



AUGUST 1, 2023 | “HIYO RAKKO” BIG HARVEST MONTH MONTH | VOL. 53, ISSUE 15

# MVSKOKE NEWS

PRODUCED BY  MVSKOKE MEDIA



(From Left) Ambassador Jonodev Chaudhuri, Representative Mark Randolph, Principal Chief David Hill, Rebecca Landsberry-Baker, Angel Ellis, and Gloria Shade “Bad Press” on the Mvskoke Reservation. (Courtesy: Rebecca Landsberry-Baker)

## “BAD PRESS” PREMIERES ON MVSKOKE RESERVATION DOCUMENTARY SCREENED AT CIRCLE CINEMA’S FILM FEST

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
MANAGING EDITOR

TVLSE, Okla. - For many Mvskoke citizens across the Muscogee (Creek) Nation the day had finally arrived when they could see the film “Bad Press”. The documentary on free press in Indian Country was initially scheduled to screen in April, however due to a conflict it was moved to July 15 at the historic Circle Cinema. After making its way across several film festivals around the globe, the filmmakers were finally able

to screen the documentary at the battleground of the fight for free press: the Mvskoke Reservation. The film was screened alongside other Indigenous-produced films during Circle Cinema’s 95th Birthday Film Fest. Other Indigenous films presented during the anniversary celebration included “We Will Speak”, and “Fancy Dance”. This was part of the theater’s Flint Family Foundation-produced Native Spotlight Series that showcases Native American cinema.

### The Screening

The event saw MCN tribal leaders in attendance including Principal Chief David Hill, Second Chief Del Beaver, and Ambassador Jonodev Chaudhuri. The film’s screening was organized by KOSU Indigenous Affairs Reporter Allison Herrera (Xolon Salinan). As someone whose job it is to cover the hundreds of Native American tribes across the United States, Herrera is very familiar with the status of free press in Indian Country. “It (Bad Press) highlights a really important issue, one that I think is often overlooked about free press in Indian Country,” Herrera said. “It’s a shame that more awareness is not raised on the fact that over 570 tribes lack free press.” Advocacy for free press in Indian Country was one of the first stories Herrera covered for National Public Radio in 2015. She claims that other news outlets like the Oklahoman and the Tulsa World are now seeking to intentionally gather news on Indian Country by creating specific reporter positions tailored to

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Mary Kathryn Nagle performs the one woman show “On the Far End”, which details the life of her mother-in-law and Mvskoke Matriarch Jean Chaudhuri. (Courtesy: MCN)

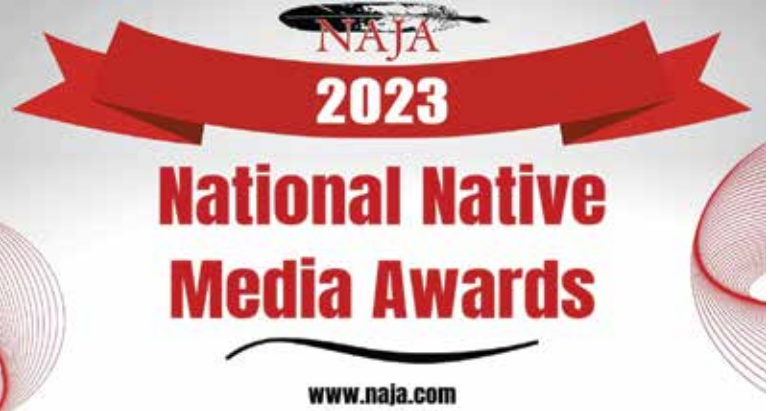
## PARADISE COVE HOSTED “ON THE FAR END” STARRING MARY KATHRYN NAGLE JEAN CHAUDHURI’S INSPIRATIONAL LIFE STORY IS TOLD IN A ONE WOMAN SHOW

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

TVLSE, Oklahoma - “On the Far End” was performed at the River Spirit Casino and Resort Paradise Cove on July 9 in honor of Mvskoke Sovereignty Day. Playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee) performed as the Mvskoke Matriarch Jean Hill Chaudhuri in the one woman show that entailed 52 years of Chaudhuri’s life. “The (July) 9th is our (July) 4th,” MCN Press Secretary Jason

Salsman said at the premiere about Sovereignty Day marking the third anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision, *McGirt v. Oklahoma*. “Muscogee (Creek) Nation doesn’t take a back seat to anyone,” Second Chief Del Beaver said. “People know when Muscogee (Creek) Nation walks in the room. That’s what today is about.”

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NAJA announced their winners that will be honored in Winnipeg, Canada in August. (Courtesy: NAJA)

## MVSKOKE MEDIA PLACES IN SEVEN NATIONAL MEDIA AWARDS

by **SHAYLN PROCTOR**  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) will be hosting their 40th anniversary conference. NAJA will be presenting the 2023 awards at the upcoming banquet to the selected journalists for their work reporting on Indian Country. These awards go to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous journalists that come from the United States and Canada. According to NAJA, there were well over 800 entries. According to NAJA’s website, “NAJA recognizes Native Americans as distinct peoples based on tradition and culture. In this spirit, NAJA educates and unifies its membership through journalism programs that promote diversity and defends challenges to free press, speech and expression. NAJA is committed to increasing the representation of Native journalists in mainstream media.” Radio specialist Gary Fife was selected for first place in the radio/podcast-best newscast, first place for the print online-best news photo and second place for the print/

online best column. Assignment editor Jerrad Moore was selected third place in the multimedia category. Multimedia producer Morgan Taylor was selected third place for print/online best news story and an honorable mention for the print/online best sports story. Managing editor Braden Harper was selected second place in print/online-best environmental coverage. Harper was very pleased to see that he was one of the recipients that was chosen for the NAJA awards but was also proud to see his colleagues place as well. As a department they will bring home seven awards. Harper recognized everyone’s efforts covering these stories that gave out accurate information to tribal citizens in a timely manner. He knows some of these stories can be hard. “I was less concerned about my name popping up as one of the recipients but I was really happy to see all of the other colleagues receive the honors that they dearly deserved for their efforts for this past year,” Harper said. “It was a good feeling. It was a year of grinding on stories and learning new

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The Muscogee (Creek) Nation filed a brief in the Hickory Ground case, which claims the site was illegally desecrated by land developers. (Courtesy: MCN)

## MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION SEEKS JUSTICE FOR THE DESECRATION OF SACRED SITE

**PRESS RELEASE**  
MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION

Editor’s Note: The following is a press release from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Atlanta, GA—Today, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation filed the first brief in their appeal to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals seeking to proceed with their case holding several federal agencies and a tribal entity accountable for illegal acts that led to the desecration of a Muscogee sacred site. The case revolves around the Hickory Ground site in Wetumpka, AL which was a sacred ceremonial ground for the Muscogee people and the final capitol of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation before the tribe’s forced removal to Oklahoma. Because of its significance to both Muscogee and American history, Hickory Ground was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. To this day, it remains one of most sacred sites to the Muscogee people as it is the final resting place for many of Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s most significant political and cultural leaders. However, a tribal entity obtained ownership of the property under the promise to protect the site and never excavate the Muscogee individuals buried there. Then did

precisely the opposite. Federal law requires federal agencies to protect historic sites like Hickory Ground, but the federal agencies responsible for Hickory Ground’s protection allowed the desecration to happen. Through a series of illegal acts, the tribal entity that had acquired the Hickory Ground site dug up and removed the Muscogee (Creek) ancestors buried there and built a casino on the holy site. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation originally filed suit on December 12, 2012, in the United States District Court, Middle District of Alabama. On March 15, 2021, the district court dismissed the Nation’s claims against the United States, the tribal entity responsible for the desecration, and Auburn University. The Nation believes that the court wrongly dismissed the suit based on a legal doctrine that has been abrogated by a subsequent Supreme Court decision. Accordingly, the Nation is asking the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn the lower court decision and allow their case to be heard. Mekko Thompson, the traditional chief of Hickory Ground and a plaintiff in the litigation, emphasized the significance of the situation stating, “This struggle is not just about the past; it is about the

present and the future. This is a universal human struggle. We stand united in our righteous determination to ensure that all sacred sites are respected and preserved. Decency demands it.” At its core, this case concerns the failure of several federal agencies and officials to abide the duties Congress set out for them in federal statutes—statutes that make clear that historic sites and Native American burials are to be protected and preserved, not destroyed. Equity and good conscience commands that the Nation’s claims against the United States be allowed to proceed. Hickory Ground’s placement on the National Register of Historic Places pre-dates any relationship or connection any other group could possibly claim to it. As a site on the National Register, Hickory Ground is protected by federal law. If successful, this case will make clear that laws protecting removed tribes’ rights to protect sacred sites must be respected and followed. Principal Chief David Hill reflected the Nation’s commitment to pursuing justice saying, “We fight because it is just to fight. We will not stop until our ancestors have received justice and this sacred site is preserved from any further desecration.”



NAJA AWARDS

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things and just trying to do my best to serve others and it was nice to see all of the hard work validated.”

Giving out accurate stories or messages to citizens by following the Associated Press (AP) guidelines and Society of Professional Journalist (SPJ) standards is something Harper takes seriously.

That is why the news team will attend the conference to learn new skills and hone technique, all paid for by the Racial Equity in Journalism fund grant.

“It’s definitely a big responsibility because the newspaper means a lot to people, they rely on information and keeping updates of what is going on in the nation, especially of those who live far away,” Harper said.

For more information about NAJA, visit their website where you can find the full list of 2023 award winners.

**“BAD PRESS”**

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cover Indigenous issues.

“You can’t just have one outlet that covers Indigenous affairs, there has to be an ecosystem” Herrera said.

“Bad Press” has screened across many other film festivals including deadCenter in Oklahoma City, Sundance in Park City, and Millennium Docs Against Gravity in Poland.

Circle Cinema’s screening began with a reception featuring traditional foods prepared by Autumn Star Catering Owner Tricia Fields Alexander (Mvskoke). The smell of Alexander’s signature fry bread and peach cake wafted throughout the theater gallery. After the reception, it was movie time. Once the lights dimmed and the projector started rolling, Mvskoke Nation finally experienced the fight for free press

up close.

After the film’s credits had concluded, the production’s panel rolled out for a post-screening Q&A. The panel saw filmmaker Rebecca Landsberry-Baker (Mvskoke), film subjects Angel Ellis (Mvskoke) and Jerrad Moore (Mvskoke), as well as Osage News Editor Shannon Shaw Duty (Osage).

Indigenous Programming

Native Spotlight is provided quarterly at the theater. According to Circle Cinema Deputy Director and Film Programmer Chuck Foxen, his connection to Native American-produced cinema came from the Sundance Institute’s Indigenous Program. The program consists of labs and fellowships that give opportunities to Native American storytellers to authentically tell their own stories through filmmaking.

Here, Foxen’s eyes were opened to a side of cinema that was not commonly seen on a mainstream level. Unlike most mainstream depictions of Native Americans, these stories were told by actual Native Americans. These were the stories Foxen knew needed to be shown on the big screen.

“I knew what was going on and I had an opportunity here at the Circle Cinema to help get Indigenous stories told and get those on the big screen,” Foxen said.

Through the Native Spotlight series Foxen is able to take his passion for Indigenous cinema and share it with others. The series also invites the Native American actors and filmmakers directly involved with each production to be featured alongside the screening. This allows audiences to connect with the films’ storytellers, as well as properly celebrate them.

“Native Americans are great storytellers,” Foxen said. “There’s a legacy of that. That continued on to what we’re doing today with making films. The stories are just

told in a different way.”

Circle Cinema has also showcased free screenings of FX’s series, “Reservation Dogs” throughout the summer. This has been leading up to the show’s third and final season set to premiere in August.

Bad Press continues to make its way across the United States and the globe. Not only does the fight for free press in Indian Country continue to be shared with others, it is also advocated for other tribes to take the initiative to provide free press for their citizens as well.

To learn more about the Circle Cinema’s Native American movie screenings, visit their website: circlecinema.org.

**MVSKOKE PLAY**

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“Sovereignty is truly special, and once you get it you don’t give it up.”

Principal Chief David Hill thanked Nagle for bringing Chaudhuri’s story to life.

“One of our fiercest Mvskoke warriors and matriarchs of the world,” Chief Hill said. “We are celebrating because of citizens like Jean Hill. When you think about sovereignty day, I ask you to think about those who came before us to make that possible.”

“The trail of tears ended,” Chief Hill said. “We are here to stay.”

Nagle’s performance first premiered at the Round House Theatre in Bethesda, MD as part of the second annual Capital New Play Festival that ran March 30 through May 7.

“On the Far End” premiered at a special viewing limited to 20 people, which was held at the Creek Council House after the Muscogee Festival Parade on June 24.

Inspiration for the Play

It was after Chaudhuri’s husband Joyotpaul, also Nagle’s father-in-law, passed away in 2020 when Nagle and her husband Jonodev

Chaudhuri sifted through the deceased couple’s belongings. It was then she discovered the life of the mother-in-law she never met.

Nagle was able to read personal hand-written records from the matriarch that included letters from family members, letters to congress and even personal journal notes and poetry.

“It was really personal and really touching,” Nagle said. “She has all these incredible stories of trials and tribulations.”

Nagle took the title of her new play from the first line of Justice Neil Gorsuch’s majority opinion in McGirt v. Oklahoma.

“On the far end of the Trail of Tears was a promise,” reads the opinion, which is also the statement Nagle starts her monologue with.

A Life Lived to the Fullest

Born Ella Jean Hill in Okemah in 1937, Chaudhuri was a full-blooded Muscogee. In the early years of her childhood Chaudhuri lived in a home where the Mvskoke language was spoken and cultural practices were common.

She recounted experiencing harsh treatment from white settlers from an early age and even lost multiple siblings before the age of ten. At the same age, she was taken from her home and forced to attend the Eufaula Boarding School, a place she escaped 8 times.

After her 8th escape, Chaudhuri’s family had experienced some troubles on their allotment as white settlers purged inward. The family would then up and leave their allotment to move to Tulsa.

At 17 the young Chaudhuri enrolled at Will Rogers High School where she continued to experience discrimination and racism. She fled to Oklahoma City, leaving her family.

While in the city Chaudhuri met her husband. They were mar-

ried by the time she was 20, which was a struggle of its own for a biracial couple living in the Jim Crow Era.

As an early adult Chaudhuri advocated for Native American rights. She fought alongside her parents for the Indians’ right to elect their own officials among their people, instead of the U.S. Government choosing for them.

In her first advocacy position Chaudhuri continued her fight for the Muscogee People while experiencing hardships and obstacles along the way. She had many small and large victories. She garnished a long list of awards, created several coalitions and took positions on various boards throughout her life.

Chaudhuri became the executive director of the Tucson Indian Center and Director of the Traditional Indian Alliance. She was also the founder of the first off-reservation Indian Health clinic in Tucson. She was the founder and president of the Arizona Indian Women in Progress (IWP). She also founded and co-chaired the Native American Heritage Preservation Coalition.

For her work in Tucson she received the American Institute of Public Service’s Jefferson Medal at a ceremony in the U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. in 1977. In 2000 she was posthumously given the Outstanding Native American Leader Award, and in 2003 she received the Dr. Martin Luther King Living the Dream Award.

Chaudhuri and her husband co-authored “A Sacred Path: the Way of the Muscogee Creeks”. The book details Muscogee culture, tribal structure and history.

“It’s a tragic story, but it’s also an inspirational story,” Nagle said.

Mvskoke Media streamed the performance from the Muscogee Sovereignty Day celebration.

Nagle also joined Jerrad Moore on LiveWire to talk more in depth about the play.

LEGAL UPDATE FROM JULY 12

MCN REP. HICKS PLEADS NO CONTEST TO SECOND DUI

by **JERRAD MOORE**  
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma - Mvskoke Media has updates on some of the cases being monitored in the legal system

Choctaw citizen and Tulsa police officer Micheal Bell plead no contest to charges of physical abuse of a child on July 12. Bell was arrested in April by Light-horse PD. Bell has been sentenced to a three year deferred sentence and will have to pay a \$500 fine. Bell will also be required to attend parenting courses, and be subjected to three years under supervised probation.

Muskogee (Creek) Nation National Council Representative Joseph Hicks pleaded no contest to a second misdemeanor DUI charge on July 12. Hicks was fined \$250 and received no probation.

This was Hicks’ second DUI offense. The MCN Code reads as follows,

“Any person who, after a previous conviction of a violation of this section or a violation pursuant to the provisions of any law of another Indian tribe or state pro-



Mvskoke Media has been following two cases that have recently made their way through the Muscogee (Creek) Nation District Court. One case involved a Choctaw citizen charged with physically abusing a minor, the other involved a MCN national council representative charged with a misdemeanor second DUI. (Jerrad Moore/MM)

hibiting the offense provided in § 1304 (A), is convicted of a second offense pursuant to the provisions of this section or has a prior conviction in a municipal criminal court of record for the violation of a municipal ordinance prohibiting the offense provided for in subsection A of this section and is convicted pursuant to the provision of this section shall be deemed guilty of a felony and shall participate in a drug and alcohol assessment and evaluation, and shall be sentenced to: 1. follow all recommendations made

in the assessment and evaluation for treatment at the defendant’s expense; or 2. imprisonment for not less than one (1) year and not to exceed three (3) years and a fine of not more than Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00); or 3. Treatment, imprisonment and a fine within the limitations prescribed in subparagraphs 1. and 2. of this paragraph”

It is unclear at this time how Rep. Hicks could be charged with a misdemeanor for his second offense in light of the language of MCN code.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

RODEO, BACK TO SCHOOL GIVEAWAY, GOLF, FAMILY REUNION, SPELLING BEE, FRYBREAD

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 8/3/23-8/6/23   | 9/7/23  |
| American Indian Rodeo<br>Caddo County Fairgrounds<br>1019 E. Broadway St.<br>Anadarko, OK 73005<br>1:00 p.m. each day.<br>Admission: \$10-\$20.<br>Kids under 7: Free<br>For info, contact 737-222-3115 | Louis and Mandy Marshall<br>Family Reunion 11:30 a.m. at the<br>Wetumka Indian Community<br>Center. All families are asked to bring<br>a potluck dish or dessert. Chicken,<br>side pork, hot rolls, and drinks will be<br>provided. All families asked to bring<br>one adult, child or auction gift. Con-<br>tact Karen at (580) 716-5199, or Con-<br>tact Susanne at (918) 623-7998. |
| 8/11/23   | 9/16/23   |
| Back to School Backpack giv-<br>away<br>4:00 p.m. - 7 p.m.<br>Safe Space Building<br>3000 Warrior Road<br>Okmulgee, OK<br>Registration date: 8/4/23<br>For info, contact 918-549-2880                   | Mvskoke Spelling Bee<br>10 a.m. - 3 p.m.<br>Eufaula Community Center<br>121 W. High Street<br>Eufaula, OK 74432   |
| 8/12/23   | 9/27/23   |
| Golf Tournament Fundraiser<br>7:00 a.m. sign in<br>8:00 a.m. start time<br>Arrowhead State Park<br>101 BE Tignor St.<br>Canadian, OK<br>For info, contact 405-614-0128                                  | Frybread Cook Off<br>10 a.m.<br>Kialegee Family Life Center<br>100 Kialegee Drive<br>Wetumka, OK<br>Contestants must be registered<br>by 9/21/23  |

THE MVSKOKENEWS

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

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



# GOVERNMENT BATTLES, MOVIE NEWS, AWARDS

## BATTLE WITH THE STATE AND CITY GOVERNMENTS, MOVIE STUFF

by **GARY FIFE**  
RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

OKMULGEE, Oklahoma— Lots of big decisions are still hung up in courts and legal systems, both local and national.

We are still waiting on a decision on the freedmen case. By the way, a tribal court has ordered the MCN Attorney General pay nearly \$5,000 in costs and fees because her clients, the MCN Citizenship Board have been slow in providing required information.

The Indian Child Welfare Act has been law for nearly 50 years and the U.S. Supreme Court has finally given its approval for this landmark federal Indian law. According to a report from Indian Country Today, the 7-2 decision opponents of the ICWA had a “lack of standing.” Our nation’s principal chief issued a statement saying, “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.”

That is a nice response to the state governors’ ongoing rhetoric, claiming federal Indian law is based on race. That has always sounded like a cheap shot, trying to stir up negative (and false) emotions. Is this a continuation of a plan to oppose and eliminate tribal sovereignty? Remember Mr. Stitt, there are no treaties with racial groups and there is a Bureau of Indian Affairs. This government-to-government relationship has existed even before there was an Oklahoma. And... there is still the ongoing dispute caused by the governor over gaming revenues. He said the old one was expired. The tribes, courts and federal government say they are still valid.

Hasn’t Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond announced that he wants to improve the relationship between the tribal and state governments? Who are we to believe? Who’s got the proverbial ‘forked tongue?’

Are you ready for more? A report appearing in Indian Country Today says the City of Tulsa cannot give a Choctaw citizen a speeding ticket because the violation occurred on reservation land. A lower federal court said ‘you can’ but a higher federal court said ‘you can’t’ because of the McGirt decision supporting tribal jurisdiction. Governor Stitt chimed in with a familiar phrase: “It is plain and simple, there cannot be a different set of rules for people solely based on race.”

Chief Hill responded, “His (the Governors’) remarks were ‘born of intentional dishonesty or an excusable ignorance of the laws.” Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum wants to take the matter to the U.S. Supreme Court.



It is a bit sad, but actually kind of expected. The next season of the Native-produced and wildly popular TV series, “Reservation Dogs” will be the last. The creative team of Sterlin Harjo and Taika Waititi announced at the end of June that this next season will be the last. When you think about it, it seemed the four fearless Native youth had achieved their goal of reaching the West Coast and remembering a lost companion, Daniel. This series has shared a lot of that industries’ top Native talent. Keep it up!

When seeing that last year’s conclusion, the question arose, “Where does the story go from here?” Are you missing it already? The new promotional spots for the series look interesting and have an upbeat feel. I think we will all be surprised.

I wonder how many Indian babies have been named “Willie Jack”? Speaking of movies, “Kill-

ers of the Flower Moon” is scheduled for release in October. Did anybody get invited to the special screening? I know the Osages are happy.

Did you go to this year’s Creek Festival? It was good to have it. What did you think about it being more ‘spread out’ with the rides at the back of the grounds or the rodeo at a different time?

Just saw an interesting piece on Facebook. With all the new flavors of potato chips, it was destined to include one to be favored by Natives who might have tasted commodities in their life. This one was titled “Government Cheese”. If only...!

Please excuse me for patting myself on the back. It’s been quite a year for Yours Truly. A few months ago I was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Oklahoma chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. That was quite a surprise. Following

that, the honor of being chosen as one of five “Living Legends” of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation. And... finally, three of my submissions to the Native American Journalists Association competition were winners in their categories.

Even this column got a first place award in the Professional Division I & II-Print/Online category. There are a couple of others, but I don’t want my ego to get any more out of hand. Thanks to those who read Emvpanayv. I hope you find it useful, or at least occasionally entertaining.

Tribal elections are coming up. Be sure to register and vote.

O.K., enough of that. Don’t squash any Locvs on the road. Someone may need them for a stomp dance later. Hvtvm.

Disclaimer: The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation or of Mvskoke Media.

# MCN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT HOLDS ANNUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION CAMP

CAMP BROUGHT IN FUN GAMES, THE MVSKOKE LANGUAGE, AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

by **SHAYLN PROCTOR**  
REPORTER

HULBERT, Okla.- This year the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Language Department held their 16th annual language immersion camp. It was held at the Sequoyah State Park. This year’s theme was Mvskoke Punvkv Vlicev, which translates to “Mvskoke language starter”.

The language immersion camp started in 2007 when the legislation allowed 50 students to participate in the camp. In 2016 tribal legislators passed a bill to enable the Mvskoke language department to do business with the Oklahoma State Parks.

Announcements for the camp are sent by email. The department contacts all 47 JOM affiliate schools, MCN Public Relations, Facebook and Instagram to make sure that as many students as possible have the opportunity to sign up for the camp.

MCN Manager of the Language Program Judy Montiel (Mvskoke) said, “we start ordering things and planning things at least six months ahead of time, there is a lot of different avenues we have to do. Just to be able to see the student learning is all worth it.”

There are certain qualifications that need to be met during the application process. Applicants must provide a 200 word essay on “why the Mvskoke language is important” and they must be enrolled as a Muscogee (Creek) citizen between grades 7-12.

Unfortunately if students are 18 years old on the first day of camp they are not eligible to participate. However, the language department hopes to host a camp with older age groups in the future.

“We’ve got a couple that aged

out but we are hoping we can put together an adult camp that will include those that have aged out but still an opportunity to come and be part of the camp,” Montiel said.

During their time at camp students were provided three meals per day. There were rooms available for an overnight stay throughout the week at Sequoyah State Park and there were support staff that kept watch over students throughout the nights.

A camp nurse from the MCN Department of Health was present to do minor check ups and provide assistance in case of an emergency.

Day to Day Activities

The purpose of this camp is to help students connect with the Mvskoke culture and language.

Lessons were split into three groups with six language instructors.

“We had 25 students and six instructors, they all taught something just a little bit different,” Montiel said. “There are some that are veterans that had come previous years, that’s why we kind of split them up in different levels of learning, there’s some that’s not even heard the language.”

The veteran group consisted of 13 students that had previously attended the camp before. They were taught by MCN Language Instructors Phillip Harjo and Eli Rowland.

Group number one consisted of five students and was taught by MCN language instructors Gracine Hicks and Carolyn McNac.

Group number two had seven students that were taught by MCN Virtual Language Instructor Desiray Emerton and MCN lan-



2023 Mvskoke language immersion camp students pose for a group photo together. (Courtesy: Jordan Squire)

guage instructor Becky Barnett.

The various groups participated in different activities. Activities revolved around counting, colors, animals, clans, ceremonial items, Mvskoke stories and respect for the language.

Evening activities involved swimming, basketball, volleyball, cornhole and touring the scenery of the park with chaperoned golf cart rides.

This year Vicki Tate (Mvskoke) of the MCN Office of Child Care handled the crafts by showing students demonstrations of creating chokers, reed baskets, and molding medallions out of clay.

Each week there is a one hour demonstration from the ceremonial grounds and traditional church. After each demonstration, group members share a meal with their respective groups. Members of the traditional churches and ceremonial grounds are given a stipend for their services.

“Some of the kids that attend the camp may have never been to ceremonial ground and there is some that has never been to a church. We want to provide that opportunity for them,” Montiel said.

Before introducing the group to the church, Montiel is firm that church members be there for demonstration only. “We want to let them see and experience but we don’t want to be like an influence to these students without their parents’ consent.”

The Mvskoke Royalty were

invited to introduce themselves in the Mvskoke language and encourage students to pursue their goals. They shared what it meant to hold their respective titles as princesses.

This program was able to partner with the MCN Accessing Choices in Education program under education and training. They provided giveaways and prizes for students.

“We coordinated a lot of paperwork and found 90% of them to be eligible for their program. So that partnership was really valued by us and the parents that brought their kids,” Montiel said.

This is the second year of the post camp retreat, which lasts two to three days with a survey. This helps the staff know what the students’ biggest impressions were during their time at the camp and what their suggestions are for the future.

The students were gifted by the support staff and program staff with hygiene items, promotional beach towels, Nike sling packs, wristbands and camp t-shirts.

When the students attend the camps a gift card is provided between \$10 to \$125, depending if it fits within the camp budget.

“It’s given to the parents because of them being under 18, we have to provide it to the parents in the parents’ name then we also put out a letter of understanding that the parents sign that it’s intending to be used for the students,” Montiel said.

Future plans for the immersion camp are to bring in more elder speakers in order to inspire students to become more motivated to learn the Mvskoke language.

“The language is going away, we don’t have time, time is not on our side. So for me it is very rewarding that these kids came to learn something that’s ancient for one thing, it’s like a language from the beginning of time and for them to learn it and teach it. It’s rewarding to see all of the kids wanting to learn something from ancient times,” Barnett said.

According to Montiel, one of the instructors shared that the students were excited to learn more about the language, history and culture. Many students are looking forward to coming back next year.

“A lot of the students showed interest of wanting to retain that knowledge for years to come and found it pleasing to them, to be able to do that,” Montiel said.

There are programs that are provided to learn about the Mvskoke language for adults and for citizens that reside outside the jurisdiction boundaries. Some of the classes are in person, others are either online, or hybrid.

To learn more about the program, contact MCN Language Project Specialist Jordan Squire at 918-732-7725. Further information can also be found on their Facebook page.





The City of Tulsa is taking further legal action in the Hooper v. City of Tulsa case to clarify their role in enforcing laws on tribal land. (Shutterstock)

# TULSA SEEKS FURTHER CLARITY AFTER APPEALS COURT DECISION

G.T. BYNUM REQUESTS THE SUPREME COURT PASS DOWN JUDGMENT IN HOOPER V. TULSA

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

TVLSE, Okla. - Tulsa City Mayor G.T. Bynum made a Facebook post on June 30, which provided his support of a decision from the higher court in response to 10th Circuit Court of Appeals’ ruling in Hooper v. City of Tulsa on June 28.

The municipality had charged Choctaw citizen Justin Hooper with a speeding violation, costing him \$150 in 2018. After the U.S. Supreme Court’s McGirt Decision was ruled on in 2020, Hooper filed for postconviction relief. It was denied by the City of Tulsa Municipal Court using the Curtis Act as a basis of denial.

Hooper filed a motion to appeal his denial to the 10th Circuit Court. The 10th Circuit Judge Carolyn McHugh reversed the ruling of denial.

Now, Bynum claims that further verification should come from the United States Supreme Court.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation Press Secretary Jason Salsman told Mvskoke Media the Nation is disappointed about the pushback in the decision. “because we are equitable and capable partners,” Salsman said.

“We care about our relationship with the City of Tulsa,” Salsman continued. “We have worked hard to strengthen that relationship, but it must be fostered through mutual respect.”

## Bynum’s Response

In Bynum’s response to the 10th Circuit Court’s decision, he expressed his frustration with the law. Although the city is pursuing further legal action, Bynum clarified that he wants the U.S. Supreme Court to take a firm stance on what Tulsa’s place is in enforcing laws on tribal land.

Bynum released the following on his official Facebook page:

“Imagine something you assumed to be true for over 100 years turned out not to be the case. That’s what Tulsa has been dealing with since the U.S. Supreme Court informed us in the summer of 2020 that we reside in the Muscogee and Cherokee reservations.

This is a good thing. Tulsa would not exist if it weren’t for the Muscogee Creek Nation, and our culture as a city is defined by the three tribal nations that intersect in Downtown Tulsa. I am proud that we reside in the Cherokee, Creek, and Osage Nations.

But it is also a big change. Tulsa went from not knowing we were on a reservation at all to being the largest American city within a reservation. The McGirt decision brought into question many of the foundations of our systems of government. Criminal justice, land use regulations, taxation, and more - how are tribal and non-tribal citizens treated within these frameworks that we have historically relied upon to create stability within our community? Do one set of laws apply to you and a different set of laws apply to your neighbor?

When the Supreme Court issued their ruling, there was an implication that Congress would act to clean all of this up. Three years have gone by and Congress has failed to do anything. This has left the tribal nations, the State of Oklahoma, and the City of Tulsa to pursue clarity around these questions through the other mediator at our disposal: the courts.

Over the last few years, the City of Tulsa has been seeking clarity on a seemingly basic issue: do city ordinances apply to everyone in Tulsa? The City’s attorneys interpret federal law to say they do, and the federal district court agreed with them. Attorneys for a

tribal citizen disagree, and the federal court of appeals agreed with them. This leaves us one last venue to clear it up: the United States Supreme Court.

Today I have authorized our attorneys to request that the United States Supreme Court hear this case and give all parties clarity so we can move forward. As we have with their other rulings, we will honor whatever the courts decide. But we need to know what federal law allows.

At the same time, I think it is important that we move beyond this legal back and forth. It is bad for everyone involved for us to continue relying on litigation to clear up these issues. All of this will be cleared up over time, but the sooner it is the sooner we can all be working together. And I am confident that when the tribal nations, Oklahoma, and Tulsa are all working together no one can stop us.

To that end, we are already in contact with our overlapping tribal governments to establish operating practices that will guide the work of our governments moving forward. I do not subscribe to the opinions elevated by some that tribal nations want to make Tulsa a more dangerous place. Quite

the opposite. I have the highest respect for the governments of the Muscogee Creek, Cherokee, and Osage Nations. I am hopeful we can find common ground that best serves all Tulsans.

I respect the sovereignty of our tribal nations, as I respect the sovereignty of the United States of America and the State of Oklahoma. I want us to do the right thing here in Tulsa. That requires legal clarity and a desire to work together in the best interests of the people we serve. I am committed to both.”

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt also voiced his displeasure with the 10th Circuit’s decision in a video uploaded to his official Youtube Channel.

In the video, Governor Stitt states:

“There are some who believe that the rules that you follow should be based on your race or your heritage. Some believe your heritage should also determine the speed you drive on Oklahoma roads. If left unresolved by our nation’s highest court, this will have ripple effects across our state.”

Mvskoke Media will continue to monitor the appeal and provide updates on the case.



The Muscogee (Creek) Nation primary election will be held on September 16. (Jerrad Moore/MM)

# ELECTION BOARD RELEASES UNOFFICIAL 2023 MCN ELECTION RACES LIST

REGISTRATION IS NOW CLOSED FOR CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR OFFICE

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - On July 17-19 the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Election Board set up candidate filing in the Housing Building conference room. This is where citizens filed for office, including Principal Chief, Second Chief, and National Council Representative Seat A for all districts.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Election Office Facebook page released an unofficial roster. All candidates are unofficial pending a final review of candidate qualifications. The contestation period closed July 21. As of the time this article was printed on July 25, the official list had not yet been released.

Running for Principal Chief is current MCN Principal Chief David Hill, Tim Good Voice, Lahoma (Hicks) Shultz, and Joseph T. Rogers. Mr. Good Voice previously ran against Hill in the 2019 Principal Chief race, garnering 4.94% of the vote, which was not enough for him to proceed to the general election.

Second Chief candidates include current Second Chief Del Beaver and current National

Council Representative Sandra Golden. Golden is currently half way through her four year Okfuskee District Seat B term. If she wins the race a special election will have to be held to elect her successor.

Incumbent Joseph Hicks, who holds Creek District Seat A will face off against Leney Joe McNac Jr. and Dode Barnett. Barnett previously ran against Hicks in the 2019 election, where she garnered 29% of the vote. This was not enough to progress beyond the primary.

Judith Pickering will face incumbent Darrell Proctor in McIntosh District.

Current Speaker William Lowe, who holds Okmulgee District Seat A will see two challengers in his primary; James Jennings and Robyn Whitecloud. Jennings had previously held the Okmulgee Seat B. In the 2021 election he was defeated by Nelson Harjo Sr.

Uncontested districts include Muskogee with incumbent Mary Crawford, Okfuskee with incumbent Randall Hicks, Tulsa with incumbent Robert Hufft, Tukvpytce with incumbent Anna

Marshall, and Wagoner/Rogers/Mayes with incumbent Charles Son McHenry.

## Voter Registration

The primary election will be held on September 16 at designated precinct polling sites housed at each community center. There are a total of 18 sites. Early voting will be held September 13-14 at four community centers, including Okmulgee, Okemah, Eufaula and Tulsa.

Voters can update their profiles or register on the MCN Camphouse Portal.

Absentee ballots can be requested as well. Requests were mailed by the election office earlier in the year. Paid postage is due by August 23 for the primary election.

The total number of registered voters for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is 18,027 as of July 1. According to election data from 2019, only 5,092 voters participated in the general election from that year. Of that number, 3,438 resided within the Muscogee jurisdiction boundaries.



The National Council held an emergency session via teleconference. (MM File Photo)

## DISASTER ASSISTANCE FISCAL YEAR BUDGET APPROVED FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING

COUNCIL APPROVES AN ADDITIONAL \$650,000 FOR DISASTER SERVICES

by **SHAYLN PROCTOR**  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council held an Emergency session via teleconference on July 7.

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

NCA 23-067 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Amending MCNA title 35, Chapter 7, entitled “disaster act” and appropriating additional funding for fiscal

year 2023. Representative Randall Hicks sponsored the bill. It was co-sponsored by Speaker William Lowe and was adopted 13-0.

The bill is appropriating \$650,000 for disaster assistance. The National Council will authorize the Principal Chief or their designee to disburse this amount to the Disaster Assistance Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

The funds that are not used will be returned to the tribal treasury and will be used for future funding by the national council.

To view the full meeting, visit: mcnncc.com.





MCN CONSERVATION DISTRICT USES GRANT FUNDS TO PROMOTE AQUAPONICS

THE AQUAPONICS TRAINING PROVIDED EDUCATION AND HANDS-ON TRAINING

by MORGAN TAYLOR  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

MORRIS, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Conservation District hosted a two-day aquaponics training event at the Morris Indian Community Center July 20-21.

Symbiotic Aquaponics, LLC CEO Kaben Smallwood (Choctaw) provided the training with a presentation on the first day and hands-on training the following day.

Smallwood’s presentation included the basic information in addition to sharing his knowledge and skill with participants including maneuvers to capitalize upon aquaponic farming.

Citizens may utilize an array of funding sources including USDA, FSA, or the Mvskoke Fund for ag-business start ups. Landowners may have the potential to capitalize in various ways.

Using Native American Agricultural Funds as a resource, MCN Conservation is seeking ways to promote this type of industry to

Native Americans and promote food sovereignty.

Smallwood’s passion for aquaponics is something he hopes tribal members will adopt as a way to practice sovereignty in the food industry.

“If you can’t feed yourself, you don’t have sovereignty,” Smallwood said.

He believes the tribes should redirect the focus on services to their citizens in the long-term view. Simple diet changes could save millions in healthcare costs in the future.

“One ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, “ Smallwood said.

He claims to see the health disparities by using food as another way to destroy tribes.

“We have always had to take what we have been given,” Smallwood said. “Now that tribes are in the position to do better, they should.”

The MIC houses an aquaponic grow system behind the building in a small barn.

The group followed Small-

wood to the barn where he could show the participants all the needed components and how they work together to create a clean, environmentally safe garden.

There are several pieces to the system that can be purchased using start-up grants and business funds. A part of Smallwoods’ business is setting these systems up for those who purchase equipment from him.

On the website, the smallest unit starts at around \$2,600 and goes up from there, depending on the desired size of the garden.

Once the setup is complete, Smallwood claims the labor is minimal, however oversight is important.

“The industry needs skilled and knowledgeable workers,” Smallwood said of the aquaponics and agricultural industry.

Even with loans, most businesses default within two to three years, Smallwood estimated.

It is with these trainings that education can be provided to capitalize on opportunities by using natural abilities and land ownership or even obtainment, accord-

ing to Smallwood.

Nutrient-based growing

Aquaponics is defined as the agricultural practice of growing plants and fish in a closed, recirculating system, according to Smallwood.

Smallwood calls it a microbiological process using the combination of both hydroponic and aquaculture methods that fosters the relationship between plants and fish.

Hydroponics is growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid where the plants pull the needed nutrients from water that may be treated.

The treated water is in many cases considered toxic to animals and humans after it has cycled through the system, producing toxic wastewater.

Aquaculture is the rearing of aquatic animals or the cultivation of aquatic plants for food. This method of farming is used to raise and harvest water species using large tanks, confined pools and segregated bodies of water.

Without proper management,

this type of farming can be damaging to the environment. It has also been known to become a toxic pool for the fish without adequate mitigation or removal.

In a thriving aquaponic system, sterilization is a natural process where the fish release ammonia that is converted into nitrates, then watered to the plants. The water from the plants is then collected in a large basin, before going back into the fish tank using a pump to distribute water.

Smallwood claims soil is not a necessary component for plant growth. In traditional agriculture using soil, more water is used and very little of it gets to the plants due to runoff, evaporation and soil absorption.

Ultimately, aquaponics is a natural and better combination of aquaculture and hydroponics that uses a recirculating water system to raise and harvest all natural plants and fish in a symbiotic environment.

For more information call the MCN Conservation at 918-549-2609, or visit <https://www.symbioticaquaponic.com/>.



The MCN Conservation district houses the aquaponic gardening system at Morris Indian Community Center. July 20, 2023. Morris, Okla. (Morgan Taylor/MM)

NEW SECRETARY OF COMMERCE POSITION APPROVED FOR FULL COUNCIL

MCN OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT REQUESTED ADDITIONAL \$75K FOR FY 2023

by SHAYLN PROCTOR  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council held a Business, Finance and Justice committee meeting on July 20.

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

TR 23-071 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation confirming the nomination of Zechariah Harjo to serve as the Secretary of the Nation for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Representative Thomasene Yahola Osborn sponsored this legislation, which passed 3-0. This will be presented to the full council at the Regular Session.

Zechariah Harjo will serve as the secretary of the nation for the MCN through the beginning of his term upon confirmation and ending concurrent with the term of the current Principal Chief. MCN will authorize the nomination of the Secretary of the Nation through the Principal Chief, then confirmed by the National Council.

NCA 23-038 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation to amend article VI, section 2; and subsection (A) of the Constitution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation by deleting both at-large voting and at-large representations, and replacing it with eligible registered district voting (resident and absentee) and district representation pertaining to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council. Speaker William Lowe sponsored this legislation, which was postponed indefinitely 3-0.

According to the bill, citizens are requested to make an

amendment to the constitution which will eliminate at-large voting and return to district voting for National Council representatives. Eligible voters (resident and absentee) would only be able to vote for candidates in their district.

NCA 23-069 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing a supplemental appropriation to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation office of child support enforcement for fiscal year 2023. Representative Randall Hicks sponsored this legislation, which was passed 3-0. This will be presented to the full council at the Regular Session.

MCN Office of Child Support Enforcement (CSE) is requesting \$75,000 for the fiscal year 2023 to continue providing child support services within the Nation. The funds will be used to cover operational costs, purchase updated equipment, as well as strengthen the existing secure network.

NCA 23-070 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending MCNCA title 16, chapter 8 entitled “Office of the Secretary of the Nation and Commerce” and creating a new chapter 11 entitled, “Secretary of Commerce”. Rep. Osborn sponsored this legislation, which passed 3-0. This will be presented to the full council at the Regular Session.

The Secretary of the Nation is appointed by the Principal Chief with confirmation by the National Council. The Secretary of the Nation will be a cabinet-level position and appointed office of the MCN. There are qualifications that will need to be met for this position.

NCA 23-046 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation

establishing a new title 16, chapter 4, entitled “culture and humanities department and appropriating funds”. Representative Galen Cloud, along with co-sponsors Representatives Leonard Gouge and Joseph Hicks sponsored this legislation, which passed 3-0. This will be presented to the full council at the Regular Session.

This funding source was approved.

NCA 23-047 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation appropriating funds to create the Mvskoke Language Liaison Program. Rep. Cloud, along with co-sponsors Rep. Gouge and Joseph Hicks sponsored this legislation, which passed 3-0. This will be presented to the full council at the Regular Session.

This funding source was approved.

NCA 23-068 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing a donation to the Holdenville Fire Department. Representative Anna Marshall sponsored this legislation,

which passed 3-0. This will be presented to the full council at the Regular Session.

This funding source was approved.

To view the full meeting, visit [mcnnc.com](http://mcnnc.com).



# COUNCIL COVERAGE

## BFJ

BUSINESS, FINANCE & JUSTICE

The National Council held a Business, Finance and Justice Committee Session via teleconference and in person. (MM File)



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**MUSCOGEE(CREEK)NATION  
ELECTION BOARD**

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

# Important Dates

**Absentee Ballot  
Mail Out Starting  
August 17th, 2023**

**Absentee  
Registration & Ballot  
Requesting  
Deadline  
August 23rd, 2023  
@ 5PM**

**In-Person Voting  
Registration Deadline  
September 5th, 2023  
@ 5PM**

**Primary Election**  
September 16th, 2023 7:00A.M-7:00P.M

**Early Voting for Primary Election**  
September 13th & 14th, 2023 7:00A.M-7:00P.M (each day)

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

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

For more information please look at our  
website

<https://www.muscogeenation.com/election-board/>

## IN MEMORIAM

### PATSY ANN BOHANNON



Patsy was an executive assistant for several companies over the years. She retired from her final career as a casting director for the South Florida film industry. Up until she retired, she was very passionate about the local film industry and the talent in it. She put all of her energy into making sure people that worked in the industry were successful.

Patsy is survived by her husband Michael Bohannon, Sr. and children Michael Jr. and Nicola Bohannon, of Lake Worth, FL; Dorothy Mazell of Summerville, SC; Dennis Hicks of Summerville, SC and Deryl and Donald Hicks (both deceased). She also is survived by eleven grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

A private service will be with family only. In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting that donations be made out to the Salvation Army. Anyone wishing to send the family a message or share a story is asked to visit Patsy's memorial page at <http://davisseawinds.com>.

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**IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

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) Case No. GD-2023-16  
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DISTRICT COURT  
FILED  
2023 JUL 11 A 10:36  
MUSKOGEE CREEK NATION  
CYNTHIA FREEMAN  
COURT CLERK

## ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING ON PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL GUARDIAN

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** to all persons interested in the person or property of Lorena Shaye Avey, that there has been filed in the District Court of the Muscogee Creek Nation a Petition praying for the appointment of Juanita L. Coonhead as Temporary Emergency and General Guardian of the Person and Estate of Lorena Shaye Avey.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that the 20 day of August, 2023, at the hour of 10:00 o'clock 10.m., has been designated as the time for hearing said Petition before the Judge of the District Court, Muskogee Creek Nation District Courthouse, 2501 Lvmhvlke, Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447, when and where all persons interested in Lorena Shaye Avey may appear and contest the same.

Dated this 11 day of July, 2023.

## JUDGE OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

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