



MVSKOKE NEWS

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The sign at Council Oak Tree Park marks the location where the Muscogee (Creek) Nation ended its journey on the Trail of Tears. Oct. 17, 2023, Tvlse, Okla. (Jerrad Moore/MM)

CYCLE OF REBIRTH CONTINUES AT COUNCIL OAK TREE PARK

A DETAILED TIMELINE OF THE PARK'S EXISTENCE AND OWNERSHIP

by **JERRAD MOORE**
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

TVLSE, Okla. - Downtown Tulsa is home to the Creek Nation Council Oak Park, location of the Council Oak Tree. Locvpokv Tribal Town leaders in the 1830s selected the tree as the location to place the coals and ash from

their sacred fires they brought with them during removal. The Mvskoke people had a custom of naming locations they settled in Indian territory after Tribal towns and villages in their homelands. They called the town that sprung up around the Council Oak "Tulahasse", which means "old town", after a significant village complex in the Creek Con-

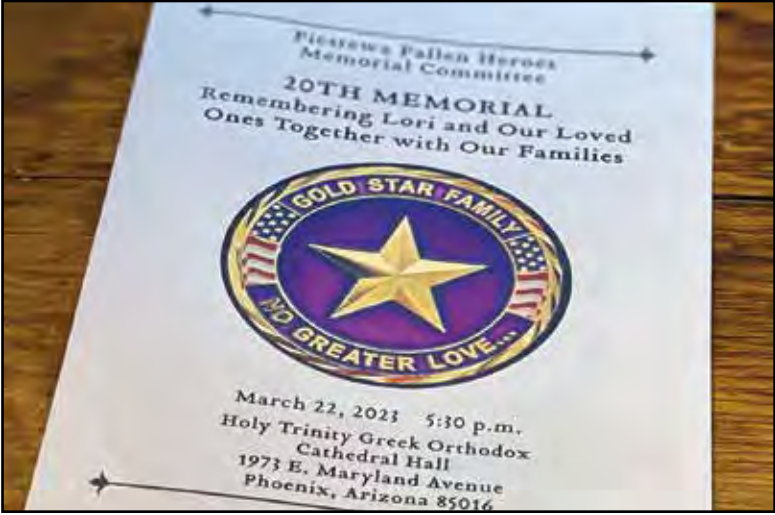
federation. The name was shortened to Tallasi and eventually became Tulsa.

The original site was later broken up by the allotment process, and the parcels where the Oak resided were bought by Tulsa oilman, Harry Sinclair. The Oak grew free from jeopardy on the grounds of the Sinclair mansion for many years until 1968 when a Texas businessman named J. Paul Little sought to have the tract zoned for a parking lot.

Little had agreed to preserve the tree if a parking lot was developed, but protests from residents of the area put the move on hold. The protestors had a plan to trade city-owned land in the Boulder Park area for the tract that held the Council Oak. The protestors, led by John Harvey, had also secured the support of W. E. (Dode) McIntosh, who was Principal Chief of the Creek Nation at the time.

Little formally agreed to the proposed deal, but on December 14, 1971 a group of landowners near Boulder Park filed suit in District Court, alleging that the city did not have the authority to carry out the trade and the plan would depreciate the value

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A pamphlet for the 20th Memorial of Lori Piestewa's death lays on a table during the memorial dinner in Phoenix, AZ, March 23, 2023. (Kaylea Berry/MM)

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF PIESTEWA'S ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

MUSCOGEE NATION HONOR GUARDS REVERE PIESTEWA, GOLD STAR FAMILIES AND POW/MIA

by **KAYLEA BERRY**
REPORTER

PHOENIX, Ariz. - March 23, 2023, marked the 20th year of U.S. Army Specialist Lori Piestewa's death. Piestewa (Hopi) was the first Native American woman to be killed in combat and the first woman killed in the Iraq War. This year the

Muscogee Nation's men's and women's honor guards were able to honor Piestewa, her team, and other Prisoners of War/Missing in Action and Gold Star Families.

It was a two-day ceremony beginning with a dinner on Wednesday, March 22. Honor guards and

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A new grant will help the MCN Tourism Department develop strategic planning for tourism opportunities. (MM File)

NATIVE ACT FUNDS \$3 MILLION AMONG 30 TRIBES FOR TOURISM

TRIBAL TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM MADE POSSIBLE BY THE NATIVE AMERICAN TOURISM AND IMPROVING VISITOR EXPERIENCE (NATIVE) ACT

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation was awarded \$149,423 from the U.S. Department of Interior Tribal Tourism Grant Program made possible by the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act, funding more than \$3 million to 30 tribes.

The funds will be used to evaluate the project and market opportunities in tourism on the reservation. This includes international tourism, bus tours, website development, unifying tourism with gaming initiatives, creating more cohesive gift shops, and participation in the Route 66: Road Ahead Initiative.

MCN Director of Marketing and Tourism Ryan Logan claims the grant timeline allows for the funding to be expended during the calendar year.

Partnerships with the state of Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia, and other tribes are creating marketing advancements to attract tourism dollars, however there hasn't been much exploration on the tourism side of

things according to Logan. "This will allow a more strategic plan to where we can work with an outside vendor to help define these things," he said. "This allows us to pinpoint one specific area we want to grow and implement that strategic plan."

For future tourism opportunities, the website development is a priority to Logan. It will also allow his department to staff adequately.

"Tapping into this funding that will allow us to expedite this, we will be well suited," he said.

Stepping into the director position in January, Logan has been able to see the full scale potential to increase revenue with cultural tourism.

"Tourism is the third leading industry in Oklahoma," he said.

According to Logan, the average trip of an out of state visitor is anywhere from 14-21 days. Collecting data by zip code, it was determined that many come internationally with high numbers from Germany and France.

The Muscogee Reservation has a diverse environment where a visitor

can enjoy a metropolitan area or the rural country. However, Logan said there are just not enough attractions, especially in those desolate areas to keep visitors entertained for the average stay.

The Route 66 centennial is coming up, which is in conjunction with the initiative. The old route will potentially be used as a market profile within the reservation area. It will base operational decisions on the fact that the largest stretch of the highway runs through Oklahoma.

Logan claims the Nation is establishing its presence in the Tulsa area by implementing visual aspects like murals, statues, and signage to show Muscogee representation to tourists.

"It puts us being truly authentic and taking ownership of the place we created," Logan said.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Brian Schatz and Vice Chair Lisa Murkowski authored the act.

"This new funding will further empower Native communities across the country to expand unique cultural tourism opportunities and share their own stories, cultures, and traditions with visitors," said Chairman Schatz.

According to Senator Murkowski, tribal tourism grants empower tribes to expand opportunities to learn about Native peoples and cultures, create jobs, and increase revenues for vital services in their communities.

"My friend, Chairman Schatz, and I have been co-leading efforts to direct the federal government to fully implement the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act - the NATIVE Act - which established the Tribal Tourism Grant Program in 2016," said Vice Chair Murkowski. "And we continue to advocate for our bill that amends the NATIVE Act to further promote Native-run tourism across the country."

The grant project is in its beginning stage. Once the department receives the funds, Logan plans to hire new staff and start outlining priority investments.

This is a developing story.



Brenna Day smiles big in front of her graphic art piece, "Ivory Billed Extinction". The piece was designed in a computer and features a skeleton overlay. (Courtesy: Day Family)

MVSKOKE ARTIST CONTINUES TO PRESS FORWARD TOWARD PROMISING DIGITAL ART CAREER

BRENNA DAY RECEIVED HONORABLE MENTION AWARD FOR DIGITAL ART PIECE

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

NORMAN, Okla. - Brenna Day (Mvskoke) is an artist of many different mediums. She has worked in pencil, charcoal, acrylic paints, pastels and most notably digital art. She joins a long list of talented Native American artists that produce art inspired by their culture.

Day is descended from Locvpokv and the Beaver clan. She is the daughter of Bill and Jennifer Day, the granddaughter of Gary and Betty Gerber, and the great granddaughter of the late Carl and Betty Martin.

She is a 2022 graduate of Broken Arrow High School. Excelling in her studies, Day was an advanced placement 2-D art student.

In February of 2022 Day's two-dimensional digital art piece, "Ivory Billed Extinction" won an honorable mention at

the George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center's Sutton Award art show. The art piece illustrates an Ivory Billed Woodpecker with a skeleton overlay.

The Mvskoke word for woodpecker is cvkvlv. It holds cultural significance as a medicine bird. Day used the bird as her subject due to its extinction in recent times, something that has had an impact on her. The species was rediscovered in the early 2000s, but has not been sighted since.

The "Ivory Billed Extinction" piece would go on to be displayed in the Oklahoma Young Talent Juried Art Show (YTIO) exhibit at the University of Central Oklahoma. It was honored as a judge's choice designee.

Being featured in these exhibits opened Day's eyes to the potential the art industry can bring.

"I got to walk around and see

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COUNCIL OAK

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of their property.

On July 7, 1972 Judge William Means ruled that the City did have the authority to do the trade, but another wrinkle had appeared.

While everyone waited for Means decision, it was discovered that two separate Texas banks held mortgages on the Council Oak property and the deed could not be delivered due to a threatened foreclosure. Alamo National Bank of San Antonio claimed that Little was behind in payments on his \$65,000 dollar mortgage. Security State Bank of Piersall Texas held a mortgage for \$150,000 on the same property.

This meant that in order for the trade to happen, the foreclosure would have to be sorted, and the land would have to be bought by a party that was still willing to swap it for the Boulder Park parcel.

The land was eventually cleared for a Sheriff’s sale and was purchased on October 2, 1973 by a group of Tulsa real estate developers for \$114,350. The purchasing group consisted of Nat Henshaw, Noel Eden, and Ira Crews. The group had made the deal with the express purpose of saving the Council Oak, and the swap was back on.

On February 19, 1974 the Tulsa City Commission formally traded deeds, and the city took ownership of the Council Oak site.

On September 29, 1976, after a review of the submitted application, the Creek Council Tree site was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In January of 1980, the City placed lightning rods in the Council Oak to protect the tree from damage. Later that year in May a beautification project was started that resulted in the installation of a sprinkler system, landscaping and a wrought iron fence.

On October 26, 1986, a ceremony was held to commemorate the Council Oak, where Muscogee Creek Nation Principal Chief Claude Cox and other city and state officials declared the day to be Creek Nation Council Oak Tree Day. This became an annual event on the site that continues on to the present.

The Council Oak Tree still resides in its original location today. A local homeowner’s association, Tulsa Riverview Neighborhood Association has proposed ideas as to how to update the park with restored plaques, lighting and landscape work.

The association has sent out a letter reaching out to Muscogee (Creek) Nation, or MCN citizens asking for guidance and support in their efforts to update the park. The full letter can be found in the submission section of this edition on page 6.

BRENNA DAY

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all these other exhibiting artists selling things,” Day said. “I can do that, I can be that if I want to.”

Day’s family was present to see her piece proudly exhibited in front of artists from around the country. It was even framed by a professional framing company. On top of feeling a sense of pride, Day explained that it was fun participating in an event where she was recognized for doing something she genuinely enjoys.

The journey to becoming a digital artist for Day began in 2019 when she received an iPad for Christmas. Just a few months later in early 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic began, providing her plenty of free time to hone her skills as a digital artist.

“I was drawing several hours everyday,” Day said.

Today Day continues to study digital art as a freshmen at the University of Oklahoma. Most recently she was accepted into the visual communication program through the art school.

“I was really excited because this is what I love and I get to do it as a job,” Day said.

When asked about her career aspirations after she finishes school, Day was optimistic about the future. Digital artists can find careers in software design, video game design and animation. For Day, her dream would be to one day work for the media company known for wishing upon stars.

“They have people at Disney,” Day said. “It would be amazing if I could work for Disney in [animated] costume design, or set design.”

Regardless of where Day’s career goes, her passion for the digital arts and her love for Mvskoke culture is clear and present in her work.

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PIESTEWA

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representatives from all over came together to support the families of those who made the sacrifice of serving in the U.S. military. The night began with a Pass In Review of each group, coming from all over the country. Then Gold Star Families and POW/MIAs were recognized, dinner was served, and individuals gave performances.

On Thursday, March 23 the official 20th anniversary of Piestewa’s sacrifice, a sunrise ceremony began with George Piestewa carrying a traditional Red Hawk Feather Memorial Staff to the top of Piestewa Peak. The peak was renamed in Piestewa’s honor on April 17, 2003.

This memorial is a place of healing not only for the Piestewa family, but also for the family and friends of those who gave their all.

Former POWs Patrick Miller, Jessica Lynch, Joe Hudson, Edgar Hernandez, and Shoshana Johnson attended the event. They spoke about who Piestewa was, and read aloud the names of those who are not here today. Although they each lost a friend that day, and the Piestewa family lost their daughter and mother, they did gain something new.

Piestewa’s sacrifice brought them together, creating a bond they each needed. Each one is able to lean on the other and aid in their healing journey.

Attending the Piestewa Fallen Heroes Memorial was a great honor. They presented Percy Piestewa, Lori’s mother, with a Pendleton blanket during the ceremony as a token of respect and honor.

“It was a huge honor to pay tribute to a fellow warrior sister that shed her blood for our country, our people and morals,” said Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv Treasurer, Sarah Wilson. “We want to let her family know that we are thinking of them as they continue through life.”

“She will never be forgotten along with other service members.”

This memorial also marked the first out-of-state event for the Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv.

“It was amazing to be able to meet her mother and son, both having such gentle and positive spirits on this anniversary day,” said Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv Commander, Megan Lowry. “It was truly a heartfelt and meaningful event to have the opportunity to participate, and we are definitely planning to go back if possible.”

Both the men’s and women’s honor guards marched and presented colors during the ceremonial dinner and memorial service.

Lori Piestewa

Lori Piestewa was a single mother of two, Carla and Brandon, and wanted a better life for them. She joined the Army in March 2001 and completed basic training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Piestewa earned the rank of Private First Class while serving with the 507th Maintenance Company in Fort Bliss, Texas.

As part of the worldwide war on



Shonday Randall (Mvskoke) proudly stands beside her haiku at the Woody Guthrie Center in downtown Tulsa, Okla. March 23, 2023. (Courtesy: Shonday Randall)

MVSKOKE POET’S HAIKU SELECTED TO BE DISPLAYED ACROSS DOWNTOWN TULSA

SHONDAY RANDALL’S “TVLSE” WAS ONE OF TEN POEMS CHOSEN AMONGST HUNDREDS OF ENTRIES

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

TVLSE, Okla. – Haikus are simple, they tell a vivid story in just a few sounds. For those who are fans of the short poetry format, they may have noticed that the preceding sentence is a haiku itself. Originating from Japan, traditional haikus adhere to a three-line, five-seven-five syllable format. They are unique because they are descriptive poems that colorfully illustrate nature.

It also happens to be the favorite poetry format of Mvskoke poet, Shonday Randall. She has been telling stories through the format for as long as she can remember. Her heritage as a Mvskoke citizen living on the Mvskoke reservation played a pivotal role in one of her most recent poems.

On March 23 Randall was recognized for her poem, “TVlse” at the Woody Guthrie Center during their Curbside Haiku Poetry Night. The event was hosted in conjunction with the City of Tulsa, the Woody Guthrie Center, and Magic City Books. Randall was one of ten selected poets to have their poems displayed on boards around the downtown area.

“As a Mvskoke citizen and with the reservation being intact, my mind always goes to our ancestors and how we came to be in Tulsa,” Randall said. “I always like to share that part of history with family/friends. I thought this would be a good opportunity to write about

terror, President George W. Bush authorized the invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003. Since this was the first war in which American service women could actively serve in combat forces, Piestewa was deployed to fight for her country as a member of the 507th Maintenance Company.

On March 23, three days later, Piestewa’s convoy was ambushed and bombarded with fire, including a rocket-propelled grenade that led to a deadly collision. She became both the first woman killed in action in the Iraq War and the first Native American woman to do so.

Due to Lori Piestewa’s courage, commitment, and fearlessness while serving her nation, she was retrospectively promoted to Specialist and given the Purple Heart and Prisoner of War Medal.

“I remember the news stories only ever mention Jessica Lynch, I had no idea a Native Woman Warrior had given the ultimate sacrifice,” Lowry said. “It is of the utmost importance that we continue to give a voice and pay tribute to her family, honoring that sacrifice.”

The Piestewa Challenge, launched this year, was created in memory of the 177 women who lost their lives while participating in military activities around the world. This challenge was named in honor of SPC Lori Piestewa and took place March 23 – 29.

The Piestewa Fallen Heroes Memorial takes place every year in Phoenix, Arizona.

something, but I wanted it to be motivational. I was just thinking ‘we’re still here, here we are.’”

Her haiku goes, “The end of the trail is only the beginning, we are Mvskoke”. The first line alludes to the forced removal of the Mvskoke people from their homelands to the present day reservation. The poem ends with a note of hope, and a strong statement of cultural identity.

According to Randall, she took inspiration from her ancestors, some who were Trail of Tears and Indian boarding school survivors. Growing up Randall’s family valued education. They made sure she knew how to actively read, write and create. Poetry provided her with the perfect outlet.

“It was always just for fun, it’s relaxing,” Randall said.

Randall also shared that when she travels, instead of purchasing trinkets to serve as memories she enjoys writing haikus. She said it allows her to keep inspiring herself.

As for her award-winning poem, “TVlse” she was humbled that she was able to share her talent and her heritage with fellow Tulsans.

“I think it’s important that we remind the residents of the City of Tulsa that they are on the reservation. I think it’s important that we make our presence known as much as possible,” Randall said.

The story of Tulsa’s origins as the endpoint of the Trail of Tears for the Mvskoke people may not be well known amongst Tulsans today. However, Randall’s poem about the city serves as a humble reminder that Tulsa would not be Tulsa without the Mvskoke people.

The full list of the ten haikus selected for the Curbside Haiku Poetry Night can be viewed on Tulsa’s downtown website: www.downtowntulsa.com.

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A Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council Regular Session meeting was held in person and via teleconference on March 25 at the Mound Building. (MM File)

CHANGES TO ELECTION BOARD COMMITTEE PASS

MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION LEADERSHIP HOLD SESSION IN MVSKOKE HOMELANDS AND ON THE RESERVATION

by **KAYLEA BERRY**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - A Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council Regular Session meeting was held in person and via teleconference on March 25 at the Mound Building. All passed legislation is subject to Full Council approval during the Regular Session held the last Saturday of each month.

The National Council addressed the following legislation, the interpretation of which is attributed to language in the bills:

TR 23-025 A MCN tribal resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a service agreement with Bio-Medical Applications of Oklahoma, Inc. for the benefit of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Health. Representative Mary Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

The contract will help improve patient treatment and access to health services for in-patient dialysis treatment.

TR 23-027 A MCN resolution authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a MCN Dept. of Housing contract with Harris Contractors. Representative Galen Cloud sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

The MCN Dept. of Housing is requesting approval for a contract with Harris Contractors to construct five homes for the Dept. of Housing. The cost for the work on the five homes is a total of \$969,762.

TR 23-028 A MCN resolution approving the Tribal Internal Control Standards submitted by the MCN Public Gaming Commission. Representative Randall Hicks sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

The commission performs regulatory oversight and monitors compliance with tribal, federal, and applicable state regulations. The commission submits the Administrative Rulemaking Standard in accordance with MCNCA Title 21 2-101.

TR 23-029 A MCN resolution authorizing commitment for matching funds in collaboration with the State of Oklahoma for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Tribal Cooperation Grant program. Representative Joseph Hicks sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

There are multiple projects that need to be taken care of across the Nation's boundaries. The State of Oklahoma gave the Muscogee Nation \$6,750,000. The tribe will match the \$6,750,000, Indian Health Services will donate \$3,100,000, and \$4,000,000 coming from the Oklahoma Water Resource Association, Wagoner and Mayes Counties, as well as the City of Beggs will go to infrastructure funds for 10 projects. The infrastructure funds are tripled for a total of \$20,600,000. The projects include dam repairs, water issues, wastewater management and more. These projects were

selected based on what was in the IHS system with funding already available to maximize it.

NCA 23-018 A MCN Law establishing a new Title 28, Chapter 13, entitled "Muscogee (Creek) Nation Land Referral Services". Rep. Cloud sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

The MCN provides legal assistance to enrolled citizens for land services. There is a need to reorganize the process and create the Land Referral Services area for citizens to receive assistance to establish clear title, alleviate trespass and protect assets of the citizens, traditional churches, ceremonial grounds, and the Nation.

The new law will be codified in the MCN Code of Laws, Title 28, Chapter 13.

NCA 23-019 A MCN law authorizing an appropriation for the MCN Realty Land Referral Services. Rep. Cloud sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

The legislation is seeking a funding source. Acting Controller Patricia Killian determined the Interest on the Permanent fund as the source.

NCA 23-021 Authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition for the benefit of the Office of the Secretary of the Nation. Representative Mark Randolph sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

The VITA grant was awarded in the amount of \$10,000.

NCA 23-022 Amending MCNCA Title 19, Chapter 2, Entitled "Organization of Election Board and Precinct Election Committees," Chapter 10, entitled "Absentee Voting" and Chapter 15, Entitled "Campaign Finance Code." Representative Leonard Gouge sponsored the legislation, which passed 15-0.

According to MCN Election Board employee Sara Barnett, the code was modified to simplify language. The absentee ballots were extended from 20 to 30 days, and priority mail can be used. The campaign finance code was updated so donations can only be accepted from Muscogee citizens of Muscogee-owned businesses. Election board members' stipends were increased from one payment to a payment for each event that a board member attends and helps with.

Rep. Marshall took time to recognize Women's History Month and all Mvskoke hokt-vke past and present for "their strength, endurance, resilience and courage".

Muscogee leadership attended the 209th anniversary of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Chief David Hill, Second Chief Del Beaver, Council members and Horseshoe Bend Park Ranger shared a few words about being on original Mvskoke lands in Alabama.

For full videos of committee meetings, visit www.mcnn.com.



Participants gathered in "talking circles" to greet one another and share experiences. (Courtesy: Steven Randall/Mvskoke Citizen)

TRAIL OF HOPE HOSTS 30TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A WEEKEND-LONG EVENT WAS HELD FOR NATIVE AMERICANS IN DRUG ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE RECOVERY

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

GLENPOOL, Okla. - The 30th Annual Native American Sobriety Conference was hosted by the Trail of Hope at the Glenpool Conference Center March 17-19.

The three-day event kicked off after the work day Friday evening with registration, an opening ceremony, special guest speaker Andrew Bearpaw of Tahlequah, entertainment and lastly talking circles.

Talking circles split the men from the women into smaller groups to share stories and become acquainted. Some tears were shed and laughs were had during the talking circles.

New friends and some old stayed well into the night, chatting and sharing experiences of the long, hard life they once lived during their active addictions.

With new connections, participants were overly excited for the early start on Saturday morning at 8 AM.

For the first two hours, partic-

ipants learned about the medicine wheel during a workshop.

Several speakers from different organizations took the stage to speak words of encouragement into the recovery groups.

Dinner was provided to the attendees which was followed by some dancing and entertainment by a disc jockey.

An optional sweat lodge was open at 5 a.m. Sunday morning at a separate location. Events at the conference center did not continue until 9 a.m. with the final speaker and a closing cedar ceremony to follow.

The late Lana Harjochee (Mvskoke) played a major role in the annual event and the Trail of Hope organization as the Chairwoman before her passing in 2020.

Harjochee explained to the Cherokee Phoenix in a 2016 interview that Native people need other Natives to talk to and understand them.

According to Harjochee, the organization was developed by a group of Native men attending Alcoholics Anonymous, where



Wilson students attend the Cultural Day event hosted by the Wilson Indian Community Center March 29, 2023 in Wilson, OK. (Kaylea Berry/MM)

WILSON INDIAN COMMUNITY HOSTS CULTURAL DAY

WILSON PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARNED ABOUT MVSKOKE CULTURE

by **KAYLEA BERRY**
REPORTER

WILSON, Oklahoma - The Wilson Indian Community Center hosted a Cultural Day for Wilson Public School students March 29 at the community center. The Cultural Day brought Muscogee culture and history to roughly 300 students.

Community members in the past saw a need for a cultural day but there was never a follow through to put one on. This year, new Wilson Indian Community member Kim Morrison took the initiative to coordinate the event.

"I started reaching out to Claudia McHenry, former Mvskoke Royalty, my coworkers, I talked to my boss about it," said Kim Morrison. "I met with the committee

here, and they said that would be a good idea."

Morrison continued, "It is hard to get it out if there is no support system or if the school lacks services, so I feel like it's important for the community centers to be able to provide a cultural day to all of the schools."

The elementary students participated in the morning, middle school and high school students attended in the afternoon. Students were split into groups by grades. They learned how to make corn husk dolls, watched a fry bread demonstration (and tried it), listened to storytelling, learned about beading and learned about Mvskoke Royalty.

"I am helping explain the importance and differences of fry bread, and also talking about my

they noticed that the Natives present would not share their experiences during these meetings, even when they began new lives clean and sober.

"These men began a Native American conference that our people would be proud to attend and gather together sharing with one another life's experiences, hopes, strength as a new person without the chemical that controlled and destroyed their lives," she said.

The conference has no affiliation with any AA or Narcotics Anonymous groups.

Many participants do attend meetings in their local areas that include AA, NA, 12-step programs, and other various groups.

According to the American Addiction Center, substance abuse among Native Americans is generally much higher than those of the general U.S. population. Methamphetamine use is reaching three times the rate of any other race.

Data indicates that Native Americans have the highest rates of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, inhalant, and hallucinogen use disorders compared to other ethnic groups.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that 13% of Native Americans need substance use treatment, but only 3.5% actually receive any treatment.

Studies have shown that cultural identity and spirituality are important issues for Native Americans seeking help and may experience better outcomes with traditional healing approaches.

For more information about the Trail of Hope, they can be called at 918-519-5447, emailed at trailofhopendnz@gmail.com or contacted through the organization's Facebook page, Trail of Hope Supporters.

Tribal members living within the Muscogee reservation that struggle with addiction can call the MCN Behavioral Health Department at 918-758-1910.

reign, who I am and a little bit about Mvskoke Royalty," said Jr. Miss Muscogee Nation Chenoa Barnett. "It's really cool to people from maybe different tribes or who are non-Native that come to learn, see how our Nation runs and what we offer to Mvskoke students."

The event was available for all students, Muscogee citizens, other tribal citizens, and non-Natives.

"I think whether they're Native or not they need to know the culture of this area," said Andrea James, Wilson Public School Superintendent. "They need to understand that they're living in the middle of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and at least know the history behind some of it."

"We appreciate their time, we appreciate everything they've done for us," James continued. "We've enjoyed it, it's been good."

According to McHenry the only way to continue traditions and keep the Mvskoke language alive is by passing it on and teaching it to the next generation.

"It's important to inform youth about who we are as a people and to let them know that if they don't learn these things, then it'll go away," said Claudia McHenry, 2021-2022 Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

Morrison hopes to work with Henryetta and Schuler Public Schools to put on future cultural days. These schools also fall within the Wilson Indian Community's boundaries.

If any other communities and/or schools are interested in hosting a cultural day for their students, they can reach out to Morrison at 918-758-1930.



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MVSKOKEMEDIA



Mvskoke Nation Youth Services Youth Prevention Specialist, Jamie Rolland teaches youth how to measure out ribbon placement at the Okemah Indian Community Center March 30. (Kaylea Berry/MM)

YOUTH SERVICES HOLD CONNECT THE DISCONNECT EVENT

YOUTH LEARNED HOW TO MAKE RIBBON SKIRTS

by **KAYLEA BERRY**
REPORTER

OKEMAH, Okla. - Mvskoke Nation Youth Services put on a ribbon skirt making class for Native youth ages 16 to 24 at the Okemah Indian Community Center March 23 and 30. Youth Services started a program, Connect the Disconnect, to bring the Mvskoke culture and language to youth in the communities.

“We’re taking it to the communities so that people that don’t have the opportunities to learn at home can still have the opportunities to learn our culture,” said Mvskoke Nation Youth Services Director, Nancy Deere-Turney. “At the same time, we’re discussing relevant topics for youth that they also need to hear that maybe they’re not hearing in the home either.”

The topics that were discussed during this two-week class included consent and boundaries. Mvskoke Nation Youth Services Youth Prevention Specialist, Jamie Rolland gave a short presentation to the youth in attendance and asked questions to see what level of understanding they had on the topic. Rolland also taught the girls how to make ribbon skirts.

“I’m teaching the girls how to make a basic ribbon skirt because it’s important for them to be connected to their culture and to have some kind of identity,” Rolland said.

This was a two-part class, with

the first day consisting of learning how to get the ribbon skirt started. The second day taught more about ribbon colors, width, and placement.

“A lot of it is just really preference on colors and that skirts mean something different to everybody,” Deere-Turney said. “So, the color may mean something different for you, it may tell a different story for you, but it goes back to personal preference, it tells your story.”

Rolland just started with Youth Services in February teaching healthy teen dating. This marked her first Connect the Disconnect event.

“I’ve been sewing since I was in 6th grade, my Home Ec[onomics] teacher Ms. Jones taught me,” said Rolland. “The only reason I really got into sewing again was because I have two small daughters and it’s expensive to pay somebody else to make three outfits every year for Green Corn, so I started sewing again.”

They try to make every class different and rotate what is being taught. Next month’s class will be on making moccasins. The program tries to hold the classes in different communities throughout the reservation to give as many youths as possible the opportunity to learn about the Mvskoke culture.

Call 918-549-2557 to request MCN Youth Services to put on a Connect the Disconnect event or for questions about what all is offered.



(L-R) Changing Winds Cultural Society Chairwoman Cheryl Anquoe, 2023 Miss Aurianna Jones (Seminole), 2023 Jr. Miss Jaylee Mule (Kiowa), 2023 Little Miss Mahlea Warrior (Kickapoo) and CWCS Committee Member Madonna Myers. (Courtesy: Cheryl Anquoe)

MISS INDIAN OKC NAMED

THE PAGEANT WAS HELD ON MARCH 13

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. - The 2023 Miss Indian Oklahoma City pageant crowned Aurianna Jones (Seminole), Jr. Miss, Jaylee Mule (Kiowa), Little Miss, Mahlea Warrior (Kickapoo) at the Destiny Christian Center on March 13.

The 31st annual pageant was sponsored by the Changing Winds Cultural Society. The Seminole Nation Honor Guard presented the colors for the ceremony.

Lisa Johnson Billy (Chickasaw) and her husband Phillip Billy emceed the event. Lisa was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives District 42, becoming the first Native American woman to serve in the state house. She finished out her term in 2016 as the floor leader.

CWCS Chairwoman Cheryl Anquoe (Kiowa) said that the pageant serves young Native girls living within OKC, Guthrie, Shawnee, Purcell and El Reno areas.

“We provide a platform,” she said. “The Changing Winds Cultural Society.”

Sign language classes start immediately for the princesses for six weeks.

According to Anquoe, the trio will perform in sign language at future events.

“These girls are invited to perform,” she said, mentioning the high volume of requests for the performance. “These performances have to be a priority.”

When inquiries are made by

outside organizations, Anquoe said they expect all three princesses to be there.

“It’s an obligation, there is a lot required,” she said. “It’s a prestigious title, they go out into the community, they are seen, they are known.”

Additionally, the girls are involved in meet and greets of various forms and exhibition dancing if appropriate.

Previously, princesses have been special guests of the Red-Earth, Gathering of Nations, the Rhythm of the World, the Oklahoma American Indian Chamber of Commerce luncheon, the Oklahoma City State Fair, and many community powwows.

Anquoe said that the last three reigning misses attended over 16 powwows together and 33 events, appearances and requested performances.

CWCS seeks an honorarium for the girls. They have been honored with gift cards, gifted items, and even received monetary honors.

The main goal is to get the girls out of their shell and be able to interact in front of the public, according to Anquoe.

“They learn so much, protocol and etiquette,” she said. “A lot of them go on to hold other titles, a lot of them come back to win these titles.”

The most recent former title holder is Rachel Scott (Chickasaw), who came back to win the Miss title at last year’s pageant from being crowned Little Miss years ago.

Anquoe claims there have been Muscogee (Creek) Nation participants and title holders in the past. A list of title holders can be viewed on their website.

It draws many emotions out of Anquoe watching the young ladies take on these roles. She sheds proud tears from time to time.

“The transformation from the time they gain the title from the time they leave they become more outgoing and it’s wonderful to see,” Anquoe said. “It’s priceless, that’s all I can say.”

Anquoe got involved with the organization and the pageant when her young daughter won the Little Miss title at just six years old, making her the youngest title holder at the time.

CWCS founder Shirley Wapskineh appointed Anquoe as her right hand man after her young daughter’s reign.

Wapskineh created the CWCS and the Miss Indian OKC pageant after she saw a need for young Native girls to be mentored in the OKC area. Being involved in the Oklahoma Federation of Native Women and Miss Indian World allowed the platform idea to take shape.

According to Anquoe, it was Wapskineh’s main goal to help these ladies be in front of the public. The connections that she had with different entities including civic, private, and public organizations boosted opportunities for the young Native women.

Anquoe served seven years until Wapskineh’s passing in 2015. She returned in 2021 to bring Wapskineh’s legacy back to the pageant.

“It was her heart and her life,” she said. “She holds a special place in a lot of these womens’ hearts.”

Spending time together, the girls developed a strong bond.

“It’s a sisterhood,” Anquoe said. “All the girls that have held titles are sisters.”

“As Ms. Shirley would say ‘May you always walk in beauty’”

Committee Members of the pageant include Pat Nimsey, Madonna Myers, Robert Deere, Kalonie Green, Susan Zotigh, Claudette Eckiwady, Alexis Tanyan, Lori Switch, Hilary Fields, Keri Morgan, and Patricia McDaniels-Gomez.

For more information visit <https://missindianokc.org/>.



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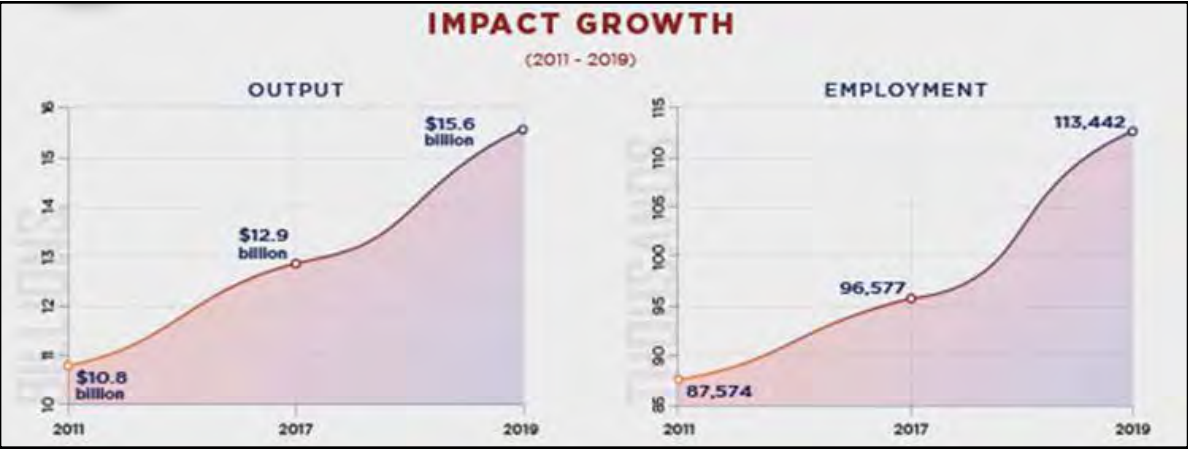
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The latest Native impact study concluded the tribes made a \$15.6 billion impact on the state of Oklahoma. (Courtesy: Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium)

TRIBAL FINANCE CONSORTIUM CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS NATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON OKLAHOMA

THE CONSORTIUM INCLUDES OKLAHOMA TRIBES, NATIVE BUSINESS OWNERS, NATIVE SPONSORSHIPS, AND MAJOR CORPORATIONS

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

WYANDOTTE, Okla. - The Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium held a conference at the Indigo Sky Casino and Resort, hosted by the Eastern Shawnee Tribe on March 22-24.

The consortium included 20 of the 38 tribes of Oklahoma along with many tribal citizens including Native business owners, tribal employees, and Native sponsors. Also in attendance were large corporations who collected data to provide an impact study to highlight the tribes’ contribution to the states’ economy.

Biannual meetings are held to share knowledge, expertise and experience. It allows the tribes to advance economically and financially within the state.

Attendees watched presentations from President of the OTFC Victor Flores, Eastern Shawnee Tribe Ceremonial Chief Shawn King, Treasurer Justin Barret, REDW Accounting Firm, Moss Adams Consulting, Hogan Taylor Technology, Southern Plains Tribal Health Board, and First United Bank, along with other businesses.

Topics presented included tribal

involvement in the cannabis industry, wealth management in Indian Country, cryptocurrency, broadband, information technology, tribal healthcare, digital banking solutions, fraud, 105(c) lease programs, enterprises, and post covid world protocols for tribes.

Tribes shared data within the consortium to participate in the Native Economic Impact Study released every two years.

The most recent study was released in March 2022 and contained an evaluation from 2019. It stated the total impact on the state was over \$15 billion. In 2020, the consortium released the evaluation of 2017, stating the total impact to be nearly \$13 billion.

Oklahoma City University Professor of Economics and Director of the UCO Center for Native American & Urban Studies, Dr. Kyle Dean generated the numbers of the study. He is best known for his comprehensive work with Oklahoma tribes, having completed the first ever estimate of the combined economic impacts from Oklahoma tribal activities.

According to Dr. Dean, the report includes the economic activity measured by tribes and the Indian

Health Service.

“It excludes the direct contribution of many related Native American entities, tribal citizens and self identified Native Americans,” Dean said.

Flores claims this is a place where tribes can network and learn from each other as well as learn about each other.

Flores also leads the Tribal Services division of national leading accounting firm REDW.

In this capacity, he brought together all the tribal treasurers, secretary of commerce, finance officers and directors from all 38 federally recognized tribes that have headquarters in Oklahoma. This meeting started the consortium in 2017.

He said, “REDW was actually one of the founding sponsors.”

The OTFC is planning the next conference this summer at Downstream Casino Resort by the Quapaw Nation.

Last year, the MCN hosted the spring conference at River Spirit Casino and Resort.

The 2024 spring session will release the Native Economic Impact Study for 2021.

For more information visit <https://www.oktribalfinance.com/>.

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**Dear Creek Council Oak
Tree Stakeholders,**

We are writing to you as representatives of the Riverview Neighborhood Association, a fairly large, diverse urban community just south of downtown. Recently, our 12 member Board of Directors brought a proposal to the RVNA at large to initiate a campaign to beautify and restore two small parks in our neighborhood that have fallen into disrepair over the last few years. The proposal to engage in a project at Creek Council Oak Tree Park and Stickball Park was unanimously and enthusiastically approved by our association members empowering the board to move forward in a fundraising campaign while also working in an exploratory manner to recruit stakeholders and invested parties in the project.

It is our desire to engage in a 3-phase campaign and achieve as much as our fundraising campaign will fund. Phase One is to simply beautify the parks and bring them back to their original state. This will include landscape work, signage, statue/monument repair, lighting, etc. We would like to engage the city parks on this measure to obtain original renderings as well as see about available budgeted funds as well as initiating a maintenance plan to

ensure improvements will remain
cared for.

Phase 2 will be to engage the city as a whole with promotion and education about the site. In this phase, we aim to promote the historical significance of the Creek Council Oak Tree as Tulsa's original location of its founding in 1836, as the Lochapoka tribe established the first continuous settlement in the area. Tulsa not only is indebted to this small band of the Creek Nation as the city's first settlers, but also as the originators of our town's name. The given name of their small village was Talasi, meaning "old town" in their language, eventually morphing into Tulseý, and then Tulsa, as non-native settlers moved into the area and mispronounced the Creek word. We believe this landmark remains relatively unknown to the majority of Tulsans and tremendously overlooked in the compendium of Tulsa's history.

Not only do we aim to promote the site and its historical significance to the founding of Tulsa, but also educate our fellow citizens of the great struggle of the Lochapoka clan as they spent two years traveling the Trail of Tears, losing 131 of their loved ones along the way. As far as we know, the monument of flames at the park is the only memorial to those that lost their lives in the Lochapoka's forced removal from their ancestral home in Alabama. The terrors these resilient folks experienced should not be overlooked and is of utmost importance in formulating a culture of peace and accountability that facilitates a vibrant, compassionate community. We aim to achieve Phase 2 through media projects, art (murals) near and around the site, signage, websites and educational resources. We have had

a generous neighbor pledge to match up to \$8,000 of contributions made from within our neighborhood to help achieve these goals, and we hope to elicit more contributions from the hundreds of businesses in our neighborhood.

Phase 3 will consist of a new addition to the parks to further demonstrate RVNA's gratitude to those before us who have honored the importance of this historic site by saving the tree from demolition while also recognizing and honoring our city's special and unique Native American heritage. With your help and other benefactors and philanthropist within our city and state, who appreciate the importance and sacredness of the events that happened on this site in 1836, it is our hope to install a substantial, permanent art installation that further commemorates the site, as well as the struggle of those that were the forebears of our beloved city.

We, as the Board of Directors, desire to enter into this significant and meaningful project with the aid, assistance, guidance, direction and support of our city government, its parks authorities, the Creek Nation, and the city's historical and cultural preservation societies and foundations and prominent stakeholders, business owners, and developers within the district. We endeavor to not only uplift this important landmark but also cultivate the spirit of community and cooperation that would honor and emulate the resilient people of the Lochapoka Tribe, the original Tulsans.

Yours in service to a better Tulsa,

Chris McCabe, RVNA
Board President
Jason Mathew, Vice-President

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

'BAD PRESS' SCREENING

Please join the Tulsa Artist Fellowship, KOSU and the Circle Cinema for a free screening of *Bad Press*, a documentary film by Rebecca Landsberry-Baker and Joe Peeler about the fight for free press in Indian Country on April 26th from 6-9pm.

This free screening is part of the Circle Cinema's Native Spotlight Program and we are pleased to be partnering with them.

Angel Ellis is just trying to do her job. She's a reporter for Myskoke Media in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, and she wants to give her readers access to all the information relevant to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. But that's not an easy task, given that Angel and her colleagues believe in truth and transparency and aren't afraid to challenge the integrity of some questionable tribal officials. Fast-forward to a confusing whirlwind of an emergency session at the National Council, where the 2015 Free Press Act is repealed and the newspaper is placed under the direction of the Secretary of the Nation and Commerce. Now the real fight begins.

Rebecca Landsberry-Baker and Joe Peeler tell a nuanced, empowering tale of a modern Native community fighting for transparency and access to information in order to hold their government accountable. *Bad Press* is an energizing watch — full of humor, humanity, and numerous twists and turns.

Variety called *Bad Press*, “an engrossing documentary on a fight for tribal government transparency” and the Hollywood Reporter said that, “Landsberry-Baker and Peeler’s documentary is thus the perfect illustration of what happens when you dismantle the Fourth and Fifth Estates and wind up putting democracy in peril, and it’s something everyone in America should be worried about right now.” And Columbia Daily Tribune called Angel Ellis a, “free press crusader” and said that, “this year’s True Life Fund film, “*Bad Press*,” delivers an everyday icon in Angel Ellis.”

Reception begins at 6pm with food catered by Tricia Fields Alexander, owner of Autumn Star Catering, which serves traditional Native American foods across the country. Alexander feels a close connection with her community and her family through cooking traditional recipes.

Screening at 7pm with Q and A to follow moderated by KOSU's Indigenous Affairs reporter Allison Herrera.

This is a free screening, but we are asking for a suggested donation of any amount that will go directly towards the Native American Journalist Association or KOSU. However, no one will be turned away.

Bios:

ANGEL ELLIS

Angel Ellis is a Citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and has lived, worked, and played within the tribes' reservation boundaries

most of her life. Growing up, her heroes had press passes rather than capes and inspired her to become a journalist.

Ellis became Director of Mvskoke Media in 2020. Not only did her advocacy help bring free press back to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, but she also advocated for the tribe's first FOIA law. In 2020 she joined the ranks of Elias Boudinot Free Press award winners.

Ellis advocates for and educates on ethical coverage of Indigenous topics and communities. She currently serves as an Oklahoma Media Center board member, was recently elected to the Native American Journalists' Associations Board of Directors, and serves on the SPJ Freedom of Information Committee.

In November 2022, the Local Media Association (LMA) recognized Ellis during Native American Heritage Month as one of the Indigenous people “who have positively influenced and enriched the United States.”

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation became the first tribe to usher in a citizen-ratified, constitutionally protected, and fully funded press. It passed with an overwhelming three-fourths support of the voters. The story is captured in the documentary film “Bad Press.”

In January 2023, the film “Bad Press” premiered at Sundance. This film captures her advocacy work and was selected as the Sundance Special Jury Freedom of Expression Award. She was recently selected to be the recipient of the 2023 True Life Fund.

REBECCA
LANDSBERRY-BAKER

Rebecca Landsberry-Baker is an enrolled citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the executive director of the Native American Journalists Association. She is a recipient of the 2018 NCAIED “Native American 40 Under 40” award and was selected to the Harvard Shorenstein News Leaders Fall 2022 cohort. Landsberry-Baker made her directorial debut with the documentary feature film, *BAD PRESS*, which was supported by the Sundance Institute, Ford Foundation JustFilms, NBC, and the Gotham. *BAD PRESS* premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and received the U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Freedom of Expression.

JOE PEELER

Joe Peeler is a Sundance award-winning director and editor whose work has appeared on NETFLIX, HBO, FX, ESPN, Hulu and CBS. Joe began his career apprenticing under legendary director Peter Bogdanovich, and from there edited Lucy Walker's Academy Awards Shortlist documentary short *The Lion's Mouth Opens*; multiple episodes of the Netflix original series *Flint Town*; and Margaret Brown's SXSW premiere documentary short *The Black Belt*. Most recently, Joe co-directed *Bad Press*, which premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and won the U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Freedom of Expression.

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THE MUSCOGEE
SLAVE NARRATIVE

by Ted Isham

Disclaimer: The following is an editorial submission from Ted Isham, and does not reflect the views of Mvskoke Media, or Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

Part I:

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is a Native American tribe that has a long and complex history, including its relationship with slavery. While it is true that some members of the tribe owned slaves, this was not the prevalent culture. Instead, the Creek Nation had its own forms of slavery, including corvée and clan law, which differed from the chattel slavery of the American South. This article will explore the history of slavery in the Creek Nation, including estimates of the slave population during four time periods and the laws that formed the Freedmen Districts of Canadian, Arkansas, and Deep Fork. Finally, we will ask some questions that will allow the reader to think on the complexity of Creek Enslavement.

Before delving into the specifics of the Creek Nation's history with slavery, it is important to define the different types of slavery. Chattel slavery, which was practiced in the American South, involved the complete ownership of a person as property. Corvée slavery on the other hand, involved a person being obligated to perform labor for a certain period of time as part of their debt to another person. Clan law slavery which was practiced by many Native American tribes, involved a person being absorbed into a family or clan and treated as a member, although they may still be required to perform labor.

Estimates of the slave population in the Creek Nation vary depending on the time period. According to the Parsons and Abbott Census of 1832, which divided the Creek Nation into Upper and Lower Towns, the Upper Towns had a slave population of around 445, while the Lower Towns had a slave population of around 457. During removal, some enslaved African Americans were forced to accompany their Creek owners to Indian Territory.

So why did the slave population in the Creek Nation grow during the pre-removal time period? One reason was that the United States government, in its various treaties with the Creek Nation, often allowed the tribe to keep enslaved people as a way of compensating for lost land. For example, the Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814 ceded a large portion of Creek land to the United States, but also allowed the Creek Nation to keep their slaves. Similarly, the Treaty of Indian Springs in 1825 allowed the Creek Nation to keep their enslaved people in exchange for ceding even more land to the United States.

Despite the fact that a few members of the Creek Nation owned slaves, as there were 31 families that owned more than 10 slaves and 45 families that 'owned' only 1, out of 6270 families, the tribe as a whole did not view slavery as a core part of their culture. In fact, many Creek people were opposed to slavery, and several Creek leaders advocated for the emancipation of enslaved people. One of the most notable of these leaders was Opothleyahola, who was a Creek chief during the pre-removal era. He was opposed to slavery and believed that it went against the values of the Creek Nation. He was also a staunch supporter of the Union during the American Civil War and helped to lead the Union-allied Creeks during the conflict.

In addition to the differences in the types of slavery practiced in the Creek Nation versus the American South, there were also differences in the way that enslaved people were treated. Many Creek slave owners treated their enslaved people more like

members of their family. Enslaved people in the Creek Nation were often given their own homes and were allowed to work for wages and purchase their own freedom. In some cases, enslaved people were even able to gain their freedom through intermarriage with Creek people or through other means.

Despite the fact that the Creek Nation did not view slavery as a core part of their culture, the legacy of slavery continued to impact the tribe in various ways. After the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery, the Creek Nation was required to give citizenship to the enslaved people they had held. This resulted in the formation of the Freedmen Districts of Canadian, Arkansas, and Deep Fork, which were areas set aside for the former slaves and their descendants. These districts were governed by a set of laws known as the Creek Freedmen's Laws, which were designed to protect the rights of the newly freed people.

The Canadian District, was established in 1866 and had a population of around 2,700. The Arkansas District, was established in 1867 and had a population of around 3,500. The Deep Fork District, was established in 1883 and had a population of around 4,500. The Creek Freedmen's Laws were designed to provide the former slaves with some measure of protection and security. They also established a system of courts to adjudicate disputes between former slaves and their former owners.

Despite these changes, the Creek Nation has remained a vibrant and resilient community. Today, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is one of the largest Native American tribes in the United States, with over 91,000 enrolled citizens. The tribe continues to preserve its rich cultural heritage through its language, art, and traditional practices. And while the legacy of slavery remains, although not totally correct, a part of the Creek Nation's history, it is important to recognize that the tribe's relationship with slavery was complex and multifaceted. While some members of the tribe owned slaves, many others were opposed to the practice and worked to end it.

Part II: Questions we can ask ourselves about the notion of 'Slavery in the Creek Nation'

We can ask who were the slave-holders of our Nation? We see from the article that only a few families had more than 10 'enslaved' persons in their families and of those we see the names of those who we 'signers' of various land cession treaties who were given perks for signing. We also see that women were listed as head-of-household, which turns out that the women were 'married' to a non-tribal member who ran a trading post. So very few 'slave owners were truly traditional.

Also, we can ask what happened to the Freedmen districts/towns? There were the 3 districts/towns setup from Creek National Council legislation that allowed the 'freedmen' a mechanism to participate in the tribe. Arkansas, Canadian and Deep Fork had huge populations and sent representatives to the National Council until they died out.

Finally, does the United States have the authority to dictate to another sovereign how they choose to identify who is or who is not a member of itself? The 'coerced' signing of the 1866 treaty should be invalidated as not all of the tribal headmen were present during the negotiations. The US government in that document dictates to another sovereign to accept their definition of a slave and who should be counted as a citizen.

This article only brings to bear the weight of a deeper dive on history to flesh out some basic facts that may be missing during the present discussions of the Freedmen and Slavery within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in general.

IN MEMORIAM



CYNTHIA SURLS

Cynthia "Cissy" June Surls (Fish) was born on November 03, 1966 in Wetumka, Oklahoma to Pusler "Pete" Peter Fish and Cynthia Anne Bell and belonged to the Raccoon clan. Cynthia earned her wings on March 28, 2023, surrounded by family at her home in Wynona, Oklahoma at the age of 56. Cynthia, or Cissy as her family and close friends often called her, was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, aunt and was a long-standing resident of Wynona, Oklahoma. Cynthia loved her family, children, and Savior with all her heart. She also adored animals. Cynthia's kind and generous heart, along with her irrev- erent sense of humor will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved her.

A private ceremony was held at the Foraker Cemetery in Foraker, Oklahoma on Friday March, 31, 2023. She was preceded in death by her daughter, Jessica Surls. Cynthia is survived by her husband, Michael Surls, Sr., sons, Nathaniel Fish, Marvin Fish, and Michael Surls, Jr., par- ents, Pusler "Pete" Peter Fish and Cynthia Anne Bell, two sis- ters, Billie Jean Fish and Melissa Fish, two brothers Pete Fish, Jr. and Timothy Fish, as well as her many, many nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and cousins.



CALVIN SELF

Calvin was born in Flour Bluff, Texas on May 30, 1937 to John and Florine Self. He was the first of four children. He was a proud tribal citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. His family was among the first pioneering families to estab- lish residence in Flour Bluff. He married Wilma (Renee) Bullock on January 21, 1956. Calvin lived his whole life in Flour Bluff and graduated from Flour Bluff High School in 1955.

He worked as a master electrician, as well as a commercial fisher and shrimper. Calvin and Renee started Industrial Electric Co., Inc. in 1970 and grew it into a thriving business that lasted for 37 years. He was a member of IBEW Local Union 278 for 65 years.

Left to cherish and love Calvin are his three sons, Gordon (Joyce) Self, Mitchell (Robin) Self, and Stewart Self. His daughter, Michelle (Keith) Campbell, his two sisters, Nancy (Ken) Condry, Sharon (David) Weaver and his sister-in-law Christa Self. He is also survived by numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews. Calvin loved his seven grandchildren, eleven great-grandchildren and two step great-grandchildren. Remember- ing his pranks, laugh, and wisdom are: Cassandra Self-Houston (Zeb- ulah), Alisha Cowan (Grady), Andrea Lupo (Ryan), Nathan Self (Shelby), Lauren Yates, Christo- pher Yates, and his great grandchil-

dren: Connor Self, Grace, Made- lyn, Jackson and Carter Houston, Genevieve, Sheridan, Eynnne, Per- egrine, and Heathcliff Cowan, and Avlynn and Hudson Lupo.

Calvin is preceded in death by his parents, Haskell (John) Self and Florine Self, wife Renee Self, brother Edward (Hop) Self, nephew Christopher Weaver, grandson Cameron Self, and his great-grandson, Ryder Cowan.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

March 1-June 1: Muscogee Creek Nation Scholarship Foun- dation application window, 918-732-7754.

April 19: 12 - 1 PM, Sexual Assault Survivors Walk, Eufaula, Under One Roof.

April 21: 12 - 1 PM, Sexual Assault Survivors Walk, Okmul- gee, Capitol Complex Walking Trail.

April 22-23: Mvskoke Art Market, River Spirit Casino Resort.

April 26: 6 - 9 PM, "Bad Press" documentary screening, free to the public, Circle Cinema, Tulsa.

April 29: 8 AM to 3 PM, Tulsa Creek Indian Community Spring Fling Arts and Crafts sale seeking vendors. \$10/table. All vendors must fill out the MCN Vender Sales License Application. For vendor info call 918-298-2464.

Month of April: Discover Bible is offering Native New Day 30-lesson Bible Studies by cor- respondence. Write in to Dis- cover Bible School; P.O. Box 14208 Tulsa, OK 74159-1208

May 5: 9:30 AM - 2 PM, Mus- cogee Nation Conservation Dis- trict Natural Resources Careers & Outdoor Classroom, Claude Cox Omniplex, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, RSVP to 918-549-2609

CALLING
FOR
GRADUATE
PROFILES

The 'Mvskoke News' will feature 2023 Muscogee (Creek) Nation high school, military, technical school and college graduates in the upcoming June 1 edition of the 'MN'.

Please provide us with the following information accompanied with a digital photo file via email to info@mvskokemedia.com no later than Friday, May 12 by 5 p.m. in order to be published in the 2023 'MN' graduation edition. If you do not recieve an emailed confirmation of receipt, please call the office at 918-732-7720 to verify the profile has been received.

Profiles will be edited for Associated Press style, structure, grammar, spelling, length and punctuation.

2023 Graduate Profile Form

Name:

High School/College/Technical Institute/Military Program:

Bio (150-word limit):

DEADLINE: MAY 12, 2023 AT 5PM

LATE PROFILES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

For more information, please call: 918-732-7720
or email: info@mvskokemedia.com



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