



MVSKOKE NEWS

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BILL DISAGREEMENT LEADS TO SPLIT VOTE AND ARGUMENTS BETWEEN NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

CONTROVERSY AROUND NCR 25-001 AND ITS HANDLING HAS LED TO DISAGREEMENTS, PROTEST VOTES, AND FINGER-POINTING AMONGST NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

BY **THOMAS JACKSON**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The March 29 Regular Session of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council was not without controversy as a disagreement broke out over the specifics of a bill, NCR 25-001, which would adopt the rules and procedures for the National Council.

Representative Mark Randolph of the Kowety District, one of the bill's sponsors, made a motion to adopt the bill, which was seconded by Representative Nelson Harjo of the Okmulke District. Rep. Randolph then began to discuss two amendments that he wished to add to the bill, as is allowed by procedural rules.

However, Representative Robert Hufft of the Tvlse District interrupted Rep. Randolph, putting a motion forward to adopt the rules as is and to send the

amendments back to the Internal Affairs Committee. Rep. Hufft received a second, and the motion went through, superseding Rep. Randolph's motion to discuss the amendments.

Mvskoke Media reached out to Rep. Randolph and Representative Robyn Whitecloud of the Okmulke District, who spoke publicly about the bill on Facebook, as well as Representative Hufft.

According to an email from Rep. Whitecloud, this caused several representatives - Representatives Barnett, Gouge, Harjo, McHenry, Osborn, Randolph, and Whitecloud - to vote against the bill in protest of the move by Rep. Hufft, who they viewed as having gone against procedure.

This protest vote would lead to a split vote, and the bill was eventually adopted with a vote of 8-7.

When asked about further steps he intended to take regard-

ing his amendments being sent back to the Internal Affairs committee, Rep. Randolph replied:

I've taken the necessary steps to ask that specific questions be answered internally to ensure NCA 25-001 was handled according to Robert's Rules of Order and our own Rules of Procedures. I would also like to know if the motion made by Representative Hufft violates our Rules of Procedure.

Nowhere in the Rules of Procedure does it state all amendments have to be taken through the Internal Affairs Committee. The ability to make amendments on the floor while we were addressing NCA 25-001 was confirmed by our Speaker and our Lawyer Friday the day before the Council meeting via email to the full Council. ... We all make mistakes, but we must learn



The MCN National Council voted on rules and procedures during a National Council Regular Session March 29. (MM)

from those mistakes and make sure we do not continue to repeat the same mistake.

Rep. Randolph's comments and concerns were echoed by Rep. Whitecloud, who replied that the amendments that both she and Rep. Randolph wished to make had already been previously discussed at a work session on Jan. 20, 2025, where anyone who had amendments to make was told to make them there.

"I was dismayed that the amendment discussion was cut short, Rep. Randolph did not get to finish his discussion and I did not get the opportunity to

address the amendments I had," Rep. Whitecloud said.

"On 1/7/25, the council as a whole was asked to read over the revisions and if anyone had questions or wanted to make additional amendments to submit those on 1/13/25 and they would be discussed at a work session held on 1/20/25. Rep. Randolph and myself were the only ones that submitted amendments at that time; the amendments I wanted to address on 3/29/25 are the same amendments I shared with the Council on 1/20/25..."

As of presstime, Rep. Hufft did not respond to a request for comment.



Louise Roberts showing one of the children how to prepare food at the Wilson Indian Community Center. (Photo Courtesy: Wilson Indian Community Facebook page)



Louise Roberts whisking during her cooking class session at Wilson Indian Community Center. (Photo Courtesy: Wilson Indian Community Facebook page)



The class preparing food themselves during the cooking class at Wilson Indian Community Center. (Photo Courtesy: Wilson Indian Community Facebook page)

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP CELEBRATED IN THE KITCHEN

MONDAY COOKING CLASSES AT THE WILSON INDIAN COMMUNITY CENTER TEACH CHILDREN AND ADULTS

BY **SHAYLN PROCTOR**
REPORTER

WILSON, Okla.- Louise Roberts (Mvskoke) always thinks of something to cook. As a member of the Wilson Indian Community Center, Roberts had been wanting to teach children and adults some of the foods that she has known how to cook and the foods she remembers growing up as a child herself. Roberts, who attends Nuyaka Indian Baptist Church and belongs to Thlopthlocco tribal town, began hosting cooking classes last fall at WIC every Monday at 6:30 p.m for anyone wanting to learn how to cook traditional and non traditional meals. Each week she surprises them with what meal they're going to cook.

Cooking classes at the WIC are open to both children and adults. "We wanted to do something for our community, the adults and chil-

dren, it just took off from there. I told the children when we were getting started that we were going to do traditional and nontraditional, just everyday meals so that when they get ready to leave home they would know some little skills about just fixing a quick meal," Roberts said.

One of Roberts's favorite meals she cooks is chicken and dumplings. She usually prepares the chicken before the classes begin because that does take time, but participants make the dough for the dumplings.

Roberts knows that some of the children will one day live on their own or go off to college, and that when they start buying their own food to cook they need to know what to do so they won't have to go hungry. "I hope that as they get older and when they do get out on their own these children they'll remember the cooking class and continue to cook the food that has been taught to them, even the adults," Roberts said.

Since these classes are for anyone

to join, she has seen some of the members of the Okmulgee Indian Community Center come and take a class as well. They started out with 20-25 people, but that number can fluctuate depending on work and school schedules. Roberts has noticed that even with the fluctuations participants all enjoy it.

The classes are open to anyone, and Roberts has also invited anyone that knows how to cook traditional or nontraditional foods. She is always willing to learn or hear other ideas of how to cook meals, like differences in grape dumplings or chicken and dumplings.

She has also noticed that when some men lose their spouse she sees them losing weight. "It's because the cook was gone and I told my daughter I said I want to show them how to get in there and make an egg sandwich, something simple like that. I've seen a lot of men lose weight and my heart just kind of went out to them and I said we can teach them. They can come and learn just how to make something real simple," Roberts said.

So far, classes have made fry

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP

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HICKORY GROUND MAKES MOTION TO FILE THIRD AMENDED COMPLAINT

UPDATE ON THE LAWSUIT AGAINST THE POARCH BAND OF CREEK INDIANS AND AUBURN UNIVERSITY

BY **JERRAD MOORE**
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - The legal battle for justice for Hickory Ground continues at the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama. As previously reported, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit vacated a prior district court order dismissing Muscogee (Creek) Nation v. Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

The Eleventh Circuit decision remanded the case back to

the district court and directed the MCN and Hickory Ground to file an amended complaint that addressed each claim and defendant separately.

MCN made a motion in the district court on Jan. 15 to file the third amended complaint. As of publication time, Judge Myron H. Thompson has not issued a decision on the motion.

Mvskoke Media spoke with Hickory Ground's legal representation in the case, Cherokee lawyer and playwright Mary Kathryn Nagel, about the current state of the lawsuit. Nagel out-

lined the differences between the most recent complaint and prior complaints filed in the case. Nagel stated:

The biggest difference is that the Eleventh Circuit instructed us to separate out our claims, so that, for instance, if we have a NAGPRA and we also have ARPA claims, and we have a claim under the Indian Reorganization Act, the IRA, that we separate it out claim by claim so we don't have more than one statute at issue in one claim and not more than

one defendant at issue in one claim. So, previously for instance we had a NAGPRA claim and we just listed all the defendants we had NAGPRA claims against in the same claim. It gets a little complicated when you have a case like ours where you have multiple defendants and multiple claims. Especially if the district court's trying to evaluate what claims it's going to dismiss, what claims are going to stay in the case. And it's much easier for the district court to say, 'Okay, count 12 is gone, count 13 is gone, which is this statute against this defendant, this statute against that defendant.' And kind of group them out by the Auburn

University defendants, the Poarch tribal official defendants, and the federal defendants (which are the federal agencies and individual officials that have been sued)...

We added facts that have taken place since the last complaint that was filed in March of 2020. And so, it's been five years and we updated on different things that have happened since then, for instance, the fact that Poarch engaged in additional construction at the sacred site in 2023 and refused to even share any kind of documentation with the Nation or Hickory

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bread, grape dumplings, chicken and dumplings, chicken and rice, along with other foods. During their time cooking, Roberts likes to incorporate the Mvskoke words for their food so that they are also learning the language.

Roberts likes that all are willing to learn and get in the kitchen to start whipping up the meals. She loves to see when students start doing it by themselves and she's also there for them for guidance. "They're all getting to know how to make the fry bread, they get to know how to knead it," Roberts said.

Roberts teaches safety first before she lets students go off on their own, like dealing with a skillet on the stove. She shared that she always helps children put foods like fry bread in a hot skillet.

Roberts understands you have to go slow and cooking can't be learned

in one or two days, so she often repeats meals. According to Roberts, every Monday evening they make fry bread and sometimes grape dumplings.

One day Roberts wants to let them turn loose and see how far they have come along, and to show her if they are able to cook the simple meals by themselves. This, she shared, will assure her that they will be able to do this on their own when the classes are over and they continue learning to do more at home.

Roberts is grateful to be able to host these classes and make them happy to help them learn how to cook, she always sees their excitement when they come into the classes. She likes when they all come together after cooking and being able to enjoy their own meals.

For any updates on the classes visit the Wilson Indian Community Facebook page or for information about the cooking classes contact Louise Roberts at 918-961-4920.

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Ground regarding what kind of surveys or what investigations they performed to ensure that this new construction wouldn't result in further desecration of burial sites or funerary objects or other important cultural resources. Creek Nation was very clear and asked Poarch to not engage in that construction until that investigation could be undertaken, and Poarch refused to do that. Which has been somewhat typical with their conduct to date...

We also added some allegations that relate to the affirmative defense that the Poarch Band Tribal officials are asserting, which is that they are entitled to sovereign immunity under the Coeur D'Alene exception

to the Ex Parte Young Doctrine.. The defendants violations of the federal laws that protect Hickory Ground are ongoing. They haven't ended, right? So the more years this lawsuit keeps going, the more facts we have to talk about, the more issues there are. The claims continue.

The Ex Parte Young Doctrine refers to a United States Supreme Court decision that held that government officials cannot claim sovereign immunity when they enforce unconstitutional laws that harm individuals. The Coeur D'Alene exception refers to a SCOTUS decision that held that the state of Idaho had Eleventh Amendment immunity from a suit brought by the Coeur D'Alene Tribe.

Nagle urged the audience to check out Hickory Ground's social media on Facebook, X, formerly known as Twitter, as well as

Instagram. She shared:

They are posting a lot about Auburn right now, Auburn just denied Mekko Thompson's request to repatriate as a lineal descendant under NAGPRA and they basically told him, hey unless you can tell us the exact names and the identity of individuals you claim you are related to, you don't qualify to repatriate these relatives. Of course the absurdity of that is, you know, historically Mvskoke individuals weren't buried in a white Christian manner, so there is no headstone.

If you would like to view some of the filings in this case, there is a link to the files in the description of the "Lawyer'd Up - MCN vs Poarch Band Update" Youtube episode.

Mvskoke Media will have ongoing coverage of this developing story.



The Ag Youth Program group visiting the Homelands trip in 2023. (Photo Courtesy: MCN Ag Youth Program)

MCN AG YOUTH PROGRAM WILL HOST SEVEN-DAY HOMELANDS VISIT IN JUNE

VISITS TO MOUNDVILLE, HORSESHOE BEND, AND OCMULGEE MOUND PROMISE EDUCATION, CULTURAL HISTORY, AND FUN

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR REPORTER

MVSKOKE Reservation- The annual Muscogee (Creek) Nation Agriculture Youth Program will be visiting the Mvskoke Homelands in Georgia and Alabama this summer from June 8-14. The trip is open to MCN youth that are 14 years and older, live within the reservation boundaries, and have membership in the MCN Ag Youth Program. The fully funded trip has an April 25 deadline.

For this year's trip, youth will visit Moundville and Horseshoe Bend in Alabama and the Ocmul-

gee Mounds in Georgia. In the past when they went, Ag Youth Program Manager Billy Haltom (Potawatomi) said that the trip was a great time and very educational for the youth. The annual trip switched gears two years ago to focus on history and culture. Before that, the group traveled to Washington D.C., where they visited the United States Department of Agriculture, met people from the Indian Affairs Office and other departments dealing with tribal programs

"A lot of our kids don't ever get the opportunity to leave the state, much less do a lot of things that we're able to do with them when we

go out of town," Haltom said.

Haltom described the previous Homelands trips as a mix of emotion, education, and history. When the group visited Tuscaloosa, Ala., they toured the University of Alabama, went to Moundville State Park, and toured the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park.

While at Moundville, a few employees from MCN Historic and Cultural Preservation came to help since they are familiar with the staff and the different parks. "We really got the deluxe tour, it was really

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A portion of the flyer for the youth basketball tournament (Image Courtesy: Ryan Headrick / The Treatment Connection)

SACRED WELLNESS NETWORK'S YOUTH BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT POSTPONED

THE YOUTH TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS HAS BEEN PUSHED BACK SEVERAL MONTHS DUE TO THE CURRENT DAYS TAKING PLACE ON EASTER WEEKEND

BY THOMAS JACKSON REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Youth Tournament of Champions, a youth basketball tournament scheduled for April 18 and 19, has been postponed, according to Ryan Headrick, owner of the Treatment Connection, the host of the tournament. The tournament hopes to help raise money and awareness for counteracting substance and alcohol abuse, and for fighting homelessness.

The tournament, which had been scheduled to take place at the Mvskoke Dome in Okmulgee, OK, was postponed due to scheduling conflicts, as its original dates were

inadvertently set on Easter Weekend.

Ryan Headrick, one of the tournament's organizers and owner of the Treatment Connection, plans to have the tournament rescheduled to early June, if not earlier. He hopes to have this event be the first of many to work towards the goal of fighting substance and alcohol abuse, as well as homelessness.

Those interested in discovering resources for those suffering from substance or alcohol addiction and learning more about the Treatment Connection's work can do so on their website, https://dot.cards/thetreatmentconnection.



The MCN Supreme Court has ordered NCA 24-077 unconstitutional (MM File)

NCA 24-077 DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

MCN SUPREME COURT FINDS LAW AN "UNCONSTITUTIONAL USURPATION OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH'S CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY"

BY JERRAD MORE ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee Creek Nation Supreme Court has issued an order and opinion in SC 2024-05: In the Matter of the Constitutionality of NCA 24-077. The high court has found NCA 24-077 unconstitutional. According to the decision:

To begin, the Court finds it necessary to briefly reiterate the concerns it expressed with this process in its February 21, 2025 oral argument. Unlike the nomination and confirmation process for an Article VI Justice (where the confirmed Justice will serve a six-year term, with the option (absent recusal) to hear all cases that are filed with the Court), the nomination of a Special Justice is for a singular case. This places an inordinate amount of power

and influence with the Legislative and Executive branches of government, where the circumstances are ripe for a Special Justice to be selected based entirely on a desired outcome for the specific case. Even if the motivations of the Legislative and Executive branches of government are well-meaning, the decision by the other branches to meddle with the Nation's past precedent creates an appearance of impropriety.

This Court has a duty to protect the integrity of the Nation's judicial system. This Court has previously explained that "it is the responsibility of the Judge in all cases to determine, himself, using his best judgment, if

his decisions will be perceived as unfair requiring recusal." Further, that "in deciding whether a decision will be perceived as unfair, a judicial officer should consider the case from both a subjective standpoint (assessing whether the judicial officer considers himself or herself to be impartial) and an objective standpoint (asking whether the public would reasonably consider the judicial officer to be impartial)." In this instance, the Court views the following circumstances as objectively problematic: (1) the Executive and Legislative branches of government are involved as par-

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THE MVSKOKE NEWS

Angel Ellis, Director | aellis@mvskokemedia.com

Braden Harper, Managing Editor | bharper@mvskokemedia.com

Jerrad Moore, Assignment Editor | jmoore@mvskokemedia.com

Shayln Proctor, Reporter | sproctor@mvskokemedia.com

Meredith Johnson, Reporter | mjohnson@mvskokemedia.com

Thomas Jackson, Reporter | tjackson@mvskokemedia.com

Frances Herrod, Reporter | fherrod@mvskokemedia.com

Lindsey Arneecheer, Layout | larneecheer@mvskokemedia.com



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neat and it was very educational,” Haltom said.

During the Horseshoe Bend tour, Haltom described it as emotional because of the battle that took place and the lives that were lost. During their time at Ocmulgee Mounds in Macon, Ga., the group was joined by the former MCN Chief of Staff who helped them with a tour. “We got to meet with the mayor and go tour City Hall. There’s a lot of coexistence between MCN and the town of Macon, that was a really neat experience,” Haltom said.

Even though it is an educational trip they are able to have fun-- swimming in the ocean all afternoon, seeing dolphins, and watching the Atlanta Braves baseball game. “That was a really good day for everybody even though it wasn’t as much education. They got to experience a lot of things that not a lot of them would ever be able to do,” Haltom said.

Hotels, food, and transportation are covered by the program and even every stop the group makes, including convenience stores, is included in the cost. However, the

program doesn’t cover souvenirs. “It’s an excellent opportunity for young people to go. It doesn’t cost them anything, it’s guaranteed a good educational fun trip and it’s just a lot of fun,” Haltom said.

Haltom shared that they already have eight members signed up so far for this year’s trip, with a max of 10. He has heard some of the youth speak highly of those trips and mentions that they all say that they had a good time, how educational it was for them and they hope they go back.

“I enjoy being with the kids, it’s a lot of fun. Because again, a lot of our kids have never really been anywhere or have been on a very limited basis somewhere. Just to see them take in all the different things they probably never thought they would get to do. It’s just really rewarding,” Haltom said.

For any information about the Ag Youth Program or the Homelands trip you can contact Billy Haltom at 918-843-0385 and their office number is 918-732-7628. Their application form for the Homelands trip can be found on their facebook page at MCN Ag Youth Program.

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ties in SC-2023-10 and are solely responsible under NCA 24-077 for selecting the Special Justices to hear their case; (2) the Legislative and Executive branches of government argued in briefing and during oral argument that a quorum issue has existed since this Court’s decision in Ellis, SC-2010-01 (a decision issued on May 2, 2013), yet nothing was done to address this “problem” until the eve of oral argument in SC-2023-10 (in June of 2024, over ten years later), passing NCA 24-077 via an emergency session shortly before oral argument; finally, (3) both NCA 24-077 and the tribal resolutions nominating and confirming the Special Justices were all passed and signed on the same day, further evidencing that SC-2023-10 was the specific target of NCA 24-077, as opposed to a general desire to address concerns arguably created by the Ellis decision. Due in large part to these circumstances, there is a great public perception that NCA 24-077 and the tribal resolutions appointing

the two (2) Special Justices were enacted to produce a desired result, whether or not that perception is correct. In reality, this perception would be the case in any matter (present or in the future) in which the Legislative or Executive branch is a party to the action before this Court. It defies reality to believe opposing parties, the public, or foreign jurisdictions would not suspect wrongdoing when a party in an appellate matter is given the ability to unilaterally select the judicial officer hearing their case. Under this Court’s case law precedent (mentioned above), such a perception would be enough to justify recusal of the newly appointed Special Justice from the outset, creating an endless loop in which every Special Justice appointee would be expected to recuse as soon as they assumed the case.

The Court also addressed habeas corpus concerns discussed in oral arguments, as follows:

Finally, the Court has expressed its concern that NCA 24-077 specifically applies to writ of habeas corpus actions. Under the Court’s

appellate rules of procedure, an appellant seeking a writ of habeas corpus is guaranteed to have their action set for hearing within seventy-two (72) hours of filing, with (at least) a three (3) Justice panel. NCA 24-077 upends this appellate rule, requiring a full complement of seven (7) Justices hear the writ, and giving the Executive and Legislative branches up to ninety (90) days to finalize their selection for any recused Justices’ seat. Writs of habeas corpus are particularly important actions, as no man or woman should be unjustifiably detained by the Nation. To require an Appellant in a writ action to wait up to ninety (90) days in jail while the Nation scrambles to fill recused Justices’ seats is simply unacceptable.

The decision in SC 2024-05 now removes the stay in SC-2023-10, Citizenship board of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation v. Rhonda K. Grayson. The MCN SC has not issued an order scheduling oral arguments in this case at the time of the publication of this article.

Mvskoke Media will have ongoing coverage of this developing story.



Muscogee (Creek) Nation tribal leadership stands in front of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Citizen Services Building. April 14, 2025. Okmulgee, Okla. (Braden Harper/MM)



Construction workers place the final beam on top of the new Muscogee (Creek) Nation Citizen Services Building. April 14, 2025. Okmulgee, Okla. (Braden Harper/MM)

CITIZENSHIP BUILDING TOPPED OFF IN CELEBRATORY CEREMONY

DECADES-LONG VISION FINALLY COMES TO FRUITION FOR CURRENT AND PAST TRIBAL LEADERSHIP

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal Complex skyline now has a new shape with the addition of the Citizen Services building. The structure saw its final beam placed at a topping out ceremony held on April 14. Tribal leadership including Principal Chief David Hill, Second Chief Del Beaver, members of the National Council, and members of Chief’s cabinet were present to witness the historic event. The 167,000 square feet, four-floor facility was designed by New Fire Native Design Group and FSB-AE, which are also

responsible for the designs of Looped Square Meat Co. and the Safe Space Facility. The building broke ground on December 12, 2023.

New Fire Native Design President Jason Holuby said the new structure will feature Mvskoke cultural motifs in its design, and will begin the process of making the tribal complex more walkable and safe for visitors and employees.

“Our team worked tirelessly to integrate thoughtful and meaningful Mvskoke culture throughout the project,” Holuby said. “Today is a celebration of progress. Not only in the building’s construction but progress of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Progress of us as

a people.”

A topping out ceremony is a way to celebrate a milestone made during construction of a new building, typically when the final and highest steel beam is put in place. The tradition goes as far back as 700 A.D. in Scandinavia. Although it marks a milestone, it does not mark the full completion of the project.

Former MCN Chiefs that attended Monday’s topping out ceremony included Bill Fife, George Tiger and James Floyd. Former National Council member James Jennings attended in place of former Chief A.D. Ellis. Accord-

CITIZENSHIP BUILDING
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BUTTERFLY RELEASE HONORS THOSE LOST TO VIOLENT CRIME

MCN CENTER FOR VICTIM SERVICES SAYS RELEASE PART OF MANY EVENTS PLANNED FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

MVSKOKE RESERVATION - Painted Lady butterflies soared above the Okmulgee Community Garden after they were released by those who attended the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Center for Victim Services’ Second Annual Butterfly Release. The event took place on April 9, during National Crime Victims Rights Week. At the ceremony, attendees were each handed a cup containing a butterfly to release in honor of those who lost their life to violent crime. A list of loved ones

and family members were read off during remarks from event organizers. A traditional Cedar Blessing was available after the butterflies were released.

The butterflies released were Painted Ladies (Vanessa Cardui) from the Euchee Butterfly Farm, a common species found in North America. The butterfly release was just one of several events hosted by the department for Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

MCN Center for Victim Services Outreach Coordinator MaCaylin Autaubo (Wichita) says the idea to include the butterfly release to



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Center for Victim Services Director Shawn Partridge hands out butterflies to attendees at the department’s Second Annual Butterfly Release. Okmulgee, Okla. April 9, 2025. (Braden Harper/MM)



A Painted Lady butterfly rests on a garden bed after it was released during the Butterfly Release. Okmulgee, Okla. April 9, 2025. (Braden Harper/MM)

April’s slate of events came from a colleague with a butterfly connection.

“It came from our youth prevention specialist, she got the idea from the Euchee Butterfly Farm, she works closely with them in their personal time, she has family links

to them,” Autaubo said. “This is one of the biggest months for our program because we are victim based. We work with survivors of sexual violence. We also address stalking and teen dating violence. We do our best to highlight domestic and sexual violence.”

MCN Center for Victim Services Health and Wellness Coordinator Morgan James (Mvskoke) says the best way to bring awareness to domestic and sexual violence issues is to talk about it openly.

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(Courtesy: Chris Azbell)



(Courtesy: Chris Azbell)

CHEWIN' THE CUD

BY KENT SANMANN
COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

“You are what you eat.”

If this is true, I’m a lot more McDonalds than I am Kiowa or Chickasaw, my two tribes. Unfortunately, I am sure this is true of most today’s Native Americans. Even if they are eating healthier than McDonalds, the chances

they are eating traditional foods rather than the common foods of the mainstream American diet is pretty slim. And if by chance they are eating traditional Native dishes, chances are the sources for the ingredients are from non-Native producers and corn, beans, squash

etc. are not traditional tribe varieties, but probably modern commercial crops.

Moreover, modern crops can differ significantly from traditional varieties, in terms of taste, physical characteristics and nutritional content. In other words, making sofkee from hominy purchased from Shawnee Mills is going to be different from sofkee made from a traditional Muscogee or Yuchi variety.

Of course, these days people are using the commercially available ingredients rather than the traditional varieties of corn, beans, pumpkins etc. because those are the only varieties available. This should come as no surprise given the history of the Muscogee people for the past two hundred years. Increased pressure on their society, culture and agriculture from non-Natives, forced removal to a country with totally different soil, geography and climate from the one their agricul-


tural system evolved in, Civil War, increased economic intrusion, and finally allotment, and that’s just the first one hundred years. It is a miracle the Muscogee and Yuchi people survived, let alone any of the traditional crops.

But the Muscogee people have survived, as have some of their traditional corn, pumpkin and peach varieties. I think that in the future they can not only survive but thrive and help the Muscogee people thrive as well by allowing people to return to their original healthy foods and diet. The College of the Muscogee Nation and the College of the Muscogee of the Muscogee Nation Extension Service are attempting to increase the number of seeds to a point where we can grow enough of the surviving crops to actually feed people. If not every day, then at least to where traditional food made with traditional ingredients can be made for wild

onion dinners, church dinners, for the ceremonial grounds and other cultural events. This will take time, but the destruction of traditional foods happened over time, but I think with the right resources and commitments we can recover quicker than the time it took to inflict the damage; our seeds are resilient.

This Spring we will be giving seeds to a selected set of experienced growers who will grow the seeds for us, and if all goes well (no hail, tornadoes, severe drought, deer raccoons, etc.) we will get a much greater amount of seed back. One thing that has to be kept in mind is that Native seeds, not just Muscogee seeds, are extremely endangered and rare. In many cases, they are even more endangered than wildlife like tigers and

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The 2024 Mvskoke Immersion Camp photo of a few students in front of the Sequoyah State Park sign. (Photo Courtesy: Mvskoke Language Program)



The 2024 Mvskoke Immersion Camp students enjoying their time making s'mores. (Photo Courtesy: Mvskoke Language Program)

CITIZENSHIP BUILDING
 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

ing to Chief Hill, having former living chiefs present for the ceremony was symbolic because the new building not only represented his administration's vision for the tribe, but former administrations as well.

"One of the things that we did want to do was pursue the master plan that Chief Floyd had put in. After the Supreme Court ruling we knew we had to expand," Chief Hill said. "Just six or seven months ago my Chief of Staff, Jeff Fife, found the comprehensive plan that former Chief (Bill) Fife and Ed Mouss put together. This was a vision all the former chiefs had."

Bill Fife was invited to give remarks about the tribe's history of serving citizens. Along with the Nation's first executive director, Ed Mouss, Fife was there in 1979 when the tribe adopted a new constitution and the modern government was formed. Fife had previously served as principal chief from 1992-1996.

"These things didn't just

happen, they were planned out. They did really good things for our people," Bill Fife said. "The new tribal services administration building represents just that: progress. We're making progress. We have to stay ahead of the game and take care of our citizens' needs."

The building is more than just a shiny new structure, it is a facility that will make trips on the tribal complex much more efficient. According to MCNC Speaker Randall Hicks, this project took a team effort to bring to life.

"It took us all to work together in order for this to come true. Many visions, many hearts and it's not about us. It's about our Muscogee people." Speaker Hicks said. "As Chief Hill has said many times before, it's going to be a 'one-stop shop,' instead of going all over the reservation now we have one building to service all of our Muscogee people."

Candor Building Solutions, the construction company constructing the design, estimates the completion date of the project for the first quarter of 2026.

THE 2025 MVSKOKE LANGUAGE IMMERSION CAMP APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN

VCULVKE-TATE EMVYETV, THE WAYS OF THE ANCESTORS, IS THE UNIFYING IDEA BEHIND THE 18TH ANNUAL CAMP

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR
 REPORTER

HULBERT, Okla.- Applications are open for the 2025 Mvskoke Language Immersion Camp, happening on June 9-13 at Sequoyah State Park. Jordan Squire (Mvskoke), Mvskoke Language Program Project Media Coordinator, sat down with Mvskoke Media to talk about this year's camp, what campers can expect, and the importance of the camp for Mvskoke children.

Squire shared this year's camp theme: "Vculyke-tate Emvyetv," which translates to "the ways of the Ancestors."

"Our camp this year we tried to steer more into providing activities for students so they're not full in language classes all the time. They're getting the history, they're getting the storytelling and we're providing a few little social activities," Squire said.

They try not to repeat previous year's activities but try to do something interesting for the students. This year, for example, the arts and crafts activities will incorporate weaving. Within those five days campers can expect cultural storytelling, arts and crafts, and cultural and language activities. This year the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Cultural Preservation will also help with activities for the students.

With nine capable teachers and four fluent first language speakers, this year for the first time, they are able to offer a full language immersion experience. The camp works to place campers into a group of peers based on their skill, and children will take an assessment for placement. Squire knows that learning the Mvskoke language can be hard, and at times it can be intimidating, but she's glad to create a safe place for students to come and learn the language without having to worry about making mistakes. "I think it helped their confidence too because they were put in with the kids that were in the same level of knowledge when it came to language. So I think it really helped boost the kids' confidence too of speaking," Squire said.

"One of the cool things about our camp is most of the majority of our program, we're all still learning the language. So I like that these kids can feel comfortable talking

to us or asking us questions."

During camp, teachers work to make it as inclusive as possible. Squire has noticed veteran Mvskoke teacher KoKo Lowe always making sure that no student is left behind or sitting alone. Squire sees that the quietest ones often end up becoming the loudest by the end, which she is happy to see.

"It's good that we provide a camp that's like a safe zone and people trust us with their kids to come learn the language. It's sad when you see a lot of kids that have been in the program for a long time and then you see them age out, you could tell they're sad about it," Squire said. "One of the things too is at the end of the camp most of the kids aren't ready to go home because they like being out there with their friends and the new friends that they made too, but you could see a lot of the kids they really do have that interest in the language."

In her time working with the immersion camp, Squire has noticed that the camp also gets lots of returning campers. "I'm glad they come back, they like our camp, they tell their friends about it and they get connected with other individuals that are interested in learning the language too," Squire said. "I know a lot of our students that we do have come into our camp until they can age out."

The Mvskoke Language Program loves to see the citizens reaching out about their camp and how much excitement they see in the eagerness in the children's eye of wanting to come on board for this year's camp. Squire notices they are not there just for the camp but that they also want to learn the Mvskoke language, and are eager to do so. She also likes that the middle school and high school students are focused and take their

time out of the week for this camp.

This year the department is offering a five day camp experience, and through annual feedback they've learned most campers want to learn more about Mvskoke history and culture. The program takes their feedback seriously and the parents feedback as well, Squire said that they want to do better each time.

"We want them to know that we have the resources to learn the language. We may not teach you officially how to speak but we can give you little stepping stones. Because learning the language is a lot of self study too, and we do a good job at providing that for the kids," Squire said.

She's glad to see the impact that they bring to these students and she knows that some of them are from out of state. Squire says that she's glad that their families and their students put it as a priority to learn the language and culture even when some travel 100 miles away.

Applications for attending are due on May 2 by 5:00 p.m. Applications can be mailed in or dropped by the Mvskoke Language Program office or turn in the applications on their website linked below.

The camp is open for students in 7th-12th grade, and campers cannot be 18 prior to June 9, 2025. Applications are open to citizens on the reservation and beyond, just as long as they are enrolled tribal members of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. A 200-word essay on the "importance of preserving the Mvskoke language," is also part of the application.

For more information about the Mvskoke Language Immersion Camp or about the Mvskoke Language Program go to Mvskoke-Opunvk.com or contact the office at 918-732-7649.

BUTTERFLY RELEASE
 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"Talking about it and supporting the victims, letting them know that there are services available for them and supporting the programs that help the victims of the families," James said.

Domestic violence is often underreported, making accurate statistical reporting hard to develop a true prevalence rate. When asked how to handle an ongoing domestic violence situation that a victim does not want to speak up on, James asserts the best way to start fixing the problem is to be present and listen.

"Honestly, it's just being there for the survivors," James said. "Letting them know that you are there and they can talk freely without judgement."

Other events and services provided by the department include pop up booths at various locations across the Mvskoke Reservation, a Child Sexual Assault Awareness panel and honor walk at the College of the Muscogee Nation, and a Sexual Assault Awareness honor walk in Eufaula. According to Autaubo, those who call in needing help are treated as a priority.

"We have amazing advocates on our staff that are always here to help with whatever needs you may have. It's almost as if they practically drop everything that they're doing and they go wherever the call is coming from." Autaubo said.

The department's 24/7 emergency crisis line can be reached at 918-732-7979. For a full list of events hosted by the department, visit their Facebook page.

CHEWIN THE CUD
 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

elephants. Consequently, we have a responsibility in my opinion, to make sure that Native seeds survive, just as they helped our ancestors survive for millennium. That means that initially we need to select experienced growers who have enough space to plant enough plants to ensure the genetic viability of the seeds and to keep them from accidentally crossing with modern varieties.

If we manage to increase our seed stock, recruit more growers, find more land and equipment to increase our yields, we will eventually be able to grow on a scale

where we can actually make the food that we all love. It could be making sofkee out of traditional Muscogee flint corn, fried pumpkin, or peach cobbler from Muscogee blood peaches. Ultimately, we make seeds available for tribal members to grow these crops on their own, because in the end tribal food sovereignty isn't just about eating. It is about re-establishing our connections and relationships with not just the domesticated crops, but also the wild plants, animals, trees, and fish that have sustained Muscogee people from the beginning. It will take time, but if we approach it in a responsible way with the right intent, it can happen.



The 2024 Mvskoke Immersion Camp group photo on the last day of camp getting ready to go home. (Photo Courtesy: Mvskoke Language Program)

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Our Website
Creekhealth.org







(MM File)

HEW PASSES REPEAL AND REPLACE OF ELECTION CODE

MCN HEAD START GARDEN GRANT PASSES

BY **MEREDITH JOHNSON**
REPORTER

MVSKOKE RESERVATION- On April 15, the Health, Education, and Welfare Committee held a mixed virtual and in-person meeting. Passed legislation will go on to the next full council meeting, unless otherwise noted.

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

TR 25-026 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation confirming the re-nomination of Selina Jayne-Doran to serve on the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Election Board passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Leonard Gouge sponsored the legislation.

NCA 25-038 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of grant funds in the amount of \$4,237 awarded from the National Head Start Association (NHSA) and the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation for the benefit of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Head Start Program passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Mary Crawford sponsored the legislation.

According to the legislation, the grant funds will be used to buy gardening supplies to expand and

enhance the current Head Start garden.

NCA 25-039 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of the FHI 360 Walmart Racial Solidarity Grant in the amount of \$47,000 for the benefit of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Reintegration Program passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Thomasene Yahola- Osborn sponsored the legislation.

According to the legislation, the grant funds will be used to assist participating American Indian/Alaskan Native youth to gain a deeper understanding of their cultural identity, realize their inherent value and role within the tribes, and develop healthy coping mechanisms through engaging in culturally rooted outlets.

NCA 25-040 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation repealing Title 19, entitled "Elections" and replacing it with a new title 19, entitled "Elections Cokvsatkv" passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Osborn sponsored the legislation.

According to the legislation, the Election Board submitted a significant number of changes to the election code, thus there is a need to repeal Title 19 in its entirety to establish a more comprehensive code.

To view the full agenda, visit mcnnc.com.



(MM File)

BILL TO PAY FOR ADDITIONAL TOBACCO COMPACT LEGAL FEES APPROVED BY BFJ

THE COMMITTEE ALSO PASSED BILLS FOR A MVSKOKE LOAN FUND NOMINATION AND FOR LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

BY **THOMAS JACKSON**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) National Council held the Business, Finance and Justice Committee session at the Mound Building on Apr. 21.

Passed legislation is subject to full council approval during the regular session.

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

TR 25-030 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation confirming the nomination of LuAnn Hudson to serve on the Mvskoke Loan Fund Board was passed by the committee. The resolution was sponsored by Representative Nelson Harjo of the Okmulke District. It was passed with a vote of 4-0.

If adopted, this resolution will allow LuAnn Hudson to serve on the Board for the Mvskoke Loan Fund.

NCA 25-042 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing a supplemental appropriation for the

Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tax Commission for Fiscal Year 2025, to the amount of \$244,888.22, was passed by the committee. The law was sponsored by Representative Sandra Golden of the Akfvske District. It was passed with a vote of 4-0.

If adopted, this law will allow the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tax Commission to pay for additional legal services to continue negotiating over the Tobacco Compact and other legal issues.

NCA 25-043 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending MCNCA Title 14, Chapter 1, Subchapter 11, entitled "Insanity of Accused; Determination of Competence," was passed by the committee. The law was sponsored by Rep. Golden. It was passed with a vote of 4-0.

If adopted, this law will change the legal proceedings involved in determining the mental competence of a person accused of a crime, and will involve MCN Behavioral Health in the process, rather than Adult Protective Services.

To view the full agenda, visit: mcnnc.com.

CALLING FOR

GRADUATE PROFILES

The 'Mvskoke News' will feature 2025 Muscogee (Creek) Nation high school, military, technical school and college graduates in the upcoming June 1 edition of the 'MN.'

Please provide the following information along with a digital photo via email to info@mvskokemedia.com no later than Monday, May 13 by 5 p.m. in order to be published in the 2025 'MN' graduate edition. If you do not receive an emailed confirmation, please call the office at 918-732-7720 to verify the profile has been received.

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

2025 Graduate Profile Form

Name:

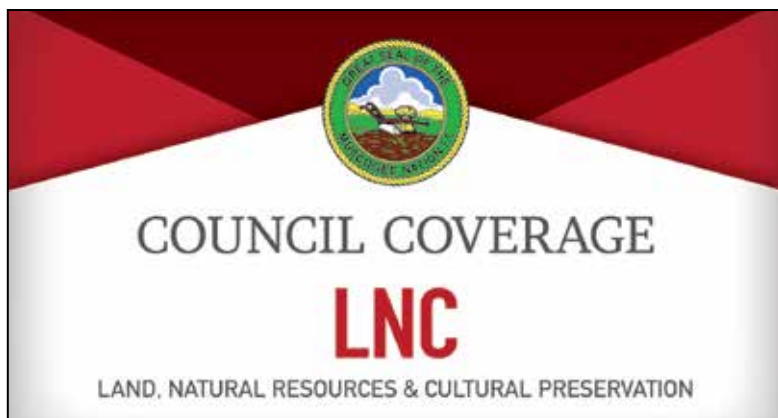
High School/College/Tech. Institute/Military Program:

Bio (150-word limit):

DEADLINE: MAY 13, 2025 AT 5PM

LATE PROFILES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

MVSKOKEMEDIA • 918.732.7720 • INFO@MVSKOKEMEDIA.COM



(MM File)

COUNCIL PASSES UPDATED POLICIES FOR MCN'S MORTGAGE DOWN PAYMENT AND CLOSING COST PROGRAM

MCN SUBMITTING A \$3M GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE HOME ELECTRONICS AND APPLIANCE REBATES PROGRAM

BY **SHAYLN PROCTOR**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Muscogee (Creek) National Land, Natural Resources and Cultural Preservation Committee held a meeting in the Mound Building on April 15.

The committee addressed the following legislation, the interpretation of which is attributed to language in the bills. All legislation passed through committee will be presented in the next session for full council approval.

TR 25-027 A tribal resolution

of the MCN approving a revised temporary relocation policy for the MCN Department of Housing passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Charles McHenry sponsored this legislation

According to the legislation, the MCN, as a recipient of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHSDA), is required to revise the "Temporary Relocation Policy" in accordance with HUD.

TR 25-028 A tribal resolution of the MCN approving a revised rental property admission and occupancy policy for the MCN Department of

Housing passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Galen Cloud sponsored this legislation.

According to the legislation, as a recipient of NAHSDA funds, the MCN Department of Housing needs to revise the Rental Property Admission and Occupancy Policy in accordance with HUD standards.

TR 25-029 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to submit a grant application to the Department of Energy, State and Community Energy Programs Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates Program for Indian tribes passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Mark Randolph sponsored this legislation.

According to the legislation, this authorizes a grant application proposal for an estimated \$3M for the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates Program for Indian Tribes; \$750,000 in that amount will be leveraged resource utilizing NAHSDA funds.

NCA 25-041 A law of the MCN amending MCNCA title 24, chapter 8, subchapter 1. Entitled "Mortgage Down Payment and Closing Cost Program", subsections §§ 8-103 and 8-104 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Randolph sponsored this legislation.

According to the legislation, changes in program policy to the conditions governing eligibility, residing on the reservation, and participant criteria will be made to the mortgage program.

For more information visit, www.mcnnc.com.

MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION

Office of Environmental Services

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025	FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 2025
Community Clean-Up Event	Recycle Collection Event
	<p>Free Document Shredding from 10 A.M. – 1 P.M. Due to the limited capacity of the shredding truck, it will be first come, first served, and you must stay with your documents while they are being shredded.</p> <p>NO books, 3-ring binders, large clips, or magazines</p> <p>Free Electronic Recycling from 9 A.M. – 3 P.M. TVs, monitors, cell phones, small appliances, and other electronics for safe and responsible recycling</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other Items Accepted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> White goods such as washers, dryers, refrigerators, and freezers (ALL DOORS MUST BE REMOVED) Automobile batteries and alkaline batteries (NO LITHIUM BATTERIES) Automobile Tires (NO AGRICULTURAL TIRES) Cardboard, paper, plastics #1 & 2, and aluminum cans <p style="color: red; text-align: center;">DO NOT bring any hazardous materials</p> <p>Hazardous waste includes paint, medications, glues, fluorescent bulbs, and chemicals such as pesticides, cleaners, and insect repellants. These types of items will not be accepted at this event.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Registration will be at the MCN Tribal Executive Building Canopy at 12:30 P.M.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Routes to be determined Crews will clean from 1 P.M. – 3 P.M.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gloves, bags, vests, hand sanitizer, and bottled water provided to volunteers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Afterwards, volunteers will meet at the MCN Recycling Center for fellowship, cookout, t-shirts and prizes!</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>MCN RECYCLING CENTER</p> <p>12675 GUN CLUB ROAD</p> <p>OKMULGEE, OK 74447</p> <p>FOR MORE INFO</p> <p>CONTACT: 918-549-2580</p> </div> </div>



Chief David Hill, Speaker Randall Hicks, and Jenks Mayor Cory Box took some time to enjoy the new golf facility on April 17. (Thomas Jackson/MM)



Jenks Mayor, Hon. Cory Box (center left), and Principal Chief David Hill cut the ribbon to officially open the new golf facility. (Thomas Jackson/MM)

RAISING THE PAR

SUITE SHOTS OPENED ITS JENKS LOCATION WITH A RIBBON CUTTING CELEBRATION ON APRIL 17

BY THOMAS JACKSON
REPORTER

JENKS, Okla. - On April 17, Suite Shots, a golf and entertainment facility, hosted a Ribbon Cutting ceremony at 12:30 p.m. at the Riverwalk Crossing in Jenks. The grand opening was celebrated with a ceremony and a series of events going on all day, even after the facility officially opened to the public at 3:00 p.m.

Suite Shots opened at 600 Riverwalk Terrace in Jenks, taking over the location previously held by TopGolf as well as GolfSuites,

which had been the subject of some controversy with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

The renovated golf facility features 60 outdoor heated bays for visitors to play golf in, as well as 2 large event spaces, 36 slot machines, 4 bars serving both cocktails and mocktails, and a full-service restaurant that serves everything from burgers and sandwiches to pizza and nachos, as well as salads, wings, and desserts. The restaurant will be open starting at 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. from Sunday to Thursday and starting at 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Suite Shots hosted a variety of

events in honor of the grand opening, and partnered with the organization United Way to host a "Putt to Win" competition after it opened for business. The radio station 97.1 FM, the Sports Animal, was broadcasting live from the site from 4 to 6 p.m. to cover the event and to give away free tickets to an Oklahoma City Thunder game. In addition, pop-up vendors sold a wide variety of items on site from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Principal Chief Hill was extremely proud of the work that

RAISING THE PAR
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

SUBMISSIONS



Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs Secretary Grover Wind was presented with a quilt from the Quilts of Valor Foundation for his military services to his country, the Muscogee Nation, and his work with fellow veterans. (Photo Courtesy: VASO)

VETERANS AFFAIRS SECRETARY HONORED WITH QUILT

BY MUSCOGEE NATION VETERANS AFFAIRS

On April 4, a representative from the Quilts of Valor Foundation presented Muscogee (Creek) Nation Secretary of Veterans Affairs Grover Wind a Quilt of Valor in recognition of his service to the Muscogee Nation, his country, and all veterans.

The Quilts of Valor Foundation began in 2003 from literally a dream experienced by founder Catherine Roberts. In the dream, Roberts' son, Nat, was deployed in Iraq and according to her, "The dream was as vivid as real life. I saw a young man

sitting on the side of his bed in the middle of the night, hunched over. The permeating feeling was one of utter despair. I could see the war demons clustered around, dragging him down into an emotional gutter. Then, as if viewing a movie, I saw him in the next scene wrapped in a quilt. His whole demeanor changed. The message of my dream was: Quilts = Healing."

Congratulations to Secretary Wind on receiving this distinguished honor.



Senate Bill 675, which would have allowed the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority access to all vehicle registration information from the Department of Safety, failed to pass on April 9. (Meredith Johnson/MM)

TURNPIKE TOLL BILL TO TAX ALL MOTORISTS WITH TRIBAL PLATES FAILS TO PASS IN STATE LEGISLATURE

SENATE BILL 675 WOULD HAVE REQUIRED VEHICLE OWNER REGISTRATION THROUGH THE OKLAHOMA LAW ENFORCEMENT TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS NETWORK, WHICH WOULD HAVE IDENTIFIED ALL MOTORISTS USING THE TURNPIKE SYSTEM, INCLUDING MOTORISTS WITH TRIBAL TAGS

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. - An Oklahoma State Senate bill that would have imposed turnpike tolls on motorists who operate vehicles with tribal tags failed to pass through the public safety committee on Wednesday, March 15. Senate Bill 675 was originally introduced in the senate on Jan. 15 and was engrossed in the house on March 26. The bill includes language that would have given the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority the ability to access vehicle owner registration from the Department of Safety if that information was not already provided by another sovereign jurisdiction. The state claims it has lost millions of dollars in unpaid tolls by tribal citizens who are enrolled in tribes who are not compacted with the state.

Section F of SB 675 states: Unless vehicle owner registration information is made available to the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority through a registering agency of this state or any other state, territory, district, province, nation, or other jurisdiction that permits access to such information upon request or by agreement, the Department of Public Safety may provide the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority with vehicle owner registration information within this state that is available through the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Telecommunication Systems network. This provision shall only apply for the purpose of toll collection for vehicles identified by the Okla-

homa Turnpike Authority's video toll collection system.

This comes just nine days after the state's tobacco compact extension with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation expired on March 31. According to Press Secretary Jason Salsman, the Nation is still in talks to reach an agreement. The state already has a license tag agreement with Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation and Choctaw Nation.

During a press conference, Governor Kevin Stitt expressed his concerns over the bill. According to Stitt, he believes all residents of the state should be required to pay tolls.

"The fact that you have the Muscogee Creeks that have killed this bill, because they want to drive on the turnpikes for free, I think Oklahomans find that disgusting, I think Oklahomans find that ridiculous," Governor Stitt said. "We have a compact with the Cherokees, with the Choctaws, with the Chickasaws, we know who the tags belong to, they're just like Oklahomans, it's the same billing process. Listen, nobody likes paying turnpike fees, let's make them free for everybody. But I can't be a fair governor to say 'you're going to pay a fee to drive on the turnpike, but theirs is free'"

MCN Principal Chief David Hill released a public response to Governor Stitt's comments. According to Chief Hill, the turnpikes that run through the Mvskoke Reservation should have never been constructed in the first place without consultation from the Nation:

More divisive and ignorant rhetoric from the Governor. It's not the first time we've heard this, trust me.

'Indians get everything for free! Indians don't pay taxes! They get free college!' And now, it seems the new one 'The Creeks want to drive on the turnpikes for free!' The same turnpikes that were built on our Reservations? That bear our names? That we were never consulted during their concept or construction? Never mind that we receive zero percentage on the collection of tolls.

If we wanted to drive the turnpikes for free, we wouldn't have an entire fleet of tribal vehicles, that get their Pike Pass first thing. We wouldn't have thousands of tribal citizens with Pike Passes. The killing of SB 675 is a win for tribal consultation, and a loss for authoritarian, one-size-fits-all state and tribal governance. We're thrilled that there are many who see the value of this and want to work together on real issues and not be divided by false narratives and politics.

Governor Stitt claimed that the matter of unpaid turnpike tolls was a racial issue that is unfair to fellow Oklahomans who do not drive vehicles with tribal tags.

"I think this is a 95, or 98 or 99 percent issue with Oklahomans. The turnpike should not be based on race, it shouldn't be based on where you live in the state, it shouldn't be based on what tag you have on your car. Everyone that drives the turnpike should pay the same amount."

To read SB 675 in its entirety, visit the Oklahoma State legislature's website, oklegislature.gov.



VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



DONALD "BUTCH" MCINTOSH

The Muscogee Nation Veterans Services Office is proud to honor Tribal veteran Donald

"Butch" McIntosh for his dedicated service to the U.S. Air Force, the United States, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Donald honorably served thirty-three years from 1961-1994 and is a recipient of the Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with 5 Devices, Air Reserve Forces Meritorious Service Medal with 4 Devices, National Defense Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon with 5 Devices, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Air Force Training Ribbon, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Device. Mvto Mr. McIntosh for your selfless service to your country and your community.

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RAISING THE PAR
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

was put in by both Suite Shots and the Muscogee Nation's Gaming Enterprises. However, as he mentioned while giving a speech at the ceremony, the Muscogee Nation's work in bringing prosperity to the reservation is not finished.

"Ever since our ancestors stopped under a massive Council Oak tree after a long, difficult journey on the Trail of Tears, this river has been our home. It's up to us to make sure it continues to run, to thrive, and to sustain growth for many years," Chief Hill said.

He also made sure to thank both the City of Jenks and Suite Shots for all of their hard work as

well.

"To our friends and partners here in the city of Jenks, thank you for your consistent willingness to work along with us to transform this region into a place that generations to come can be proud of what we've built together. To Mayor Box and the members of the Chamber of Commerce, mvto. To the team at Suite Shots, thank you for your trust and commitment to join us in transforming this property into a can't-miss entertainment destination."

More information on Suite Shots, its facilities, and its hours can be found by visiting their website, <https://suitseshotsjenks.com/>, calling 918-528-5624, or emailing info@suitseshots.com.



Daniel Lee works on his Last Lemon Kokum design collection. (Photo Courtesy: Last Lemon Facebook)



The founder Daniel Lee of Last Lemon had given a young girl one of his retro clothing that he had designed. (Photo Courtesy: Last Lemon Facebook)

CHEROKEE DESIGNER HIGHLIGHTS HIS JOURNEY TO FASHION

DANIEL LEE'S LAST LEMON DESIGNS MIX THE TRADITIONAL WITH STREETWEAR

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- Daniel Lee (Cherokee) is the 26-year old founder of Last Lemon, a new business specializing in retro and streetwear clothing. Lee's creations mix traditional Native American designs and motifs with urban streetwear.

The fashion spark for Lee happened while watching his little sister do runways. When he saw that the men's wear wasn't his type of style he wanted to try something fresh.

According to Lee's website, "Last Lemon is more than a designer brand—it's a story of resilience and transformation. Rooted in Native American heritage, our designs blend traditional patterns, ribbonwork, and patchwork with modern urban streetwear to create something truly unique."

Last Lemon came to life because of a saying he used: life gives you lemons. "Life gives you things that you think you want but then it's not what you think it was," Lee said.

Last Lemon for Lee means resilience, throughout Lee's life he has been led onto different paths of the road. He had steered into a difficult journey, but Lee went towards his

religion to help along the way. However he knows that through his religious beliefs it helped open doors for him such as his business.

Lee had a mentor that helped guide him as well, "I met a mentor that really changed the direction of where I was going. I met him when I was doing construction work and he had this different mentality, I was 22. What made him different was how he appeared. He manipulated me in a good way," Lee said.

In 2019, he began by stepping out of his comfort zone and has been working on himself. He gets emotional because he never congratulated himself for his growth, but is looking forward to taking classes in business administration in the future.

Currently, the self-taught Lee spends a lot of time researching fashion, fabric, and clothing. All of Lee's design work is done in his home studio, and he takes inspiration visiting flea markets because of the authentic and retro offerings. With a focus more on urban streetwear and retro wear, he has also begun to incorporate Kokum design in his denim designs- Lee's kokum collection is coming out soon. Kokum designs integrate Ukrainian floral scarves in pow wow regalia

and are also integrated into clothing, jewelry, and other accessories. Kokum is the Cree word for grandmother, and recalls the traditional scarves worn by elderly women.

He's been on a roll of creating different designs by adding his touch. Lee has created jackets featuring kokum and is currently trying out a ribbon skirt with a kokum design. Lee has been enjoying how he can bring his designs to life even though he is still learning.

Lee isn't motivated by money, but hardwork and effort. "The grind got's to be right to make it work, and the grind got's to be right for what you are doing it for," Lee said.

"I got to get more people involved with Last Lemon and it starts with the graphic design that I am working on right now."

Lee also spoke about achievement and motivation. "Believe in yourself that you can do what others can do, there's no limit to what you can do. Once you get that settled in your mind, there's just no stopping you. There's no limit to what you want and what you put your mind to."

For any information you can go to Lee's website at last-lemon.com and his facebook called Last Lemon.

IN MEMORIAM



(Photo Courtesy: Dean Olsen)

CONNIE JEAN OLSEN

Connie Jean (Colbert) Olsen, a devoted follower of Jesus Christ, entered into the arms of her Lord on February 17th, 2025. It was a gentle passing in her family's home in Gig Harbor, WA.

Connie was born near Haskell with the helpful hands of Beatrice Bruner as midwife. She was the third of eight children born to Jesse and Margaret Colbert on April 02, 1934. Connie became known to many as Corn, and she attended Twin Hills and Preston High School where she learned to excel in grammar and basketball. She later coached women's basketball here and there and worked many years as a house painter. Divorced from Otis Doyle, with her three kids she followed her sister Patsy and husband Jimmy Lewis, a house builder. Jimmy would build them and Patsy and Connie would paint them. They were almost vagabonds, following opportunity. They all wound up moving to Phoenix, Arizona and then Oroville, California. This is where she met her second husband Allen Olsen who had been following work of his own while chipping away at college where he could. Connie had two more children with Allen, and they kept

moving on by themselves, living in Idaho a couple of times, California more than once and Washington more than a few times and even Montana. Along the way, she became a telephone operator and did this for many years. Connie also made time to start several home Bible groups as her walk with God kept strengthening. Always diligent in making sure her husband and kids had a good home mostly by teaching her kids to love the Lord and how to clean and master hard work. Mom was no push over and terrifying with a good tree switch. Connie loved yard sales, antiques and crossword puzzles and was the go to for spelling, essay writing and etiquette guidance. She was loved by her husband, her children and her children's friends.

Connie is preceded by her parents, her son, Wesley Doyle, sisters; Shirley Hill, Kay Francis Bradley, Patsy Lewis, Judy Hall and brothers; Jesse Jr. "Spike" and Jerome "Jerry".

She is survived by her brother Charles Colbert, her husband of 59 years, Allen Olsen, daughters; Nancy Jukich, Julie Winn, sons; Dean Olsen and Jerome "Jerry" Olsen, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Friends and family will hold graveside services at 10:30AM on Saturday May 3rd at the Colbert Family Cemetery on Ferguson Road (0.7 miles east of N 310 Rd. The signed entrance is next door to 21595 Ferguson Rd. Haskell - Please do not disturb occupants they are not related.) Be prepared - there are no facilities anywhere near the cemetery. A reception will follow nearby. For questions reach the family at ConstanceOlsen09@yahoo.com. No solicitations please.



(Photo Courtesy: Lockart-Green Funeral Home)

JEANNIE KIEFLING

Jeannie Kiefling, a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, and woman of deep faith, passed peacefully into the presence of her Lord on March 1, 2025.

Born on August 9, 1943, in Henryetta, Oklahoma, the daughter of Frank and Juanita (Franklin) Johnson. She graduated from Muskogee High School before earning her degree from Oklahoma Baptist University. Jean's life was a testament to love, selflessness, and unwavering faith in Christ. A gifted musician, she shared her talents through piano and voice, serving as the United Methodist Music Director for over 25 years. She was a beloved teacher for more than 35 years, shaping young minds in both the classroom and Sunday school. Her years of teaching were recognized with The Key Award in 2004, which is

awarded for selfless service and commitment to the schools and youth of the region. Her greatest joy came from nurturing and guiding children—her own, her grandchildren, and countless students whose lives she touched.

Jean was a giver in every sense, always putting others before herself. She had a quiet strength, a heart full of empathy, and a deep desire to bring comfort and encouragement to those around her. She believed in the power of prayer, the beauty of a handwritten letter, and the importance of remembering birthdays with a thoughtful card. She found peace in simple joys—reading, journaling, and completing the New York Times crossword. She even found solace in ironing, seeing it as a small way to smooth out life's wrinkles.

She is survived by her devoted husband of 55+ years, Roger Lowell Kiefling; her children, Rebekah "Becky" Lynn Backowski and Lane Kristian Kiefling; her cherished grandchildren, Justin Michael Backowski, Jacob Lane Backowski, and Hannah Grace Backowski; her sister, Ann Wegener and her brother, Frank Johnson.

Jean's legacy is one of love, faith, and kindness. Her gentle spirit and generous heart will be deeply missed but forever remembered by all who were blessed to know her.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation Election Board



Looking for: Election Precinct Workers

Stipend rates include: \$200.00 each day duties are performed, \$50.00 for attending training session, and mileage rate of .70 per mile. (For compensation rates for Muscogee (Creek) Tribal employees, contact the Election Board Office)

Submit Application By
Email To: election@mcn-election.com
Fax To: 918-938-0799

Walk-In: Election Board Office, Solomon McCombs Building @ Tribal Complex

Application located on our website
www.muscogeenation.com/election-board
 or
 by calling our office at **918.732.7631**

Primary Election - September 20th 7AM-7PM
Early Voting - September 17th & 18th 7AM-7PM

Attending Training is Required
 Saturday, September 13th: Election Worker Training,
 1:00pm – 4:00pm @ College of Muscogee Nation

Must be a registered Voter with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation

MORE THAN 300 MVSKOKE KILLED IN STEAMBOAT WRECK HONORED IN LOUISIANA

BY BRITTANY HARLOW
VERIFIED NEWS NETWORK

The following story is a republished story from Verified News Network

PORT ALLEN, La. - An annual lecture series in Louisiana is shining light on a little-known tragedy that claimed the lives of hundreds of Mvskoke people during the forced removal.

The Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture Series is held annually in memory of the founder of the West Baton Rouge Historical Association and West Baton Rouge Museum. This year's event centered on the dedication of a historical marker honoring the 311 lives lost in the tragic wreck of the steamboat Monmouth, which happened on the Mississippi River near Profit Island on October 31, 1837.

Researchers say the Monmouth, headed upriver, was forcibly transporting 693 Mvskoke people to Oklahoma on what is now known as the Road of Misery when it collided with a steamer.

Saturday's dedication programming included two speakers, Native author and historian J.D. Colbert (Muscogee Creek, Chickasaw, Cherokee and Citizen Potawatomi) and award-winning Baton Rouge researcher Yvonne Lewis Day.

"This historical marker that commemorates that tragic event in Mvskoke history is a major step forward in honoring and remembering those lost," Colbert said. "We Mvskokes would say Pum Vcule Vrakkuecetv, To Honor Our Ancestors. We will not forget."

Day spent two decades studying the Monmouth tragedy. Her research found the Monmouth was



(Photo Courtesy: West Baton Rouge Museum)

over capacity when it collided with another ship during poor weather conditions, and the crew may have also been drunk.

Those lost are still buried in mass graves nearby.

"We can't sing your names individually," Day said during the dedication. "But in my heart I sing for them all, as a memory."

Day's research is supported by second-hand accounts recorded in the Indian Pioneer Papers, digitized by the University of Oklahoma Western History Collection.

"The officers in charge of the ship became intoxicated and even

induced some of the Indians to drink," Thomas Barnett relayed from David Barnett a hundred years later. "This created an uproar and turmoil"

"We saw a night ship coming down the stream. We could distinguish these ships as they had lights. Many of those on board our ship tried to tell the officers to give the command to stay to one side so that the night ship could pass on by. It was then that it seemed that the ship was just turned loose because it was taking a zig-zag course in the water until it rammed right into the center of the night boat."

"Then there was the screaming of

the children, men, women, mothers and fathers when the ship began to sink."

The new Monmouth Marker stands 10 miles from the museum, at the intersection of North River Road and Section Road.

Brian Falcon is the chair of the Historic Preservation Committee for the West Baton Rouge Historical Association, which sponsored the marker.

He said its presence finally sets a physical point where a visitor can place him or herself relative to the disaster and reflect on those events.

"As you well know, the Monmouth passengers were being dishonorably and forcefully relocated," Falcon said. "To add further injury, they were needlessly endangered resulting in many of their deaths in a place far from their homeland. Even though they weren't from West Baton Rouge, their dying on our soil made them part of our people. We honor them as part of our historic family as they deserve to be."

Falcon said he hopes the marker will serve as a stopping point for members of the Muscogee Nation journeying to connect to and from their ancestral homelands.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Spring Arts & Crafts Market
Holdenville Creek Indian Community Center
224 E. Poplar, Holdenville, Okla
May 3 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
To reserve a spot as a vendor, contact 405-379-3485

Elder's Meeting
Okmulgee Elder Nutrition Center
2900 N. Osage Pl. Okmulgee, OK.
May 7 | 9:30 a.m.

Coffee and Donuts
Veterans Affairs Services Office
May 8 | 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
1006 Bear Ln,
Okmulgee, OK 74447
For questions, contact 918-732-7739.

Health Shelf Donation Drive
College of Muscogee Nation Health & Wellness is seeking hygiene products, laundry detergent, and gently used blankets and pillows for students in need. Every five items donated will enter donors into a drawing. Donations can be dropped off at 2170 Raven Circle, Okmulgee, OK.
For more information, contact 918-549-2800.

Farmer's Market
CMN Extension/
Looped Square Meat Co.
May 10 | 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
3300 U.S. 75 North, Beggs, Okla
For questions, contact 918-549-2861.

Arizona Outreach
MCN Tribal Liaison
May 10
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Talking Stick Resort
9800 Talking Stick Way,
Scottsdale, AZ
For questions, contact 918-549-2955

Mvskoke News Graduate Edition
All Muscogee (Creek) citizens who are graduating from high school, military, college, or technical school are invited to submit a profile for the June 1 edition.
For questions, contact 918-732-7636
Submissions Deadline: May 13

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