



OCTOBER 15, 2023 | “OTOWOSKVRAAKO” BIG CHESTNUT MONTH | VOL. 53, ISSUE 20

# MVSKOKE NEWS

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## FREEDMEN WIN IN DISTRICT COURT

JUDGE MOUSER REMANDS THE DECISION BACK TO MCN CITIZENSHIP OFFICE

by **JERRAD MOORE**  
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - Rhonda Grayson and Jeffery Kennedy have won their case in Muscogee Creek Nation District Court. They filed suit seeking to have their applications for citizenship evaluated based on the 1866 treaty. After a trial that resulted in the MCN Attorney General Geri Wisner being sanctioned, Judge Denette Mouser issued her decision remanding Grayson and Kennedy's citizenship claims back to the MCN Citizenship Board.

### District Court's Opinion

According to the opinion, "The Nation cannot choose to select and rely on portions of the Treaty to which it points as evidence of the tribe's intact reservation, and also negate the clear language entitling descendants of a segment of the Dawes Final Roll - the Creek Freedmen - from eligibility for citizenship. There simply is no legal avenue for configuring a check-



Damario Solomon-Simmons has represented Rhonda Grayson and Jeffery Kennedy in tribal court in the latest freedmen suit. (MM File)

board of validity where parts of the Treaty are intact and other parts are invalid. Either the Treaty in its entirety is binding or none of it is. The Nation has urged in McGirt- and the U.S. Supreme Court agreed - that the Treaty is in fact intact and binding upon both the Nation and the United States, having never been abrogated in full or in part by Con-

gress. To now assert that Article II of the Treaty does not apply to the Nation would be disingenuous. As such, this Court as well as the divisions and agencies of the Nation must adhere to the language found in the Treaty of 1866, including the language directing the Nation to embrace as citizens the African Creeks listed on the Creek Freedmen Roll and their lineal descen-

dants. The Court finds that the actions of the Board in denying Plaintiffs' citizenship applications and appeals were contrary to law, specifically the Treaty of 1866 and its required inclusion of the Creek Freedmen and their lineal descendants within the citizenship of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation." Judge Mouser has ordered that Grayson and Kennedy's cit-

izenship denial be reversed and remanded the case back to the MCN Citizenship Board for reconsideration in light of Article Two of the Treaty of 1866 and the Creek Freedmen Roll.

### MCN AG's Response

Mvskoke Media received the following statement from the MCN AG, "We respect the authority of our court but strongly disagree with Judge Mouser's deeply flawed reasoning in this matter. We will immediately be appealing this case to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Supreme Court. The MCN Constitution, which we are duty-bound to follow, makes no provisions for citizenship for non-Creek individuals. We look forward to addressing this matter before our Nation's highest court." The MCN Supreme Court has issued a stay of enforcement of the MCN District Court's recent ruling in the Freedmen case. Mvskoke Media will have ongoing coverage of this developing story.

## INDIGENOUS METEOROLOGIST ANNOUNCED AS CHIEF AT KTUL NEWS CHANNEL 8

DR. CHRISTOPHER NUNLEY WILL NOW PROVIDE WEATHER FORECASTS FOR NE OKLAHOMA



Dr. Christopher Nunley was recently announced as KTUL News Channel 8's new chief meteorologist. (Courtesy: Chris Nunley)

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
MANAGING EDITOR

TVLSE, Okla. - When a television viewer flips on their monitor to catch a nightly news broadcast, it is unlikely they are to find a meteorologist who has a Ph.D, or has Indigenous heritage for that matter. Dr. Christopher Nunley happens to have both. It was recently announced that Dr. Nunley will take over as chief meteorologist at KTUL News Channel 8 in the Tulsa area. Dr. Nunley replaced Dan Threlkeld, who had spent decades working in the field and in the Tulsa market. Dr. Nunley is an Oklahoma native with Choctaw heritage. Growing up, he attended powwows and actively participated in his culture. He credits his grandmother, and great-grandmother for instilling a sense of high importance in learning and passing down their family's culture. When it was announced that he would have the opportunity to return to his roots in Oklahoma, he was ecstatic to be closer to family. "It was really surreal to receive

that phone call," Dr. Nunley said. "To this day it does not feel real." Like any other kid that grew up in the Sooner State, Dr. Nunley had first-hand experience living in an area that saw different severe weather events year round. This would lead him to develop a fascination with natural weather phenomena, eventually leading to a career in meteorology. "I think growing up in Oklahoma, seeing all the different types of high-impact weather and just the variety of it around the state intrigued me and it made me curious why certain things happen," Dr. Nunley said. One distinct local severe weather event that Dr. Nunley recalled was the 1999 Moore tornado. During that weather event the city of Moore saw an EF5 tornado rip through the area, leaving behind a 17 mile-long trail of destruction. Dr. Nunley also recalled 2007's Tropical Storm Erin, a severe weather event that extended into

**DR. NUNLEY**  
*Continued on Page 2*

## A HINT OF BEAUTY WITH SOME SNAGS

INDIGENOUS BUSINESS OWNER JASMINE BEAR SHARES ABOUT BEARSHAW BEAUTY AND A NEW SOCIAL MEDIA APP  
by **SHAYLN PROCTOR**  
REPORTER

TULSA, Okla.- Jasmine Bear (Osage/Mvskoke/Cherokee/Choctaw/Seminole) is an Indigenous business owner, and the founder of Bearshaw Beauty. She has been running the business for over a year now. Her inspiration for starting it was to provide more natural beauty product options for customers. Bearshaw Beauty is a family affair. Bear receives assistance with the business from her sisters, Honey Bear and Brit Bear. The latter makes Cherokee baskets. Jasmine Bear is very appreciative of her sisters, and their help with her business. Bear's sisters both have extensive knowledge on the products Bearshaw Beauty offers. The products Bearshaw Beauty sells are gender neutral and are made for any skin type. "It's more of a natural option instead of European products that have a lot of ingredients, so I wanted something more simple that your body will love," Bear said. She takes great care when handling products and the containers for them, she wants them to be safe for anyone to use. Bear never went through cosmetology school for skin care, however she has done extensive research to learn about the different ingredients she uses. This is to ensure they are safe. She simply wants the best fit for her customers. "I enjoy it and it's kind of like baking but with shea butter instead of real butter," Bear said.



Jasmine Bear stands with her sister, Honey Bear at their booth. (Photo Courtesy: Jasmine Bear)

When looking for raw material, she uses ingredients like shea butter, which is imported from Ghana. She also uses cacao butter imported from Peru. Bear loves to include grape seed oil or apricot oil because it is lighter than coconut oil. Bear's most popular product so far is her honeysuckle lip balm. She mentioned that the reason for its popularity is because honeysuckle is a hard flavor to find. "It's only four ingredients in the lip balms so your lips don't get addicted to it and it's all natural so people seem to really like that one a lot," Bear said. **Natural and Local** Bear believes skin care is very important. "Because the skin is the biggest organ you have, I think it's important to stay hydrated and take care of it," Bear said. Bear's products are currently sold at Southwest Trading company in Tulsa. Bear has also received requests from

other Indigenous stores in Oklahoma interested in featuring her products. Bear has set up her booth at various locations and events. This has helped with sales because it allows people to test the product for themselves. Her next stop is Tulsa for Native American Day. "When I debuted my business last year, I had really great feedback and it was a really good turnout. I made a ton of sales and debuted a lot of my products," Bear said. "I am really good with booth set ups because I used to do promo five years ago and so I'm used to setting up that booth, I'm glad I have that experience to apply to now." On top of receiving positive feedback from the community, the venture has experienced growth. "It has been growing to a point where I do need more space for all of my ingredients and materials. There's a lot that I need and I need a lot

**BEARSHAW BEAUTY**  
*Continued on Page 2*



DR. NUNLEY

Continued from Page 1

parts of Texas and even Oklahoma. That storm made landfall near Corpus Christi, made its way across the western Texas plains, eventually finding its way through central Oklahoma.

Standard severe weather events like these, and unusual anomalies drove Dr. Nunley to learn as much as he could about the science of meteorology. This would lead him to study meteorology as an undergraduate student at the University of Oklahoma. Later he pursued graduate studies at the University of Mississippi, eventually earning a Ph.D. in Earth Science and Atmospheric Sciences. On top of receiving the highest academic achievement possible, Dr. Nunley is also a first-generation college graduate.

“I really wanted to do it for my family and my culture,” Dr. Nunley said. “Some of my ancestors on my dad’s side did not have the opportunity to go to college, much less get a graduate degree. I just wanted to make my ancestors and my family proud.”

As an Indigenous meteorologist and television talent, it is not a

role Dr. Nunley takes for granted. It is a position very few Indigenous people have fulfilled. Dr. Nunley shared that he hopes to increase visibility and representation for the Choctaw people, and more broadly Indigenous communities across Green Country through storytelling.

“The magnitude makes me feel emotional thinking about it,” Dr. Nunley said. “In this industry minorities, whether Indigenous, black, LGBTQ or female, I feel like there is a lack of representation. I think that it’s gotten better, but I still think there’s a lot to do on the Indigenous side. I do feel like our population is underserved and I hope I can make an impact.”

For Native Americans that live far away from their tribes and families, it can be easy to feel a sense of disconnection from their culture. Dr. Nunley shared that he is excited to be back with his family, and his tribe. Particularly he is looking forward to attending one of the largest powwows hosted by Choctaw Nation in November.

Northeastern Oklahoma television viewers can catch Dr. Nunley for evening weekend forecasts on News Channel 8.

BEARSHAW BEAUTY

Continued from Page 1

of working space,” Bear said.

Before the end of the year, Bear intends to come out with a new recipe for hair, body oil and lotion. She has even ordered biodegradable lotion bottles for the new products. While making her lotion, she understands it involves a lot of trial and error because it is her first time including water as an ingredient, which includes a preservative.

According to Bear, it can be challenging for first-time business owners trying to build a company from the ground up. However, in spite of the challenges she believes it is a venture everyone is capable of doing.

“Be sure to take care of yourself, starting your business is very exciting when new ideas are flowing, but beware of overworking yourself,” Bear said. “Remember to step away, maybe take in some sun, because self care and mental health is very important.”

The word about Bearshaw Beauty’s brand has spread. Some of Bear’s customers are even using her products as gifts for family members. The venture that first started out as a hobby has now grown into another career for Bear.

Bear has always been into skincare and makeup. “I think I started in the sixth grade, well I have three older sisters so they showed me things really young on how to do eye-shadow and trying out new styles,” Bear said.

Growing up Bear never saw Indigenous-made beauty products on the shelf at the store. “I can’t bead and can’t do ribbon work but beauty products I started making. The feedback that I received was like, ‘it’s so nice that there is a natural beauty product that is Indig-



Jasmine’s Bear products are Indigenous made, and feature natural ingredients. (Photo Courtesy: Jasmine Bear)

enous owned and operated,” Bear said.

Bear wants to open her own local shop, and eventually branch out to different locations. She is also looking to expand the brand’s name to “Bearshaw Beauty Boutique”, in order to include a wider range of products including shampoos, conditioners, and bath bombs.

about it among local Indigenous communities.

Bear has come across other dating apps, but has never seen one for Indigenous people, she wanted to be the person to create it.

Dating apps for adults are not the only mobile device service Bear is interested in providing for her fellow Indigenous people. She also wants to develop an app for children where they can identify their tribe, and connect with other children from different tribes. This could help children learn more about other tribes, and help contribute information on the app.

“They don’t put it in schools so all of the kids are on their tablets and phones so I feel like it’ll be easier to download. I don’t want to make money off of that so it’ll just be free,” Bear said.

For more information about Bearshaw Beauty’s products, visit them at bearshawbeauty.com. For those interested in her app, a link to download it can be found on thesnagapp.com.

Snag Dating App

In addition to selling natural beauty products, Bear has also recently launched a new dating and social media app called Snag. The new app is available on Apple and Android devices and contains a feature called Native Network. According to Bear, the feature is similar to Facebook.

The app’s other component provides a matchmaking feature called snag. This functions as a dating feature that can connect users with other Indigenous users. According to Bear, she has not seen a lot of activity within the dating feature yet, however she is seeking ways to spread the word

EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS JOY HARJO

IN JOY OF READING EVENT

ACE PROGRAM ENHANCES STUDENT AND FAMILY EDUCATIONAL CHOICES



The Joy of Reading event featured former U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo. (Courtesy: MCN Communications)

GLENPOOL, Okla. - The former thrice-named U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo partnered with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Education Accessing Educational Choices Program to host a reading event on Sept. 21 at the Glenpool Conference Center.

Harjo read her newest book,

“Remember”. The book invites young readers to pause and reflect on the wonder of the world around them, and to remember the importance of their place in it.

Harjo was assisted by Miss Muscogee Nation Chenoa Barnett, who showed the pictures in the book to the students more closely.

The first 200 eligible students

by MORGAN TAYLOR  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

received lunch and a book bundle including “Remember” and Harjo’s memoir.

The “Joy of Reading” event was a part of the Indigenous Readers Sessions. In these sessions students read stories aloud with an author or a narrator. At the end of the session they are given book bundles to foster literacy.

Story topics focus on enhancing student’s understanding of the value of family, communities, Native culture, determination, and resiliency.

Replays of the reading are available for students who missed the event on the ACE website. Students and parents can find next year’s scheduled cultural and educational events on the ACE website as well. The program offers events for all ages Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade.

Family Fun Night

The following week after the Joy of Reading event, ACE staff

hosted a Family Fun Night at Incredible Pizza on Sept. 28 in Tulsa, Okla.

Attending family members were given a game card with a free buffet dinner.

On Nov. 1, applications will be available for a one-time \$500 reimbursement that students can use to purchase education materials that will benefit their academic success. The application will be available on the ACE website. On the site parents and students can access the ACE catalog and view upcoming events.

Resources for all ages pre-kindergarten to high school seniors are available through this pro-

gram.

Family fun, ACT prep, concurrent enrollment fees, cultural labs, and Indigenous reader modules are just some of the educational activities offered by ACE.

The ACE Program mission is to enhance student and family educational choices by creating a Service Provider System that includes evidence-based, culturally-responsive service options to improve Native American student academic outcomes, according to the ACE website.

For more information visit <https://mcnaceservices.com/ace-program/>.

THE MVSKOKENEWS

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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).



# OK'S 18TH SUPERFUND SITE ADJACENT TO MVSKOKE RESERVATION IN MUSKOGEE

RADIOACTIVE SITE SITS ON THE ARKANSAS RIVER IN CHEROKEE NATION



Acidic waste ponds at Fansteel/FMRI are situated near the Arkansas River. (Courtesy: Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality)

by MEREDITH JOHNSON  
REPORTER

MVSKOKE RESERVATION - On Sept. 6, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a new Superfund site in Oklahoma. Superfund sites are polluted areas that are deemed a risk to human health and require long-term efforts at cleanup, monitoring and remediation. The listing is the 18th Superfund site within the state of Oklahoma.

In March of 2023, the EPA proposed adding Fansteel Metals/FMRI to the National Priorities List. According to a statement from Regional Administrator Dr. Eartha Nance, those who live near the Superfund sites should not have to worry about it.

“The EPA remains committed to ensuring the safety and health of citizens who live near these Superfund sites,” Dr. Nance said. “By adding the Fansteel Metals site to the NPL, we are enforcing environmental justice and taking action to remove a threat

that impacts the environment and public health.”

The site, formerly Fansteel Metals/FMRI, is located north of Oklahoma Highway 62 near the Arkansas river in Muskogee. The site sits within the boundaries of the Cherokee Reservation and is adjacent to the Mvskoke Reservation.

Fansteel Metals/FMRI was in operation between 1957-1989 and produced tantalum and columbium metals from uranium ore. Both metals are used in technology and electronics. The operation produced radioactive residues which were deposited onsite in waste ponds.

The site had not been maintained nor cleaned since the company filed for bankruptcy in 2002, prompting an emergency response action from the EPA in 2018.

While the EPA has reliable data on hazardous sites, identifying those in Indian Country can be difficult due to the nuances in ownership and land use, accord-

ing to the Tribal Lands Assistance Center. However, the Fansteel/FMRI site had been on the state and federal radar for years.

Before closing operations in 1989, Fansteel/FMRI had operated since 1967 with a license under the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission due to the high concentrations of uranium produced at the site. After a 2002 bankruptcy filing, a note in the amount of \$30 million was provided to fund decommissioning the site in three phases.

When the EPA completed an emergency response action in 2018 and an expanded site investigation in 2019, phase one of the clean-up process had not been completed. The action removed toxic chemicals from the site and established that the groundwater near the facility was contaminated with metals and radioactive material.

### Just Over the Fence

Of the 18 Superfund sites in Oklahoma, half are in eastern Oklahoma. Of those nine sites, three are within the Mvskoke Reservation. These include Henryetta Oil and Metal in Henryetta, and Wilcox Petroleum Co in Bristow.

Director of MCN Environmental Services James Williams explained that although the site is in the jurisdiction of Cherokee Nation, the site cleanup is still in the best interest of Mvskoke people. MCN has been involved in public meetings over the site and kept informed on the EPA's process because of the site's proximity.

MCN Environmental Services routinely works with the EPA in consultation and collaboration. “We have an open door policy with them and they're good at assisting us and we're good at assisting them,” Williams stated.

The Fansteel/FMRI site sits as Williams says, “on our neighbor's side.” He explained the importance of communication between tribal and federal governments. “This is our backyard, that's what we call our reservation boundaries, and we like to keep an eye on the neighbors... And we're also looking down the road for the next seven generations, looking for their future too,” Williams said.

For more information about Oklahoma's Superfund sites go to: [Cleaning Up Oklahoma](#).



An entrance to the Fansteel/FMRI site was boarded up but still accessible until 2019. (Courtesy: Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality)

### HELP US SALUTE OUR MUSCOGEE VETERANS

Please email the following to [info@mvskokemedia.com](mailto:info@mvskokemedia.com)

- Name
- Branch
- Years Served
- 150 word bio
- 1 High Resolution Photo

All of the information is due on **OCTOBER 20TH NO LATER THAN 5 P.M.**

to be placed in our Special Veterans Edition on November 1.

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# VETERANS PACT EVENT HELD AT MVSKOKE DOME

## VETERANS RECEIVED HEALTH SCREENS, AND FILED CLAIMS

by MEREDITH JOHNSON  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- On Friday, Sept 22 the Muskogee (Creek) Nation hosted an event for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at the Mvskoke Dome. The event was part of the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act (PACT) that expanded veterans' healthcare and benefits.

The PACT act expansion was the largest in VA history, and specifically addressed the comprehensive damage caused by exposure to burn pits, Agent Orange, or other toxins while in the military.

During the event veterans were able to speak to representatives about claims and VA benefits one on one, and receive VHA toxic health screens. Screenings included questions about possible exposures and information about registry exams. Screenings can take anywhere from five-30 minutes.

Medical examinations were also available in a mobile medical unit. Services the unit offers are numerous and include basic X-rays, lab draws, EKGs, pulmonary function tests, dental exams and audiology screenings. These tests and services are then sent to the VA so that veterans can access them, as they would from their primary doctor. Processing time varies, but the unit's turn around time can be as soon as the next day for radiology, labs can take up to 72 hours.

Mary Culley (Seminole/Creek), Regional Specialist with the VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations, stressed the importance of female veterans getting their toxin screening and stated,

“We're finding a lot of our Indian women when we go through the toxic screens, because you don't think about it, because it's just been a part of your daily life in the military, that they may



Mary Culley is a regional specialist with the Veteran Affairs Office of Tribal Government Relations. (Courtesy: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs)

have been exposed to bomb blasts. And that could be now what's causing migraines, what's causing aneurysms in the back of the head, not knowing where they got that from, so that's coming up as part of the toxic screens when we come across females that had been exposed in some of those deployment areas.”

Culley also encouraged widows to apply for benefits, and emphasized the comprehensive expansion of the PACT act.

“It is important is for our widows to understand this also benefits them... even though their spouse passed away, say it's Vietnam Vet and they may have been exposed to Agent Orange, just because back then their claim may have been denied because it may not have been an approved health-related issues for that toxin, it could be now, because there's 20 new additional health disparities associated with all these different toxins. And we've been finding widows and getting their widows compensation approved.” Culley said.

The event also offered other services in addition to the health screenings. Veterans could get their VA ID cards, connect with combat counseling services, and speak to representatives with the

Social Security and Disability Administration. Also at the event were representatives from Veterans Upward Bound, an organization that helps veterans with college applications, funding, and support.

For any veteran or widow who

missed the PACT event at the Mvskoke Dome, there are future events scheduled across eastern Oklahoma listed below.

**Nov 7**  
McAlaster, OK  
Hosted by the Choctaw Nation

For more information about PACT Act events, VA disability claims, or the mobile medical unit, contact Mary Culley at [mary.culley@va.gov](mailto:mary.culley@va.gov) or at 405-626-3426.

For a guide to the PACT Act and VA benefits go to: [PACT Act and Your Benefits](#).

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# MVSKOKE RIDERS PARTICIPATED IN A TRAIL OF TEARS COMMEMORATIVE RIDE

THE 30TH ANNUAL MOTORCYCLE RIDE BROUGHT TOGETHER VARIOUS TRIBAL GROUPS



The motorcycle riders ended their trip to commemorate the Trail of Tears at the College of Muscogee Nation in Okmulgee, Okla. (Courtesy: Mvskoke Riders)

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Mvskoke Riders led a pack of motorcycle riders from various tribes as they pulled into the College of Muscogee Nation after traveling along the 30th Annual Trail of Tears Commemorative Motorcycle Ride on September 18.

Over tens of thousands of motorcycle riders consisting of multiple tribal-affiliated biker groups traveled to Bridgeport, AL to pay tribute to those who walked the trail by riding the official route in remembrance of the tragic period.

The Trail of Tears was a route taken during the forced removal of tribes including the Muscogee, Cherokee, Seminole, Chickasaw and Choctaw people. They were forced to march through multiple states including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, and Tennessee. At the end of the tragic route they arrived in Indian Terri-

tory, now present-day Oklahoma.

People of various tribes from the Creek Confederacy endured an 800-mile journey, with an additional 400 miles through waters over a period of three to four months in harsh winter conditions.

MCN Veterans Affairs Director Grover Wind rode alongside his comrades in the Mvskoke Riders group.

“It’s an honor for us to be able to participate on the part of the trail our ancestors walked on,” Wind said. “We are looking forward to representing the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.”

Wind said they are fortunate to be much more comfortable during their ride than walking, but affirmed the event was to honor their ancestors, and not for reenactment purposes.

CMN welcomed the riders for dinner as they ended their journey in Okmulgee.

For more information follow the MCN VASO on Facebook.

# MCN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SETS SIGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE

## SECRETARY OF HEALTH SHAWN TERRY DISCUSSES NEW DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN DEPARTMENT

by **MORGAN TAYLOR**  
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Health Secretary of Health Shawn Terry provided updates on the Nation’s health system on a recent episode of Mvskoke Radio.

According to Secretary Terry, the Nation is making great strides toward becoming the leading healthcare provider on the reservation by combating infectious diseases, expanding services, and building infrastructure.

Council Oak Comprehensive Care Center has started providing surgical procedures.

According to Terry, as of the second week of October, the center is the first tribal health center in the country to host a robotic surgical program.

“Dr. Michael Wright will be the first operating surgeon on the Da Vinci Robot,” Terry said.

When it comes to surgical outcomes, Terry claims there is no comparison between robotic technology usage versus older traditional methods.

The robot is operated by a surgeon, and is highly sensitive to different variables. This includes the practicing surgeon’s body temperature, breathing patterns, and heart rate. Even if a sudden cough or accidental nudge is sensed, the robot will react by halting operations to prevent a potentially life-threatening injury.

Patients’ families can now stay at one of the 50 rooms at Council Oak hotel as their loved ones undergo surgical procedures or experience prolonged inpatient stays.

“There is a nominal price of \$70 per hotel,” Terry said, “but we have a way that if someone can’t economically do that, we will find

a method to get them a room.”

As flu season emerges, the health department is hosting vaccination drives throughout the reservation where participants can get multiple seasonal vaccinations like the flu vaccination and the most up-to-date COVID-19 vaccine.

“The new vaccine that’s out now is supposed to be manufactured specifically for these newer strands of COVID-19,” Terry said.

### Cold and Flu Season

With a recent uptick in positive Covid cases, Terry reports that it is not at any fatal or critical level that the tribe has experienced in the past.

According to Terry, recent cases have reached a level of 18%, along with the resurgence of influenza.

“We don’t see the vast numbers that we did back during the pandemic,” Terry said.

After receiving its first settlement in the opioid litigation last month, the health department is in the planning stages of construction for its first substance abuse center. The new facility will be located in Muskogee.

The center will be equipped with a wing dedicated to detox program services for patients experiencing alcohol and drug withdrawal symptoms.

Along with the short-term inpatient service, Terry claims that patients will be able to seek other outpatient substance abuse treatment plans including therapy, group sessions, pain management and mental health diagnoses.

“It will be a fairly comprehensive hospital for anything affection

related,” Terry said.

Eventually, Terry seeks to host a program that will provide 30-day treatment plans for men and women.

“We are excited to have something culturally sensitive to our people, done by our people,” Terry said.

He hopes to start with outpatient services within the next few months.

Updates to existing facilities will further meet the needs of the service areas they reside in.

The Sapulpa clinic is set to undergo an expansion project, upgrading the 17,000 square foot facility to a 50,000 square foot one. The final design plans are set to be finished by the end of this year.

The Okmulgee Hospital Emergency Room will be undergoing a complete remodel and renovation. The new space will resemble the emergency room at the Okemah location, with an adequate waiting room with multiple individual triage rooms and ample patient treatment rooms.

Pharmacy services will expand as a new pharmaceutical distribution center is built in Tulsa that will help fill the current prescription mail-out list of 3,000.

Terry plans to implement optometry and dental clinical services in all Muscogee (Creek) Nation clinics and increase services offered.

“We are working with our dental direct to spend some money and energy trying to get our dental at the same level of commitments we’ve made on the medical side,” Terry said.

To find the nearest MCN clinic near you, visit: <https://www.creekhealth.org/clinics/>.

# REMEMBRANCE WALK HONORS THE PAST AND COMMEMORATES FORMER STUDENTS

CLAUDIA MCHENRY HOSTS REMEMBRANCE WALK TO HONOR INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVORS

by **SHAYLN PROCTOR**  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Remembrance Walk held at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Complex is about honoring Indian board school survivors and their families. At this event citizens were able to bring pictures of their family members who had been affected by these boarding schools and take them on the walk. The event was held on the south side of the Mound Building on Sep. 29.

Former Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation Claudia McHenry (Mvskoke) hosted the event. She started this project back in April of 2022 when she held the princess title. “It was just to honor those that had to go through the adversities of boarding school and I’ve always known that it wasn’t a pleasant experience for people,” McHenry said.

The event had an opening prayer with two guest speakers, Chebon Kernell and Brenda Golden.

Golden was recommended by Kernell. McHenry had seen her in the community and noticed her work with child advocacy. She thought Golden would give citizens a good perspective.

McHenry hoped that everyone who came to the event had a better perspective and awareness of the issues it recognized. She understands the horrific stories of the past from the boarding school era are not to be taken lightly, however modern boarding schools have changed their approach to instruction and have gained a more positive image.

The event featured posters

about Indian boarding schools on the MCN reservation, and how advocates have brought awareness to the historical issue.

McHenry wants citizens to gain a sense of community, education and awareness. “We all have this commonality about it and we should work together to overcome that,” McHenry said. “Add more to the language and continue to take those resources that weren’t available to our ancestors.”

By hosting this event she wants others to want to learn more about these boarding schools and the trauma suffered by generations of Natives. “I also hope that it takes the initiative of some of our tribal leaders to search those grounds of where those schools used to be, just to make sure nobody is there,” McHenry said.

According to McHenry, through hosting it feels good to contribute a big part to the event. McHenry received calls from citizens asking what they could do to contribute to the event. She was glad to see the community listen, learn and tell their stories so that others are able to hear their perspective.

### Generational Trauma

When McHenry thinks about the past of what the ancestors had to endure, she feels hurt for them. She has nieces of her own and can not imagine them in that position, to have their innocence stripped away by abuse. “It’s an awful feeling to just ever think that someone would ever do that,” McHenry said.

McHenry’s grandmother experienced abuse from the Eufaula

Boarding School before it became the modern institution it is today. McHenry’s grandmother went through beatings by a ruler from instructors, conditioning her not to speak her language or exhibit her culture. As she began to start her own family as an adult she did not pass down the Mvskoke language to her children. That is, until she was much older.

“I guess that was the only time she felt safe enough to speak it, that’s all she spoke when she was passing away,” McHenry said. “So it really resonates with me because that makes me hurt for her and I couldn’t imagine.”

McHenry hopes to host this event annually, and wants to host it next year. She has expressed interest in bringing students from Riverside Indian School. She wants to give these students a voice to speak about their experience within that boarding school, and how it currently has a positive impact. She also would like to open the invitation to notable figures like filmmaker Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Mvskoke).



Mvskoke Citizens listen to speakers at the Remembrance Walk. (Photo Courtesy: Claudia McHenry)

Last year’s Remembrance Walk’s theme was called “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” and featured three guest speakers. One speaker spoke about Indian Boarding Schools from the past, another spoke about the present and how it has taken an effect on the community. The last speaker spoke about what the future could look like in spite of the past and

present. McHenry would like to continue that theme.

“I hope this continues annually, and it gets a little bigger and bigger,” McHenry said.

For more information about the Remembrance Walk, contact Claudia McHenry at 918-758-8683. She can also be contacted by email at [claudiamchenry@gmail.com](mailto:claudiamchenry@gmail.com).

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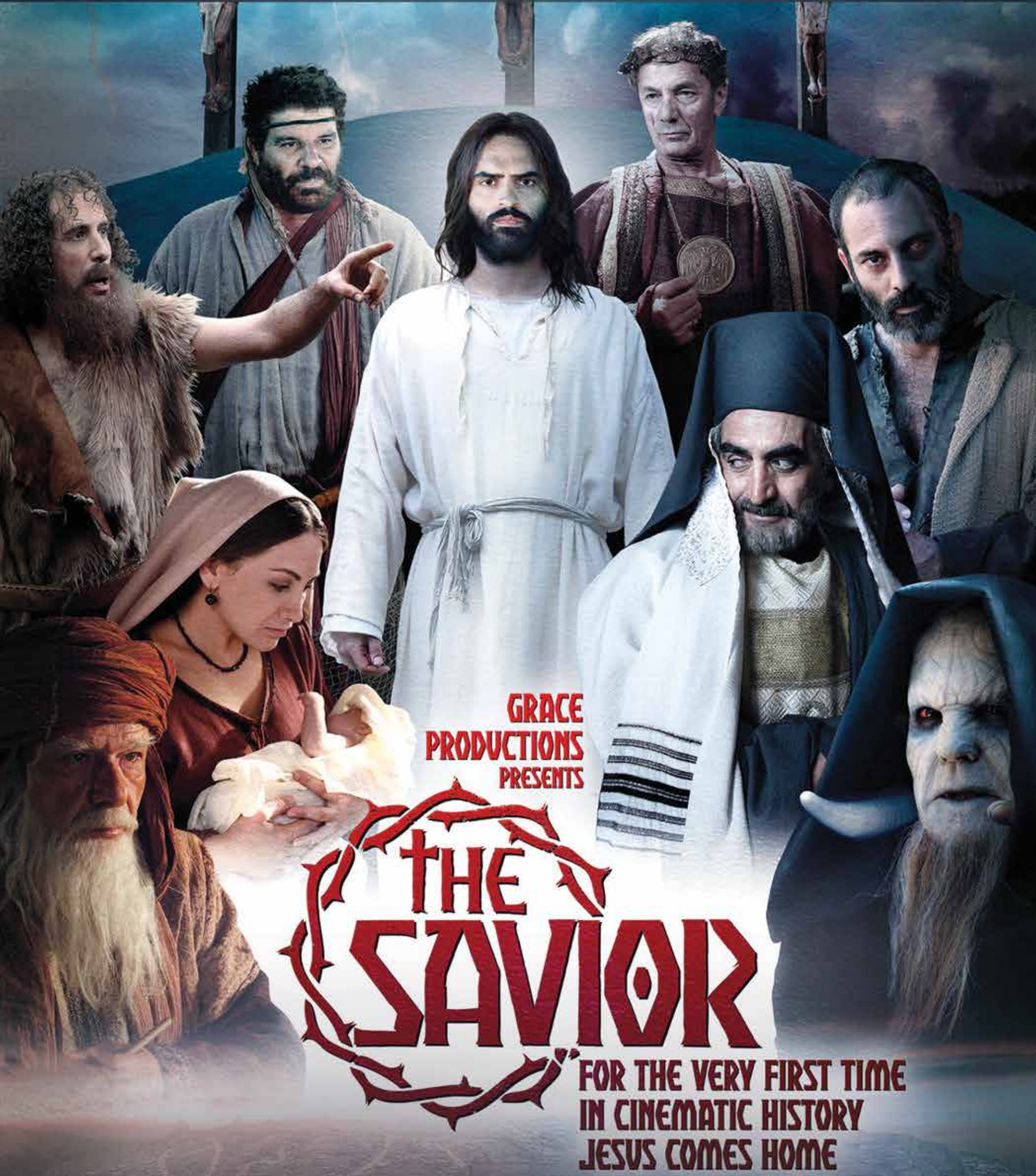


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# HOMELESS NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS TO RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM HOUSING DEP.

MVSKOKE CITIZENS WILL WEAR MCN SEAL AT THE INDIAN NATIONAL FINALS

by SHAYLN PROCTOR  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council held a regular session in person on Sept. 30.

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

TR 23-094 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation (MCN) authorizing the Principal Chief to apply for federal funding through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Tribal Transportation Bridge Program to fund ten replacement bridges and six bridge constructions within the MCN. Representative Joseph Hicks sponsored the bill, which was adopted 15-0.

Ten bridges have been identified as structurally deficient and have become a risk to the traveling public along with several others. MCN requested for the federal funds through the BIA Tribal Transportation Bridge Program in the amount of \$10,261,863.

TR 23-095 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the adoption of 2023-2024 conservation regulations of the MCN. Representative Galen Cloud sponsored the bill, which was adopted 15-0.

MCNCA Title 23 § 2-203 A allows the MCN Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources to draft conservation regulations. This is in accordance to Title 23, § 2-203.B.1.a., which states, “the Conservation Regulations will be presented to the Principal Chief which will be forwarded for submission on the regulations to the National Council for the approval by Tribal Resolution”.

TR 23-099 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing certain Muscogee (Creek) citizens the use of the great seal of the MCN while participating in the Indian National Finals Rodeo. Rep. Joseph Hicks sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

MCN will allow the use of the Great Seal of the MCN to be displayed on the clothing for Savanna Adams (Mvskoke), Shakylah Stafford (Mvskoke) and Bradley McGee (Mvskoke). They will wear it at the Indian National Finals when participating in their events in Las Vegas, Nevada on Oct. 24-28.

TR 23-100 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the construction of a new Head Start/Early Head Start facility for the MCN Department of Education. Speaker William Lowe sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

A total of \$2,000,000 in grant funds was approved for the first phase of construction for the new Head start/Early Head Start Facility in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. An additional \$249,000 was granted from the Department of Health and Human Services. This facility will be located at 905 Airport Road in Okmulgee, utilizing a total of five acres of land.

NCA 23-075 A law of the MCN authorizing an appropriation to the MCN tribal Construction Services in order to create the ramp assistance program. Representative Charles McHenry and co-sponsor Representative Robert Hufft sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

MCN Tribal Construction Services are going to oversee the new program for eligible Mvskoke citizens. The Nation's tribal construction services will be adopting policies and procedures for the

program. They received \$50,000 for program funding.

NCA 23-097 A law of the MCN authorizing an appropriation to the MCN Facilities Department For Water Services provided for the MCN Industrial Park located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. Rep. Joseph Hicks sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

According to the bill, upon recognition after the installation of the MCN Industrial Park in 2008 without fault of the party, the water meter was not properly recording the water usage. Afterwards it was changed on Jan. 3 to replace the water meter when viewing that it wasn't properly recording the water usage. With that there was a balance from 2008-2022. The City of Okmulgee agreed to start the date from 2014 when the water service began at the MCN Industrial Park. The remaining balance of \$16,308 will be paid for.

NCA 23-098 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the United States Department of Agriculture for the benefit of the MCN Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Rep. Cloud sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

MCN Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources has been awarded \$82,517 from the Tribal Nations Wild Cervid grant for the Fiscal Year 2023. This will be used for needed resources, which will increase due to testing of wild harvested deer and to provide critical samples for the baseline knowledge of the presence and absence of Chronic Wasting disease.

NCA 23-099 A law of the MCN amending MCNCA Title 23, entitled “Wildlife Code.” Rep. Cloud sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

According to the bill, after reviewing the MCNCA Title 23 Wildlife Code the MCN Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources made the decision to adopt minor changes in the code. This includes a bag limit, bait, and a baited area.

NCA 23-100 A law of the MCN authorizing an appropriation to the MCN Office of Environmental Services for the lagoon closure at Duck Creek and Okemah casinos. Rep. Joseph Hicks sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

The lagoons located at the Duck Creek and Okemah Casinos have been out of compliance and are in need of closure. MCN Environmental Services will lead the project's closure. Duck Creek Casino will close for reuse of the drip system. According to the bill, The Okemah lagoon will be closed permanently.

NCA 23-103 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of the grant funds awarded from the Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service (IHS), Produce Prescription Pilot Program grant. Representative Mary Crawford sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

According to the bill, \$2,500,000 will help reduce food insecurity. It will help with health outcomes among Indigenous people by increasing access to fresh produce as well as other traditional foods within Native American Communities.

NCA 23-104 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the Institute of Museum and Library services for the benefit of the Col-

lege of the Muscogee Nation. Representative Anna Marshall sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

According to the bill, the grant will be used for ten hotspots for student school work assignments. The bill aims to increase the visitation of patrons, utilization of the library, and for general programming and outreach activities for Muscogee Nation culture.

NCA 23-108 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of the 2023 Enbridge Fueling Futures grant for the benefit of the MCN Lighthouse Police Department. Rep. Joseph Hicks sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

The MCN Lighthouse Police Department received \$14,526 from the grant. According to the bill, it will be used to buy 150 fire extinguishers with vehicle mounts to install into each of the patrol units.

NCA 23-109 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds received from the United States Department of the Treasury for fiscal relief funding for Muscogee International, LLC. Representative Sandra Golden sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

According to the bill, MCN received \$424,351,068.50 from ARPA, this amount will help with the support of economic stabilization and provide the continued resiliency of the Nation.

NCA 23-110 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of ARPA funds received from the United States Department of the Treasury for the fiscal relief funding for Muscogee Nation Businesses, LLC. Rep. Golden sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.



The National Council held a regular session in person on Sept. 30. (MM File)

The MCN Business, LLC has experienced negative effects from the COVID-19 Pandemic. ARPA will reimburse eligible expenses such as employee health insurance premiums, vaccine incentives, personal protective equipment and office supplies.

NCA 23-111 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of ARPA funds received from the United States Department of the Treasury for fiscal relief funding for the Lighthouse Police Department. Rep. Randolph sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

The MCN Lighthouse Police Department has received the Department of Treasury ARPA funds to create a transport division. This will hire four transport officers, acquire four vans and provide for daily operational costs.

NCA 23-112 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending MCNCA title 36, § 1-104 entitled “Powers and duties of the Tax Commissioner”. Representative Randall Hicks sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

The National Council will amend Title 36 of the Code of Laws. This will increase the Nation's taxation revenue base and is consistent with the authority of the Nation, according to the bill.

NCA 23-114 A law of the MCN appropriating funds to be used for construction of a new Head Start/Early Head Start facility to be located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. Speaker Lowe sponsored this bill, which was adopted 14-1.

The amount of \$2,000,000, along with grant funding of \$249,000 will cover phase one for the new Head Start/Early Head Start Facility located in Okmulgee.

NCA 23-115 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the benefit of the MCN Department of Housing. Rep. Joseph Hicks sponsored this bill, which was adopted 15-0.

According to the bill, a total of \$459,840 has been funded to help provide housing vouchers toward eligible Native American veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In other business, the National Council changed the date for the November planning session and regular session. The new planning session date will take place Nov. 6, the new regular session date will take place Nov. 7.

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

A FEDERAL COURT HAS ORDERED  
R.J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO &  
PHILIP MORRIS USA TO STATE:

Secondhand  
smoke kills over  
38,000 Americans  
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# SUBMISSIONS

## IN APPRECIATION

I want to take this time to say “Mvto” to all tribal citizens for your support during my campaign. I greatly appreciated all the campaign forums, and those who made it possible. It allowed me the opportunity to hear the concerns of the people in their respective communities and meeting new faces.

I remain dedicated to improving our communities and making sure that everyone's voice is heard. I hope you will continue to support me in this ongoing effort.

Mvto again for the support and prayers!!!

Hvtvm Cehecares

Judith (Judy) Pickering

# BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR TRIBAL YOUTH THROUGH STABLE HOUSING

There is a pressing need to address the issues that surround housing stability, particularly among tribal youth in Oklahoma. From 2020 to 2022 Oklahoma experienced a 29 percent surge in youth homelessness, leaving approximately 120,000 without a stable home.

Within the Comanche Nation Housing Authority (CNHA), 57% of homeownership units are occupied by families with children under the age of 18, comprising 41.6% of all occupants. Simultaneously, 42.5% of CNHA's rental units are home to families with children under 18, constituting 31.1% of the overall occupants.

CNHA is addressing these challenges by providing accessible housing solutions through various programs. The housing

authority offers lease-to-own and rental assistance programs, support for home repairs and housing for tribal elders and its students. The efforts of CNHA aim to alleviate financial burdens and create a stable environment for all members of the tribe.

“Ensuring stable and secure housing plays a pivotal role in shaping the development of youth,” said Russell Sossaman, CNHA’s executive director. “It provides a solid foundation for positive adulthood outcomes, allowing young individuals to focus on personal growth and educational pursuit and have more rewarding career opportunities as a result.”

The housing authority's resources can also create opportunities and contribute to increasing higher education rates and future earnings, reducing incarceration rates and improving mental health. By helping those in need, CNHA strives to promote Comanche Nation's culture by ensuring that the community's basic needs are met.

According to Housing Matters Urban Institute, teens who live in inadequate housing are more likely to attend school regularly and have an environment that is instrumental to their success. Their studies have also shown that adolescents with access to stable housing experience lower stress levels, improved mental health, and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

CNHA's programs are designed to provide affordable, safe and decent housing while promoting self-sufficiency through employment, education and economic stability for income-eligible Comanche Nation members.

To learn more about CNHA's housing initiatives, call 580-357-4956 or visit [www.comanchehousing.com](http://www.comanchehousing.com).

Nora Sovo

The image is a vertical poster for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Election Board. At the top left is a circular logo with a red and white design and the text "MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION ELECTION BOARD". To the right of the logo, the text "MUSCOGEE(CREEK)NATION ELECTION BOARD" is written in large, bold, black capital letters. Below this, the text "2023 GENERAL ELECTION" is written in large, bold, white capital letters on a blue background. A horizontal line separates this from the next section. The next section has a white background with the text "Important Dates" in large, bold, black font. Below this, there are two columns. The left column has a light blue background and contains the text "Absentee Ballot Mail Out Starting October 5th, 2023" in bold black font. The right column has a light blue background and contains the text "In-Person Voting Registration Deadline October 24th, 2023 @ 5PM CST" in bold black font. A horizontal line separates this from the next section. The next section has a blue background and contains the text "General Election November 4th, 2023 7:00A.M-7:00P.M" in bold white font. Below this, the text "Early Voting for General Election November 1st & 2nd, 2023 7:00A.M-7:00P.M (each day)" is written in bold white font. A horizontal line separates this from the bottom section. The bottom section has a blue background and contains two columns. The left column has a light blue background and contains the text "Voter Registration form can be found on the Election Board website or Camphouse Portal users may use the election board tab to update voter registration" in bold black font. The right column has a light blue background and contains the text "For questions please contact us at 918.732.7631 or email us at Election@mcn-election.com" in bold black font. Below this, the text "For more information please look at our website" is written in bold black font. At the bottom, the URL "https://www.muscogeenation.com/election-board/" is written in bold black font.

# LEGALS

IN THE DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION  
OKMULGEE DISTRICT

DISTRICT COURT  
FILED

In the Matter of the Adoption of )  
AKADIAN ALAN BELL, dob: 6/1/2016; )  
AND )  
DYLAN JANE SANDIFER-BELL; dob: 5/7/2017;) )  
Minor Children. )

2023 SEP 25 P 1:20  
CYNTHIA FREEMAN  
COURT CLERK  
No. 20-2023-27

**NOTICE OF PETITION TO TERMINATE PARENTAL RIGHTS  
OF NATURAL MOTHER**

MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION TO:

**Hilary Lea Sandifer**

**YOU ARE HEREBY** notified that a Petition has been  
filed in this Court asking this Court to determine that your  
Parental Rights be Terminated. You have been named as the  
natural mother of Akadian Alan Bell, dob: 6/2/2016 and Dylan  
Sandifer Bell, dob: 5/7/2017. The Petition alleges that your  
consent is not required by law for the following reasons to wit  
pursuant to Title 6-1-901(B)(2)(c) and (B)4; Title 6-1-1007(B):

**TITLE 6-1-901(B)(2)(C) ABANDONMENT:** It is alleged  
that the child is eligible for adoption in that you have "failed  
to maintain a significant relationship with the child through  
visitation or communication for a period of six (6) consecutive  
months out of the last fourteen (14) months immediately  
preceding the filing of a Petition to Terminate Parental  
Rights." Incidental or token visits or communications shall not  
be construed or considered in establishing whether a parent has  
maintained a significant relationship with the child.

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

**DISTRICT COURT  
FILED**

IN THE MATTER OF: )  
) Case No. **JV-061 P 313**  
**L.M.; DOB: 10/27/2019** )  
) **MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION**  
) **CYNTHIA FREEMAN**  
**Alleged Deprived Child.** ) **COURT CLERK**

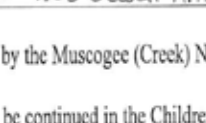
**NOTICE OF HEARING TO:**

**Unknown Father, Natural Father to L.M.**

**YOU ARE HEREBY GIVEN NOTICE** that a Motion to Terminate Parental Rights has been filed against you in the above-styled and numbered cause and will be heard in the District Courtroom of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Tribal Complex in Okmulgee, Oklahoma on November 30, 2023 at 9:00 o'clock A.M.

**YOU ARE HEREBY INFORMED** that it is sought by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation that the child remain a ward of the Court and custody be continued in the Children and Family Services Administration for continued foster placement of possible pre-adoptive placement. **YOU ARE FURTHER INFORMED** that you have the right to be represented by legal counsel at this hearing.

**FURTHERMORE,** failure to appear at the hearing shall constitute a denial of interest in the child, which denial may result, without further notice of this proceeding or any subsequent proceeding, in the termination of your parental rights.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT







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