

MVSKOKE NEWS

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FREEDMAN CASE ORAL ARGUMENTS RECAP

MCN SUPREME COURT LIVE STREAMED ORAL ARGUMENTS IN SC-2023-10

BY JERRAD MOORE
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

Editor's note: the following legal coverage contains word use and style that differs from Mvskoke Media and AP guidelines in order to present and best reflect the language used during oral arguments.

OKMULGEE, Okla – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Supreme Court live streamed oral arguments in SC-2023-10 to their Youtube channel on June 10, 2025. Due to a MCN SC court order, reproductions of the oral arguments were not allowed and the video was removed from Youtube by the MCN SC shortly after.

SC-2023-10 is a challenge filed by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Citizenship Board of an MCN District Court decision. The MCN District Court reversed a MCN Citizenship Board decision denying Rhonda Grayson and Jeffery Kennedy's MCN citizenship applications and ordered the board to reconsider them in accordance with Article II of the Treaty of 1866 between the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the United States.

Tuesday's oral arguments saw Graydon D. Luthy, R. Trent Shores and Barrett L. Powers of GableGottwals representing the MCN Citizenship Board. Luthy presented the arguments.

Grayson and Kennedy were represented by Jana Knott and Demario Solomon-Simmons with Knott presenting arguments.

MCN Citizenship Board arguments

Arguments began with Luthy outlining the main arguments put forth by the board. Luthy stated that there are two questions for the MCN SC to decide in the case.

The first question, according to Luthy, was if the MCN District Court violated the Nation's sovereign immunity when it held an evidentiary trial to review the Citizenship Board's administrative agency ruling on Grayson and Kennedy's citizenship applications. Luthy asserted this violated MCN code provisions for review of administrative decisions and violated the Nation's sovereign immunity.

The second question, Luthy argued, was whether or not the

MCN District Court decision should be overturned for invalidating the MCN constitutional provisions for citizenship.

Luthy asserted that the Treaty of 1866 did give certain Freedmen and their descendants the rights of MCN citizens, but the treaty did not include any words that guaranteed those rights in perpetuity. Luthy pointed out that nowhere in the treaty does the MCN give up any rights to determine its citizenship in the future.

At this point Chief Justice Andrew Adams III asked if Luthy's interpretation of the treaty provided any time frame for validity of the Freedmen rights.

Luthy responded that the treaty does not include any time frame. Luthy asserted that treaty rights were not perpetual unless words, such as forever, are used in the treaty to describe them. Luthy referenced several treaties, which all used the words "forever," "perpetual," and "for all time" to describe treaty rights.

Chief Justice Adams asked if there was any case law that Luthy could cite which affirms that without those words the treaty becomes



Justices heard arguments in citizenship showdown. (Photo Courtesy: MCN SC)

stale or moot.

Luthy stated there was not, and that the Board was not arguing that the treaty had become stale or moot. The Board's argument was that since the treaty did not include language that affirmed the rights in perpetuity, under the retained rights doctrine, the MCN retained its sovereign right to determine its own citizenship.

The retained or reserved rights doctrine is a legal principle which states that Native American tribes retain any rights not explicitly granted to a state or the United States in a treaty.

Luthy detailed how the 1979 MCN Constitution was required by the Oklahoma Indian Welfare

Act to be approved by the United States Department of the Interior before citizens could vote to enact it. Luthy affirmed that the constitution was approved, specifically the citizenship requirement language.

Justice Kathleen Supernaw asked if MCN members at the time had to approve the constitution before it was sent to the DOI for its approval. Luthy agreed that they did and asserted that all MCN citizens were eligible to vote on the 1979 constitution, including the Freedmen.

Luthy pointed to an opinion

FREEDMAN CASE Continued on Page 4



Air Force Veteran Kaylea Berry. (Braden Harper/MM)

NATIONAL WOMEN VETERANS RECOGNITION DAY HONORS WOMEN WARRIORS

MUSCOGEE NATION VETERANS AFFAIRS HOSTED A COOKOUT FOR THEIR MONTHLY VETERANS GATHERING AND TO HONOR WOMEN WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE, Okla. – Hamburger patties were sizzling on the grill at the Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs office on June 12. The hamburgers were served at a cookout hosted by the department for their annual monthly gathering for veterans. The cookout was also held in honor of National Women Veterans Recognition Day, a celebration that honors the women who have served in the armed forces.

Women Veterans Recognition Day is not a separate Veterans Day for women, but rather it commemorates the Women's Armed Services Integration Act signed into law on June 12, 1948. Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill released a proclamation declaring June 12 as "Women Veterans Recognition Day." The proclamation reads:

Whereas, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is a sovereign Nation and as such seeks to honor military women for

their service and sacrifice; and whereas, on June 12, 1948, Women's Armed Services Integration Act was signed and this act granted women a permanent place and an opportunity for a career in the United States military; and whereas, women Veterans deserve the support and respect they have earned through their service and there is so much history about women Veterans to be told; and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Muscogee (Creek) Nation Veterans Affairs Department honors the invaluable contributions of women veterans and we applaud past, present, and future sacrifices they make.

Perspectives from Mvskoke Women Veterans

MCN Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program Manager Tacia

WOMEN WARRIORS Continued on Page 2

MISS MCN AHOLOCE DEERE AND JR. MISS MCN MIA POWELL CROWNED AT THE MVSKOKE DOME

ANNUAL FESTIVAL BEGINS WITH THE 2025-2026 MVSKOKE ROYALTY CONTEST



Newly crowned 2025-2026 Miss MCN Aholoce Deere and Jr. Miss Mia Powell. From left to right, MCN Chief David Hill, Miss MCN Aholoce Deere, Jr. Miss Mia Powell, and Second Chief Del Beaver. (Shayln Proctor/MM)

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla.- The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Scholarship Pageant for the next Miss and Junior Miss MCN was held at the Mvskoke Dome on June 6. The new ambassadors of 2025-2026 who earned the Mvskoke Royalty title are Miss MCN Aholoce Deere and Junior Miss Mia Powell.

Miss MCN Aholoce Deere is Raccoon Clan, and her parents are Natalie Harjo and Ahse Deere. Deere's tribal town is Thlopthlocco, and she attends Alabama-Quassarte church. Deere is a student at the Tulsa Welding School.

Deere's traditional dress was made by her mom, and her talent was the story of WePucase (master of the snake).

Junior Miss MCN Mia Powell is Wind Clan, and her parents are Gina and Johnny Powell Jr. Powell attends Grace Baptist Church, and her ceremonial ground is Nuyaka. Powell attends Broken Arrow High School.

Powell's dress was made by former MCN Miss Claudia McHenry. Her talent was the story of the "Great Ball Game," which spoke in the Mvskoke language; the three paintings that were presented were made by her dad.

The contest consisted of a self-introduction, introduction to their regalia, talent, and a one-minute question and answer. Many families and friends came to support the contestants. In attendance was Principal Chief David Hill, Second Chief Del Beaver, former Mvskoke Royalty, Muscogee (Creek) National Council representatives, and different Tribal pageant royalty.

The Women's Honor Guard opened for the flag salute, and

former Miss 2024-2025 Janya McIntosh sung the National Anthem in the Mvskoke language, which was followed by a runway fashion show featuring Mvskoke clothing from the past to the modern era.

Past year's MCN royalty participated in the events as hosts and announcers, including Miss MCN (1995-1996) Royce Billy, Miss MCN (2008-2009) Elizabeth Gray, Jr./Miss MCN (2022-2024) Chenoa Barnett, Jr. Miss (1997-1998) Laura Wilson, and Jr. Miss (2004-2005) Alyssa Bear.

Towards the end of the evening, 2024-2025 MCN Miss Janaya McIntosh and Jr. Miss Olivia Beaver were given a farewell for their work and dedication.



A group photo of the contestants for the 2025-2026 Miss and Jr. Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation. (Shayln Proctor/MM)

REBECCA NAGLE'S "BY THE FIRE WE CARRY" WINS NON-FICTION AWARD AT THE 36TH ANNUAL OKLAHOMA BOOK AWARDS

BOOK DETAILS THE FIGHT FOR SOVEREIGNTY FROM REMOVAL TO THE 2020 SUPREME COURT AFFIRMATION OF THE MVSKOKE RESERVATION

by **FRANCES HERROD**
REPORTER

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla – “By the Fire We Carry: The Generations-Long Fight for Justice on Native Land” by award winning journalist Rebecca Nagle (Cherokee) was presented the Non-Fiction award at the 36th Annual Oklahoma Book Awards on May 16, 2025.

“I feel really honored that the Oklahoma Book Awards and the Department of Libraries recognized “By the Fire We Carry,” said Nagle.

“It was also cool to be in the category with so many amazing finalists and so many other really good books. It was really cool to also see a lot of Native authors.”

“By the Fire We Carry” continues the narrative of Nagle’s This Land podcast which covered the Sharp v. Murphy Supreme Court

case that set the stage for the eventual affirmation of MCN Reservation boundaries in Oklahoma. The struggle for sovereignty is meticulously related through stories of Native resistance to removal and assimilation, and illuminates the enduring legacy of survival handed down from generation to generation.

“When I talked to other tribal citizens in Eastern Oklahoma people had a similar reaction (to McGirt). People were happy but also felt the weight of what our ancestors had been through. For us to see that legal victory and have that joy also kind of cut deep in a way, cut us to our core. I wanted the readers to be able to feel that and to be able to understand what that actually meant and what it would have meant for the tribes to have lost,” says Nagle of the book.

The book has previously been awarded the J. Anthony Lukas

Book Prize, the Oklahoma Historical Society’s E. E. Dale Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle John Leonard First Book Prize.

The Oklahoma Book Awards, which recognize books by Oklahomans or books that have an Oklahoma based theme, were presented at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. Co-sponsored by The Oklahoma Center for the Book and Friends of the Oklahoma Center for the Book, The Oklahoma Book Awards recognize works in fiction, non-fiction, children/young adult, poetry, and design/illustration.

Rebecca Nagle recently launched Welcome to Native America, a twice monthly newsletter featuring long form journalism, deep dives on issues affecting Native Nations, and News Round-Ups.

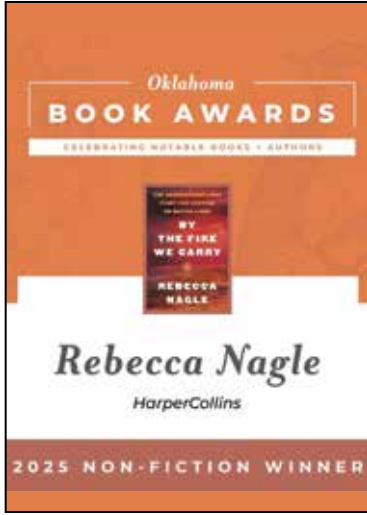
“I think we need diversified voices. I wanted to just have a place

where people who were interested in reading my writing and reading my reporting could go to get it consistently and that might be a place for my writing to live, where I can build relationships with readers that last longer than one project,” explains Nagle.

That relational aspect continues to live on in her upcoming work.

Nagle shares, “Right now I’m working on a collaborative project with some other Indigenous writers and scholars. I’m hoping for it to come out next year on the anniversary of the 250th year signing of the Declaration of Independence.”

The project looks at the history of U.S. democracy and how colonization, genocide, and resistance has shaped law and democracy. Nagel says, “It’s a big project looking at U.S. democracy and how both the colonization and genocide of Indigenous people, but also our resistance, has shaped U.S law and



By the Fire We Carry by Rebecca Nagle won the award for Non-Fiction at the 36th Annual Oklahoma Book Awards (Photo courtesy Oklahoma Department of Libraries)

democracy in ways that aren’t recognized. Historically Native people have been written out of the American story and whenever we’re not part of the story, we’re not part of public discourse. We’re not part of public policy.”

“That is not just a problem for tribal communities but a problem for our country. We fundamentally don’t understand what our government is or who we are. We haven’t really looked at our history so (we’re) retelling the American story with Native people at the center.”

WOMEN WARRIORS

Continued from Page 1

Berryhill (Mvskoke) is an Army veteran and served in the armed forces from 2002 to 2010. Berryhill’s paternal grandfather, Kenneth Berryhill, served in the Marines, and Berryhill enlisted to keep a promise to her grandfather, Thomas Walker, who was also an Army veteran. Berryhill served in the War in Iraq and the War in Afghanistan.

Berryhill’s role in the Army was as an armorer. She went out with different convoys and was deployed with the Marine Corp. When she returned home after being honorably discharged, Berryhill noticed that there were not many women veterans seeking the help they were entitled to.

“I feel as a woman veteran that a lot of women veterans don’t reach out for assistance,” Berryhill said. “A lot of women veterans that we serve have family that they lean on. My program does not serve a lot of women veterans because they are very prideful and don’t really reach out for assistance.”

MCN Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program Case Manager Kaylea Berry (Mvskoke) is an Air Force Veteran. Many of her relatives are veterans. Berry was inspired to enlist when her cousin and a work colleague enlisted. According to Berry, she did not experience any obstacles serving in the Air Force due to her gender. However, after she was honorably discharged she discovered that women are not always associated with serving in the military.

“Nobody really acknowledges females being veterans, or active duty,” Berry said. “Most people just assume men are military members or veterans.”

Berry served four years from 2017 to 2021 as a mass communications specialist. She served for two years overseas in Ramstein, Germany. Her responsibilities involved public relations and internal communications. When she returned to civilian life Berry helped found Este Cate Hoktyke Suletaww, the MCN Women’s Honor Guard in 2022.

Berry and Berryhill now serve fellow veterans through the Veterans Reintegration Program. Through the program, Muscogee veterans can receive assistance with employment, housing, and anything else they may need to support themselves.

“We serve homeless veterans and veterans who are at risk of homelessness,” Berryhill said. “Our main focus is to get them employed and get them reintegrated back into society.”

MCN Secretary of Veteran Affairs Grover Wind is proud of the service women veterans from the Tribe have contributed. However, he understands their contributions to keeping the country safe have not always been properly recognized.

“We support women veterans for the job they did. They have always been an intricate part of our forces,” Wind said. “Women warriors have always been important to our culture, our tribes. They have been an intricate part of our defense for a long time, they just haven’t always gotten the recognition.”

In addition to not receiving the proper recognition for their service, some have even been told that they are not real veterans because of their gender.

“Our women veterans, I’ve known some in the past that were told that they weren’t veterans because they were women,” Wind said. “That really infuriates me because they’ve played a very crucial part. I think the recognition is long overdue.”

The purpose of veteran gatherings is to give them the space to fellowship and connect with their tribe. Wind said that he met women veterans at the cookout he had never met before. It’s his hope they feel right at home and that they will come back for future gatherings.

Veterans and citizens can stay up to date on events hosted by VASO on their Facebook page, Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs.

JOINT COMMITTEE PASSES BILL ALLOWING LIQUOR SALES IN CHECOTAH SMOKE SHOPS

THE BILL WILL ALLOW THE SALE OF LIQUOR IN ADDITION TO BEER IN CHECOTAH'S TWO LOCATIONS

by **THOMAS JACKSON**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Business, Finance and Justice committee and the Health, Education and Welfare committee held a joint meeting at the Mound Building on June 17.

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 bill:

TR 25-053 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending TR 18-112 (A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving beer sales at the Checotah Creek Indian Com-



munity smoke shops) was passed by the joint committee. The law was sponsored by Representative Galen Cloud and co-sponsored by Representative Darrell Proctor. It was passed with a vote of 8-0.

If adopted, this resolution will allow the Checotah Creek Indian Community smoke shops to begin selling liquor in addition to beer at their two locations.

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



HEW PASSES RESOLUTION ON PAYMENT TRACKING SOFTWARE FOR DEPT. OF ED

MASTER SERVICE AGREEMENT FOR AI SOFTWARE POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

by **FRANCES HERROD**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla – On June 10, the Health, Education, and Welfare Committee held an 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 25-035 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a master service agreement with Intertribal LLC for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Department of Education. The resolution passed 3-0. Representative Thomasene Yahola Osborn sponsored the resolution.

The resolution is for an agreement to use Intertribal LLC’s One Tribe software for tracking payments through the Higher Education program, Employment and Training, and the NCA one time grant through the MCN Department of Education.

TR 25-036 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a master service agreement with Fireflies AI Corporation for the benefit of the Muscogee (Creek)

Nation Department of Health. The resolution was postponed indefinitely 3-0 without discussion. Representative Thomasene Yahola Osborn sponsored the resolution.

The resolution would have provided access to Fireflies AI Corporation software for officials and providers to be able to record, transcribe, summarize, analyze, and take action on conversations in order to help users automate workflows while remaining compliant with best privacy practices and federal HIPAA law.

To view the full agenda, visit mcnn.com.



- Angel Ellis**, Director | aellis@mvskokemedia.com
- Braden Harper**, Managing Editor | bharper@mvskokemedia.com
- Jerrad Moore**, Assignment Editor | jmoore@mvskokemedia.com
- ShayIn Proctor**, Reporter | sproctor@mvskokemedia.com
- Meredith Johnson**, Reporter | mjohnson@mvskokemedia.com
- Thomas Jackson**, Reporter | tjackson@mvskokemedia.com
- Frances Herrod**, Reporter | therrod@mvskokemedia.com
- Lindsey Arneecher**, Layout | larneecher@mvskokemedia.com



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MCN DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND HUMANITIES HOPES TO WORK WITH UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA ON CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF MVSKOKE ANCESTORS

THE NATION PURCHASES LAND IN ELMORE COUNTY, WHICH IS ONE OF THE FOUR MOTHER TOWNS OF MCN.

BY **SHAYLN PROCTOR**
REPORTER

MVSKOKE RESERVATION - On June 10, the Land, Natural Resources and Cultural Preservation Committee held an in-person meeting on June 10.

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 25-037 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to execute the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) application for Oklahoma Targeted Brownfields Assessment passed with the vote of 4-0. Representative Robyn Whitecloud sponsored this legislation.

MCN Geospatial Department is wanting to apply to the ODEQ. According to the bill, this assessment will be able to determine the scope of remedial actions needed before the property may be used to serve its citizens.

TR 25-038 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to execute the University of Georgia's NAGPRA care and trust agreement for the maintenance of physical custody of certain ancestors, associated and unassociated funerary objects, sacred items, and/or other items of cultural patrimony passed with the vote of 4-0. Representative Galen Cloud sponsored this legislation.

MCN passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Whitecloud sponsored this legislation.

The DOE-FECM, Office of Resource Sustainability has resources and expertise to support Tribes. Such as data sharing, technical assistance and workforce development initiatives in the area. According to the bill the MOU will support the long-term environmental restoration, job creation and energy for MCN citizens.

TR 25-039 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a Memorandum of Understanding between the MCN, Alabama Quassarte Tribal Town, Kialegee Tribal Town, and Thlopthlocco Tribal Town for the Method of Allocation for the Nation's proportional share of the funding for Housing and Urban Development funds and the FY-2026 Indian Housing Block grant passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Mark Randolph sponsored this legislation.

According to the bill, the MCN and the Tribal Towns agree that it is in the best interest of the MCN, Tribal Towns, and citizens for HUD to use enrollment for receiving their proportional share of the needs for the Indian Housing Block Grant where the Tribal Towns receive funding based on double their enrollment and the Nation will receive the remaining portion.

TR 25-040 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Nation and the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management (DOE-FECM), Office of Resource Sustainability, for the direct benefit of the

MCN passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Whitecloud sponsored this legislation.

The DOE-FECM, Office of Resource Sustainability has resources and expertise to support Tribes. Such as data sharing, technical assistance and workforce development initiatives in the area. According to the bill the MOU will support the long-term environmental restoration, job creation and energy for MCN citizens.

TR 25-041 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a Memorandum of Agreement and to apply for federal funding through the Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Transportation Bridge Program to fund bridge construction with Creek County for two (2) bridge replacement projects passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Whitecloud sponsored this legislation.

The two bridges are hazardous to the citizens that travel, and the MCN is requesting federal construction funds through the BIA. Upon completion Creek County will assume full responsibility.

TR 25-042 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a lease agreement for Grazing and Cooperative Land Management between the MCN and the Nature Conservancy passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Whitecloud sponsored this legislation.

The TNC lease is for 11,000 acres to be preserved for MCN. This is for grazing livestock and land management.



TR 25-043 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief or his designee to execute a contract for utility services with the City of Glenpool for the benefit of the Department of Housing passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Charles McHenry sponsored this legislation.

The property that will receive the utility service is located at 15608 S. Broadway in Glenpool.

TR 25-044 A tribal resolution of the MCN authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a real estate contract for the purchase of property in Elmore County, Alabama passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. McHenry sponsored this legislation.

The Nation will purchase this property, this will expand MCN land use. According to the bill, this land is one of the four Mother towns of MCN, it's part of the Tukabatchee Tribal Town.

NCA 25-051 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka for the benefit of the MCN Department of Housing passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. McHenry sponsored this legislation.

The Department was awarded \$500,000 in grant funds. This will be able to help purchase land for a multi-year housing development. This will be located in Glenpool, and/or Bixby.

NCA 25-052 A law of the MCN

appropriating funds to be used toward the purchase of property located in Elmore County, Alabama postponed indefinitely with a vote of 4-0. Rep. McHenry sponsored this legislation.

The located property is in Elmore County, the owner of this property has requested \$1,062,500. These funds will be going towards purchase plus title insurance, title opinions, surveys, environmental studies, and applicable taxes, according to the bill.

NCA 25-056 A law of the MCN authorizing a budget modification in excess of ten percent (10%) for the MCN Realty/Trust Department for FY 2025 budget passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Cloud sponsored this legislation.

The MCN Realty/Trust Department is making the modification request to reallocate certain funds for expenses for supplies, survey, fees, filing fees and so forth.

NCA 25-057 A law of the MCN approving the FY 2026 Indian Housing Plan passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Whitecloud sponsored this legislation.

This improvement is for the submission to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Indian Housing Block Grant funds will go towards the current Indian Housing Plan.

For more information visit, www.mcnnc.com.



BY **FRANCES HERROD**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. – The Muscogee (Creek) National Council held the Business, Finance and Justice Committee session on June 12.

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 25-045 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to submit a grant application to the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Safeguarding Tomorrow revolving loan fund program for the benefit of the Mvskoke Loan Fund. Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Representative Sandra Golden.

The legislation authorizes the Principal Chief to submit a \$9 million grant proposal to the US DHS for loans to be used for hazard mitigation projects within the MCN Reservation and commits \$900,000 from National Council for a leveraged resource.

TR 25-046 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation confirming the nomination of Barry W. Brandon to serve on the Public Gaming Commission. Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Representative Patrick Freeman, Jr.

The legislation confirms Barry W. Brandon as the nominee who, by MCN law, can be appointed and confirmed by the National Council to the Public Gaming Commission.

TR 25-047 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises, LLC (MNGE) Board of Directors to execute the third amendment to the Aristocrat master equipment lease

BFJ PASSES LEGISLATION ADDRESSING OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE AND ASSAULT ON TRIBAL JUSTICE PERSONNEL, VAWA TO FULL COUNCIL

RESOLUTIONS ADDING EUFAULA AND COWETA TO ARISTOCRAT MASTER AGREEMENTS ALSO PASS

agreement. Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Representative Robert Hufft.

The legislation will extend the Aristocrat master agreement for three years until 2029 and add the new properties at Eufaula and Coweta.

TR 25-048 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises, LLC (MNGE) board of directors to execute the Aristocrat minimum obligation agreement. Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Hufft.

The legislation will add the new properties at Eufaula and Coweta to the Aristocrat minimum obligation agreement.

TR 25-049 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises, LLC (MNGE) board of directors to execute the third amendment to the Aristocrat master gaming device purchase and lease agreement. Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Hufft.

The legislation will add the new properties at Eufaula and Coweta to the Aristocrat master gaming device purchase and lease agreement.

TR 25-050 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises, LLC (MNGE) Board of Directors to transfer certain real property to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Hufft.

The legislation authorizes the MNGE Board of Directors to transfer ownership of a parcel property to MCN for future development.

TR 25-052 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving the terms of settlement and authorizing the Principal Chief to execute settlement agreement documents to resolve litigation

claims against the City of Tulsa and Tulsa City officials. Legislation passed 4-0. It was sponsored by Rep. Hufft.

The litigation remains pending; however, the attorneys for the Nation and the Tulsa defendants have been meeting to negotiate a possible settlement. Due to technical issues with the video feed public discussion regarding the resolution is not available.

NCA 25-053 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from the Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition for the benefit of the Office of the Secretary of the Nation. Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Representative Dode Barnett.

The legislation authorizes the Office of the Secretary of the Nation to purchase server HDDs, memory expansion and office supplies for the MCN Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program utilizing \$10,000 from The Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition VITA Grant.

NCA 25-054 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending title 14, entitled "Crimes and Punishments." Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Barnett.

The legislation would allow MCN to pursue Obstruction of Justice and Assault of Tribal Justice Personnel charges when Tribal Justice Personnel are obstructed from, or assaulted during, the performance of their duties under MCN law. The amendment also allows for more effective prosecution under the Violence Against Women Act.

NCA 25-055 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending title 14, § 2-344, entitled "Forfeitures." Legislation passed 4-0. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Barnett.

The legislation amends Title 14, § 2-344 and allows the court to impose forfeiture of any property used in or bought with profits from

violations of the laws of MCN when accepting a plea of guilty or no contest.

Other Business:

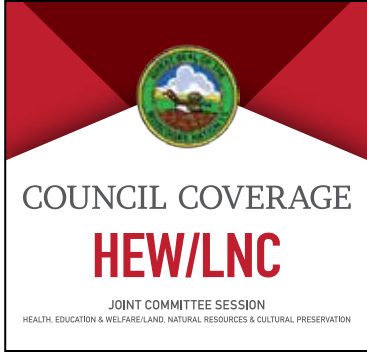
NCA 24-100 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Principal Chief to execute and file the articles of organization with the office of the Secretary of the Nation to form Muscogee Capital Fund, LLC and Muscogee Equity Fund, LLC under the Muscogee (Creek) Nation limited liability company act; and approving the operating agreement for Muscogee Capital Fund, LLC; and approving a service agreement between Muscogee Capital Fund, LLC and Development Capital Network (DCN) to manage Muscogee Capital Fund, LLC and approving the operating agreement for Muscogee Equity Fund, LLC; and approving a service agreement between Muscogee Equity Fund, LLC and Cimarron Capital Associates II, LLC (CCAI) to manage Muscogee Equity Fund, LLC.

Secretary of the Nation Zechariah Harjo updated the MCNNC on the Muscogee Nation Capital Fund, which launched May 27. Harjo shared that the program, which allows for small business loans to Mvskoke citizens including those beyond the reservation, was slated to be available earlier, but was pushed back due to Trump Administration Executive Orders.

Fountainhead Golf Course was on the agenda but will instead be discussed in a work group when all participants are available. Rep. Barnett requested a more detailed business plan for the course.

MNGE briefed the committee on the monthly report. The results of an audit performed due to address security issues were also discussed. Mvskoke Media has requested a copy of the report.

To view the full agenda, visit mcnnc.com.



HUD-VASH GRANT PASSED BY HEW/LNC

GRANT AIDS HOMELESS AND AT-RISK VETERANS ON THE RESERVATION

BY **THOMAS JACKSON**
REPORTER

OKMULGEE, Okla. - The Health, Education and Welfare committee and the Land, Natural Resources and Cultural Preservation committee held a joint meeting at the Mound Building on June 17.

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 bill:

TR 25-051 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving the Tribal Housing and Urban Development - Veterans' Affairs Supportive Housing ("HUD-VASH") Renewal and Expansion grants for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Veterans' Affairs Services Office was passed by the joint committee. The law was sponsored by Representative Leonard Gouge. It was passed with a vote of 9-0.

If adopted, this resolution will allow the MCN Department of Veterans' Affairs Services Office to apply annually to the Tribal HUD-VASH Program, allowing them to continue assisting both homeless and at-risk veterans on the MCN Reservation.

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

FREEDMAN CASE

Continued from Page 1

issued in 1941 by the U.S. Solicitor General and asserted that it, also, approved of the provisions in the 1979 constitution.

Justice Supernaw asked if there was any documentation about how notice was given to all the MCN members about the constitutional vote and how it was presented and advertised to the people.

Luthy stated that he thought it was advertised, but he did not have any record of it being so.

Luthy pointed out that after the 1979 constitution was enacted, there was no lawsuit brought challenging it, and no complaint from the DOI about the electoral process used.

Luthy then proceeded to go through the history of the Grayson and Kennedy case, highlighting that the district court treated the case as active litigation, instead of an administrative law review. Luthy asserted that the resulting evidentiary trial and decision invalidated the MCN constitutional provisions for citizenship. Luthy stated that this meant that the district court decision should be reviewed under a de novo standard of review.

De Novo review means that the lower court’s decision in the matter under review will not be considered and the court hearing the case will do so as if it is being heard for the first time.

Chief Justice Adams asked if the standard of review was informed by Title 7 Section 4-110 sub b.

Luthy suggested that since this was a constitutional matter that code did not apply. Luthy stated that the de novo review applied to judicial cancellation of a constitutionally embedded right to determine membership.

Luthy asserted that the district court’s decision could not be upheld, unless it was determined to be required and inevitable.

Vice-Chief Justice Richard Lerblance asked why the language of the 1866 treaty that included the Freedmen as citizens was not included in the 1979 constitution.

Luthy stated that he had no idea. He affirmed that language was not in the provisional constitution submitted to the voters before DOI approval and that the voters approved it without the language. Luthy re-emphasized that the DOI and, thus, the United States, which was the counterparty of the 1866 treaty, had approved the 1979 constitution.

Vice-Chief Justice Lerblance asked if Luthy would agree that the binding nature of treaties is reinforced by the principle that the treaty rights are not terminated on statehood or other changes in governments.

Luthy agreed. Justice Lerblance then asked why the 1866 treaty would not apply to the MCN requirements for citizenship.

Luthy answered that it was because that was the decision of the people. Luthy said that certain legal principles were at work in the 1979 constitution.

The first example he used was the MCN’s existential right to define membership. He stated that the constitution shouldn’t be overruled in absence of clear indication to the contrary.

His second example referred again to the retained or reserved rights doctrine, which states that the MCN retains all rights unless they are expressly given to the United States.

Luthy reiterated that the Treaty of 1866 does not use language that gives a perpetual grant of citizenship to anyone.

Luthy asked the court if they believed that a tribe has the inherent ability to change its membership requirements. He stated that he thought the answer had to be yes. Luthy pointed out that the MCN changed the eligibility requirements for holding elected office by requiring one-quarter blood quantum.

Luthy pointed to other tribes that have increased their blood quantum requirements for membership.

Justice Lerblance pointed out that there are tribal, state, and fed-

eral laws that don’t have perpetuity language in them to which Luthy agreed. Luthy stated that the issue is not whether the treaty had language that only granted Freedmen citizenship rights for a specified time.

Luthy then asserted that the Freedmen had citizenship rights until MCN citizens exercised their right to change the citizenship requirements by voting for the 1979 constitution.

Chief Justice Adams asked if the MCN had a governmental citizenship roll based on the 1866 Treaty before the vote on the 1979 constitution. Luthy responded that they did and that the 1867 MCN constitution was silent as to membership requirements.

Chief Justice Adams asked if there was MCN case law from that period that affirmed Freedmen citizenship rights under the 1867 constitution. Luthy responded that there was case law, but it did not reference the 1867 constitution because it lacked any language about membership.

Chief Justice Adams asked if it was accurate that the 1867 constitution authorized Tribal Towns to elect representatives to the House of Kings and the House of Warriors, and some of these Tribal Towns were Freedmen towns, such as Arkansas Colored, Northfork Colored and Canadian Colored Tribal Towns.

Luthy stated that those towns were not identified by name in the 1867 constitution.

Chief Justice Adams asked if those towns were allowed to elect representatives under the constitution. Luthy stated that those events happened.

Chief Justice Adams asked if there was evidence on record that Creek Freedmen were allowed to vote in the 1979 vote to adopt the constitution.

Luthy stated that he thought there was. Chief Justice Adams asked if any had been presented to the court. Luthy stated that he was unaware whether any had or not.

Chief Justice Adams asked if Luthy would have the court assume that the Freedmen were allowed to vote for the 1979 constitution. Luthy said he thought that it was generally well known within the MCN that the Freedmen did vote. Luthy asked why, if it were the case, that the Freedmen were denied the right to vote they had not filed a lawsuit on the matter in 48 years.

Chief Justice Adams pointed out that Luthy was asking the court to assume that the Freedmen participated in the vote and also that if they were disenfranchised they would file suit. Luthy stated that he thought such a suit would be inevitable.

At this point Luthy’s time for argument had expired and Jana Knott, representing Grayson and Kennedy, began her argument.

Grayson and Kennedy arguments

Knott began by pointing out that the 1866 Treaty has not been abrogated and remains the supreme law of the land. Knott stated Article II of the treaty gives Creeks of African descent and their descendants all the rights and privileges of Native citizens and that the laws of the Nation shall give equal protection to all such persons.

Knott asserted that even though the Citizenship Board did not use the term “abrogation” in their arguments before the court or in their briefing, the case was about treaty abrogation.

Knott stated that each of the arguments put forth by the board was a form of implied abrogation. Knott cited the United States Supreme Court decisions in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians*, and *United States v. Dion*, where the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that congressional treaty abrogation must be clear and unequivocal, it cannot be implied.

Knott pointed out that it made no difference if the 1979 constitution was approved by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, only Congress can abrogate a

treaty. The BIA approval was a federal executive action.

Knott asserted that treaty rights do not and should not ebb and flow at the whims of the executive branch, otherwise treaty rights would be abrogated every time the administration changed.

According to Knott, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians* held that executive action, in that case an executive order of the President, absent congressional authorization could not serve as the basis for the termination of treaty rights. Congress must clearly express its intent to abrogate a treaty.

Knott stated that it made no difference that the BIA approval was required by the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, because any federal action impacting a treaty right is evaluated under the legal framework of abrogation.

Knott continued that in *United States v. Dion*, the U.S. Supreme Court found that the Bald Eagle Protection Act abrogated the Yankton Sioux Tribes treaty right to hunt for bald and golden eagles. The legislative history of the act showed that Congress considered the importance of hunting the eagles to the Yankton Sioux Tribe religion, and included provisions to issue religious hunting permits to tribal members. The U.S. Supreme Court saw this as congressional treaty abrogation.

Knott then compared the *Dion* decision to the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. Knott stated that the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act doesn’t mention treaty rights or citizenship rights of any of the Oklahoma tribes. According to Knott, nothing in the language or legislative history of the act shows congress considered any conflicts between the act and the Treaty of 1866.

Knott asserted that the denial of citizenship to descendants of Freedmen in the 1979 Constitution is a race based exclusion that violates the treaty.

Knott stated that any constitutional provision that strips Freedmen descendants of citizenship is void ab initio regardless of BIA approval.

Void ab initio is a legal term that means the action never had any legal effect.

Knott also pointed out that it is irrelevant if the Freedmen were allowed to vote for the 1979 Constitution, because treaties cannot be abrogated by unilateral tribal action.

Knott disputed that Freedmen descendants were allowed to vote.

Knott quoted the *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision stating that the power to abrogate a treaty belongs to congress alone.

Chief Justice Adams asked how Knott would address the Solicitor General opinion mentioned in the Citizenship Board’s arguments.

Knott replied that the Solicitor General is an executive branch official, not Congress. Knott referred to the earlier analysis of *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians*, which held that executive action absent congressional authorization could not abrogate a treaty.

Knott addressed the arguments put forth by the Citizenship Board that the MCN has the sovereign right to determine its citizenship. She agreed that the Nation has the right to determine its citizens, but stated that the argument relies on implied abrogation of the treaty.

Knott gave examples, specifically *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, *United States v. Wheeler*, *Merrion v. Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, and *Iowa Mutual Insurance Company v. LaPlante*. According to Knott, these were all cases where the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Tribal sovereign powers had been restrained or abridged by treaty or act of congress.

Knott asserted that the Treaty of 1866 clearly restricts the Nation’s sovereign right to determine its citizenship as it relates to Creeks of African descent and their descendants.

Knott pointed out that the Citizenship Boards arguments revolve around whether unilateral Tribal

action can abrogate a treaty provision. She asserted that it cannot. Congress is required to abrogate the treaty through legislation or subsequent agreement.

Knott addressed the lack of “language of perpetuity” argument put forth by the Citizenship Board. She referenced the analysis put forth by Cherokee Nation v. Nash, which found that the Cherokee Treaty of 1866 did not contain language that limited in duration or expired on any condition the citizenship rights for Freedmen included in the treaty.

Knott stated that the Creek Treaty of 1866 also does not include any language that terminates, or temporarily limits, the rights granted to Freedmen or their descendants.

Justice Supernaw asked how Knott reconciled the language in Article II of the treaty with Article X, which states that the Nation agrees to any future congressional acts that might modify citizens rights in Article II.

Knott reiterated that the language and legislative history of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act does not include any discussion of Tribal treaty rights or citizenship. She referred the court again to the *Dion* case as an example of treaty abrogation.

Knott also pointed out that the *McGirt* decision ruled that the entire treaty of 1866 was still in effect, and that it was not possible for either party of the treaty to accept one provision and deny another.

Knott addressed an earlier question from Justice Lerblance concerning why the language of the 1866 Treaty was not used in the 1979 Constitution. She stated that evidence was presented in the MCN District Court that Article III of the 1979 constitution was passed because of racial motivation.

Knott quoted a statement from Principal Chief Claude Cox to the MCN National Council on October 29, 1977. Knott quoted Cox as saying:

That’s what we’re fighting for, this blood quantum, trying to get back and let the people control. Because under the old constitution, the 1867 Constitution, you’ve lost before you’ve ever started. There were three Freedmen bands that would outnumber you today as citizens. So if we want to keep the Indian in control we’ve got to take a look at this thing and get us a constitution that will keep the Creek Indian in control.

Justice Lerblance replied that there were political implications of the 1979 constitution, to which Knott agreed.

Knott also addressed a question by Chief Justice Adams about the 1867 Constitution. Knott asserted that at the 1866 Treaty negotiations, the United States made it clear that Freedmen participation in the government was a prerequisite for the reservation provisions in the treaty. The 1867 constitution was the affirmation of the treaty requirements, with Freedmen being represented in the Creek government serving in both the House of Kings and House of Warriors.

Chief Justice Adams asked what Knott’s response to the Citizenship Board argument that the MCN District Court did not have the authority to issue its decision.

Knott replied that the sovereignty arguments made by the board in relation to the district court decision were a distraction from the real issue in the case, whether the 1866 Treaty has been abrogated.

Chief Justice Adams clarified that he was interested in hearing Knott’s position on the argument that the board put forth that the district court should not have had an evidentiary hearing in the matter.

Knott stated she had two responses. She asserted that the nation waived its sovereign immunity for appeals of the Citizenship Boards decisions. She stated that after the case had gone a year without being assigned to a judge, Grayson and Kennedy filed

a motion for the MCN Supreme Court to assume original jurisdiction, at which point the board filed a motion to dismiss, which requested that the board be afforded an opportunity to engage in the exercise of discovery and build a thorough record on all relevant facts and legal claims.

According to Knott, this board request for information that fell outside of the administrative record necessitated an evidentiary hearing. Knott pointed out that when the MCN SC declined jurisdiction, it agreed that the court would greatly benefit from an assembling of a complete record before the district court.

Knott detailed that since the Citizenship Board requested the discovery process, the board could not now claim that the district court was in error in conducting it.

Knott stated that if the MCN SC ruled that the district court proceeding was in error, the MCN SC should still rule on the constitutional question at hand because it is the only court that can do so.

Knott closed her arguments by stating that if the MCN SC holds that Article II of the 1866 Treaty remains in full force and effect and the treaty is still the supreme law of the land, it must affirm the lower court’s decision.

Citizenship Board’s rebuttal

Luthy stated that the Board is not arguing that the treaty was abrogated, and in fact the board claims the treaty is in effect.

Justice Montie Deer asked if the U.S. Supreme Court could make a decision on whether the 1866 Treaty had ever been abrogated by the tribe.

Luthy stated that that was not his point, continuing that the tribe’s right to determine its citizenship is an existential right and that if that right is to be cancelled it needs to be clear that it has to be cancelled.

Luthy’s second point went back to the retained rights doctrine. Luthy stated that unless the MCN expressly gave a right to the United States in the treaty, MCN retains that right.

Luthy’s third point revolved around the language in the treaty. He stated that the language of the treaty did not give the Freedmen special rights, it gave them the same rights of Native citizens. Luthy asserted that the treaty did not give anyone, including Native citizens, rights to citizenship in perpetuity.

Luthy also asserted that the treaty did not say that the MCN was giving up the right to determine, through an election, who its citizens are.

Chief Justice Adams agreed with Luthy that Tribes have the right to pass their own laws and be bound by them. Chief Justice Adams pointed out that under MCN Title 27 section 1-101 the authority comes from MCN sovereignty and also the treaties and agreements between the MCN and the United States including but not limited to the Treaty of 1866.

Chief Justice Adams also pointed out that MCN Title 27 section 1-103 states that in all cases the MCN courts shall apply the constitution and duly enacted laws of the MCN as well as the common law of the Muscogee people as established by custom and usage, and the treaties and agreements between the MCN and the United States.

Chief Justice Adams also pointed out that the U.S. Constitution also has language concerning treaties being controlling, and asked Luthy if he agreed that the U.S. Constitution might be applicable to this situation.

Luthy stated that the U.S. Constitution as it has been applied to Indian Tribes would apply here.

The Citizenship Board’s time for rebuttal had expired at this point, but Chief Justice Adams had one final question.

He asked if Luthy could cite any precedent or language in the treaty that could affirm the notion put

FREEDMAN CASE

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Continued from Page 4

forth of a sunset provision for portions of the treaty.

Luthy stated that the board was not arguing that there was a sunset provision. He restated his argument that the treaty is silent on the principal issue, and since it is silent and doesn't use words of perpetuity or give up the right to define membership in the future, under the retained rights doctrine the constitution was proper.

Luthy closed stating that ambiguity is construed in favor of the Tribe in treaty determinations.

Justice Lerblance asked why the 1866 Treaty is not the law of the land, if it had not been abrogated.

Luthy responded that the Treaty of 1866 is not abrogated by the Constitution of 1979.

Justice Lerblance asked if the 1979 Constitution had the same effect as the abrogation of the treaty. Justice Lerblance asked if the provisions of the 1866 Treaty were still applicable today.

Luthy stated that they are appli-

cable, but included in the retained rights was the right to change the membership requirements.

Luthy pointed out that the constitution's citizenship provisions could keep a full-blooded Creek from obtaining citizenship, if their ancestors were not on the Dawes roll.

Justice Deer asked if it was true or false that under Article III section 2 of the United States Constitution the U.S. Supreme Court has legal jurisdiction between Native Nations and the United States.

Luthy affirmed that it was true.

Justice Deer asked when the U.S. Supreme Court ever made a decision regarding this case.

Luthy stated it has not.

Justice Deer asked if it has a right to.

Luthy affirmed that if there is an actual case in controversy that goes through the system and certiorari is granted, then yes.

Justice Deer then asked if that was McGirt v. Oklahoma.

Luthy disagreed and stated that McGirt did not involve the issues

in this case.

Justice Deer stated that his problem all along has been that if the United States entered this treaty with the Creek Nation, when does the United States get input on the discussions had in this case.

Luthy responded that he could offer some examples.

Justice Deer continued that he had read a case concerning a Tribal Nation in South Dakota vs the United States. He stated that the Tribe was upset that their land had been given back to non-Native people, but the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the land could not be given back, but instead compensated the tribe monetarily. Justice Deer stated that in this case the United States had input on the decision, but in this case it had none.

Luthy stated that there are all kinds of ways that the case could get to the U.S. Supreme Court. He said the United States could bring suit, which it hasn't. He pointed out that the DOI could get involved as it has with other tribes,

which Luthy also said hasn't happened.

Justice Deer asked if those things can happen, and Luthy affirmed they could.

Grayson and Kennedy surrebuttal

Knott addressed Justice Deer directly stating that the United States can have a voice on this particular issue if Congress decides to abrogate this provision of the treaty, which she attested has not happened.

Knott reiterated that the treaty, including Article II, remains the law of the land.

Chief Justice Adams asked Knott's response to the retained rights doctrine argument.

Knott cited Roff v. Burney as precedent, showing that tribal sovereign rights can be qualified by acts of congress and treaties. She stated that congress alone has the power to say the treaty is no longer in force on this citizenship issue. Knott attested that this has not

happened.

Knott pointed out that the U.S. Supreme Court did not include the MCN Constitution in its analysis of the McGirt case, it only considered the 1866 Treaty.

Knott also pointed out that Chief Justice Adams was correct in his observation that the 1866 Treaty was incorporated into fundamental MCN law that the MCN SC must apply.


Knott stated that any constitutional provision in conflict with the treaty must yield.

In her closing statement, Knott pointed out that the 1866 treaty listed the Freedmen as "Creeks of African descent," affirming that they were always Creeks. Knott clarified that this was evidence that the traditional values of the Creek Nation never equated citizenship with physical appearance, blood quantum, or race.

The Justices had no further questions for Knott.


With the closing of arguments, the case was submitted with the court.

VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



STEPHANIE M. MOORE

The Muscogee Nation Veterans Services Office is proud to honor Tribal veteran Stephanie M. Moore for her dedicated service to the U.S. Army, the United States, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Stephanie honorably served for over eight years from 2001 to 2010 and is a recipient of the Combat Medical Badge, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal (2nd Award), National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Army Overseas Service Ribbon. Myto Mrs. Moore for your selfless service to your country and your community.



JOHN A. SLOAN

The Muscogee Nation Veterans Services Office is proud to honor tribal veteran John A. Sloan for his dedicated service to the U.S. Army, the United States and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. John was born on April 27, 1946 and passed on December 6, 2020. John honorably served for three years from 1968 to 1970 and is a recipient of several honors: Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal with 3 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, Army Good Conduct Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 4 Bronze Service Stars, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Medal with Palm Unit Citation, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, Army Valorous Unit Citation Award, Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Marksmanship Qualification Badge with Rifle Bar. Myto Mr. Sloan for your selfless service to your country and your community.

MVTO FOR YOUR SELFLESS SERVICE!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Elder's Meeting
Okmulgee Elder Nutrition Center
2900 N. Osage Pl. Okmulgee, OK.
July 2 | 9:30 a.m.

Rentie Bruner Family Reunion 44th Anniversary
Middle Creek #1 Indian Baptist Church
July 4-5
Dinner on July 4 begins at 6 p.m.
Reunion on July 5 runs from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Those attending are encouraged to bring lawn chairs, water, ice, door prizes, or door prize donations. Activities will include cornhole, volleyball and a waterslide for kids.
2817 N. 389 Rd.,
Lamar, Okla
For questions, call 405-712-0933

Coffee and Donuts
Veterans Affairs Services Office
July 19 | 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
1006 Bear Ln,
Okmulgee, OK 74447
For questions, contact 918-732-7739.

Farmer's Market
CMN Extension/ Looped Square Meat Co.
July 12 | 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
3300 U.S. 75 North, Beggs, Okla
For questions, contact 918-549-2861.


Nene Letkv 5k Fun Run & Walk
River Spirit Casino
July 12 | 8:00 a.m.
8330 Riverside Pkwy,
Tulsa, OK
For questions, call 918-732-7754.

Wisdom Warriors: Just Move It!
Veterans Park
July 25 | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Indian Health Care Resource Center of Tulsa
Free for elder citizens (65 & older) of federally-recognized Native American tribes. Event will provide activities focused on fitness, nutrition and brain health.
1028 E. 6th St., Tulsa, Okla.

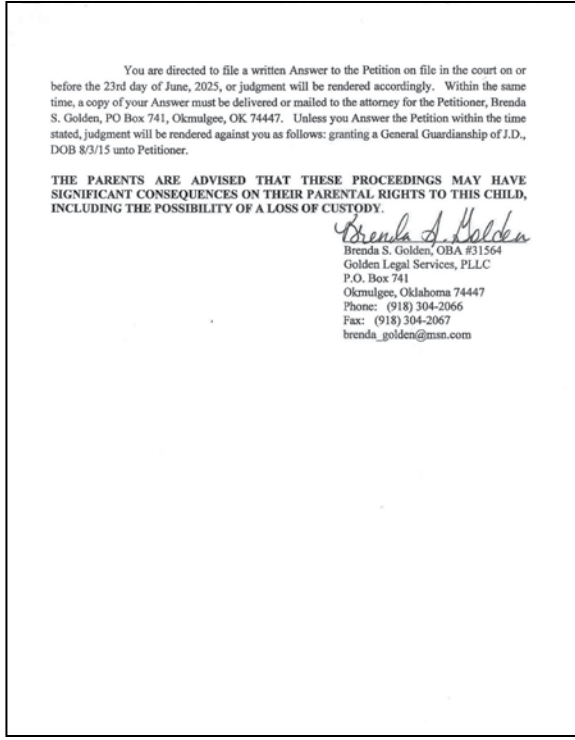
Health Shelf Donation Drive
College of Muscogee Nation Health & Wellness is seeking hygiene products, laundry detergent, and gently used blankets and pillows for students in need. Every five items donated will enter donors into a drawing. Donations can be dropped off at 2170 Raven Circle, Okmulgee, OK.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

LEGALS

PG-23-61 PG. 1



PG-23-61 PG. 2



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IN MEMORIAM



(Photo Courtesy: Keith D. Biglow Funeral Directors)

CUAUHTEMOC BENJAMIN MONDRAGON

Cuauhtemoc Benjamin Mondragon, lovingly known as Popsi or Ben, passed away on May 6, 2025, in Preston, Oklahoma at the age of 42.

Born in Bakersfield, California, Ben worked as a dedicated machinist, but his greatest joy came from the time he spent with his family. He was a natural entertainer who loved cooking, traveling, and being the life of the party. Whether hosting a gathering or making someone laugh, Ben had a way of making everyone feel at home.

He is survived by his loving wife, Sarah, daughters Kalacee and Ciara, and sons Ayden and Michael. He also leaves behind his mother, Ramona Mondragon, his sister Aldora “Tiny” Mondragon, his special companion Mamas the Cat, and a host of cherished nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Ben is preceded in death by his beloved twin baby girls, his father Cuauhtemoc Mondragon, his sister Destiny Mondragon Smith, his grandmother Katie Mae Harris, and his great-grandparents Aldora “Sis Mama” and Benjamin “Pappy” Worthy.

Ben’s vibrant spirit, infectious laughter, and deep love for his family and friends will be remembered always. Though his time here was far too short, the light he brought into the world will never be forgotten.



(Photo Courtesy: Keith D. Biglow Funeral Directors)

RAMONA KAY MONDRAGON

Ramona Kay Mondragon, affectionately known as “Red,” passed away on May 12, 2025, in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, at the age of 74.

Ramona was born in February 1951 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to the late Katie Mae Harrison and Louis Downing.

She was a beloved mother, sister, grandmother, and friend. Ramona is survived by her daughter Aldora “Tiny” Mondragon and son-in-law Reginald; her sister Betty Downing; and her cherished grandchildren: Kyla McGee Thomas (Shade), Kylan “Bubba” McGee, Romello Smith, Ramone Smith, Rayvn Smith, Rhuson Smith, Kalacee Mondragon, and Ayden Mondragon.

She is preceded in death by her daughter Destiny Mondragon-Smith and Aurelia Johnson, son Cuauhtemoc Benjamin Mondragon, her sister Billie Hardrick, and her brothers Louis and Charles Downing, and Harry Worthy.

Known lovingly as “Meme” to her grandchildren, Ramona had a passion for family and a heart for hospitality. She loved to entertain, laugh, and bring people together—never meeting a stranger and always welcoming others with warmth and joy.

Ramona’s memory will live on through the many lives she touched and the love she so freely gave.



(Photo Courtesy: Marker Funeral Homes)

MARY EDWARDS SMITH

Mary Edwards Smith went home to be with the Lord on April 30, 2025 after battling cancer. She stayed strong and kept her faith in God until he called her home. She was 74 years old and a lifelong resident of Bixby, OK and a citizen of Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Mary never had any children of her own but she was an integral part of the lives of her nieces and nephews. She would never miss any of their events and would spend time with each of them playing games and working on arts and crafts.

As a child Mary and her twin brother Larry were always into mischief and kept the rest of the siblings on their toes, especially her older sister Sharon who thought Mary was her real life baby doll. Her brothers and sisters would say she was always a feisty little lady and often thought of as the firecracker of the family.

Mary was hardworking, very

compassionate and caring, always providing assistance to everyone, especially elders who did not have family members to look after them.

Mary loved all animals, especially weenie dogs. She had several weenie dog companions over the years. She also loved traveling, especially the trips to the beach and Moundville Alabama. Mary was always there for her family and friends with an ice cold Coca Cola and open arms to listen and love without judgement.

Mary was a Native American artist who won Muscogee (Creek) Nation Artist of Year in 2016 and was awarded Muscogee (Creek) Nation Living Legend in 2023. She was very talented and enjoyed making pottery, beadwork, twining, textiles, stain glass, corn husk dolls, feather work, and basket weaving. Mary is a self taught basket weaver and teacher. She began weaving in 2001. Weaving was a passion for Mary and she believed her basket weaving was a gift from God. Most notably she revived the Creek Double False Braid Rim in 2005. This rimming method was unique only to the Creek basketry; it had not been done for 100-150 years. Mary traveled teaching to other Native American tribes and anyone who had the desire to learn. She spent a lot of time traveling and teaching in Moundville, Alabama, Macon, Georgia and Washington D.C.

Her art can be found on display in various museums and exhibits within the United States. Mary’s impact will span many generations and live on with the Mvskoke people. She has been recognized and garnered multiple awards for many of her artworks. However, when Mary was asked what her greatest accomplishment was it was being known as a Native American Muscogee Creek basket teacher, “Svmpv Hayetv Mvhayv.”

She was survived by her sister Sharon Walkup of Jay, Dolly “Jean” Luckey and husband Steve Luckey of Liberty Mounds, nephew Michael Walkup of Jay, niece Angela Wiggins and husband Jared Wiggins of Grove, nephew George Luckey and wife Amy Luckey, of Dearborn, Michigan, niece Margret “Maggie” Edwards of Haskell, nephews Ryan Edwards of Haskell, Paul Wayne Edwards and Bobby Jo Edwards,

10 great nieces and nephews and 4 great great nieces and nephews. Mary also had cousins and friends that loved her as well.

She was preceded in death by her parents Margret Hoover Edwards and Joe John Edwards. Twin brother Larry Lee Edwards, brother Joe Robert Edwards, brother-in-law Jerry Walkup and sister-in-law Linda Edwards.

Mary was loved and will be missed by everyone who knew her. “This is not Goodbye, it is until we meet again in Heaven.”

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Muscogee (Creek) Nation Election Board

2025 Muscogee (Creek) Nation Candidate Filing for National Council Seat B

Date & Time

July 7th - 9th 2025
9AM - 4PM (each day)

Location

2nd Floor Conference Room at the MCN Housing Authority Building
(2951 N. Wood Dr., Okmulgee, OK 7447)

Visit our website at
www.muscogeenation.com/election-board/ OR
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