ☐ Respondent. DHS should be notified of this case.

8. Between the spouses, there has arisen a state of complete and irreconcilable incompatibility. There is such a conflict of personalities as to destroy the legitimate ends of matrimony and the possibility of reconciliation.

9. Prior to the marriage, Petitioner acquired separate property. Petitioner requests that this Court award the separate property to him/her.

VERIFICATION

STATE OF OKLAHOMA }
COUNTY OF Oklmulgee } SS:
I, Brendan Harjo, of lawful age, being first duly sworn upon oath, state:
That I am the Petitioner above named, that I have read the above and foregoing pleading and know the contents thereof, and that the statements, allegations and facts therein set forth are true and correct to the best of my information, knowledge and belief.
Brendan Harjo Signature
Brendan Harjo Print Name
Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1st day of February 2022
 Notary Public
My Commission Number:
My Commission Expires:
SEAL


IN THE DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR MUSKOGEE (CREEK) NATION
OKMULGEE DISTRICT COURT
FILED
In the Matter of the Adoption of FILED 21 P 2 52
ATTICUS EZEKIEL SCHRADER, dob: 1/16/2018
a minor child.
 AD 2022-32

NOTICE OF PETITION TO TERMINATE PARENTAL RIGHTS
OF NATURAL MOTHER

MUSKOGEE CREEK NATION TO:
Courtney Jade Schrader
YOU ARE HEREBY notified that a Petition has been filed in this Court asking this Court to determine that your Parental Rights be Terminated. You have been named as the natural mother of Atticus Ezekiel Schrader, a minor child born on the 16th day of January, 2018. The Petition alleges that your consent is not required by law for the following reasons to wit pursuant to Title 6-1-901(B)(2)(c) and (B)4; Title 6-1-907(B):
TITLE 6-1-901(B)(2)(C) ABANDONMENT: It is alleged that the child is eligible for adoption in that you have "failed to maintain a significant relationship with the child through visitation or communication for a period of six (6) consecutive months out of the last fourteen (14) months immediately preceding the filing of a Petition to Terminate Parental Rights." Incidental or token visits or communications shall not be construed or considered in establishing whether a parent has maintained a significant relationship with the child."
TITLE 6-1-901(B)(4) FAILURE TO CONTRIBUTE TO SUPPORT: The Court may terminate parental rights upon a finding that a parent who does not have custody of the child has willfully failed to contribute to the support of the child as provided in a decree of divorce or in some other Court order during the preceding year or, in absence of such order, consistent with the parent's means and earning capacity.
YOU ARE THEREFORE NOTIFIED THAT THE COURT WILL HEAR EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF, AND IN OPPOSITION TO, THE GRANTING OF THE APPLICATION AT THE TIME AND PLACE SHOWN BELOW WHERE YOU WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE PRESENT AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD AT THAT TIME AND PLACE, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO OBJECT TO THE ADOPTION OF THE CHILDREN; YOUR FAILURE TO APPEAR AT THIS HEARING SHALL CONSTITUTE A DENIAL OF YOUR INTEREST IN THIS CHILD, WHICH DENIAL MAY RESULT, WITHOUT FURTHER NOTICE TO YOU OF THIS OR ANY SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS, IN THE TERMINATION OF YOUR RIGHTS TO THESE CHILDREN, ALL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF THE MUSKOGEE CREEK NATION.
You are further notified that this Court will hear evidence and hold the hearing on the 11th day of April, 2023, at 9:00 A.M. in the District Court of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation, Okmulgee District.
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto affixed by official signature and seal of this Court this 21st day of December, 2022.
 JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT
TERRI CRIG, NCMA #567
Attorney for Petitioner
P. O. BOX 891
Wagoner, OK 74477
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