



MVSKOKE NEWS

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FESTIVAL 2023 PROVIDES FUN AND CULTURE FOR ALL AGES

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 47TH ANNUAL MUSCOGEE NATION FESTIVAL

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - Community members, tribal citizens, and regular attendees from near and far came to one of the biggest celebrations hosted by the Mvskoke people known as festival. The 47th Annual Muscogee Nation Festival was held during the weekend of June 22-25.

MCN Principal Chief David Hill said the Festival has expanded this year, providing expansion in amusement, sporting events, and extra cooling areas.

"We are just trying to make it enjoyable for all the citizens," Chief Hill said. "That's the main thing, making sure they have a lot of fun."

After meeting "Yellowstone" series' Mo Brings Plenty last year, Chief Hill called him to invite him out to this year's festival. Not only did he accept the invitation, he also brought his nephew, Cole Brings Plenty who is featured in the series, "1923".

According to Chief Hill, Mo Brings Plenty enjoyed himself,

especially at the rodeo. For MCN Second Chief Del Beaver, it's all about community and family. "We just want to show them what we're about," Beaver said.

Fellowship and Culture

MCN National Council Representative Nelson Harjo Sr.'s favorite part of festival is the ability to sit and visit with friends he has not seen in a long time.

"Majority of the people here are all our people, and they're still having fun and that's my favorite part," Rep. Harjo said.

Gary and Carolyn King are at-large citizens living in Kansas who travel annually for the festival.

Raised in Okemah, Gary enjoys the reconnection to the culture. He loves the social Stomp Dance. At 70 years old he is not able to dance as much anymore.

Even Carolyn, raised in Oklahoma as well, does her best to stay connected by learning the language and attending the social Stomp Dance with Gary.

"There's a lot of young folks that have taken our places and they do a good job," Carloyn said. "There's so many shell shakers, it's amazing to see."

"When we see it in our own kids and grandkids, it makes us feel a lot better," Gary said.

The events started early in the month with the MCN Scholarship Pageant on June 3 and ended with a day of fair fun on June 25.

For the first time in the pageant's history, the ceremony was held in the southern region of the reservation at Thlopthlocco Tribal Town's venue, the Crystal Theatre in Okemah, Okla.

After a list of competitive events, Chenoa Barnett won the Miss Muscogee Nation title and Georgia Harjo was crowned as Jr. Miss, making her the second at-large citizen to hold a Miss title.

Over the next two weeks, the Nation prepared for the tournament festivities taking place June 16-18.

Unfortunately, overcast skies and occasional rain caused some events to postpone or reschedule, however each event was still able to proceed.



Social Stomp Dance participants are seen dancing during the first night of the main weekend of festival. June 22, 2023. Okmulgee, Okla. (Morgan Taylor/MM)

Must-See Moments

Highlight events included the Indian Nationals Finals Rodeo on Friday and Saturday at the Bob Arrington Arena, and the slow-pitch softball tournaments, each concluding Sunday.

Saturday's tournaments started early with the tennis tournament, volleyball, horseshoes, three-on-three basketball for adults, blow darts for the youth, bow shooting, and tomahawk throwing. The rodeo and softball tournaments continued as well.

Tania Bear (Mvskoke/Seminole) works for the MCN Department of Interior Affairs as Secretary Jesse Allen's Executive Assistant. She played in a team during the basketball tournament where they took home the gold in the 35 and older division.

"I live here in Okmulgee so it's convenient, we always get a team together," Bear said. "It's a well-put together tournament."

For Bear, the festival's activities are a family affair as they each

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The MCN Attorney General and other members of the MCN Citizenship Board's legal counsel appeared in court for a hearing in the Grayson and Kennedy v. The Citizenship Board of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation case. (Jerrad Moore/MM)

MCN ATTORNEY GENERAL THREATENS DISTRICT JUDGE ORDER ON SANCTIONS DETAILS ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE TRIBAL COURT

by **JERRAD MOORE**
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - A hearing was held in Grayson and Kennedy v. The Citizenship Board of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation case on June 30.

The hearing was concerning a motion for sanctions filed by Damario Solomon-Simmons who represents Rhonda Grayson and Jeffrey Kennedy in the case. Sanctions motions are filed to identify litigation misconduct and ask a judge to impose a penalty.

Previously in a March 30 court order MCN District Court Judge Denette Mouser had found that the defendant, in this case the MCN Citizenship Board being represented by the MCN Attorney General's office, had been "uncooperative and evasive" during the discovery phase of the case. Judge Mouser at that time sanctioned the defendant by awarding \$4,728.96 in attorneys fees and costs incurred.

The court ordered the amount be paid to the plaintiff's counsel within 30 days from March 30. The MCN Attorney General's office failed to comply with this order, and did not make any request or appeal for additional time to comply.

Solomon-Simmons filed for additional sanctions, which was heard at the June 30 hearing.

According to the order dated July 3,

"Even then, Defendant waited nearly two full months (until just two days before the scheduled hearing) to act on or at minimum acknowledge Plaintiffs' motion, and yet still failed to demonstrate any genuine defense of its inaction and non-compliance.

It is clear to this Court that Defendant's counsel sought to find any avenue of excuse or justification - legitimate or otherwise - for the failure to comply with the Court's order, even asking the Court to take judicial notice of an administrative order from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation ("the Nation" or "MCN") Supreme Court which lays out the grounds for recalling an MCN District Court judge.

At the June 30, 2023 hearing, upon being handed the administrative order by counsel for Defendant, the Court questioned counsel in open court regarding the motive for presenting it with the order. None of Defendant's counsel were able to articulate any rational explanation. Thus, the Court's only inference can be

that the true motive of such action was at worst a veiled threat of removal from the bench, or at best an attempt to intimidate the Court prior to its ruling on Plaintiffs' motion and/or prior to rendering final judgment,.....The Court is shocked and thoroughly disheartened to have seen such behavior from the Nation's top attorneys.

While it is not for this Court to decide the ultimate discipline that may or should be handed down, the Court believes counsels' behavior in attempting to intimidate and mislead the Court may even rise to the level of an actionable violation of professional ethics. Based upon the Court's findings from the pleadings and the June 30, 2023 hearing, the Court finds that Defendant's counsel unjustifiably and willfully delayed their client from complying with the Court's Order dated March 30, 2023, and therefore Plaintiffs Motion for Sanctions is GRANTED."

The order continues, "In opposition to Plaintiffs' Motion for Sanctions, Defendant moves the Court to vacate its March 30, 2023 Order awarding sanctions in the form of attorney fees and costs, or in the alternative to stay proceedings until the Court enters a final judgment in this matter.

In support of its motion Defendant's counsel exhibits a misunderstanding of the nature of sanctions, conflating sanctions with legal remedies.

Basic understanding of civil procedure should inform Defendant's counsel that sanctions are awarded as penalties (or "fines") while a monetary award based upon a final judgment is known as a remedy under the law (commonly identified as or referred to as

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MVSKOKE FESTIVAL HOSTS SPECIAL GUESTS FROM NEW ZEALAND

MĀORI TELEVISION PRODUCER DOCUMENTS THE TRIBE'S CULTURAL CELEBRATION

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Festival is a special event that attracts visitors from near and far. Now it has attracted visitors from as far as New Zealand. During the weekend of the festival, Whakaata Māori television executive producer Moehau Hodges-Tai and his uncle, Bosun Pako made the over 7,000 mile journey for the cultural celebration.

Hodges-Tai and Pako are Māori, the Indigenous people of Aotearoa (New Zealand). The Māori culture is vibrant, unique and plays an integral part of life in their country. Today there are over 100 Māori iwi, or tribes across the island nation.

While the modern Māori actively practice their language and culture today, like many other Indigenous cultures around the world they have experienced history involving colonization. This is a story that is all too familiar with Mvskoke people and other Native American cultures across the United States. In spite of these issues, Māori people continue to thrive by telling their stories.

One way that the Indigenous people tell their story is through the Whakaata Māori, a government-sanctioned media organization that provides cultural news and programming to its viewers. The channel was formally called Māori television, and originally launched on March 28, 2004. According to the organization's website, their mission is to "promote, revitalise and normalise the Māori language by taking a digital-first, audience-led



Moehau Hodges-Tai grabs a shot of the social Stomp Dance at the opening Thursday night of the Muscogee Nation Festival's main weekend. (Braden Harper/MM)

approach in the delivery of educational, entertaining, and engaging programming."

The organization features free-to-air content, which is available to viewers on a variety of different platforms including television, online streaming, and social media.

According to Hodges-Tai, the name Whakaata translates to reflection, thus the name of the organization means the reflection of Māori. Just like Indigenous news organizations in the United States like Indian Country Today, Whakaata Māori provides information for their people and strives to reflect their culture and language in the most authentic way possible.

Hodges-Tai serves as an executive producer for Whakaata Māori. Over the past couple years he has provided coverage on Native American cultures in the United States. During this time he developed a contact with the Ambassador of Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Jonodev Chaudhuri.

"I've summoned him many times to come on our programs back in New Zealand just to talk about different issues happening over here that are relevant to us back home," Hodges-Tai said.

This year, Hodges-Tai was finally able to meet Chaudhuri

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<div>MCN ATTORNEY</div> <div>Continued from Page 1</div> <div>'damages"). Defendant's counsel makes several arguments based upon this misunderstanding of the law, which the Court finds completely absurd. Defendant's counsel are three attorneys from the Nation's Office of the Attorney General, including the Attorney General herself and one former MCN District Court judge." The Court finds it beyond belief that such a misunderstanding of the law and civil procedure, by all three attorneys, is sincere."</div> <div>The Cases' Status Today</div> <div>Judge Mouser has ordered that the MCN Citizenship Board has 21 days from July 3 to pay the \$4,728.96 in attorneys fees and costs incurred from the March 30 order for sanctions or face a penalty equal to one percent of the unpaid balance each day until the full amount has been paid.</div> <div>Wisner, Clint Wilson, and Jeremy Pittman were also each sanctioned separately and distinctly for contemptuous behavior and attempted intimidation of the court. They are each required to pay a fine of \$500 to the MCN District Court. These fines cannot be paid from the budget of any MCN Department or funds of the Nation.</div> <div>The trial for Grayson and Kennedy's suit against the MCN Citizenship Board concluded April 4, 2023. It has been three months and no decision has been delivered.</div> <div>This article contained an unavoidable conflict where a tribal attorney mentioned in the story, Clint Wilson is the brother-in-law of the reporter, Jerrad Moore. However, Moore has not had direct contact with Wilson regarding this story.</div>	<div>NEW ZEALAND</div> <div>Continued from Page 1</div> <div>in person. Hodges-Tai and Pako made the long journey to the Mvskoke Reservation during one of its most culturally active times, the main weekend of festival.</div> <div>"It's just an amazing opportunity for us from our home, New Zealand which is almost on the other side of the world." Hodges-Tai said. "To come here and see the Indigenous people of this country come together to celebrate in such a positive event."</div> <div>Hodges-Tai's iwi are Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Wai. He grew up speaking his native language, te reo Māori before he learned English. According to Hdoges-Tai, this was unusual because it was something that had not happened in over 140 years. Just like Indigenous cultures in North America, Māori seek to revitalize their language as well.</div> <div>Māori and Polynesian culture have also recently broken through mainstream American media the past couple years. Filmmakers like Jermaine Clement and Taika Waititi have led the charge in telling their own stories in film and television. Waititi served as the executive producer on the FX original series "Reservation Dogs" with Native American filmmaker Sterlin Harjo.</div> <div>"It's easy enough to watch a documentary or a tv show like Reservation Dogs where you get a hint of the culture," Hodges-Tai said. "But it's a special thing to physically come here, spending our time, to take in as much as we can and learn."</div> <div>Whakaata Māori will air their program on Mvskoke culture sometime within the near future.</div>	<div>FESTIVAL 2023</div> <div>Continued from Page 1</div> <div>participate in a sporting event and watch one another for support.</div> <div>"We have to be a role model for the young ones," Bear said.</div> <div>The tennis and slow-pitch tournaments concluded on Sunday. Cornhole was held as the last event for the first weekend of tournaments.</div> <div>Events were simultaneously hosted throughout the day. The results of the tournaments available at the time this article was published are on page four of this edition for those who may have missed it.</div> <div>Main Weekend</div> <div>The Monday after the first weekend, tribal departments were shuffling to prepare for the stacked main weekend that started on Thursday with the Living Legends Ceremony, held at Faith Church in Glenpool.</div> <div>Later in the evening visitors started traveling to the Mvskoke capital to join in the social Stomp Dance at the Claude Cox Omniplex.</div> <div>The first dance was led by</div> <div></div> <div>Chief Hill and his mother at the social Stomp Dance. (Morgan Taylor/MM)</div> <div>Chief Hill and his mother, making it a memorable highlight of the evening.</div> <div>The evening also held a fun fair that included carnival rides, funnel cakes, lemonades, and served a free dinner of traditional foods. "At every dance, the Mvskoke people</div> <div>eat" is a common sentiment said by many tribal citizens.</div> <div>As the sun rose Friday morning, the junior olympics kicked off at Harmon Stadium, the Okmulgee High School football field. The elderly nutrition department was up by 8 a.m., ready for the Senior Games.</div> <div>While these activities reached a lunch break, the golf tournament teed off at the Fountainhead Creek Golf Course in Checotah.</div> <div>Native American vendors lined up the art fair at the Claude Cox Omniplex pavilion with rows of tables containing for-sale, handmade items.</div> <div>Carrying on into Friday morning, vendors set up their stations again as guests slowly trickled in through the morning and throughout the day as the carnival continued to spin kids around and around on various rides like the Twist-a-whirl and alligator rollercoaster, not to mention the fun slide.</div> <div>The evening held the Hannah Phillips Bull Bash Bull Riding at the Bob Arrington Arena. It celebrated Phillips' birthday as she used her bull stock business to provide the rodeo with stock. Fast-pitch softball tournaments started in the late evening along with the live entertainment from country singers Cam and Pat Green.</div> <div>Runners lined up Saturday morning to run a 5K around the complex. Fast-pitch tournaments and youth three-on-three basketball started after the race, while festival parade participants were getting ready for a stroll down Main Street in Downtown Okmulgee.</div> <div>Muscogee (Creek) Nation employees, tribal leaders, and citizens came out in dozens of colorful floats and cars to wave at festival parade attendees along the streets. Many floats tossed out candy for children.</div> <div>After the parade, Chief Hill and Second Chief Beaver headed to the Safe Space Building for a</div> <div>meet and greet with citizens and visitors.</div> <div>The day continued with vendors, resource booths, the fun fair, arts and crafts, along with the ongoing tournaments.</div> <div>Gospel and hymn singing started in the late afternoon in the Mvskoke Dome and went on into the evening. It featured Winnie Cooper singing praise.</div> <div>The Living Legends Softball Reunion was held at the Safe Space Building where alumni were served a meal and had fellowship together.</div> <div>The bull riding event continued in the evening and concluded.</div> <div>The Last Night</div> <div>Saturday's entertainment included a line up consisting of Native American performances. Performers competed in a battle of the bands event during the employee appreciation day event in May.</div> <div>A vote was taken to determine the Saturday night entertainment. The winners included Lance Gouge and the 99 South Band. The night's entertainment concluded with the Mvskoke Fashion Show.</div> <div>Fireworks were lit each evening around 11 p.m. It indicated the end of events for the day and celebrated the festival itself.</div> <div>The fast-pitch finals were held on the following Sunday, which concluded all competitive events.</div> <div>New to the festival list of events for the weekend was the Fourth Sunday on the Reservation. It featured Goldwing Express at the Dome.</div> <div>Mvskoke Media posted pictures throughout the festival on the Mvskoke Media Facebook page. The Muscogee Nation Festival Facebook page also features pictures and a survey asking for the feedback of guests and participants.</div>
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NATIVE AMERICAN RADIO PIONEER HONORED AS A MUSCOGEE LIVING LEGEND

MVSKOKE MEDIA'S GARY FIFE DISCUSSES HIS CAREER IN TRIBAL MEDIA

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - For those who have tuned their radios and listened to Native American news programming over the air in the United States, there is a likely chance the voice they heard was Gary Fife's. For over 30 years Fife has served as a radio host, delivering news across Indian Country. On June 22, Fife was honored as a Muscogee Living Legend for his efforts in pioneering Native American media.

Over his decades-long career in media Fife has worked in several different markets, across different communication mediums. This includes television, radio and print. He has worked in Alaska, Oklahoma and Washington D.C.

When he got the call that he was selected as one of this year's legends, Fife was ecstatic. People in his position are the ones that typically write about living legends, they are not the ones that others write about. According to Fife, the announcement gave him a good feeling.

"You could have knocked me

over with a feather, as the saying goes," Fife said. "I guess there were people out there that were listening, and reading my material. It was nice to know someone was paying attention."

MCN Assistant to the Principal Chief and Executive Office Manager Anita Daney organized this year's living legends selection process and ceremony. This year's selection process was tight. Among the pool of nominated citizens to choose from, the judges could only select five.

"It was a really hard choice for the judges," Daney said. "Every year it's getting harder and harder to make a selection."

Along with Fife, the other four citizens selected as living legends this year included Betty Gerber, Virginia Thomas, Mary Edwards Smith and James R. Floyd.

A Career Decades in the Making

Fife has experienced a lot of growth and change within tribal journalism throughout the years. His career has so far spanned

from the early 1970s to the early 2020s. His first job in the industry was working for LaDonna Harris (Comanche) at Americans for Indian Opportunities. He would then go on to work for the American Indian Press Association, now the Native American Journalist Association.

During his tenure at the American Indian Press Association, Fife and his colleagues produced stories on Native Americans that showed a side not seen in the mainstream media. According to Fife, they produced stories that genuinely exhibited the cultures. This provided a more in-depth perspective than simply just portraying Native American stereotypes.

During Fife's tenure in D.C., it allowed him to see the decisions that federal leaders made, and how they affected Native Americans across the U.S. This involved reading every piece of legislation that was needed to provide astute coverage to Indian Country.

"That was the sort of thing that just absolutely nailed me," Fife said. "This is what I like



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill hands Mvskoke Media Radio Specialist Gary Fife a wooden plaque with the MCN seal at the 2023 MCN Living Legends ceremony. June 22, 2023, Glenpool, Okla. (Braden Harper/MM)

doing, this is what I want to do. This will serve our people without having to take sides."

Technology has also changed a lot within the past couple decades. When Fife started as a journalist, he produced his work on a typewriter. Now all of his work is produced on a computer.

Later in his career, Fife and his wife Ramona (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe) would find themselves moving back to Oklahoma to take care of his aging father. He would work at Cherokee Nation for a spell before landing at the MCN in the media department. Fife said that he has had the pleasure of helping the department grow more professional, and provide

accurate coverage of the nation it serves.

Currently, Fife is the host of the Mvskoke radio program that airs every Wednesday morning at 10:00 a.m. on KOKL The Brew. The radio broadcast is a variety program that features guest interviews on many different Mvskoke and Native American topics. The show has featured guests that include musicians, chiefs and state policymakers.

As for the current status of tribal media today, Fife said he is extremely pleased with how Native Americans have used different mediums to tell their own stories about their own people.

THE MVSKOKENEWS

- Angel Ellis, Director | aellis@mvskokemedia.com
- Braden Harper, Managing Editor | bharper@mvskokemedia.com
- Jerrad Moore, Assignment Editor | jmoore@mvskokemedia.com
- Morgan Taylor, Multimedia Producer | mtaylor@mvskokemedia.com
- Gary Fife, Contributor | gfife@mvskokemedia.com
- Chelsie Rich, Mvskoke Market | crich@mvskokemedia.com
- ShayIn Proctor, Reporter | sproctor@mvskokemedia.com



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LIVING LEGENDS INDUCTS FIVE NEW MVSKOKE CITIZENS

THIS YEAR’S SELECTION INCLUDED HIGH QUANTITY OF SUBMISSIONS

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

GLENPOOL, Okla. - Five new Mvskoke Living Legends were honored for their contributions to the tribe at Faith Church on June 22. This year’s selection faced challenges due to the high quantity of submissions for this year’s ceremony. This year’s selection of living legends included Betty Gerber, Gary Fife, Virginia Thomas, James R. Floyd and Mary Edwards Smith.

The ceremony saw dignitaries and prominent figures from across the tribe including Principal Chief David Hill and members of the national council. The newly crowned Mvskoke Royalty, Chenoa Barnett and Georgia Harjo were seen passing out programs and meeting new faces.

The Este Cate Hoktvke Suletawv Honor Guard appeared to present the colors as the national anthem was sung in the Mvskoke language. Lighthorse Chief Richard Phillips delivered the invocation in the Mvskoke language before Chief Hill gave his opening remarks.

“It seemed like there were alot of nominees for this year as well, to me I think all of them are considered living legends,” Chief Hill said. “It’s always good to honor all those that you can see on the cover (of the program) that every one of these legends has done a great job representing the nation.”

The qualifications to be selected as a living legend is a MCN citizen over the age of 55 years of age who has “brought recognition to and/or made outstanding contributions to the quality of life and development of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on a local, national or international level”. This includes ceremonial religious leaders, artists, politicians, busi-

ness people, educators and volunteers.

The Honorees

The first living legend to be honored was Virginia Thomas, the former director of the MCN Johnson O’Malley program. Thomas wrote legislation to fund a newly organized Mvskoke language development effort. Under Chief AD Ellis, Thomas was instrumental in reorganizing the Mvskoke Royalty Pageant that has now become one of MCN’s most culturally prestigious events. Thomas was also instrumental in establishing the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Challenge Bowl, an academic competition that challenges students on tribal history, culture and language.

“I encourage all of you to make a difference for this tribe,” Thomas said. “If you see something wrong, change it, don’t complain about it. Do it for your tribe, for your children, that’s who I do it for. I want to make sure that we stand upon the foundation of those that came before us, that we would be worthy of those who fought to get us where we are right now.”

The next legend honored was Mary Edwards Smith, a Mvskoke artist known for her traditional basket weaving. She is most notable for reviving the Creek Double False Braid rim in 2005, a method unique to traditional Creek basketry. She is a teacher, and has passed on what she has learned across the country including Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia and Washington D.C. Smith’s works have been on display at many museums, art festivals and Indigenous art competitions.

“For the past 30 years I have been teaching traditional Mvskoke artwork to the nation, schools,



From Left: Carol Floyd, Betty Gerber, Gary Fife, Mary Edwards Smith, and Virginia Thomas stand together for a group photo at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Living Legends Ceremony. June 22, 2023. Glenpool, Okla. (Braden Harper/MM)

universities and museums,” Smith said. “I love what I do, I hope I have another 30 years to do it.”

The legend honored after Smith was Dr. Betty Gerber, a Mvskoke historian and the former executive director of The Museum Broken Arrow. Dr. Gerber is most notable for bringing awareness and advocating the true history of how Broken Arrow got its name. She acted as a bridge between the MCN, and the City of Broken Arrow by raising funds for an exhibit that properly educated others on the history of the MCN, and its significance to the area.

“You could have dropped me into any century, anytime, anywhere, as long as I was Muscogee Creek, I would have been tremendously proud of our people,” Gerber said. “It seems like we’re doing something good all the time. We take care of our people. We don’t put money before integrity. That’s why I am so proud. I hope that each one of you is also proud.”

Mvskoke Media Radio Specialist Gary Fife was honored as a living legend for his career in the field of journalism and media.

Fife has worked in many different markets including Alaska, Oklahoma and Washington D.C. He was a trailblazer in Native American radio and has been awarded numerous honors for his efforts in various media. Fife was also involved over the past decade with the fight for free press within the MCN.

“One of our huge responsibilities is to present the truth and the kind of stories that belong to people to know, hear and share,” Fife said. “In the course of my career I’ve had the chance to visit many of the other Native American Nations across the U.S. I’ve seen how we are so much alike, and how we are so much different. One thing we all share is the need for the truth.”

The last living legend to be honored was former MCN Principal Chief James R. Floyd. With a career spanning decades within and outside the MCN, Floyd has served countless Mvskoke citizens, Native Americans and veterans. Some of Floyd’s most notable accomplishments during his term as principal chief include opening the final phase of the

River Spirit Casino Resort, purchasing the land acquisition where Fountainhead Golf Course is now located, and bringing the tribe’s healthcare system out of financial crisis.

Although Floyd was unable to appear at the ceremony due to a prior conflict, his family was in attendance and accepted the honor on his behalf. He relayed the following statement, which was read by his son, Jacob Floyd.

“I feel honored to be recognized today as a Muscogee (Creek) Nation Living Legend and join a select group of very deserving tribal members who have given so much in service to our people. It has been a privilege for me and my family to serve the nation and our citizens,” according to the statement.

The event concluded with a lunch reception after the ceremony. This year’s living legends were featured in the Muscogee Nation Festival Parade on Saturday, June 24.

To view the full MCN Living Legends 2023 awards ceremony, visit the Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s Youtube channel.

MCN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TAKES SWIFT ACTION AFTER SEVERE STORMS HIT THE RESERVATION

STRONG WINDS HIT THE 11 COUNTY AREA LEAVING MANY WITH POWER AND WATER

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

MVSKOKE RESERVATION, Okla. - Principal Chief David Hill declared a state of emergency for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on June 20.

“I have signed Executive Order No. 23-03 declaring a State of Emergency for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in response to the storm damage on our Reservation,” Chief Hill said in the executive order.

This action allows the nation to request a formal federal declaration, and relaxes procurement procedures for emergency items.

Citizens across the reservation were affected by the heavy rainfall, tornadoes and strong winds over Father’s Day weekend on June 16-18.

The late night storms on Saturday included damaging winds up to 90 miles per hour that caused power outages, home damages,

and property damage.

The Tulsa (Tvsle) area had the highest level of damage with wind gusts of up to 100 miles per hour.

According to MCN Emergency Management Director Bobby Howard, the strength of the winds were equal to an F3 tornado.

Tulsa’s Fox 23 News reported the storm qualified as a derecho. This is defined as a long-lasting squall line of severe storms that produce winds greater than 58 mph along a path longer than 240 miles.

MCN in the Dark

On Sunday, Oklahoma Gas and Electric reported nearly 76,000 customers were without power as of 11:30 a.m.

The Public Service Company of Oklahoma reported over 99,000 residents without power as of June 21. As of the time this article was initially published, the expected restoration of the power grid was

June 25.

OG&E reported a peak of 139,000 outages with over 98 percent of those restored as of June 21. A complete restoration of power was expected to be finished by 10 p.m. on June 22.

East Central Electric reported all homes they served were restored by midnight on June 20. They discovered 48 broken poles that still needed to be repaired.

Howard said that he and other county emergency management teams have been providing emergency services to the affected areas since Friday night.

As some towns experienced power outages, Howard provided them with some of the nation’s large generators to power water treatment facilities. This allowed the towns to provide usable water.

Howard said he took a generator directly to the Murrow Indian Children’s Home in Muskogee.

MCN Emergency Management has provided bottled water to

elderly citizens and has also even had water buffalo vehicles ready at all times for community usage.

Cooling stations have been set up around the reservation for citizens without power.

Restoring Power & MCN Assistance

As of June 20, many are still without power. According to Howard, the power companies are working at an extremely fast pace to restore power to their respective areas.

“It could be until Tuesday (June 27) before everything is back up,” Howard said.

Howard remains in contact with companies multiple times a day to provide service time estimates to citizens.

The Nation has provided program assistance for citizens experiencing power outages lasting over 12 hours. The assistance will provide \$500 for groceries.

MCN Social Services has other programs available, depending on

the needs and eligibility of the citizen.

For those that are in need of emergency services, Howard claims the best thing to do is to contact their local emergency manager for the fastest service.

Howard and other managers provide direct emergency assistance to communities through the great working relationship they share.

“We are a happy team of 11 people,” Howard said, claiming that this type of job requires coordination in order to get it done properly.

A fatality was confirmed as a result of the storm where a man died after a tree fell on his home in Creek County.

For those that are in need of individual disaster assistance, contact the MCN Social Services program at: (918) 549-2880.

For emergency arbor care needs (downed trees on power lines or on homes) call: (918) 752-8577.



The northern area of the Mvskoke reservation experienced the most damage from the severe storms over the weekend of June 16-18 in Tulsa, Okla. (Courtesy photo: Stuart Harper)



There are several legal developments within Mvskoke Nation in tribal court, the Oklahoma Supreme Court, and the Eastern District Court. (Jerrad Moore/MM)

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

MVSKOKE MEDIA PROVIDES UPDATES FROM THE COURTS

by **JERRAD MOORE**
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - Mvskoke Media is monitoring several court cases as they make their way through the legal system.

MCN District Court

A sounding hearing is scheduled for July 12 for Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council Representative Joseph Hicks' second misdemeanor DUI Charge. Former MCN National Council Representative Travis Scott has a pre-trial conference hearing scheduled for Aug 1. Scott was charged with felony false swearing and four misdemeanor charges of conflict of interest by tribal officials on Feb. 11, 2022. These charges were filed in relation to Scott's impeachment, which was found unconstitutional by the MCN Supreme Court.

Oklahoma Supreme Court

There have been no new developments in the Alicia Stroble tax case since last month's update, the case remains at the Oklahoma Supreme Court. No decision has been handed down.

Bacone College

The Higher Learning Commission has assigned a Financial Distress designation to Bacone College, effective June 28. A Financial Distress designation is a consumer protection mechanism meant to apprise the public that current conditions at an accredited college or university raise serious concerns about its resource base to support its educational programs per HLC's Criteria for Accreditation.

Bacone also is facing three new civil suits. BSN Sports, LLC, has filed a suit for breach of contract in the amount of \$34,495.24. Ohio Security Insurance Co. has filed for breach of contract for \$82,446. Thesis Americas Inc. filed for a money judgment in the amount of \$86,631.71.

Mvskoke Media had previously reported that Bacone was put on heightened cash monitoring by the U.S. Department of Education. Heightened cash monitoring is instituted by the department when colleges or universities have a number of financial or federal compliance issues.

In addition, an accreditation complaint had also been filed by a former Bacone employee with HLC.

Bacone will now be the subject of a "focused visit" by HLC no later than November of this year. Following the "focused visit", HLC

will determine whether the designation can be removed or if further action is necessary.

Eastern District Court

MCN citizen and former Morris Public Schools teacher Dallas Ewton was sentenced to 15 years in prison on June 30. Ewton plead guilty in federal court to multiple felony counts of sexual abuse of a minor in Indian Country.

On July 1, 2021 a felony criminal complaint was filed against Ewton by the FBI in the Eastern District of Oklahoma, alleging that he committed aggravated sexual abuse, sexual abuse of a minor or ward and abusive sexual contact of a minor or ward.

As part of a plea agreement filed on July 7, 2022, Ewton plead guilty to two counts of sexual abuse of a minor in Indian Country, and one count of abusive sexual contact in Indian Country.

The plea agreement details how Ewton engaged in sexual acts with two of his students. They were 12-15 years old during his time as a teacher at Morris Public Schools.

According to his sentencing documents, after serving his prison sentence Ewton will serve a 20-year term of supervised release and must register as a sex offender.

FX'S "RESERVATION DOGS" ANNOUNCES FINAL SEASON

THE GROUNDBREAKING SHOW WILL CONCLUDE AFTER UPCOMING SEASON

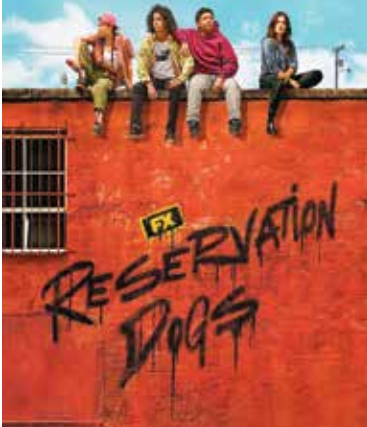
by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

MVSKOKE RESERVATION, Okla. - As the saying goes, "all good things must come to an end", and so too does the groundbreaking television series, "Reservation Dogs". The show's creator, Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Mvskoke) recently made the announcement that the show will conclude after its upcoming third season. The show was notable for featuring a cast and crew of Indigenous actors and filmmakers.

As for the reason why the series is concluding, Harjo explained that the filmmakers agreed it felt right to conclude the story with the ending they wrote for the upcoming season. Harjo released the following statement on the series' conclusion through his Instagram account.

"Aho young and old warriors! Here it is: the coming third season of Reservation Dogs will be the final season Reservation Dogs. That's a difficult line to write and a more difficult decision to make. However, it's the correct decision creatively for the show. I always knew what the end of the story would be, I just didn't know when it would arrive. As we continued to break stories and write scripts this season, it became clear to the producers, Taika and me that the season three finale is the perfect SERIES finale. When we came up with the idea for Reservation Dogs, I didn't think the show would ever get made, but thankfully it did. It's been incredible. A dream. Mvto for coming with us on this journey. Hvtvm Cehecares (until we meet again)"

After receiving positive critical reception and warm responses from audiences, "Reservation Dogs" became an overnight sensation when it first premiered. The success from the show would open up big opportunities for Harjo



Reservation Dogs will produce one final season that will premiere next month. (Source: FX)

within the entertainment industry. He is currently set to work with Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James on the upcoming Netflix film, "Rez Ball".

The show broke barriers by showcasing Native American culture on the reservation, as well as providing job opportunities for Indigenous writers, producers and directors. The show was also notable to locals for being shot on location within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

Kahnawake Mohawk actor K. Devery Jacobs plays the character Elora on the show. This time around, she wore multiple hats as this season of "Reservation Dogs" will see her television directorial debut.

In response to the announcement that the upcoming season of the television series would be its last, Jacobs said "Niawenhkó:wa — hugs thanks to all who brought the show to life. But mostly to NDN (Indian) country — we made this for you."

Mvskoke Media has provided on-going coverage on the television series, as well as its impact on Indian Country and Mvskoke Nation. Most recently, Rogers State University Fine Arts Professor Dr. Hugh Foley appeared on Live Wire to discuss how the show used RSU as a filming location for season three.

The final 10-episode season of "Reservation Dogs" is set to premiere on Aug. 2.



The new shirt design was on sale at the festival and at the Mvskoke Market gift shop (Ethan Hall/MM)

BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE MVSKOKE MEDIA 2023 CREEK FESTIVAL SHIRT

MVSKOKE CREATIVE GRAPHIC DESIGNER SHARES INSPIRATION BEHIND DESIGN

by **ETHAN HALL**
MEDIA INTERN

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee Nation Festival is an annual celebration that attracts thousands of visitors from across the state during the three-day event. There are many things to do and see such as cornhole tournaments, tomahawk throwing, blow darts, bull riding, a carnival, watching or participating in the social Stomp Dance and watching live music performances. There

are also booths set up by different departments of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation with vendors selling their merchandise.

Mvskoke Media sets up a booth every year as well, with a new Creek Festival shirt that goes on sale. The t-shirt is thrown out at the festival parade and is set at a lower price than other shirts. Festival goers can either buy or win a shirt by playing a game of cornhole. Mvskoke Media Graphic Designer Lindsey Arneecheer dis-

cussed the design of this year's shirt.

When asked about what inspired the design and what it represents, Arneecheer said she tried to incorporate different basic Native American symbols into the shirt's design to represent every tribe that goes to the festival, since Mvskoke citizens are not the only ones who attend.

This is not the first time Arneecheer has designed a festival t-shirt.

"I've done so many I can't think of a specific number," Arneecheer said. She also said that any shirt sold by Mvskoke Media with the phrase "Still here, Still indigenous" on it, she probably designed it.

Over the years people love to see what new designs the department brings out for the big event. This year's shirts were thrown out at the festival parade, and will be available in the Mvskoke Market gift shop in the McCombs building on the complex. They were also given out as a prize after winning a game of cornhole at the Mvskoke Media festival booth.

MCN FESTIVAL 2023 EVENT RESULTS

- 5K
- Brandon Payne 16:11
 - Archer Bennett 16:36
 - Bobby Lyons 17:34
 - Robert Ketcher 18:37
- PARADE
- Eufaula Indian Community
 - College of the Muscogee Nation
 - Okfuskee Indian Community
- VOLLEYBALL
- Red Storm - Tulsa, OK
 - Native Mob Tahlequah, Ok
 - Sun Devils Tulsa, Ok
- *MVP - Chase Holms and Sierra Holmes
- HORESHOES
- MEN
- Mitch Smith
 - Billy Vann
 - Rusty Walker
- MENS DOUBLES
- Mitch Smith and Mike Cummings
 - Kato and Billy Vann
 - Noah Beaver and Rusty Walker
- WOMEN
- Sarah Hicks
 - Brenda Daniels
 - Sweetleaf
- WOMENS DOUBLES
- Sarah Hicks and Brenda Daniels
 - Addie Hicks and Michelle Morgan
- RINGER TOSS
- Mitch Smith
- SENIOR CITIZENS ACTIVITIES
- QUILT CONTEST
- HANDMADE
- Addie Hicks
 - Sharon Whiteheat
- MACHINE MADE
- Irene Boatwright
 - Donna Frikken

- Sandy Denny
- OSAFKE
- Terry Fish
 - Kendell Allen
 - Charlene Colbert
- MENS BEAN BAG TOSS
- Zachary Watts
 - Samuel Roberts
 - Merle Berryhill
- WOMENS BEAN BAG TOSS
- Lavern Tiger
 - Elizabeth Butlet
 - Lynda Tiger
- MENS JACKS
- Lyle Wells
 - Mitch Barnett
 - Lyle Wells
- WOMENS JACKS
- Annie Gibbs
 - Nellie Hallum
 - Lillian Thomas
- MENS FREE THROW
- Charles Proctor
 - Joe Holuby
 - Sampson Lewis
- WOMENS FREE THROW
- Lisa Floyd
 - Liz Deere
 - Susanne Roberts
- CHAIR VOLLEYBALL
- Eufaula Mean Machine
 - MIC Renegades
- CORNHOLE
- Advance division
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 - Joseph Factor and Jacob Foreman
 - Brett Hogshooter and Matthew Creekiller
- Competitive Division
- Phillip Crawford and Logan Slape
 - Howard Gritts and Bobby Ballou
 - J.T. Reece and Brian Olson
- Intermediate Division
- Austyn H. and Jaydun T.
 - Doug K. and J.D.
 - Alex Williams and Jim I.

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The City of Tulsa was involved in a lawsuit where a Native American municipal resident filed for post-conviction relief from a municipal crime he committed. (Shutterstock)

TENTH CIRCUIT RULES AGAINST TULSA IN HOOPER CASE

CITY OF TULSA DOES NOT HAVE MUNICIPAL JURISDICTION OVER TRIBAL CITIZENS

by JERRAD MOORE
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

DENVER, Colorado - The Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that the City of Tulsa does not have jurisdiction over municipal crimes committed by tribal citizens in the city.

In Hooper v. The City of Tulsa, Choctaw citizen Justin Hooper was issued a traffic citation by the city of Tulsa.

After paying the fine, Hooper disputed whether the Curtis Act gave the city of Tulsa jurisdiction over municipal violations committed by tribal citizens post McGirt.

Hooper filed an application for post-conviction relief in municipal court, which ruled in favor of Tulsa. Hopper then took his case to federal court, appealing his denial of post-conviction relief and seeking a declaratory judgment that section 14 of the Curtis Act is inapplicable to Tulsa today.

The city of Tulsa filed a motion to dismiss the case under federal rules of civil procedure. The district court agreed with Tulsa and dismissed Hooper's appeal and request for declaratory judgment.

This brought the case to the Tenth Circuit Court. The court found that Section 14 of

the Curtis Act gave Tulsa jurisdiction over tribal citizens in the city while it was located in Indian Territory, but once Tulsa reorganized under Oklahoma Law in 1908, Section 14 no longer applied.

From the decision the ruling stated the following,

“Mr. Hooper does not dispute that Section 14 provided Tulsa with jurisdiction

over municipal violations committed by all its inhabitants, including Indians at the time it was enacted, as Tulsa was a municipality in the Indian Territory, authorized and organized according to chapter twenty-nine of Mansfield's Digest.

Rather, Mr. Hooper argues that once Tulsa reorganized under Oklahoma law,

Section 14 no longer applied to the city. We agree.”

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt released the following statement regarding the court's ruling;

“I am extremely disappointed and disheartened by the decision made by the Tenth Circuit to undermine the City of Tulsa and the impact it would have on their ability to enforce laws within their municipality. However, I am not surprised as this is exactly what I have been

warning Oklahomans about for the past three years. Citizens of Tulsa, if your city government cannot enforce something as simple as a traffic violation, there will be no rule of law in eastern Oklahoma. This is just the beginning. It is plain and simple, there cannot be a different set of rules for people solely based on race. I am hopeful that the United States Supreme Court will rectify this injustice, and the City of Tulsa can rest assured my office will continue to support them as we fight for equality for all Oklahomans, regardless of race or heritage.”

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the tribal jurisdiction Tulsa resides in released the following statement on the ruling;

“We're pleased to see that the 10th Circuit has applied the correct rule of law concerning the questions before it regarding the Curtis Act. We can now move forward, expand resources and continue to flourish together with our partners rather than wasting anymore time challenging the sovereign rights of tribes.”

The case will now be remanded back to the district court to be reheard in light of the Tenth Circuit opinion.



The Oklahoma State House of Representatives failed to override Governor Stitt's veto of SB-26, a tribal compact regarding tobacco sale taxes. (Shutterstock)

OK SENATE FAILS TO OVERRIDE GOVERNOR'S VETO ON TRIBAL TOBACCO COMPACT

VOTE ON MOTOR VEHICLE COMPACT POSTPONED UNTIL JULY 31 AT THE LATEST
by JERRAD MOORE
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. - The Oklahoma Senate has failed to override Governor Kevin Stitt's veto of Senate Bill 26 in a session held on Monday, June 26.

Senate Bill 26 would have extended the Tribal Compacts Tobacco Product Sales Tax until December 31, 2024. The extension would have allowed Oklahoma to continue to receive a share of sales tax on tobacco products sold by tribal entities.

Without a compact in place, tribes have no obligation to send any tax revenue back to the state.

The Oklahoma legislative process requires both the senate and the house to obtain a two thirds vote to override a veto. The senate was one vote shy of veto override for SB-26, with a vote of 31 Ayes to 8 Nays.

Another bill on the agenda at the senate session was HB 1005. This bill extended the Tribal compacts on Motor Vehicle Licensing and Registration until December 31, 2024.

HB 1005 had already obtained a veto override vote in the house body, but the senate did not take up the bill at the June 26 session. It is possible that the bill will be considered in the senate in July.

Governor Stitt released a statement regarding the SB-26 veto override failure, stating;

“I am pleased by the Senate's vote to sustain my veto of the Tobacco Compact extension

and I believe that today's outcome underscores the state's commitment to negotiating compacts in good faith that are beneficial to all parties involved. My original compact offer—to extend the compacts previously negotiated and entered by Oklahoma's Governor and tribal counterparts—is still on the table for each tribe that has reached out and remains available to those that have not yet. I look forward to continuing to work with them to reach an agreement.”

Prominent leaders of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma including Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton, and Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill released statements on the June 26 session.

Chief Hill released the following on HB 1005, stating;

“It's unfortunate, but to echo some of Senator Treat's comments, we believe that the votes will be there when this is brought up again during the extended special session. It's simply more political gamesmanship and unnecessary divisiveness from the Governor. We remain hopeful that at some point we can reach good faith government-to-government relations.”

The Oklahoma Legislature Extraordinary Session has been extended to July 31. State lawmakers will have until then to vote on overriding the Governor's veto on HB 1005.



Tribal leaders from Muscogee (Creek) Nation and around Indian Country shared their reactions to the recent Supreme Court ruling on the Indian Child Welfare Act. (MM File).

INDIAN COUNTRY REACTS TO THE ICWA DECISION

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT VOTED TO UPHOLD THE 45 YEAR-OLD LAW

by SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law that was enacted in 1978. The recent Haaland v. Brackeen case challenged the law, with petitioners arguing that ICWA was unconstitutional and that it violated the anti-commandeering principle of the Tenth Amendment. This case started on November 9, 2022 and wrapped up June 15. The Supreme Court voted to make the decision on June 15, 2023 to uphold ICWA, 7-2.

If a Native American child who is an enrolled citizen of a federally recognized tribe is removed from their family, this law stops the prolonged action of the child being adopted by a non-tribal family. The law gives their extended families, and tribal citizens the ability to adopt or foster that child before options outside the tribe are explored.

ICWA helps Native children stay within tribal families to

maintain the connection with their Native community and culture. The law states that it was enacted for the best interests for the children; to retain their cultural identity.

According to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, the actions of institutions outside of Native American tribes in the past still have ripple effects in the present.

“For nearly two centuries, federal policies promoted the forced removal of Indian children from their families and communities through boarding schools, foster care, and adoption. Those policies were a targeted attack on the existence of Tribes, and they inflicted trauma on children, families and communities that people continue to feel today,” Haaland said. “The Act (ICWA) ensured that the United States' new policy would be to meet its legal and moral obligations to protect Indian children and families, and safeguard the future of Indian tribes.”

A statement from Princi-

pal Chief David Hill on the ruling states, “For centuries tribal nations have been fighting to govern as sovereigns to protect our own, and the very core of that is being upheld by this decision. Today's decision strengthens our ability to protect the most vulnerable among us.”

MCN Attorney General Geri Wisner echoed Chief Hill's statement, stating “Today, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision that clearly upheld and defended the Indian Child Welfare Act. The Brackeen ruling acknowledged what Tribal Nations have known all along: that the Indian Child Welfare Act does not exceed federal authority; does not infringe upon state sovereignty; nor does it discriminate upon the basis of race. Today is a good day for our Indian Nations, families and children.”

MCN Children and Family Services Administration Director Michelle Bender, who has worked on the front lines of the fight to keep Mvskoke children within Mvskoke families commended the court's ruling as well.

“The Muscogee (Creek) Nation strongly believes in the importance of protecting and preserving the Nation's strongest resources, our children and families. We are pleased and applaud today's ruling. The Nation believes ICWA is constitutional, necessary, and inherently upholds the sovereignty of the Nation by keeping Native children and families together. With upholding ICWA, the United State Supreme Court continued to uphold the United States' promise to protect Native American children and families.” Bender said.

ICWA is set to continue to help Native children preserve their traditions and grow up within their communities.

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The expanded tent at the Muscogee Festival featured additional vendors that could not all fit in the pavilion. June 24, 2023. Okmulgee, Okla. (Kali Perez/MM)

ART, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY ON FULL DISPLAY AT MVSKOKE FESTIVAL

EVENT CONTINUES TO CAPTIVATE WITH EXPANDED ART FAIR

by **KALI PEREZ**
MEDIA INTERN

OKMULGEE, Okla. The annual summer Muscogee (Creek) Nation Festival once again captivated the community, and promised to be even bigger than previous years. A notable highlight of the festival is the expansive art fair, where the booths extend beyond the pavilion to accommodate a greater number of vendors. The diverse range of offerings at the art fair ensures that there is something for everyone, from traditional clothing to hand-printed tees, jewelry, and metalwork.

The vendor application process for the festival began in March. It was evident that interested individuals or businesses had to act quickly to secure a spot before all available spaces were taken. Even though the vendor area had been expanded, the number of spots remained limited. This scarcity highlighted the festival’s popularity and the strong desire

among vendors to participate.

Both new and returning participants of the art fair were astounded by the large number of attendees. The festival’s reputation has attracted a significant audience, and the event continues to draw in more people each year. The high attendance not only provides an excellent opportunity for vendors to showcase their products or services, but also contributes to the vibrant atmosphere and overall success of the festival.

One of the vendors, Jackie Jackson, shared valuable advice for individuals seeking to explore their talents further. According to Jackson, it is crucial to identify something one excels at and has a natural aptitude for. This advice highlights the importance of self-awareness and understanding one’s strengths when pursuing a creative endeavor.

She also emphasized the amount of work that goes

into preparing for the fair, describing the days beforehand as a mad dash. “I made 100 shirts just yesterday. A lot of work goes into making sure we have our inventory in time,” Jackson explained. Her family, having been in the industry for over 33 years, has shown the amount of hard work and time that goes into ensuring the quality of hand-printed shirts.

The Creek Festival plays a vital role as a platform for local artists and artisans to showcase their creations, which in turn fosters a sense of community and celebrates the rich cultural heritage of the Native American tribe. The expansion of the event, as evidenced by the extended vendor area, reflects its growth and ongoing success in attracting both curious visitors and customers. Visitors browsing the booths are often amazed by the accomplishments of their community members, finding it inspiring to witness the cre-

ativity and skills on display.

Okmulgee’s annual summer Creek Festival stands out as a vibrant and diverse cultural event. Its expanded art fair and limited vendor spaces contribute to its appeal, drawing

the attention of artists, artisans, and attendees alike. The festival offers a unique and enriching experience for all involved, ensuring that it remains a highlight of the region’s cultural calendar.



The pavilion at the Claude Cox Omniplex grounds housed many different artists selling their crafts during the Muscogee Festival. June 24, 2023. Okmulgee, Okla. (Kali Perez/MM)

MUSCOGEE (CREEK) CITIZENS PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT FOR MVSKOKE FESTIVAL

LANCE GOUGE AND 99 SOUTH BAND PERFORMED AT NATIVE AMERICAN NIGHT

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - Saturday evening of the Muscogee Festival 2023 was dedicated to highlighting Mvskoke talents including Lance Gouge and The 99 South Band at the Claude Cox Omniplex.

An artist on the rise, Lance Gouge just started his music career last year.

During Gouge’s set at festival “Yellowstone” series actor Mo Brings Plenty took a seat in the front row and listened to him with intrigue.

According to Gouge’s father, Geebon, he hopes his son caught the Native star’s attention.

The quiet, humble young man recently recorded his first song, “This Time”. It was released last October on major platforms and has become a popular hit locally.

One of Gouge’s personal favorites is his song “She’s a good one.”

“It’s not about anybody,” Gouge said. “It’s a really good song I wrote, as soon as I wrote it everybody was listening to it right off the bat.”

Gouge claims his songs are being played in different bars and dancehalls. They are becoming popular among the young adult community.

Growing up, the Okmulgee native would attend the festival each year but did not see himself performing for the Mvskoke people then.

Gouge started out singing in church with family as a young kid. Now that he performs at major festivals, Gouge said he is molding into a different person and



Lance Gouge is a young, rising artist who is enrolled as a citizen in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. (Morgan Taylor/MM)

finding himself.

“I was shy,” Gouge said. “But I didn’t know how I was.”

In a previous interview with Mvskoke Media, Gouge claimed he did not think his music would ever circulate on a major platform.

“I didn’t think I could sing,” Gouge said. “I thought I was just an instrument kind of guy.”

Gouge’s vocal talent was not discovered until his friend noticed his voice during a fun singing session at their house. As Gouge started singing more openly, other friends started to notice his voice, leading him to record his first single in his bedroom.

“I have improved since then,” Gouge said joking about his bedroom record release.

The Lance Gouge Band has performed at several venues with many more performances to come in the future. Their next appear-

ance will be at the 7 Hills Music Festival on Saturday, Aug. 5 at Nichols Park in Henryetta, Okla.

The two bands that appeared at the Native American night of festival competed with a long list of performers at a battle of the bands contest in May. Both bands won the competition and were invited to perform at festival. This competition was part of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s Employee Appreciation Day event.

The 99 South Band has been playing together for over six years all over the state, including other festivals like the Seminole Nation Days.

The band plays covers of country music, new and old and can be heard in local dive bars from time to time.

For those interested in where to find these bands next, information on both The 99 South Band and Lance Gouge can be found on Facebook.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



GAVON WALKER
PRESTON HIGH SCHOOL

Walker is the son of Tania Bear and Aaron Tecumseh and Gerren and Michelle Walker. He is Mvskoke, Seminole and Kiowa and is from the sweet potato clan. He is a member of New Tvlse Ceremonial Ground. Gavon is attending Green Country Technology Center for Construction Trades where he will be continuing his education after graduation. He is excited to complete high school and move forward with his journey. He would like to thank his parents and brother for supporting him.

LEGALS

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION
OKMULGEE DISTRICT

IN THE MATTER OF:)
S.S.; DOB: 04/16/2009) JV-2023-12
J.S.; DOB: 08/30/2013)
Alleged Deprived Child(ren).)

JUVENILE SUMMONS

THE MUSCOGEE NATION to: ANTHONY EDWARDS

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a Petition has been filed in the Court of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation alleging that the above-named child is a deprived child and that, as the parent of said child, S.S., you have been named as the Respondent, all as more fully set out in the Petition.

YOU ARE THEREFORE ORDERED TO APPEAR at the Courtroom of the District Court of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, on the 3rd day of AUGUST, 2023 at the hour of 9:00 a.m. for an **Adjudication/Disposition Hearing** and to there remain subject to the call of the Court until discharged, so that you may be advised of the allegations and may answer that you admit or deny the allegations of the Deprived Petition.

You may seek the advice of any attorney on any matter relating to this action at your own expense. Or, if you are qualified as indigent, an attorney can be appointed for you.

IF YOU FAIL TO ATTEND THIS HEARING, YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS MAY BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED AND YOU MAY BE CITED FOR CONTEMPT OF COURT AND A BENCH WARRANT MAY BE ISSUED FOR YOUR ARREST.

Issued this 29th day of June, 2023.

[Seal]

Deputy Court Clerk
Muscogee (Creek) Nation District Court

2023 FESTIVAL PHOTO GALLERY



2023 FESTIVAL PHOTO GALLERY (CONT. FROM PAGE 7)

