



# MVSKOKE NEWS

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## PRINCIPAL CHIEF HILL AND SECOND CHIEF BEAVER RE-ELECTED FOR FOUR MORE YEARS

MCN CHIEFS' INAUGURATION ATTENDED BY TRIBAL DIGNITARIES, STATE LEADERS AND NOTABLE MVSKOKE ARTISTS



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill (Top) and MCN Second Chief Del Beaver are sworn into office by Supreme Court Vice Chief Justice Mekko George Thompson. (Shelby Botone/MCN)

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
MANAGING EDITOR

TVLSE, Okla. - Muscogee (Creek) Nation oversaw the swearing in of MCN Principal Chief David Hill and MCN Second Chief Beaver to serve another four years in office. Both were sworn in at an inauguration ceremony at the RiverSpirit Casino and Resort on Saturday, Jan 6. The event was attended by many tribal dignitaries from the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes, as well as other tribes. Leaders from the Oklahoma State Government were present, including State Attorney General Gentner Drummond. The ceremony also saw local municipal leaders from cities around the Mvskoke Reservation and municipal leaders from Macon, Georgia.

**2024 INAUGURATION**  
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## MCN ISSUES ARREST WARRANT FOR OKMULGEE COUNTY JAIL OFFICIAL OVER LHP OFFICER ASSAULT

ISSUES ARISE OVER ARRESTING NON-TRIBAL JAIL OFFICIALS

by **MEREDITH JOHNSON**  
REPORTER

& **BRADEN HARPER**  
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - A Monday, Dec 18 assault at the Okmulgee County jail has resulted in an arrest warrant for a non-tribal Okmulgee County Jail official and has shed light on cooperation issues between Okmulgee County Jail officials and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Lighthorse Police Department.

The assault happened while MCN LHP were attempting to deliver a suspect to the Okmulgee County jail for booking and processing. Not only was the suspect initially refused acceptance to the jail, but a verbal and physical conflict began between MCN LHP and the Okmulgee County Criminal Justice Authority officials.

Bodycam footage released by MCN shows the verbal and physical conflicts between the two law enforcement agencies.

The bodycam footage comes from MCN LHP Officer Aaron Torix. In the footage, OCJ officer Matthew Douglas can be seen and heard refusing to admit the suspect and replying to the MCN LHP request with, "...take him out of my building." Tim Lawson, the Assistant Director of Okmulgee County Jail Authority can be heard saying, "They're not going to take him."

The footage then shows Douglas moving into the control room of the final booking area and is followed by MCN Lighthorse Deputy Chief Dennis Northcross. Obscured by paper, the assault can be seen through the glass window on the door.

As the door opens, MCN

**LHP OFFICER ASSAULT**  
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## NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS ORGANIZATION SET TO RECEIVE FEDERAL CHARTER

NATIVE VETS WILL NOW HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO FEDERAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES



President Joe Biden is scheduled to sign U.S. Senate Bill 1725 in January. (Shutterstock)

MVSKOKE RESERVATION - After two decades of hard-work and patience, U.S. Senate Bill 1725, which will grant a federal charter to the National American Indian Veterans Inc. (NAIV) will now be signed into law by President Joe Biden in January. The bill was initially introduced by Senator Mike Rounds from South Dakota in May 2021. In November 2022, the bill passed unanimously through the U.S. Senate. On Dec. 15 in a statement from Senator Rounds' Office it was announced that the bill was passed as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024.

Mvskoke veteran and advocate Michael Coon helped push efforts to get the bill passed. His involvement stems back five years when NAIV National Commander Don Loudner (Hunkpati Sioux) invited Coon to become a region five commander that would represent the 39 federally-recognized tribes in Oklahoma, along with Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas and Texas. Upon invitation, Coon accepted the high responsibility of serving Native veterans in his region.

Loudner is a Korean War veteran from Sioux Falls, South

Dakota. Currently 91 years old, friends and family are unsure how much time he has left to live due to failing health. Brothers in arms like Coon have been praying that Loudner would be physically strong enough to travel to Washington D.C. to see SB 1725 signed by the president. This would be a crowning achievement of Loudner's life work serving Native veterans.

According to Coon, SB 1725 has been in the works for 20 years with Loudner supporting it every step of the way. Loudner and Coon, along with many other Native vets from across the nation worked tirelessly to get the NAIV federally chartered. Finally, in 2021 Senator Rounds and Senator Ben Ray Lujan from New Mexico introduced legislation before the senate.

Coon had also worked with Senator Markwayne Mullin, Senator James Lankford and former Senator Jim Inhofe regarding the NAIV federal charter. Coon feels that while military veterans get proper recognition in society, Native veterans do not always get the same recognition.

"I was so thrilled for our veterans across the nation because

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
MANAGING EDITOR

we're the highest ethnic group to serve in the nation. I think it's time we finally get recognized and that our veterans get what they deserve," Coon said. "All veterans get recognized but as far as the Native Americans they always seem to leave us out."

According to Coon, the charter will better help all Native veterans, regardless of their residential status. This means that Native veterans that live outside of the jurisdictional boundaries of their tribe will still have access to benefits and services through the new charter.

NAIV is a nonprofit organization that serves Native American veterans in 14 regional offices across the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, there are currently over 140,000 Native Americans veterans in the United States. As an ethnic group, Native Americans have the highest record of military service, five times the national average. The United States has granted charters to other ethnic-specific veteran groups, however this is the first Native American veteran organization to receive a charter.

"Native Americans serve in our nation's military at five times the national average, and this charter gives them the recognition they truly deserve and have earned," Senator Rounds said. "The NAIV works closely with Tribal Veterans Service

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## STITT CREATES TASK FORCE TO ADVISE ON STATE, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES

THE 13-PERSON PANEL WILL INCLUDE TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM 38 TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS



In light of a recent law enforcement conflict in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Reservation jurisdiction, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt created a new task force to investigate issues involving the handling of arrests and detainment. (Courtesy: Oklahoma.gov)

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. - On Friday, Dec 22, 2023 Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt signed Executive Order 2023-32 that created the One Oklahoma Task Force. The task force will advise state leadership on jurisdictional issues between state, local, and tribal authorities.

Per the language in the order, the task force creates a 13-person panel that is responsible for submitting a report addressing "the McGirt decision's negative effects."

As detailed in the EO, "The purpose of the Task Force shall be to provide the Governor, the Legislature, Tribal leaders, and the state's congressional delegation with substantive legislative and regulatory recommendations, including but not limited to updated uniform cross-depu-

by **MEREDITH JOHNSON**  
REPORTER

tization agreements, uniform jail agreements, and state and federal legislative proposals."

The Task Force will be made of appointees from various state agencies and non-governmental organizations the EO defines as stakeholders. These include the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office, the Oklahoma Secretary of Public Safety, the Oklahoma state Bureau of Investigation, the Council of Law Enforcement Training, and the Oklahoma State Fraternal Order of Police among others.

Of the 13-person panel, only two members will specifically represent Oklahoma's tribal governments: one member representing the Five Tribes and one member representing the other 33 federally-recognized Oklahoma tribal governments. The EO does not state how these members will be chosen or appointed.

The first meeting of the Task Force will be no later than 60 days after the EO's signing, which is on or before Feb. 20. Per the EO, the meeting will be in accordance with the Oklahoma Open Meetings Act.

The EO comes days after a dispute at the Okmulgee County Jail between jail employees and Muscogee (Creek) Nation Lighthorse Police. The dispute led to a physical altercation and an MCN District Court (District Court) arrest warrant for OCJ employee Matthew Douglas on Dec. 20 for felony assault of Lighthorse Deputy Chief Northcross. The warrant was

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2024 INUAGURATION

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Before the chiefs were officially sworn in, the event honored two Mvskoke citizens and a Seminole Nation citizen for their personal accomplishments and contributions to Mvskoke Nation. Lauren King was first honored for being the first Mvskoke citizen elected to serve as a U.S. Federal Judge for the Western District of Washington. Rear Admiral Calvin M. Foster was honored for becoming the first Mvskoke citizen to achieve the rank of admiral in the navy. Sterlin Harjo was honored for his role as an executive producer on the first all-Indigenous produced television series, “Reservation Dogs”. Harjo is a citizen of the Seminole nation and claims Mvskoke heritage.

Former MCN Chiefs, current and former national council representatives, as well as former and current cabinet members were recognized in the audience for their contributions to the tribe.

Principal Chief Hill and Second Chief Beaver were sworn into office in the Mvskoke language by Supreme Court Vice Chief Justice Mekko George Thompson.

In Second Chief Beaver’s speech he touched on the accomplishments of the administration’s past four years in office, as well as the challenges it has faced as well. Second Chief Beaver noted that his favorite part of the job is meet-

ing new people from around the tribe and around the country. To him, the inauguration was special because of the support by everyone who attended.

“Today is about celebrating, it’s a great day today,” Second Chief Beaver said. “Everyone, not just the Muscogee (Creek) Nation but all nations back each other, we support one another. There’s a greater good out there that we believe in and that’s everyone in Oklahoma.”

In Principal Chief Hill’s speech he detailed how the nation endured through paradigm-changing events including the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the historic McGirt Supreme Court Decision. In spite of these great trials and tribulations, Principal Chief Hill remarked that he still found great support and encouragement from the tribe. According to him, the tribe is much more than just it’s chief.

“I pledge to do my very best to uphold the trust you have placed in me,” Principal Chief Hill said. “The title of principal chief is not for one person. But no one can do this job alone, it takes an incredible team and staff to make things happen for citizens everyday. And it takes citizens to support the vision for this great nation’s growth, prosperity and progress.”

The ceremony concluded with a Mvskoke Hymn led by MCN Lighthouse Chief of Police Richard Phillips.



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill and MCN Second Chief Del Beaver stand next to one another at the Chiefs’ Inauguration. Jan. 6, 2023. Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Shelby Botone/MCN)

TASK FORCE

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recalled on Dec 21., yet according to District Court records the charges still stand. Douglas has a pending arraignment scheduled on Jan 17.

The Okmulgee County Jail Authority, the entity responsible for jail operations, was recently found to be under state investigation in 2022. From a Frontier report, the OCJA violated policies and procedures in housing juvenile prisoners in federal custody. The OCJA was specifically found violating visual site safety checks for juveniles on increased observation and the segregation of juvenile prisoners from adults.

While the jail is not certified to hold state juvenile offenders, it has contracts with tribal and federal agencies to do so. Citing jurisdictional issues, state inspectors were only able to observe juvenile inmates and had no access to incident reports or documents, per the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

During remarks on Dec. 21, Muscogee (Creek) Nation Attorney General Geri Wisner referred to the recent OCJA investigation. Wisner said, “The assault of

a Lighthouse Police Officer at the Okmulgee County Jail is the direct result of policies set by Okmulgee County officials that disregard state law. This facility is already facing an ongoing investigation by the Oklahoma State Department of Health and the Office of Juvenile Affairs for the mistreatment of juveniles in their custody, including purposefully housing juveniles with adult inmates.”

In a statement on his website, Stitt wrote, “The primary function of government is to protect public safety, and the McGirt decision has created confusion and tension among those that work to serve that function. By gathering stakeholders from every corner of our state, we can address the real jurisdictional challenges left by McGirt and usher in lasting change. The State of Oklahoma, Tribal governments, and our citizens deserve clarity.”

In response to the EO, Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill issued the following statement to Mvskoke Media: “We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with Governor Stitt. In fact, we’ve been asking for that for over three years. Given the failure of the Governor’s first taskforce, we’d like to

LHP OFFICER ASSAULT

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LHP Officer Keith Bell can then be heard saying, “Don’t put your hands on me.” Lawson then moves between MCN LHP and OCJA officials.

According to court records, an arrest warrant was issued for Matthew Joseph Douglas on Wednesday, Dec. 20 for the offense of “PROTECTED STATUS BATTERY”. According to the MCN code, Title 14 section 2-303, “The crime of protected status battery is a felony and occurs when all of the elements of battery are present and, in addition, it is knowingly committed against: 1. Law enforcement officials, referees or umpires, teachers or school officials, during performance of or relate to their duties.”

LHP officers attempted to serve the arrest warrant to Douglas on Wednesday, Dec. 20. However, they were unable to do so. Douglas was given the opportunity to turn himself in by 9 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 21. At the time of this publication, Douglas is not currently in LHP custody.

MCN and Okmulgee County Sheriff Office's Responses

The Okmulgee County Sheriff stated that their deputies have been “positive and professional” during the situation. According to the Okmulgee County Sheriff’s Office statement,

“On Monday, December 18, 2023, the Okmulgee County Sheriff’s Office received a call for assistance at the Okmulgee County Jail. The Okmulgee County Jail has its own administration and is overseen by the Okmulgee County Criminal Justice Authority. Upon arrival to the jail, there were 15-20 Muscogee (Creek) Nation Lighthouse Police present. Tribal patrol units had blocked the roadways around the jail and parked tribal units so they blocked on-duty OCSO patrol units in their park-



MCN AG Geri Wisner speaks at a press conference held at the Mound Building on the main tribal complex. The conference addressed questions regarding a recent incident where a LHP officer was assaulted by an Okmulgee County Jail official on Monday Dec. 18. (Braden Harper/MM)

ing spots, preventing them from responding to emergency calls. The call for assistance at the jail was related to an incident that occurred inside the jail between tribal police officers and jail staff. This situation was calmed, and tribal police left the grounds and the prisoner being presented was accepted after all proper booking procedures were completed.”

The statement goes on to state that a warrant was issued for the arrest of an Okmulgee County Jail official, however no arrest had been made.

Although MCN LHP is not a federal entity, federal laws still grant tribal law enforcement jurisdiction. Wisner asserted that political opinions do not give other law enforcement officers the right to violate laws or assault officers from other agencies.

According to Wisner, this is the first time LHP has had a dispute like this with the Okmulgee County Jail.

“Law enforcement wants the same thing at the end of the day, to be able to go home safely to their families, to be able to police and provide a safe community for all

of our children, for our elders, be able to provide a street and a sidewalk that we can safely walk down on and be proud to raise our children. We want that just as much as anyone. We want to work together with other jurisdictions to be able to provide that” Wisner said.

Currently there are no U.S. Marshals involved with this investigation at this time.

“I think that this is the first layer of an onion, if you will, of a long history of conflict, of racism, and a number of issues that have existed. And we look forward, as a couple of you said, maybe we think it’s necessary. We look forward to pulling those back, because we want justice at the end of the day, the safety of your head and the safety of your welfare.”

As this brings to light issues of tribal jurisdiction and non-cooperation, Mvskoke Media reached out to the office of State Attorney General Drummond and received the following response:

“Attorney General Drummond has been in contact with all parties to ensure a peaceful and lawful resolution.”

offer some suggestions to make this one serious and substantial: Focus on promoting cooperation, not inflaming division. Engage tribes honestly. There are 39 unique tribes in Oklahoma, not just two. Eleven state agencies will

be represented to speak for themselves. Tribes should be afforded the same opportunity. Focus on requiring state and local agencies to follow the law. We believe that if he does these simple things, he will find that there is no crisis of

law or ‘patchwork’ gaps to solve-only a crisis of political will being fueled by the Governor’s own political campaign to have fewer police, fewer courts and fewer prosecutions by overturning tribal jurisdiction.”



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FEDERAL CHARTER

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Officers to make certain Native American veterans receive proper benefits and resources. Congress regularly looks to the NAIV for input when addressing issues facing Native American veterans. This charter will help give the NAIV a larger platform to continue advocating for and serving the more than 140,000 Native American veterans living in the United States. I am pleased to have had it included as part of this year's NDAA.”

The bill has been supported by a number of Native American tribes, including the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, Oglala Sioux Nation, and the Inter-Tribal Council of the

Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma.

“Native veterans have served our country from Valley Forge to Afghanistan and with this action, Congress has shown Native American veterans past and present the respect that is so well earned.” Loudner said.

Coon is currently seeking funding from the MCN National Council to go to Washington to see the bill signed by President Biden in person with Loudner. Coon’s trip is in need of funding for airfare and lodging. Coon also requested thoughts and prayers for Loudner during this time so that he would be able to attend the official signing himself.

during Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s Festival in June, she was also selected as one of the American Association of Retired Persons’ (AARP) Native American Elders honored in 2023. On top of recent accolades, Thomas continues to serve her community as chair of the Okmulgee Indian Community.

Thomas was honored by AARP at a ceremony held at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City Nov. 1, 2023. The ceremony has been held every year since 2009, marking its 14th year in 2023.

Thomas’ history of service with MCN dates back to the 1970s in the education department under then Principal Chief Claude Cox. Throughout her career in education Thomas taught in Oklahoma and California. She also ran a nonprofit Johnson O’Malley program (JOM) in Alaska that served approximately 5,000 students. Thomas started her decades-long career at just 20 years old.

In the 1990s Thomas would return to Oklahoma to serve her fellow MCN citizens. Thomas was elected to the OIC board as treasurer in 2000. In 2019 she was elected as the OIC chair, a position she still holds to this day. Thomas not only works closely with her fellow Okmulgee community members, she also continues to build relationships with other communities like Tulsa and Muskogee.

When Thomas received the call that she would be honored as an AARP Native American Elder, she did not initially believe the news. She thought that if a representative from AARP was calling her, it was more likely they were trying to sign her up for a membership with the organization.

“I thought, ‘Why did I

answer this? They’re going to ask me for money!’” Thomas said. “I did not know that I was nominated, but it surprised me.”

Thomas received the honor based on her work in education, as well as her service to her tribe. She is one of the founding members of the National JOM association. According to Thomas, the JOM program she established within MCN was considered a model to other programs across the United States.

Muscogee (Creek) Challenge Bowl

One of Thomas’ biggest and long-lasting legacies from her time running the MCN JOM program is the challenge bowl. Hosted annually early in the year, the bowl sees school teams compete with one another to answer questions pertaining to Mvskoke language, history and culture. Although the bowl is held in high regard now, it initially faced obstacles when it was first organized. MCN National Council members at the time were not supportive of it. However, it was when Thomas attended a challenge bowl in Cherokee Nation that she had a realization a similar event was a necessity for her tribe.

“When I walked in the door all these kids would come running up to me and try to talk to me in Cherokee. Greeting me, shaking my hand, welcoming me in,” Thomas said. “I was in one of our own schools the week before, and our own Creek kids didn’t know one word in Creek, they couldn’t greet me. They didn’t know their clan, they didn’t know who their chief was, they didn’t know anything. They just knew they were Creek.”

The challenge bowl has seen



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Second Chief Del Beaver and Mvskoke Living Legend Virginia Thomas pose for a photo at the AARP Native American Elder ceremony. (Courtesy: Hymer Photography)

MVSKOKE LIVING LEGEND CONTINUES TO BUILD A LASTING LEGACY FOR HER TRIBE

VIRGINIA THOMAS SELECTED AS AARP NATIVE AMERICAN ELDERS HONOREE FOR HER WORK



Mvskoke Living Legend Virginia Thomas is pictured at the recent AARP Native American Elder ceremony. (Courtesy: Hymer Photography)

by **BRADEN HARPER**  
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - Virginia Thomas (Mvskoke) had quite the busy year in 2023. Not only was she one of five elders selected as a living legend

great changes over the years. It initially only had a budget of \$3,000. However, after careful consideration from the National Council that would increase to \$5,000. According to Thomas, the challenge bowl is now a line item in the MCN’s fiscal budget. The competition was initially conducted from binders, now it is conducted by using computers.

Now in 2024, the Challenge Bowl continues to see generations of Mvskoke children compete with their knowledge on their tribe’s culture.

According to Thomas, a fruit that has come from the challenge bowl is the current language program. After seeing a renewed interest in the Mvskoke culture, many wanted the opportunity to learn the Mvskoke language as well. Thomas then assembled a team of prominent tribal leaders for the language advisory committee including Wilbur Chebon Gouge, Amos McNac

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BILLY LUTHER TALKS “FRYBREAD FACE AND ME” WITH LIVEWIRE

WRITER/DIRECTOR OPENS UP ABOUT THE MOVIE, HIS CAREER PATH, AND NATIVES IN THE FILM INDUSTRY



The new film, “Frybread Face and Me” has proven to be a hit and even found itself on the top ten list of programs streamed in the U.S. (Courtesy: Billy Luther)

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The opening voice over in “Frybread Face and Me” precisely sets more than just the tone for the coming-of-age feature film. Against a blank, black screen the narrator states, “My grandmother once told me in Navajo storytelling, symbols mean more than facts and time means nothing at all,” With

this we get full-on cultural context, setting, and the kind of kinship relations a good reservation tale has.

Filmmaker Billy Luther (Dine/Hopi/Laguna Pueblo) recently spoke about his film and career path with Mvskoke Media’s LiveWire.

The film follows Benny, an 11-year-old Navajo/Hopi/Pueblo

city kid from San Diego, sent to spend the summer of 1990 with his maternal grandmother on the Navajo Reservation while his parents sort out their marriage. There, he experiences a fish-out-of-water summer with his culturally-grounded cousin Dawn, gets a crash course on being Navajo, and remains true to himself. When his disconnected uncle asks him the gibe, “Are you a cowboy or a cowgirl?” he answers with the already set understanding of who he is, “I’m just Benny,” he replies.

Benny remains Benny to the end, only changing in his awareness to the strength of his cultural ties when he effuses joy at the news it was his grandmother who made him first laugh.

Premiering at the 2023 South by Southwest Film Festival in Austin, “Frybread Face and Me” was written and directed by Luther. The film also retains Native and Indigenous involvement. It was produced by Chickasaw citizen Chad Burris’ company Indian Entertainment, and includes an executive producer credit from Luther’s long time friend Taika Waititi.

**Homework, Preparation, and Networks**

Luther knew early on what he wanted to do. That drive informed his career as a filmmaker. He said, “I loved telling stories. And when I probably was about 10 years old, I just knew exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to work in television or film. I wanted to write and direct. So I would borrow cameras and VHS cameras and just with my neighborhood friends and just go out and start filming things. So it just started at an early age.”

After high school, Luther went to film school in Chicago. He began working in documentaries and has worked consistently in the genre for the last 15 years. His 2007 documentary “Miss Navajo” chronicled the experience of beauty pageant contestants in the Miss Navajo Nation contest. “Miss Navajo” premiered at Sundance



Writer and director Billy Luther sits with actors Charley Hogan and Keir Tallman on the set of “Frybread Face and Me.” (Courtesy: Billy Luther)

Film Festival and aired on PBS’s “Independent Lens,” that year.

When Luther transitioned to narrative features he did research on programs that help upcoming screenwriters and directors. From there he got involved in Film Independent and the Sundance Screenwriters’ Lab. He explained the importance of workshoping ideas and developing thick skin.

He explained, “I had to do a lot of research and homework, which is not necessarily something that you’re taught about in college or in film school. You can’t just go out and write. I mean, you can, but you know, you have to kind of understand and know the industry and know that there are programs in all aspects of filmmaking. So I really did my homework and found a place that could workshop a film that I had, you know, wanted to write ‘Frybread’ and really became a part of their program.”

Rejection can be part of working through ideas. Luther advised

those wanting to take on the task of filmmaking that rejection is just part of the process. He said, “It’s an extremely difficult career to take on. A lot of patience, a lot of rejections, a lot of no’s. But you have to have this thick skin, you can’t take things so personal. I had to go through several revisions of the film and to get into those Sundance and Film Independent labs with the script. So I had to rework and rewrite. And it’s not for the faint. It’s very, very, very hard.”

Currently available on Netflix, the movie has enjoyed success and has recently been on the platform’s list of top ten streaming programs in the U.S. Regarding this accomplishment Luther related, “I think Native social media played a great role in spreading the word, we basically had zero dollars in advertising, we’re such a small film. So getting to be in the top 10 was huge for us. And I think that was really rewarding, not just for me, but for everybody who put their heart and soul into the film.”



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**VIRGINIA THOMAS**  
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and James King.

Thomas’ passion for cultural knowledge and practice came from the absence of it being used when she first arrived in Oklahoma in the 1970s. According to Thomas, when she would speak Mvskoke words no one understood what she was saying. Additionally, while growing up her parents were afraid to speak Mvskoke in public due to cultural stigmas.

When combating these modern stigmas that have repressed the practice of learning about culture and language, Thomas’ advice is to be proactive in passing it down.

“When those people that have it around you (language), you take it for granted,” Thomas said. “We forget to teach. You think it’s going to be here always, and we’ve lost generations of not teaching the language or our culture and the kids suffered.”

Thomas added that if the knowledge of the tribe’s ancestors are not passed down, all they did for survival was for nothing. That is the most important lesson she has learned and hopes to pass down for future generations.

Nominations for the 2024 AARP Oklahoma Native American Elder Honors will open this month.

CMN ADDED TO THE TULSA HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

CONSORTIUM WILL HELP CMN FUTURE STUDENTS PURSUE EDUCATION AFTER GRADUATION

by SHAYLN PROCTOR  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- The College of the Muscogee Nation (CMN) has been added to the Tulsa Higher Education (THE) Consortium. This Consortium collaborates with different colleges and universities across Northeast Oklahoma. Their goal focuses on furthering and completing student education while encouraging them to succeed. According to the consortium’s website, CMN will be joining Langston University, Tulsa Community College, the University of Tulsa and seven affiliate members in those initiatives.

Tulsa Higher Education Consortium memberships provide assistance and benefits. This includes cross-institutional collaboration, sharing research and best practices, business, streamlining degree pathways for students and offering professional development across all institutions.

Tulsa Higher Education Consortium Executive Director Dr. Laura Latta said in a statement letter, “The board of the Tulsa Higher Education Consortium was unanimous in naming College of the Muscogee Nation as our ninth institutional member. We are proud to include College of the Muscogee Nation in THE Consortium as we continue to increase higher education opportunities in the region.” They also see CMN as a positive impact for tribal and non-tribal students.

According to CMN’s website page their mission states, “The College of the Muscogee Nation is the institution of higher education for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation emphasizing native culture, values, language



CMN graduates will now have easier transfer paths to continue their education through the Tulsa Higher Education Consortium. (Courtesy: CMN)

and self determination. The College will provide a positive learning environment for tribal and non-tribal students as citizens of a tribal and global society supported by teaching excellence and will offer exemplary academic programs that meet student, tribal, and societal needs. Through instructional quality and visionary leadership, the College of the Muscogee Nation will encourage lifelong learners, for personal growth, professional development, and intellectual advancement.”

CMN President Dr. Monte Randall (Mvskoke) and Dr. Latta appeared on KOTV News on 6 to announce this collaboration on Dec. 26. “The College of the Muscogee Nation, we have a lot of our graduates transfer on to institutions for their bachelors degrees, so we felt it was fitting to join The Tulsa Higher Education Consortium so we can further assist our graduates as they transfer on for their bachelor degrees,” Dr. Randall said.

Dr. Randall was seen proudly speaking on behalf of CMN, and on the accomplishment of joining the consortium.

Dr. Latta spoke about the consortium’s website and its growth with different degrees. She stated that adding CMN to the consortium will help future students wanting to pursue a four-year degree. The consortium’s website also includes a list of different universities and colleges to give students a better perspective of which college will be the best fit. Later on the website will add transfer pathways and scholarships to help assist students with the transfer process.

For further information about the Tulsa Higher Education Consortium, visit their website at [www.tulsaighered.com](http://www.tulsaighered.com). To keep up to date on the College of the Muscogee Nation updates and enrollment deadlines, follow their Facebook page, The College of the Muscogee Nation.

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OKMULGEE INDIAN COMMUNITY  
CELEBRATES THEIR 40TH ANNIVERSARY  
AS A CHARTERED COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS CELEBRATE WITH A MEAL, ACTIVITIES  
AND FELLOWSHIP



OIC community board members pose for a group photo. (Shayln Proctor/MM)

by SHAYLN PROCTOR  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- The Okmulgee Indian Community (OIC) celebrated their 40th anniversary and hosted a Christmas Party at their center on Dec. 11. They celebrated 40 years as a chartered community and are one of the original communities chartered by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and former MCN Principal Chief Claude Cox.

OIC Chair Viriginia Thomas (Mvskoke) spoke about how important this community is to her and the celebration of not only the anniversary, but the Christmas party as well. Two of the community's oldest members in attendance were invited to speak as well.

The community has hosted different Christmas-themed events in the past. This year included a potluck, an ugly Christmas sweaters contest, a dessert contest, and a visit from Native Santa. According

to Thomas, the event gets bigger every year and always has a great turnout.

Each member who attended the event received either a commemorative T-shirt or a bag with the community's 40th anniversary logo.

"We are going to make a good celebration and we always give something away to the members. Like this Christmas we are giving away hams," Thomas said.

MCN Historic and Cultural Preservation helped lead Christmas Mvskoke hymn singing.

OIC members made candy bags composed of apples, oranges, candy canes and other goodies. Thomas reminisced about the days when she was child and received goodie bags from her community. She also recalled her excitement when she received a goodie bag. This was the feeling OIC board members wanted to provide for others. According to Thomas, the party was designed to be enjoyed by all community members of all ages.

"Just getting to see each other and the people that can't make it to the meeting consistently, they will come to this one and the kids that are growing up," Thomas said.

This event was not only a special one for OIC board members, but the entire community as well. The evening was filled with laughter and fellowship.

**History**

When the OIC first became chartered they did not have a building, however they held meetings at the New Town Church. This is where community members began coming together, eventually organizing a board with members to oversee the group's structure and event planning.

Thomas started with the board in 2000 as OIC treasurer. "I remember just being young and thinking 'what am I doing and how am I going to do this?' but I listened to what they had to say," Thomas said.

According to Thomas, the OIC is the second largest community within the Nation and are the most active. They currently have over 700 members.

One of the most influential people Thomas looked up to was a member named Peggy who formally served as vice chairman on the OIC board. According to Thomas, Peggy knew everyone within the community. Thomas was inspired by seeing how much of an impact Peggy made.

"I was in awe that she knew these people and it was like she knew who was related to who, what church they went to, how many kids they had and how many grandkids they had. It was because of her involvement within the community and that's what I wanted," Thomas said.

According to Thomas, Peggy wanted her own family to attend the OIC, with the hope that each generation would stay active in it. Thomas said that is exactly what

happened because she saw Peggy's children and grandchildren get involved in the community; each new generation continuing to leave a positive impact.

The OIC has different sub committees including economic development, language and elders. The elders sub committee participates in activities including exercise classes, walking, chair volleyball and cooking classes.

According to Thomas, the OIC building is always busy with different meetings or events. She is very proud of the new OIC building, as well as the board members and community that inhabit it. Thomas stated that she is proud of how much they have achieved as they strive to be a model community.

Current board members include Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Makayla Harjo, Secretary Connie Dearman, Treasurer Missy Sanders and Sargent-at-Arms Marcus Proctor.

Although the community board members were not specifically trained on their current positions, they each learned as they went along. According to Thomas, the board has been working well



A baby looks up at Santa Claus during the OIC event. (Shayln Proctor/MM)

with communication by providing periodical updates and seeking to see how they can improve services for community members.

Thomas explained that serving on the board is like another job because of the daily duties that each member has to do. However, she still gets excited to see everything come together.

"I think we couldn't do something like this if we didn't have the support of our Nation," Thomas said. "I'm proud of this community and I'm proud of any legacy that I leave behind. They will already know what I do and so I'm just proud of whoever comes behind me and it's going to go on."



Original board members of the OIC include Chiquita Juneau, Rebecca Autaubo, Lillian Washington, Pricilla Kahbeah, Norma Bible, Sally Good Voice, Bernice Hale, George Autaubo, Lawrence Kahbeah, Steve Wilson, Navada Simmers, Mary Jones, Lilly Cox, Cora Deerisaw, Margaret Freeman and MCN Chief Claude Cox. (Courtesy: Virginia Thomas)

MVSKOKE VETERANS AND ELDERS  
CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS  
BOTH GROUPS OF COMMUNITIES CELEBRATED  
CHRISTMAS WITH LUNCHEONS



Elders at the Elder Holiday Luncheon smile and wave while enjoying a meal provided by MCN Elder Services. (Shayln Proctor/MM)

by SHAYLN PROCTOR  
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- The Muscogee Nation Displaced Warriors Support Program hosted their first Veterans Holiday Luncheon Dec. 19 at the Okmulgee Indian Community Center. Veterans that attended were either from or around the community and were served a meal catered from Boss'n Hogs.

Muscogee Nation Displaced Warriors Support Program Manager Tacia Berryhill (Mvskoke) spoke about gathering veterans together in order to serve a warm meal for the holidays. It was an event that provided an opportunity for fellowship.

During Thanksgiving the program gave away hams and turkeys to veterans. This Christmas season the program decided it would be best to host a luncheon, one that could serve at least 100 people.

Berryhill and her staff are veterans. At the luncheon they had the honor to serve their fellow veterans. Muscogee (Creek) Nation Secretary of Veterans Affairs Grover Wind was in attendance as well.

The Muscogee Nation dis-

placed warriors support program is a newer program, and is only six months old. The program was previously under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program for six years.

The displaced warriors support program has since been able to provide more services to citizens, utilizing tribal funds rather than grant funds that have supervision requirements. This allows Berryhill to focus on Mvskoke veterans.

According to Wind the program transports veterans or homeless veterans to areas where they can be serviced and helped.

Berryhill grew up seeing veterans gather together as a community. A need that Berryhill and her staff noticed this year was that some veterans may not have a family, or are unable to celebrate Christmas. For this reason she is grateful to provide that for them. "It's a great feeling actually it's a camaraderie and especially around the seasons," Berryhill said.

Berryhill and Wind are very appreciative of providing the luncheon for veterans, and to host events like this for those who might not be able to see family.

"Again, the loneliest feeling is not to have one but to be by yourself, this allows these veterans to come and be part of the fraternity that they're part of. So looking beyond offering services it's just the compassion that this dinner is going to be able to reach out to a homeless or maybe a lonesome or a lonely veteran out there," Wind said.

For any questions about this program you can contact Muscogee Nation Displaced Warriors Support Program Case Manager Mike Hill at 918-758-7013. The program also has a Facebook page, The Muscogee Nations Veterans Affairs.

**Elder's Christmas Holiday Luncheon**

en-fried chicken with desserts.

"I believe my favorite is that they get dressed up all fancy and they love being catered to and so it's just a real fancy time for them. It's like going to this big event where it's all about them," Boone said. "They just like getting together, enjoy talking to one another and having a good time with all of their friends."

The event even had a dance competition, with prizes handed out to one man and one woman. The dance competition prizes each included a free night hotel stay at the River Spirit. Door prizes that were given out were donated from Mvskoke Media, Wal-Mart, as well as local businesses and restaurants.

The Elder Services Program hosts different events throughout the year such as the Christmas luncheon, the sweetheart dance held in February and the senior games in May.

"I've always done things with my grandparents but they never participated in any activities like this so I do believe that this is something that the elders love to do. They just like getting together with their people and so I'm happy to do this for them and hopefully they have a good time while they are there," Boone said.

For any questions about the MCN Elder Services Program, contact Christy Boone at 918-732-7765, or reach her by email at ccarson@muscogeenation.com.

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# 2023 WHITE HOUSE TRIBAL NATIONS SUMMIT IMPROVES ACCESS TO FUNDS AND EXPANDS TRIBAL OVERSIGHT

## MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION WILL RECEIVE GREATER AGENCY IN EXPENDING FEDERAL FUNDS



President Joe Biden recently signed an executive order that gave tribes more agency in how they expend federal funds. (Courtesy: U.S. Department of the Interior)

by MEREDITH JOHNSON  
REPORTER

WASHINGTON D.C. - The 2023 White House Tribal Nations Summit was held Dec 6 and Dec. 7 in Washington D.C. During the summit President Joe Biden signed an executive order that gave tribes more control over how they use federal funding. The order will require federal agencies to make sure access to federal funds is accessible, flexible, and equitable. One of the key features is that it gives deference to tribal decision making in administering the funds. The order also created the Tribal Access to Capital Clearinghouse, an online database of federal funding opportunities for tribes and Native businesses. In addition to increasing areas of self-determination in funding and finances, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced during the summit final regulations to improve the implementation of the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). For example, the final rule specifically eliminates the

“culturally unidentifiable” loophole museums and institutions often use to refuse consultation and repatriation. In remarks during the summit, President Biden said, “It’s hard work to heal the wrongs of the past and change the course and move forward. But the actions we’re taking today are key steps into that new era of tribal sovereignty and self-determination — a new era, grounded in dignity and respect, that recognizes your fundamental right to govern and grow on your own terms.”

### Time for dialogue and exchange

While the EO and accompanying 2023 Progress Report for Tribal Nations details progress in federal policies towards tribes, the specifics of how they will affect Muscogee (Creek) people and MCN policies and programming is too early to tell. According to MCN Press Secretary Jason Salsman, the office of the Principal Chief is still reviewing the various orders, changes to funding opportunities, and policies announced during the summit.

In a statement to Mvskoke Media, Salsman clarified, “The value of the Tribal Nation Summit is that they’re just having it. So the fact that they’re having them again, they’re having tribes up to Washington for the summit for listening sessions and they’re talking about things, there’s panelists discussing things that are touching tribes such as, fentanyl overdoses, how we’re growing, and what we need and how the ARPA funds have helped and, you know, just all kinds of things that are sort of a give-and-take feedback...we’re telling you what we still need from the government. Are you fulfilling your trust responsibilities? Are you falling short? And so it’s a listening session but it’s also a feedback session as well so it’s nice to be able to have that again at the White House. We hope that it can continue with whoever’s office.”

The summit is organized by the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) which was established in 2013 by then President Barack Obama. The WHCNA was reestablished by President Biden, this year marks the third summit of his inauguration. According to the White House, “The Summit represents the President’s commitment to strengthening the Nation-to-Nation relationships the United States has with tribal nations by bringing tribal leaders and top administration officials together to discuss the most important issues facing Tribal communities.” To learn more about the summit and federal funding agency, visit: [bia.gov/atc](https://bia.gov/atc).

# WILSON INDIAN COMMUNITY HOLDS FIRST ANNUAL YOUTH TRIP AT ANDY B’S

## COMMUNITY BOWLED AND PLAYED ARCADE GAMES TOGETHER OVER THE HOLIDAYS



A young woman from the Wilson Indian Community poses with her bowling ball at Andy B's. (Shayln Proctor/MM)

by SHAYLN PROCTOR  
REPORTER

TULSA, Okla.- The Wilson Indian Community started a new tradition for the holidays by holding their first annual youth trip to Andy B's on Dec. 29. Families had the opportunity to bowl and enjoy unlimited arcade games. Children and families present were seen enjoying themselves, smiling and laughing at the event. Wilson Indian Community Chairman J.R. Wind (Mvskoke) spoke on the event and the many events to come for children of the community members. When Wind noticed a lot more youth were present at the community's meetings, he thought it would be a good idea to launch an event that they would enjoy together with their families. After consulting with fellow board members, a youth bowling trip was added to the holiday calendar. According to Wind, when the Wilson community hosts family events they typically see a great turnout. Wind hopes to see that same turnout with youth. Wind is aiming to host five youth-centered activities through-

out the new year. “We want to build trust that we are there for them as well and not just having to be a certain age,” Wind said. Wind participated in many activities with his church group growing up. It was activities like these that inspired Wind and the board to take their community's youth to places like Andy B's. Wind is very proud of his community and the board members, he has seen them give back toward the community in many ways. This includes donating to the Okmulgee County Homeless Shelter and serving meals to the homeless at Iron Gate in Tulsa. The community even started a “bless box” located at the Wilson Indian Community Center. This is a public pantry that provides food to those in need. “When me and the other board first got on, we probably had like five or six people including the board showing up to the meeting and we really have done outreach for the community. Typically now we’ve been having 20-25 if not more at our meetings, anytime we do stuff people are really on board to do it,” Wind said.

# NEW LEGAL FILING IN BACONE COLLEGE CASE

## MHEC FILES FOR CLARIFICATION ON OTHER INTERESTS IN BACONE PROPERTY



Bacone College will face a new declaratory judgment from several different parties that could result in the loss of the institution's property. (Jerrad Moore/MM)

by JERRAD MOORE  
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

MUSKOGEE, Okla. - Midgley Huber Energy Concepts LLC filed a new petition for declaratory judgment against Bacone College on Dec 29, 2023. MHEC LLC had already won a \$1 million judgment against Bacone as previously reported earlier in 2023. The new filing lists other parties that may have interests in the property and asks the court to have these parties declare whether they wish to receive a part of the funds of the sale of Bacone. According to the petition, MHEC had filed a lien against the property on July 8, 2021. After the recording of this lien, other parties recorded their own liens and

encumbrances against the property. On July 30, 2021, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission filed an Unemployment Compensation Tax Warrant against Bacone in the amount of \$65,321.20. The American Baptist Home Mission Society recorded a mortgage on the property in the amount of \$600,000 on Oct. 12, 2022. Thesis America Inc. recorded its Statement of Judgment in the amount of \$86,631.71 on July 21, 2023. On Sept. 25, 2023, Tinker Federal Credit Union recorded a judgment against Bacone in the amount of \$20,100.28. Phil Givens recorded a Mechanic's Lien on the property in the amount of \$90,000 on Dec. 8, 2023. MHEC is requesting that

these parties be summoned and required to set up any right, title or interest in the Bacone property or be forever barred from claiming any right in and to the property. The petition also requested that the property be subsequently ordered sold, with the proceeds applied first to the \$1 million MHEC judgment. The petition also lists a “John Doe” as an unknown occupant of the property, and requests that this person also be summoned to clarify their interest in the property. Mvskoke Media will have ongoing coverage in this developing story.

# NEW MCN NATIONAL COUNCIL SESSION SEES FAMILIAR FACES AND NEW LEADERSHIP

## SPECIAL SESSION CEREMONY SWEARS IN THE 23RD SESSION OF THE COUNCIL



The full 23rd Session of the Council stands at the swearing in ceremony special session. Jan 6, 2023. Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Braden Harper/MM)

TVLSE, Okla. - The legislative branch of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation entered a new era with the swearing in of the Pale-Hokkolen Tutcenohkakvt 23rd Session of the Council on Jan 6. The ceremony took place at the RiverSpirit Casino and Resort's Paradise Cove theater. The morning ceremony preceded the MCN Principal and Second Chiefs' afternoon inauguration ceremony. The new session of the council swore in two new members. Representative Dode Barnett beat incumbent Joseph Hicks for Creek

District Seat A. Representative Robyn Whitecloud beat incumbent Speaker William Lowe for Okmulgee District Seat A. Rep. Whitecloud previously served as a finance officer for MCN and Rep. Barnett previously served a term on the national council from 2012-2017. The ceremony's posting of the colors was conducted by the Mvskoke Nation Men's Honor Guard. Opening remarks were given by Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation/Mvskoke Nation Youth Council Speaker Chenoa Bar-

nett and Mvskoke Nation Youth Council Second Speaker Ariela Rodriguiz. The session then swore in members by taking an oath of office officiated by MCN Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard C. Lerblance. After the new session was sworn in, the council then voted on the election of a new speaker, second speaker and sergeant-at-arms. Representative Randall Hicks was nominated by Representative Thomasene Yahola Osborn as the Speaker Chairman Pro Tem. Running unopposed,

by BRADEN HARPER  
MANAGING EDITOR

Rep. Hicks was unanimously elected as speaker by the council. “I do want to say thank you to my fellow council representatives and I do look forward to serving the great Muscogee Creek Nation to the best of my ability and I know we will all do what we can to serve to the best of our ability.” Speaker Randall Hicks said. The second speaker election saw two candidates compete for the position, Tukvptce District Seat A Representative Anna Marshall and Tukvptce Seat B Rep. Yahola Osborn. Rep. Marshall was nominated by Representative Darrell Proctor, Rep. Yahola Osborn was nominated by Representative Robert Hufft. In a 9-7 vote Rep. Yahola Osborn was elected as Second Speaker of the 23rd Session by the council. The sergeant-at-arms election saw two candidates compete for the position, newly nominated Creek District Seat A Representative Barnett, and McIntosh District Seat A Representative Proctor. Rep. Barnett was nominated by Representative Mark Randolph and Rep. Proctor was nominated by Representative Joyce C. Deere.

In a 10-6 vote Rep. Proctor was elected as Sergeant-At-Arms of the 23rd Session. The special session concluded with a vote on the adoption of national council rules of procedures. A motion was made by Representative Nelson Harjo Sr., seconded by Rep. Hufft and was unanimously adopted by the council. The ceremony concluded with a traditional Creek hymn led by Representative Charles McHenry. After the meeting was officially adjourned, a reception was held at the Fireside Grill.



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard C. Lerblance swears in National Council Representative Randall Hicks and the new Speaker Chairman Pro Tem of the 23rd Session of the Council. Jan 6, 2023. Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Braden Harper/MM)

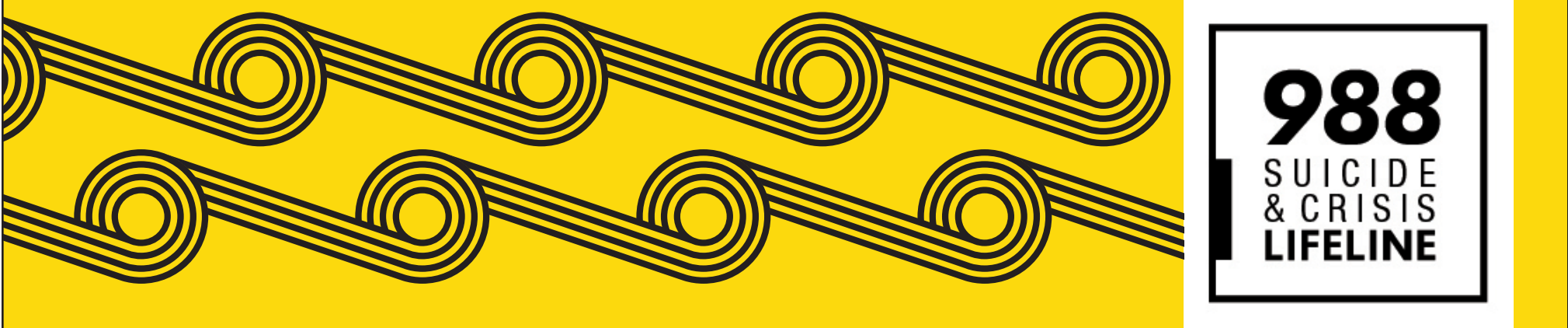




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LEGAL NOTICES

CV-2023-160

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION STATE OF OKLAHOMA

DISTRICT COURT FILED

2023 DEC 19 P 2:10

CYNTHIA FREEMAN COURT CLERK

LORRAINE BROWN, Petitioner,

AND

JORDON MONDAY, Respondent,

CV-2023-160

SETTING

ORDER SETTING HEARING PETITIONER'S MOTION FOR DEFAULT

This cause coming on before me, the undersigned Judge, this 19 day of December 2023, upon the Petitioner's request to set for hearing her Motion for Default Judgment, filed with this Court on December 19, 2023, and for good cause shown that said Motion should be set for hearing forthwith;

IT IS THEREFORE CONSIDERED, ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that Motion for Default Judgment is set for hearing before this Court on the 16 day of February, 2024, at 9:00 o'clock, of which the parties herein shall take notice.

JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT

Prepared by:

Carl P. Funderburk, OBA # 816

Funderburk & Associates, PLLC

1503 S. Denver Ave

Tulsa, OK 74119

Telephone: (918) 599-8000

Facsimile: (918) 599-8006

CR-24-3

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

DISTRICT COURT FILED

2024 JAN -4 P 2:41

CYNTHIA FREEMAN COURT CLERK

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Take notice that Kenneth Roy Dean Frair, by and through next friend, Kendra Herriage, had filed in the District Court of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Okmulgee District a Petition for Name Change of Minor Child in case number CV-24-3 to have his/her name changed as follows:

Kenneth Roy Dean Frair to that of Kenneth Roy Dean Herriage

And that the same will be heard by the District Court of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Okmulgee District on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of February 2024 at 9:00 o'clock A.m. and that any person may file a protest in this case prior to the date set for the hearing.

Dated this 4 day of January, 2024

(seal)

Court Clerk/Deputy

CV-2024-04

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

DISTRICT COURT FILED

2024 JAN -4 P 2:41

CYNTHIA FREEMAN COURT CLERK

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Take notice that Tommy Nigel Frair Jr, by and through next friend, Kendra Herriage, had filed in the District Court of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Okmulgee District a Petition for Name Change of Minor Child in case number CV-2024-04 to have his/her name changed as follows:

Tommy Nigel Frair Jr to that of Aaron Scott Roger Herriage

And that the same will be heard by the District Court of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Okmulgee District on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of February 2024 at 9:00 o'clock A.m. and that any person may file a protest in this case prior to the date set for the hearing.

Dated this 4 day of January, 2024

(seal)

Court Clerk/Deputy

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SUBMISSIONS

COLTON ROBERTS

Airman Colton Roberts is the son of Jerome and Kathy Roberts of Okemah. He has one sister, Savannah Smith of Shawnee. He is the grandson of Carney Roberts and the late Lereña Roberts of Okemah, the late Glenna Powell, and the late Thomas and Oeta Cox. Colton is a descendant of Hoktuce who was orphaned on the Trail of Tears and later settled in the Buckeye area near Mason.

Colton is a Muscogee citizen of the Hotulkulke (Wind Clan). Colton is a 2018 graduate of Okemah High School. Following high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and is currently serving at RAF Lakenheath, England in the 48th Security Forces Squadron where he was recently named 2023 Flight Airman of the year for the squadron.

Colton was recently deployed to Lask Air Base, Poland for six months in support of Operation

Atlas Guardian from which he was decorated with two Achievement Medals, one from the Department of the Army and one from the Department of the Air Force.

Air Force Achievement Medal Reads

Sr Airman Colton Roberts distinguished himself by outstanding achievement as Area Supervisor, 52nd Operations Group, Detachment 1, Lask Air Base, Poland. During this period, Airman Roberts was selected for a deployment in support of Operation Atlas Guardian where he provided security for twenty alert aircraft valued at \$1.9 billion, directly enabling one thousand flying hours and 322 sorties to ensure the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's "Air Superiority" on the Eastern Flank. Additionally, Airman Roberts expertly led joint security operations with the United States Navy

Carrier Strike Group, safeguarding \$552 million worth of Naval aircraft, supporting thirty Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance missions which directly enabled Quick Reaction Force capabilities. Furthermore, Airman Roberts was hand-selected to be a part of the advanced deployment team where he was entrusted with the accountability of the team's 36 weapons and 350 pounds of tactical equipment, which allowed a zero-lapse in Protection Level Two requirements between two deployment teams. Finally, Airman Roberts assisted in the creation of the site security plan for United States Air Force in Europe's first prefabricated facility ensuring deployment debrief facility missions were successful, this allowed over one hundred thousand sources analyzed, ultimately garnering him being coined by the 52nd Operations Group Commander. The distinctive accomplishments of Airman

Roberts reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Army Achievement Medal Reads

For exceptional service while performing joint security operations with the 977th Military Police Company in support of Operation Copper Arrow and Operation Atlas Guardian. Senior Airman Roberts' dedication to duty, selfless service, and commitment to excellence contributed to the overwhelming success of the mission. His professionalism is in keeping with the finest Military traditions and reflects great credit upon himself, the 52nd Operations Group, the 97th Military Police Battalion, and the United States Army.

OBITUARIES

BENNIE BIRAM STEPHENSON

Bennie Biram Stephenson was born Wednesday, June 17, 1936 in Weleetka, Oklahoma to Billie Lois (Keen) Stephenson and William Irish Stephenson. He had one older brother, Wendell Irish who he thought the world of. He spent his youth at his grandmother's farm in Weleetka where he attended The Alabama Church. He was a proud member of The Muscogee Nation and was always very proud of his Native American Heritage. His family later moved to Okmulgee, where he graduated high school. He loved playing basketball and football for the Bulldogs. He enlisted in the U.S. Army where he proudly served his country and was honorably discharged

as a combat veteran, having served in Korea. He spent time working with his family overseas in the oil fields, returning to the states to attend college at OSU-IT here in Okmulgee where he graduated as a draftsman. He met his first wife Beverly and had two children, Bennie (Roger) and Pamela Lynn. They relocated to Ft. Smith, Arkansas where he began his career at Riverside Furniture Co. and later retired as the Director of Quality Control.

He loved spending time with his parents and kids camping, fishing, and boating. He was a devoted husband and father. He married his second wife, Carolyn and had two more children, Tara Lynn and Carrie Elizabeth. They made their home on a farm in Roland, Oklahoma. The farm was his passion. He loved raising Angus cows and bailing hay. He loved taking

his bass boat out for fishing tournaments and camping with his parents at Okmulgee Lake. He eventually returned to Okmulgee to be closer to his mother and brother. He would remain here with his companion Marilyn whom he enjoyed spending his later years of life with traveling and visiting friends. He enjoyed competing in pool tournaments with his buddies at the V.F.W. He was also a lifetime member of The Elks Lodge where he loved to visit with friends. You could usually find him sitting on his porch or in his building enjoying the weather and having a beer. He was ornery, funny, and wise beyond his years. He was the strongest and smartest man we've ever known. We've always said, "There's a right way, a wrong way, and Bennie's way." And he was always right.

He was preceded in death

by his son, Roger; father, Irish; mother, Billie; companion, Marilyn; and brother, Wendell.

He is survived by his three daughters, Pamela Lynn, Tara Lynn, and Carrie Elizabeth; four grandchildren, Kenleigh, Taylor, Amari, and Ava Jean; as well as a host of extended family and dear friends.

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