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MVSKOKE NEWS

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CMN ESPORTS TEAM WINS FIRST CHAMPIONSHIP IN TEKKEN

RAVENS DEFEAT SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AFTER BEING DOWN 0-3

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE - College of Muscogee Nation Student Riley Barnett (Mvskoke) and the Ravens esports team made history on Monday, Dec. 8, when they won the D-1 National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Tekken 8 Championship. The win comes just barely a year after the Ravens esports team joined the NJCAA in September 2024.

Tekken 8 is an online fantasy fighter game where players battle one-on-one in an arena, similar to other games like Mortal Kombat and Street Fighter. The game hosts players on PlayStation, Xbox and Personal Computer (PC). The goal is to eliminate your opponent before they eliminate you. The character Barnett used for the tournament was Heihachi Mishima.

In a best of four double elimination, Barnett and the Ravens competed against Bryan Estrada from Salt Lake Community College. Going into the match, Barnett was undefeated. Soon, the tide would change. According to CMN Recruiter/Esports Coach Thomas Berryhill (Mvskoke), Estrada “threw a wrench in their plans” by playing as a new character he had never played before. Barnett found himself down 0-3.

“The opponent was taking us on,” Berryhill said. “Riley on the

fly had to learn how he was going to play him (Brian) and change his playing style. It was rough at first.”

Barnett explained that Estrada used an obscure character, Shaheen, to fight with. According to Barnett, Shaheen is not generally used by many online or local players. Although Barnett had a learning curve to overcome, he picked up on his opponent’s strategy very quickly. Initially, he was frustrated and tried to speed up the tempo of the fight. When that did not work, Barnett took time to re-strategize.

“I really had to stop and think about it the whole time,” Barnett said. “I just took a breath and started being more patient. I started creating more space.”

One of Barnett’s strengths is his ability to observe his opponent during a fight. Slowly but surely, after piecing together his opponent’s attack rhythms, Barnett developed a game plan.

“From there, I found out everything that I didn’t know, and in those next three matches I ended up closing it after that,” Barnett said.

Barnett’s focus paid off, winning the match 4-3.

Flare

Barnett is known on his streaming and social media platforms by his username Flare. He initially started in grassroots



Riley Barnett shows his championship certificate in front of the CMN trophy case. (Braden Harper/MM)

esports tournaments across the state. After graduating from Preston High School, Barnett enrolled at CMN after hearing about their esports program. He was also interested in the Mvskoke language classes they offer, as well as generally being more immersed in Mvskoke culture.

CMN General Studies Coordinator Colton Wood (Mvskoke) is the program’s esports director. Wood described Barnett as an “outstanding athlete.” Wood remarked that he was blown away by Barnett’s cool demeanor

throughout the match, especially knowing what was at stake.

“Being down 0-3, one match, and it’s going to ruin his undefeated streak, the whole time he’s losing, he just keeps saying ‘nice’, ‘nice’, ‘oh that’s good.’ I’m not sure if the guy (Bryan) could hear him or not but he was just having these words of encouragement for this guy,” Wood said.

According to Barnett, the reason he said “nice” was because he was happy his opponent found a good opening to attack. Barnett said it is important to keep you

cool as an example for others. For him, sportsmanship in esports is just as important as in any other sport.

“I try to keep that as a core value as us Mvskoke like to say, to keep good sportsmanship toward other players,” Barnett said. “That alone will help you keep your cool.”

Barnett regularly attends tournaments like Citadel and Combo Breaker. The latter is a three-day tournament that annu-

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COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION ESTABLISHES CAMPUS POLICE DEPARTMENT

NEW DEPARTMENT WILL ENHANCE CAMPUS SAFETY

BY THOMAS JACKSON
REPORTER

OKMULGEE – The College of the Muscogee Nation is adding to its security and law enforcement team with the establishment of a Campus Police Department. The new police force was honored at its launch during a ceremony at CMN’s Lecture Hall on Jan. 8.

Levi Payne previously served as Lead Security Officer at CMN and is now the new Campus Police Chief. According to Payne, the plan for the department was proposed in 2014 but has been in development since 2023, with the assistance of the Muscogee Nation’s Lighthorse Police.

According to CMN President Dr. Monte Randall, the college will operate with both its current Campus Security team and the new Campus Police Department. The CMN Police Department currently consists of Chief Payne, and Officers Katie Sanford, Steven Lowe, and Zackary Roberts. CMN Security Officers are Jeremy West, Easton Saffell, and Kim Vickers. Campus leadership believes the combination of Campus Police and Campus Security will make the campus a safer place.



Beginning second from left: CMN Campus Police Chief Levi Payne, and CMN Campus Police Officers Steven Lowe, Katie Sanford, and Zackary Roberts take part in a brief ceremony in which they call out 10-8 over the radio, signaling the beginning of their careers as Campus Police Officers, with the help of MCN Lighthorse Police Chief Richard Phillips (left) (Thomas Jackson/MM)

The creation of the CMN Campus Police Department also marks the establishment of the first tribal campus police force in the United States.

The new department, according to Payne, will provide enhanced campus safety by offering a more equipped and faster emergency response to incidents and criminal acts that occur on campus. According to CMN officials, officers will receive specialized training, possess enhanced authority and capabilities that the current Security team does not have, and will be expected to engage with CMN students, fac-

ulty, and staff daily.

The ceremony included an explanation of the duties of the Campus Police Department, plans for the department, and an official ceremony where Dr. Randall swore in Chief Payne as the Chief of the Campus Police Department, and where Chief Payne, in turn, swore in Sanford, Lowe, and Roberts as Campus Police Officers and presented them with badges.

In addition to establishing a Campus Police Department,

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PRINCIPAL CHIEF VETOS COUNCIL RAISES

RECOMMENDS SALARY EVALUATION COMMITTEE SIMILAR TO CHIEF SALARY PROCESS

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

MVSKOKE RESERVATION – Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill vetoed bill NCA 25-125 on Tuesday, Jan. 6. The bill would have given raises to each National Council Representative, Speaker, and Second Speaker. The bill was initially introduced and passed during the Thursday, Dec. 11, 2025, Business, Finance, & Justice Committee meeting. The bill was placed on the agenda during the Regular Session on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025. It was adopted into law by a vote of 13-1 after rigorous discussion from council representatives and four votes to postpone, amend, reconsider, and adopt.

Chief Hill’s veto outlined two objections. The first objection references Title 16 in MCNA Code Section 2-103, which outlines the evaluation process for raising the compensation of the Principal Chief and Second Chief. Enacted on November 18, 2011, through NCA 11-199, the code established an evaluation committee, formed every four years, comprising representatives from each branch of government in the MCN, plus one citizen chosen by each of the Executive and Legislative branches. The five-member committee is tasked with preparing a report containing recommendations on the salaries of the Principal Chief and Second Chief for submission to the BfJ committee in April of that year.

The objection states the need for an evaluation process: “National Council salaries should not be randomly raised on an ad hoc basis two years into the future without an evaluation process.” The objection then recommends that the evaluation committee created by NCA 11-199 also consider the compensation review for the National Council: “Further, the evaluation committee should make its recommendations for compensation for the Principal Chief, Second Chief, and National Council Representatives at the same time in the same report.”

The second objection states that it would be inappropriate to add the proposed \$438,358 to the National Council’s FY26 budget, as the raises will not take effect until January 1, 2028.

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Teens learn relationship skills

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New programs strengthen families

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STITCHING TOGETHER CULTURE AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

CENTER FOR VICTIM SERVICES HOSTS INTERMITTENT HOLIDAY SEWING CLASS FOR YOUTH

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE - Sewing machines were busy at work stitching together ribbon skirts and vests at the Okmulgee Indian Community Center for the Sew What? Let's Talk about Healthy Relationships event on Tuesday, Dec. 30. The event, hosted by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Center for Victim Services, was designed for students in 7th-12th grade. Students had the opportunity to learn how to use a sewing machine and make their own clothing. Students also learned about hallmarks of healthy interpersonal relationships.

Youth Prevention Specialist Jamie Rolland-Hill (Euclidean/Mvskoke) knows that not every student has healthy relationships

in their life to model after. MCN Center for Victim Services hosts events like these to promote healthy ways to communicate with partners.

"We talked about healthy relationships and what love looks like, what love doesn't look like," Rolland-Hill said. "We talked about healthy relationships within your family and your friends, different characteristics. What red flags look like, what green flags look like."

Taking place between Christmas and New Year's, Rolland-Hill remarked that events like these are great for students to get out of the house and do a constructive activity. According to Rolland-Hill, each student present was a beginner. Some had watched their parents sew, others



A student works on the sewing machine during the "Sew What?" relationships class. (Braden Harper/MM)

had never touched a machine. Afterward, each student was able to take home the skirt or vest they completed.

Green Flags vs. Red Flags

Red flags to look out for in a relationship are hollering, punching things like walls, throwing objects, verbal abuse, and physical violence. Rolland-Hill said that although some students may grow up witnessing these relationship red flags at home, it does not mean they have to repeat the cycle. The Center for Victim Services offers resources and specialists to help identify and address

relationship warning signs. Many students that day cited

they work through their problems," Rolland-Hill said. "Even

"It's a learning experience for them and it's also pretty fun."

characteristics their parents model when asked about what they believe are characteristics of a healthy relationship. According to Rolland Hill, one of the students said his father brings his mother flowers "just because." "Two of the youth today talked about watching their parents and how they communicate with each other and how

how they spend time together sitting in the living room watching tv and laughing together."

To stay up-to-date on events and programming from the MCN Center for Victim Services, follow their Facebook page. The department also has a 24/7 crisis line, which is reached at 918-732-7979.



Jaime Rolland-Hill teaches students how to use a sewing machine. (Braden Harper/MM)

DRUMMOND RELEASES LEGAL OPINION, MCN FILES SUIT

BY THOMAS JACKSON
REPORTER

MVSKOKE RESERVATION - Attorney General Gentner Drummond released a binding legal opinion regarding hunting and fishing on tribal land on Dec. 18. The opinion, requested by State Representative Chris Kannady, declares that the actions of Stitt and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation are needless, illegal, and will only damage the already strained relationship between the State and the tribes.

"The supremacy of federal law dictates that it preempts application of the Oklahoma Wildlife Code to Members and Nonmember Indians hunting and fishing on the Nations' reservations," Drummond wrote in his statement.

Drummond's binding opinion comes as three Tribal Nations — the Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Nations — are pursuing a federal lawsuit against Gov. Stitt, the ODWC, and Stitt's special prosecutor, Russ Cochran, citing violations of tribal sovereignty and government overreach.

According to Drummond's press release, his decision centers around the court case New Mexico v. Mescalero Apache Tribe, in which the Supreme Court argued that trust lands held by Tribes are generally the jurisdiction of the Tribes rather than the state.

As Drummond states, state wildlife agencies such as the ODWC cannot enforce state jurisdiction on lands where tribes already have their own wildlife agency. The three tribes involved in the lawsuit all have their own wildlife agencies: the Cherokee Nation Wildlife Conservation Department, the Chickasaw Nation Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Choctaw Nation Department of Wildlife Conservation (CNDWC).

Since the Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw tribes have their own wildlife agencies, the tribal agencies have primary jurisdiction over their lands in regards to hunting and fishing, according to Drummond.

Drummond also pointed to the successful partnerships in conservation the Tribes and ODWC have had for years. Drummond wrote, "We should be strengthening this collaboration, not allowing political agendas to undermine decades of cooperative wildlife management. Oklahomans deserve elected officials who respect the law and these longstanding working relationships."

On Dec. 23, Gov. Stitt and other state officials responded to the Dec.

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ally occurs over Memorial Day weekend. Combo Breaker is recognized as a "supermajor" tournament due to its strong pool of player talent. It typically sees 1,000 players, half of whom are from other countries.

CMN Esports Program

Wood said the esports team is still in its infancy. The program currently has seven active team members. The team practices in an esports lab with six gaming computers. The program was initially funded by the CARES Act. This year marks the first year the team has competed in the NJCAA. Unlike the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) Basketball Tournament, the esports team competes year round.

Growing the program involves commitment, accountability and consistency. Wood said that not only does Barnett bring these qualities to the team, he models them for other team members.

The program is looking to expand to competing in Call of Duty, Super Smash Bros, Rocket League, and Valorant competitions. Berryhill said each competition has three tiers that student athletes can compete in. Each tier presents a different level of skilled players. Berryhill said the first tier is for competitive players, the second is for more casual players, the third for new players. The competition is not just for students; it is also open to CMN coaches and alumni.

"We were students here one time, Colton and myself, and we loved playing games," Berryhill said. "As Native citizens



Left: Colton Wood, Riley Barnett, and TJ Berryhill after the CMN Esports tournament team win. (CMN)

we're very competitive already, whether it be video games, who can make their bed the best, whatever it is we're going to make a competition out of it. It's great that we're giving them a place to be competitive."

Berryhill said the win legitimizes the hard work that has gone into recruiting and training. It also helps secure funding for the esports program in the future. Wood said that although they have seen small victories in the past, the Tekken Championship win is a victory visible to faculty and students outside the program.

Barnett said that he is planning to attend tournaments in Missouri, Texas and California next year. He is also looking to attend his first international tournament in either South Korea or Japan.

To stay up to date on CMN Raven sports, follow their Facebook page, College of Muscogee Nation.



Riley Barnett shows off his skills on Tekken 8 at the CMN Esports Lab. (Braden Harper/MM)

THE MVSKOKE NEWS

Angel Ellis, Director | aellis@mvsokemedia.com

Braden Harper, Managing Editor | bharper@mvsokemedia.com

Jerrad Moore, Assignment Editor | jmoore@mvsokemedia.com

ShayIn Proctor, Reporter | sproctor@mvsokemedia.com

Meredith Johnson, Reporter | mjohnson@mvsokemedia.com

Thomas Jackson, Reporter | tjackson@mvsokemedia.com



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To submit a change of address or a letter to the editor, call: 918-732-7720 or email: info@mvsokemedia.com.

MUSEUM BROKEN ARROW ANNOUNCES 2026 LINEUP

BY THOMAS JACKSON
REPORTER

BROKEN ARROW – The Museum Broken Arrow has just announced its annual lineup of exhibitions for 2026, and the museum will continue its work with local and Indigenous artists in multiple exhibits.

According to a Facebook post about the museum's lineup, Museum Broken Arrow will be holding ten temporary exhibitions throughout 2026, and these include the following:

Museum Broken Arrow's first exhibition, "Then & Now, A Broken Arrow Photographic Exhibit," is held from Jan. 2 to Jan. 31. It will allow visitors to, according to a Facebook post by the museum, "explore photographs from 1904 to 2025 and see how Broken Arrow has changed, and not changed, through architecture and the residents who served our community."

Mickel Yantz, the museum's Executive Director, is very excited about the exhibitions they will be presenting this year and the opportunity to showcase the culture of Broken Arrow and its surrounding areas.

"With our temporary shows, we want to focus on Broken Arrow and its culture, so a lot of the artists that we bring in either live in Broken Arrow or were born and raised in Broken Arrow," Yantz said.

"Obviously, that also goes to the core of what we want to represent. We are on Muscogee Nation land, and we always want the Muscogee Nation represented in our permanent and temporary shows. We were able to reach out and make contact with a couple of artists, and we're just really excited to be hosting a couple of different shows that have Native art."

Yantz is also pleased by the relationship the museum, as well as the city at large, has had with both the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Indigenous people.

"We take it as a badge of honor, being able to share the culture and history with all of the guests that we have," Yantz said. "We had almost 10,000 people walk into the museum last year, so being able to share the history and culture of both Broken Arrow and the Muscogee Nation— We take a lot of pride in doing that, and we appreciate that partnership and everything that's come with it."

The Museum Broken Arrow is located at 400 South Main Street, Broken Arrow, OK 74012. It is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday, and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. The Museum is closed on Sunday and Monday. Those who wish to contact the museum can call them at 918-258-2616.

2026 MUSEUM BROKEN ARROW EXHIBITION CALENDAR

January - Broken Arrow Then & Now	July - Southeastern Indian Artists Association Group Shop
February - BA Senior Activity Center Artists	August - September - From BA to NYC, A Local's Journey Serving Those After 9/11. A retrospective by Pastor Scott Keele
March - FieldTrip Studio Group Show	October - Johnnie Diacon Solo Show
April - Uriens Wolfeson	November - December - Big Spirit, Little Tree in partnership with Broken Arrow Neighbors
May - Alpha Rho Tau Group Show	
June - Matt Henegar	

The museum will be hosting ten temporary exhibitions throughout 2026, including shows with Mvskoke and other Indigenous artists.

PATHWAYS PROGRAM IS HELPING FUTURE MOTHERS AND FATHERS CONNECT WITH THEIR CHILDREN

CLASS SESSIONS WILL HELP CREATE TOOLS FOR THE PARENTS TO HELP INTERACT AND CONNECT WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

PATHWAYS PROGRAM

Fatherhood & Motherhood is Sacred

This culturally grounded parenting program is designed specifically for Native families. Rooted in traditional values, teachings, and community strengths, the classes support parents in honoring the sacred roles of fathers and mothers while strengthening family bonds. The program helps parents build healthy, respectful, and nurturing relationships with their children by promoting positive communication, cultural connection, and effective parenting skills that support the well-being of the entire family.

12 Week classes will begin
Date: 01/07/2026
Time: 10am-12pm
Location: 2nd Floor Conference Room at the Housing Building

CONTACT US:
 918-295-0800
 MCNPathways@mcnchildsupport.com

THE MUSCOGEE NATION

In addition to the Fatherhood and Motherhood is Sacred classes, MCN Pathways is also offering: Linking Generations by Strengthening Relationships, Addressing Family Violence and Abuse, Suicide Prevention, Financial Literacy, and Resume Building. Classes begin in January, interested MCN citizens can contact MCN Child Support, 918-295-0800. (Image: MCN Pathways)

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

OKMULGEE – The Muscogee Creek Nation Child Support Program has started a Pathways Program. This 12-week class session, titled "Fatherhood and Motherhood is Sacred," began on Jan. 7 at the MCN Housing Building. The free classes aim to help parents build a positive relationship with their children.

The program has been designed for Native families and is culturally grounded. According to the program, "Rooted in traditional values, teachings and community strengths, the classes support parents in honoring the sacred roles of fathers and mothers while strengthening the family bonds."

"What we're hoping they can take away is learning how to parent and co-parent and learning how to establish a healthy relationship with their children," stated the Director of the Child Support Program, April Buckgaiter (Mvskoke). "We feel like it's important to spread this knowledge because we feel like people will be more inclined to pay their obligations if they have an established relationship with their child."

According to Buckgaiter, the Pathways Program was initiated

through a federal government waiver to explore alternative methods for non-custodial parents to fulfill their obligations. Last year was a start-up year, and this year marks their first year of implementing this program.

Throughout the 12-week session, there will be lessons that include family history and cultural components. The program will also have guest speakers presenting on the sacredness of parenthood. These lessons can offer different takes on how to create bonds with children and family, stated Buckgaiter.

"We were certified, we have 12 staff that are certified for different training and so it's the Native American Fatherhood and Families Association, that's what we were trained through. So every lesson offers a little bit of different take on how to create bonds with your children and your family," Buckgaiter said.

These sessions will be continuous, and if participants don't start from the beginning, such as missing one or two classes, then they'll have to start over. The MCN Child Support Program will have a calendar of set dates for when the following classes will begin. For the first six months of the year, they will have these classes.

MCN Child Support Program Coordinator Jessica Birdcreek stated that she is excited for these classes, "because I think it's going to be really good, especially for our community. There's so much that Creek Nation offers and this just adds to it. I noticed that we get a lot of parents who want that relationship with their children, and I think this is going to be a step forward and to helping them get there."

Birdcreek mentioned that, in addition to these classes, the department also offers other classes, such as resume building and financial literacy. They will also offer Child Support 101, which gives the basic knowledge of how child support works.

Buckgaiter added that they are planning various programs for the fiscal year and will add more as they develop the Pathways Program. They have staff trained in suicide prevention in addition to another program called "Linking Generations," which will be launched in January.

For information or questions about the Pathways Program and their class sessions, contact them at 918-295-0800 or email at MCNPathways@mcnchildsupport.com.

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 M-F (8AM-5PM) / 1010 E. EUFAULA / OKMULGEE, OK

A LOOK INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA'S DIGITAL REMATRIATION PROJECT

THE PROJECT IS THE SECOND COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION AND TU



Undated photograph of Susanne Barnett Strouvelle (right) with her daughters, Isabelle, Alice, and Jane (left to right, as labeled in handwriting below the image). (Image Credit: Alice Robertson Papers, TU Department of Special Collections and University Archives)

BY THOMAS JACKSON & MEREDITH JOHNSON
REPORTERS

TULSA – The University of Tulsa and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation are collaborating on a digital rematriation project known as Mvskokvke Hofone Enfulletv Rastvwetv (To Bring the Ways of the Mvskoke Back). The project is led by MCN Oral Historian Midge Dellinger, Director of the McFarlin Library's Special Collections Department at the University of Tulsa, Melissa Kunz, and Dr. Sara Beam, a Senior Lecturer of First-Year Writing at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities who previously worked as Applied Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Tulsa. The project is funded by the Mellon Foundation's Public Knowledge Program.

According to TU, the project intends to digitize and make publicly available the Robertson-Worcester Collection, which comprises a wealth of Mvskoke documents and artifacts donated to the university in 1931 by Alice Robertson. The materials in this collection involve or touch on nineteenth-century Mvskoke culture and history, and also cover the histories of the mission institutions throughout the MCN. While the collection comprises materials from Robertson and her mother, Ann Eliza, it also reveals the interwoven, interconnected histories of the MCN and TU.



Alice Robertson. (Image Courtesy: OHS)

Robertson's missionary family produced numerous Mvskoke language translations, including Mvskoke translations of the Bible and church hymns. The multifac-

eted Robertson wore many hats in her lifetime- educator, business owner, postmaster, and the first woman from Oklahoma to serve in the United States Congress. Robertson was born at the Tullahassee Mission in 1854, where her grandfather, Rev. Samuel Worcester, was a missionary. After attending college, she taught at Tullahassee and the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania before establishing the Nuyaka Mission. Robertson then headed the Presbyterian School for Indian Girls (PSIG), the Indigenous boarding school that later became Henry Kendall College, which eventually evolved into the University of Tulsa.

Citizens will be able to find photographs of Mvskoke ancestors, speeches, newspaper articles and other community material. The collection also contains many documents in the Mvskoke language, a fact Dellinger emphasized. Dellinger shared that the collection includes original copies of monthly newspapers in the Mvskoke language from Tullahassee Mission as well as written correspondence in the language between Ann Eliza and Mvskoke and Seminole ancestors.

The project will also digitize the Indians of North America Historical Manuscripts and Documents, 1724-1981 archive, which includes documents, correspondence, and photographs. The materials relate to Tribal governments, citizens, and lands, including MCN pre-removal and allotment era documents.

Dellinger hopes that the project will encourage citizens to use the sizable collection to learn Mvskoke history through the lives of their ancestors. "The Alice Robertson Collection provides a significant primary resource to utilize in learning about the lives of mid-nineteenth-century Mvskoke people," she shared.

The team views the work as a "rematriation." They use the term in honor of the matrilineal family traditions of the Mvskoke people, and to emphasize their approach to handling the documents and information they found - one that stresses the importance of returning Indigenous knowledge through archives that will be publicly accessible.

Beam, later clarified, saying, "Both repatriation and rematriation can be in physical or digital forms, and they both involve a return of objects and/or knowledge. The difference is that a rematriation includes not only returning objects/knowledge but also centering women's roles in work, the tradition of women's leadership, and the familial, spiritual, and cultural value of the object/knowledge being

drawing on the histories of TU and the MCN.

"This direct connection between all of it, and that's something that, as a writing and English teacher, I want everybody who's studying and practicing writing in English at the institution to know, have a sense of like, 'Where are you?' Physically, and also culturally, and also in a historical moment," said Beam. One of the significant pieces

expanded to include two digital archivists and a graduate assistant: Miranda Bickford, Elissa Howe, and Kara Hodo (Choctaw Nation).

Bickford shared that to date, the archival team has completed a collection condition report and is working on inventories. "By the end of the project the Alice Robertson Collection and the Indigenous Peoples of North America Muscogee (Creek) papers will be inventoried, cataloged, reorganized, rehoused, digitized, uploaded to both McFarlin's Special Collections and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Library and Archives Digital Archives, and have new finding aids, with Muscogee (Creek) citizens usage in mind," Bickford wrote.

The goal is to make the digital collections available for online access by the end of the grant period, which is the second half of 2028. The team added, "Public ease of accessibility is one of the core purposes of doing this project. The entirety of the Alice Robertson Collection and the Muscogee documents found in the Indigenous Peoples of North America Historical Documents and Manuscripts Collection will be freely and publicly accessible online from McFarlin Library's digital archive-- no account required for access."

In addition to access through TU, Dellinger emphasized that Mvskoke-specific documents from the collections will be accessible online through the MCN National Library and Archives digital archive.

In the project's final phase, the team aims to engage directly with Mvskoke communities to share their work and the history they have gathered. The goal is to bring the collection to those who cannot visit Tulsa to view it in person.

Beam stressed that they are looking for any connections to the Robertson-Worcester collection that the Mvskoke people may have. "We would love to hear from, you know, anybody who has a connection to the collection," said Beam.

"So those kinds of human connections are something that

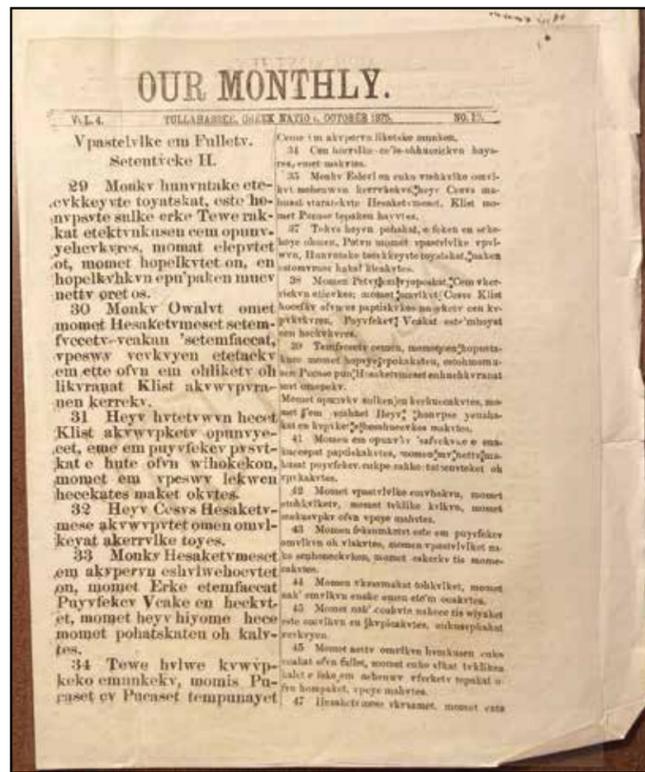


Image of Tullahassee Our Monthly, 1875, volume 4, issue 10, cover page. Tullahassee Mission publication featuring Mvskoke language lessons and articles, as well as public news and notices in English. (Image Credit: Alice Robertson Papers, TU Department of Special Collections and University Archives)

returned."

The project was initiated by Dellinger and Beam, who recognized the need to bring the archive to the Mvskoke people. "It became very apparent, very quickly, the abundance of Mvskoke history and language that is in that collection," Dellinger said. "So, Sara and I kicked around this idea for a long time of getting this entire collection digitized and therefore, more accessible to the Mvskoke people and to the general public."

"It has turned into what I think is a pretty amazing digitization project. All this Mvskoke history and language, it's a very significant collection to us as Mvskoke people."

Beam echoed this sentiment,

has been the University of Tulsa's Special Collections Department and its director, Melissa Kunz. Beam and Dellinger reached out to Kunz when they were first assembling the project, and she was instrumental in the process by providing information and coordinating with additional staff members.

"This was driven by Sara and Midge's idea to engage in a digital rematriation process," said Kunz, who was able to provide background information on the collection and the phases for the digitization process.

Kunz is also involved in growing and managing the necessary team to initiate the specialized, intensive digitization process. Since Nov. 1, 2025, the project has



ARCHIVE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

we value as part of the project too.”

Beam added that the McFarlin Library is open to the general public, and its Special Collections Department is also open to the public by appointment.

“I know not everybody can make it to Tulsa, but if you can, TU’s Special Collections Department in McFarlin Library is open to the public, so the public can call up there and make an appointment,” Beam said. “You can also search the collection online, and then you can search the special collections catalog, including through a lot of the Worcester and Robinson papers. It’s not complete, but, you know, you might find something that mentions a name that’s relevant and be able to actually go in and see it.”

This project is not the first collaboration between TU and the MCN. The Nation and the University have been collaborating on the PSIG Project, a 2021 initiative that identifies the students of PSIG and tells their stories through in-depth archival work. The team includes Dellinger, Beam, Dr. Kristen Oertel of the University of Tulsa’s History Department, Dr. Laura Stevens formerly of TU and currently Director of the Honors College at Auburn University, and numerous graduate students and staff.

MCN RIP YOUTH PROGRAM HELPS BREAK THE CYCLE

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

MVSOKKE RESERVATION – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Reintegration Program (RiP) currently offers a specialized program for youth aged 10-19 years who are justice involved or at risk. The services they provide are designed to lead young citizens to a better path.

According to MCN RiP Youth Advocate Kevin Green (Mvskoke), MCN RiP Manager Tony Fish wanted to break the cycle of generations going to prison. To do this, they began working with their clients’ children and other at-risk youth.

“We work with kids that their parents are in prison, had been in prison or where the kids have been in trouble at school and are at risk of going to juvenile,” Green said.

Green said that many of their clients come from areas in need of essential items, such as food, clothing, and hygiene. The program offers services including food/clothing, mentorship, career development, drug testing, community services, and program “speakouts.”

After noticing that many kids didn’t know their true potential or what they wanted to do after graduating high school, the program began offering career development. “A lot of times we help

and focus more on school, focus on grades and focus on what are you going to do once you get outside of high school because a lot of these kids don’t have directions. So we do a lot of that,” Green said.

Program “speakouts” are a time for the youth in the program to hear firsthand from people who have gone through the system and have gotten their life back on track. “We’ll have those clients go out and speak to a lot of our troubled youth or even just the whole school system. They’ll go in and talk about their past, their mistakes, and how they corrected them,” Green said.

For Green, being part of this movement makes him feel great, especially since he was not always a good kid himself.

“I know the pitfalls and life is hard and life is not fair. But at the end of the day, you can make it what you want to make it. So if you want to get out of the cycle, we offer that. The program offers you the tools to get out of that and for them to thrive,” Green said.

“This program is growing. We’re just here to try to help make a difference.”

The RiP program aims to help young citizens navigate high school and get started on a path towards their future- whether that’s trade school, college, or wherever their path leads them.

Reintegration YOUTH PROGRAM

SERVICES	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food/clothing • mentorship • career development • drug testing • community service • program speakouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ages 10-19 • at-risk/oja • enrolled creek citizen • reside within muscogee (creek) reservation

YOUTH ADVOCATE
Kevin Green
918-549-2624

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

CALL KEVIN GREEN OR VISIT FOR MORE INFORMATION

615 E CORPORATION HENRYETTA, OK 74437
918-549-2620
kgreen@MuscogeeNation.com

THE MUSCOGEE NATION

Green stated that MCN RiP wants to ensure they move in a direction rather than falling into the traps of past generations.

To participate in the program, you must be 10-9 years old, at risk or justice involved, an enrolled

Creek citizen, and reside within the MCN reservation.

For any more information about the MCN RiP Youth Program, contact Kevin Green at 918-549-2620.



HEALTH TALK

BY SHAWN W. TERRY
SECRETARY OF HEALTH

As 2026 begins, MCN Health reflects on a year of meaningful progress in expanding access to care, strengthening the patient experience, and preparing for the future of health care for the Muscogee Nation.

Decisions across the health system were grounded in a commitment to patient experience. Efforts to improve communication, appointment availability, and care coordination were supported by investments in technology, care navigation, and staff training - all aimed at creating a more seamless experience for patients.

2025 brought notable achievements and recognition. Creek Nation Community Hospital was named Best in Patient Satisfaction and a Top Overall Performer among Oklahoma hospitals. We also expanded Express Care services in Okmulgee to provide further convenience to patients of all ages. In addition, the expanded emergency department in Okmulgee opened, increasing capacity and improving wait times. Both demonstrate the success of our patient-centered approach.

In November, MCN Health received a joint venture award from the Indian Health Service to replace the existing Okmulgee Clinic. This investment allows

us to move forward with planning a modern facility that will better support patient access, provider workflows, and the long-term needs of the community. Replacing the ageing clinic is a critical step in ensuring our patients and staff have a space that matches the quality of care being delivered.

Another milestone followed in December with the launch of the MCN Health On-Demand Virtual Clinic. This new service expands same-day access by allowing eligible patients to enter a virtual queue through MyChart or connect through the MCN Health Call Center. The On-Demand Clinic helps reduce wait times, ease demand on express care locations, and keep patients connected to MCN Health providers.

Looking ahead, MCN Health will continue making strategic investments to benefit the Muscogee people. We recently broke ground on the new Sapulpa Clinic, and breaking ground on a new clinic in Holdenville will follow, extending services to the southernmost part of the Reservation.

We are excited for the future of the Muscogee Nation Department of Health and look forward to continuing this work alongside our patients, employees, and communities. We wish everyone a healthy and happy New Year.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL INAUGURATES NEW REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE 24TH SESSION

RANDALL HICKS AND THOMASENE YAHOLA OSBORNE WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE AS SPEAKER AND SECOND SPEAKER AFTER TIED VOTES



Council members are sworn in to the 24th Session of the Muscogee Creek National Council. (Braden Harper/MM)

BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE - The inauguration for the Pale-Hokkolen Ostohkaken (24th) Session of the Muscogee Creek National Council took place at the Mound Building on Saturday, Jan. 3. The ceremony swore in 11 returning representatives and five newly-elected representatives. The ceremony also elected officer positions for speaker, second speaker, and sergeant-at-arms. Muscogee Creek Supreme Court Justice Jessica Stomski swore in the council and council leadership.

Newly elected representatives include Creek District Seat B Representative Cody Phillips, Kowetv District Seat B Representative James Factor, Mvskoke District Seat B Representative Lora Harjo-King, Okmulke District Seat B Representative William Lowe, and Tvlse Dis-

trict Seat B Representative Lucian Tiger III. Rep. Lowe and Rep. Tiger have both previously served on the National Council.

The ceremony saw the presentation of the colors by the Mvskoke Este Cate Veterans and Este Cate Hoktyke Suletaww Color Guards. MCN Secretary of Interior Affairs Trenton Kissee provided opening remarks.

Speakers Election

The National Council Inauguration saw the election of new officers: speaker, second speaker, and sergeant-at-arms.

The election for speaker saw current Speaker Randall Hicks run against newly elected Rep. Tiger. The first vote for speaker resulted in an 8-8 tie, and the second vote also ended in a tie. Standard procedure dictates that in the event of two tied votes for speaker, a coin

will be tossed to determine the winner. Rep. Tiger selected heads, Speaker Hicks selected tails. The coin toss resulted in heads, reelecting Speaker Hicks.

The election for the second speaker saw current Second Speaker Thomasene Yahola Osborn run against newly elected Rep. Lowe. Similar to the speaker vote, the first and second votes both resulted in 8-8 ties. Council followed standard procedure which dictates that in the event of two tied votes for the second speaker a coin will be tossed to determine the winner. The coin toss resulted in tails, reelecting Second Speaker Osborn.

The election for sergeant-at-arms saw Representative Robert Hufft run unopposed. Rep. Hufft was elected by acclamation, 16-0.

The National Council adopted the rules of procedure unanimously, 15-0.

CMN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

CMN has also remodeled the Security Building to transition into a formal police department, with the Security Building now housing dedicated police offices.

This ceremony marks the beginning of an operational transition period, according to a slideshow shown at the event, during which plans to enhance operational capacity and capabilities will be implemented by 2029.

More information on CMN’s current security team can be found on CMN’s website at <https://cmn.edu/security/>

CMN Security can be contacted by phone at (918) 549-2840 and in the event of an emergency at (918) 758-8410.

HUNTING

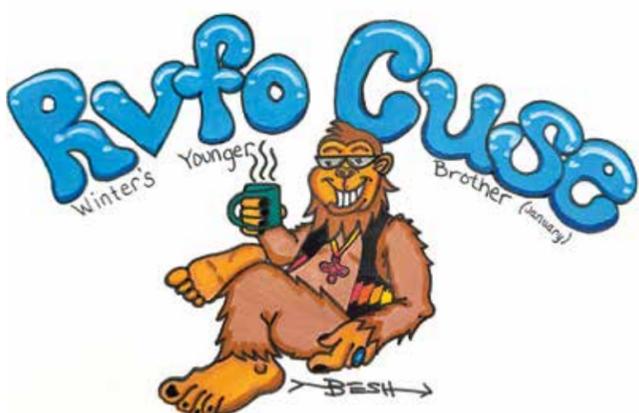
CONTINUED FROM 2

18 statements by AG Drummond and tribal leaders in a court filing according to a press release, stating that the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has “uniformly enforced its facially neutral hunting and fishing laws on all fee lands within the State, including those owned, leased, or managed by the State.”

Officials then claimed that

the AG and the tribes failed to identify any federal law or treaty that removed the jurisdiction from the states in this case. They would go on to state that it was now up to the federal court to decide whether to side with the state or the tribes in this case.

On Jan. 5, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation filed a federal lawsuit against the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Director Wade Free and special prosecutor Russell Cochran. The suit challenges the state’s claims of prosecution jurisdiction for Tribal citizens hunting and fishing on Tribal lands.



NEW 24TH NATIONAL COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION ELECTS COMMITTEE OFFICERS

INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND FACT FINDING & INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEES CAUCUS ASSIGNS REPRESENTATIVES



BY BRADEN HARPER
MANAGING EDITOR

OKMULGEE - The Muscogee Creek National Council held a Special Session on Tuesday, Jan. 6. The special session comes after the inauguration of the Pale-Hokkolen Ostohkaken (24th) Session on Saturday, Jan. 3.

Second Speaker Thomasene Yahola Osborn made a motion to change the dates on the June session schedule. The motion changed the June Planning Schedule date from Tuesday, June 23 to Tuesday, June 16. It also changed the June Regular Session from Saturday, June 27 to Saturday, June 20. The changes were made to account for this year's Mvskoke Festival. The motion was adopted unanimously 15-0.

Alicia Stroble was nominated to serve as the Pale-Hokkolen Ostohkaken (24th) Secretary. The council voted in favor of appointing Stroble as secretary 14-1. Representative Robyn Whitecloud voted against Stroble's appointment.

Per code, senior district representatives have first choice in being seated on the Fact Finding & Investigations Committee or the Internal Affairs Committee. Speaker Randall Hicks, Representative Dode Barnett, Representative Charles McHenry, Representative Galen Cloud, Representative Lora Harjo-King, Rep. Whitecloud, Rep. Osborn and Representative Robert Hufft were selected to the Fact Finding & Investigations Committee. Representative Sandra Golden, Representative Cody Phillips, Representative James Factor, Representative Darrell Proctor, Representative Mary Crawford, Representative Will Lowe, Representative Anna Marshall and Representative Lucian Tiger were selected to the Internal Affairs Committee.

Council officers assigned each representative to council committees. The committees are Business Finance & Justice, Health Education & Welfare, and Land Natural Resources & Cultural Preservation. Each committee nominated a chairperson, vice chairperson and ex officios.

The Business Finance & Justice Committee elected Rep. Tiger as the Chairperson and Rep. Lowe as the Vice Chairperson. The Ex Officio for Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises is Rep. Hufft. The Ex Officio for the Muscogee Nation Business Board is Rep. Tiger. The Ex Officio for the Mvskoke Loan Fund Board is Rep. Factor. The Ex Officio for One Fire Holding Company is Rep. Lowe. Rep. Golden will serve on the Mound Building Oversight Committee. The Business Finance & Justice Committee will hold their first meeting of the year on Thursday, Jan. 22 at 3:00 p.m. (CT).

The Health Education & Welfare Committee elected Rep. McHenry as the Chairperson and Rep. Crawford as the Vice Chairperson. The Ex Officio for the College of the Muscogee Nation Board of Regents is Rep. Harjo-King. The Ex Officio for the Mound Building Oversight Committee is Rep. Proctor. The Health Education & Welfare Committee will hold their first meeting of the year on Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 10 a.m. (CT).

The Land, Natural Resources & Cultural Preservation elected Rep. Cloud as the Chairperson and Rep. Barnett as Vice Chairperson. Rep. Marshall will serve as the Ex Officio for the Mound Building Oversight Committee. The Land, Natural Resources & Cultural Preservation Committee will hold their first meeting of the year on Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 3:30 p.m. (CT).

National Council Sessions 2026

This is the 2026 Calendar for the Planning, Regular and Quarterly Sessions of the National Council in accordance MCNCA Title 30, Chapter 3. These dates are only subject to change by majority vote of the full Council. In those situations, prior notices will be publicized and posted.

PLANNING SESSIONS will commence at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, four days prior to the Regular/Quarterly National Council Session, **PRE-AGENDA** commencing at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers-Mound Building, and the **REGULAR/QUARTERLY SESSIONS** at 10:00 a.m., in the Auditorium - Mound Building - Capitol Complex. **In the event of a natural disaster or public health emergency or any other special circumstances meetings may be held by teleconference and/or video conference.**

JANUARY 2026	Planning Session.....	January 27
	Quarterly Session.....	January 31
FEBRUARY 2026	Planning Session.....	February 24
	Regular Session.....	February 28
MARCH 2026	Planning Session.....	March 24
	Regular Session.....	March 28
APRIL 2026	Planning Session.....	April 21
	Quarterly Session.....	April 25
MAY 2026	Planning Session.....	May 12
	Regular Session.....	May 16
JUNE 2026	Planning Session.....	June 16
	Regular Session.....	June 20
JULY 2026	Planning Session.....	July 21
	Quarterly Session.....	July 25
AUGUST 2026	Planning Session.....	August 25
	Regular Session.....	August 29
SEPTEMBER 2026	Planning Session.....	September 22
	Regular Session.....	September 26
OCTOBER 2026	Planning Session.....	October 27
	Quarterly Session.....	October 31
NOVEMBER 2026	Planning Session.....	November 17
	Regular Session.....	November 21
DECEMBER 2026	Planning Session.....	December 15
	Regular Session.....	December 19

2026 MCNNC Schedule (MCNNC)



The marquee at Circle Cinema in Tulsa during the one-night-only screening of "Free Leonard Peltier" on Dec. 18 (Thomas Jackson/MM)

"FREE LEONARD PELTIER" DOCUMENTARY SHOWN AT CIRCLE CINEMA

THE SCREENING WAS FOLLOWED BY A Q&A WITH LEONARD PELTIER

BY THOMAS JACKSON
REPORTER

TULSA - The life and struggle of Native activist Leonard Peltier (Turtle Mountain Chipewewa, Ojibwe, Lakota, Dakota) was brought to Circle Cinema in Tulsa in a screening of the documentary "Free Leonard Peltier" on Dec. 18. The screening was a one-night-only event that was free and open to the general public and was sponsored by Friends of the Circle, the Indian Territory Film Festival, and the Flint Family Foundation.

The documentary, directed by Jesse Short Bull (Oglala Sioux) and David France, tells Peltier's story: how he became involved with the American Indian Movement, how he rose in leadership, and how he and several others ended up at the Pine Ridge reservation in North Dakota. It told of how he was accused of the murder of two FBI agents and sentenced to life in prison, based on testimony that was later called into question.

While the documentary has no new interviews with Peltier, now 81, it mixes old interviews with him and current interviews

of his friends, colleagues at AIM, and Tribal elders. Descriptions of threats and coercion by the FBI into giving false testimony against Peltier are detailed in the film, the most notable being Myrtle Poor Bear, whose interview was shown in the documentary. Poor Bear initially testified against Peltier, despite never meeting him, and claimed she was his girlfriend, only to later recant her statements.

The documentary also tells the history of AIM's altercations with the U.S. government, including the occupation of Alcatraz, the Wounded Knee occupation,

the takeover of the BIA building, and the Pine Ridge shootout. The documentary shows the conflict between AIM and the federal government being exacerbated by individuals like Dick Wilson. Wilson, the then-Tribal President of the Oglala Lakota tribe, with the support of the federal government, harassed, threatened, and endangered AIM members using his own personal militia, the Guardians of the Oglala Nation, also known as the GOON Squad.

The film ends with Peltier's commutation from President Joe Biden, which placed him under indefinite house arrest in his home in the Turtle Mountain Reservation in Belcourt, North Dakota- the release occurred one week before the film's premiere.

The screening of the film was capped off with a Q&A, which featured producer Jhane Myers (Comanche, Blackfeet), moderator Sunrise Tippeconnie (Navajo, Comanche) of the Reel Indigenous Podcast, and Peltier, who joined via Zoom from his home.

When speaking to the crowd over Zoom, Peltier took a moment to thank people for standing up for not just him, but for Indigenous people as a whole.

"I'm glad to see our future generations standing up the way they are. All of you young people that are out there standing up for our people. You made me feel good in my heart that any sacrifice I may have made was not at all in vain. You gave me hope that we would be victorious, and

we will be. I'm not gonna give up. I'm not gonna give up til the day I die," Peltier said over Zoom.

Myers also spoke of how excited she was to help Peltier tell his story.

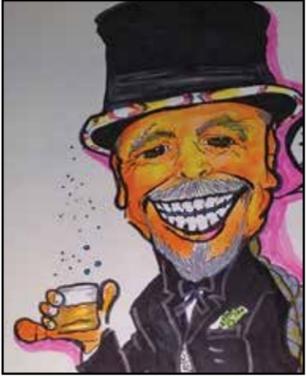
"At first, I was just like 'Oh my God, there's Leonard Peltier.' It was huge for me, because here's this icon. I think I was 12 or 13 when the American Indian Movement was happening, and, you know, here he is, like right here," Myers said.

"At the end of this call we had, I was watching our monitor, I was almost starting to cry, just because never in my life would I think that I'd have a chance to help or use my talent, use my career, or use my name as a part of this to try and make a difference."

Myers also spoke about the expansion of the film's scope from being just about Peltier and why they felt the need to speak on Indigenous activist movements like AIM as a whole.

"What you saw in the film is that we wanted to change it to show not just Leonard's story, but the native activism as a whole. Because over time, activism has changed, and I wanted people to be able to see the Natives that were on the ground and that were doing this work," Myers said.

"Like he says, it's not just us. We stand on the shoulders of all of these activists that came before us, all of the people that had prayers about this and wished for this to happen."



SOUR SOFKEE

BY FUS YVHIKV
COLUMNIST

Locv! Locv! Locv! A bag of gold or my turtle shells? Imagine waking up in the middle of the night to find your whole house is on fire. A burning conflagration that is so intense the heat burns your skin, and you can barely breathe. You only have seconds to get out alive. You rush to the nearest exit, hurriedly grabbing your purse or wallet. As you approach the door you suddenly remember your fondest treasure; a 200-year-old family bible. You throw away your purse or wallet and frantically grab the bible as you escape to safety. In the crucible of such an emergency, when seconds matter, people have a propensity of risking their lives to save the one thing that matters most. It typically is not money or treasure but rather something that carries great personal meaning.

Such is the story of Mary Hutpa during the 1861 Trail of Blood on Ice. The narrative

related in this article is largely based upon an interview of Joseph Bruner (Locv Pokv tribal town) by Effie Jackson on February 28, 1938. The interview can be found in the Indian Pioneer Papers on the website of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The Papers are a collection of oral histories conducted in the 1930s as part of the Works Progress Administration. The interviews offer firsthand accounts by elders of their lives in pre-Oklahoma statehood Indian Territory.

The bag of gold or turtle shells story takes place during the December 1861, Mvskoke Trail of Blood on Ice. During this time, several thousand pro-Union and neutral tribes people were fleeing Confederate controlled Indian Territory. They were desperately escaping to Kansas which was staunchly pro-Union. The refugees were led by the Upper Creek Chief Opothleyahola, then in his early eighties. Along the way, they were being pursued by Confederate troops commanded by Col. Douglass Cooper and Col. D.N. McIntosh.

Three well known battles were fought during the Trail of Blood on Ice. Those were The Battle of Round Mountain, November 19, 1861; the Battle of Chusto Talsah, December 9, 1861; and the Battle of Chustenahlah, December 26, 1861. It was at this second engagement, also known as the Battle of Bird Creek, where our story occurs. Here is the narrative as told by Joseph Bruner on February 28, 1938:

“After the Battle of Bird Creek, the mad flight north began. The



BESH

women on horseback taking all the earthly possessions they could. I have heard my mother tell of that flight. To comprehend it you must bear in mind that Opothleyahola was taking all of his followers with him. Women, children, and even the aged and sick. It was almost another “Trail of Tears.”

“Kansas was to be their destination. In fact, Leroy, Kansas became their camp and home until after the war. Opothleyahola gave the Federal Government a thousand able-bodied men. Among them was my mother’s first husband, who was killed in battle.

“Mary Hutpa, a Kasihta [sic] an aunt of the present Mrs. Lizzie Sapulpa (widow of Jim Sapulpa) had been entrusted with a bag of gold belonging to Spocogee, leader of the Kashitas [sic].

Knowing that Mary was in the advance flight while he had to stay to fight, old Spocogee thought she would be able to save his bag of gold.

“The flight was sudden. In their fright the women threw away everything but their most prized possessions; their haste could not be encumbered with anything that seemed unnecessary. So Mary threw away the bag of gold and kept her precious turtle shells, for these were her main adornment in their tribal dances.

“When Spocogee found he had lost his gold they said he tried to swear in white man’s words, his anger was so great. As for Mary she made her turtle shell bands help her.”

This story always moves me

because it manifests signature Mvskoke values and lifeways. Mary threw away the bag of gold and kept her precious turtle shells! The women shake shells at the ceremonial grounds not only to provide rhythm for the songs but also, fundamentally, to commune with Ohfvnk, The One Above, or Creator. What could be more precious than that?

In our Western Society, we are taught to pursue riches, money, and gold. It is stories like Mary’s that connect us to our traditional Native ways and values. It is stories like Mary’s that remind us that our connection to Ohfvnk and to Turtle Island are paramount. A bag of gold or my turtle shells? In a situation like Mary’s, may we all choose the turtle shells. Locv! Locv! Locv!

-Okis ci, Fus.

SUBMISSION

JEN HANDSEL WINS FOURTH PLACE IN POETRY CONTEST

Bristow teacher and Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal member Jen Handsel won 4th place in the Ramping on Route 66 poetry contest sponsored by the Rural Oklahoma Poetry Museum. The poem will be available to view beginning February 7 at the ROMP Museum in Locust Grove. Handsel’s poem was inspired by the many towns on Route 66 and her childhood memories of the different attractions each town has to offer. Also, included in the poem are some more modern features along the centenarian highway like Sapulpa’s Tee Pee Drive Inn and Bristow’s Chrysler Tower, which is still currently under construction. Handsel’s grandparents were the late Noah and Irene (Felix) Parkinson of Bristow.

IN MEMORIAM



LAWAUNTA SUE SOAP

Lawaunta Sue Soap passed away peacefully on December 19, 2025, two days before her 77th birthday. She was surrounded by her loved ones, whom she had so freely given her love throughout her life. Her passing two days before her birth date is a quiet reminder that her life came full circle, complete, purposeful, and deeply rooted in faith. Hoffman, Oklahoma was the place of her birth, and Coweta, Oklahoma was where she was receiving hospice care at the time of her passing.

Lawaunta was a devoted mother, sister, aunt, cousin, grandmother and friend whose love was steady, generous, and unwavering. Family was the center of her world, and she poured herself into nurturing, encouraging, and caring for those she loved. Her gentle strength and kind spirit will be remembered in the countless acts of love, wisdom, and prayers.

Lawaunta gave her life to Christ in the summer of 1959 while attending Camp Nunny-Cha-Ha, a historic Southern Baptist all girls mission camp located in the Arbuckle Mountains near Davis, Oklahoma. Later that same summer, she was baptized in a creek behind Middle Creek #1 until she and her family became founding members of Glorieta Baptist Church in Oklahoma City. A faithful Christian woman, Lawaunta lived her life grounded in her belief in Christ. She loved attending Indian Falls Creek, where worship and fellowship brought her great joy. She was not only a charter member of Glorieta Baptist Church but also a founding member of her beloved All Nations Baptist

Church (Muskogee), where she faithfully served and supported its mission with her heart.

She was a member of her maternal ceremonial ground, Peach Ground, and her clan was the Panther Clan.

Lawaunta was also an accomplished athlete and scholar. She graduated from Star-Spencer High School (1967), where she was an outstanding softball, volleyball, and basketball player, known for her determination and team spirit. Following high school, she attended Northeastern State University to earn a master’s degree in school administration.

For several years, she lived and worked at Kayenta Indian Boarding School, located on the Navajo Reservation. She developed many lifelong friendships during her time living and working on the reservation. She developed many lifelong friendships during her time working and living on the reservation. She cherished the memories and had many stories to tell of her time there. She eventually returned to Oklahoma and taught for a short time at the Concho Indian Boarding School. She was employed at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in the Children and Family Services program. After a few years of employment with the tribe, she took on the position of Director of Indian Education for the Glenpool Schools. She truly enjoyed teaching and uplifting others, especially our Native Youth, through education.

The last few years of her professional employment were with the Veterans Administration located in Muskogee, Oklahoma, where she served as an educational benefits counselor. It gave her great pleasure to give back to the men and women who have served our nation in the various branches of the military and in numerous campaigns.

Those who knew her will remember her warm smile, her quiet strength, and her steadfast faith. She lived with grace, humility, and purpose, leaving behind a legacy of love, service, and devotion that will continue through the generations of people she touched. She trusted God in all things. Although she will be deeply missed, her life stands as a

powerful example of faithfulness, perseverance, and love.

Lawaunta was preceded in death by her beloved mother, Mollie Hicks and father, George Hicks; her sister, Pamela Kay Hicks; and her brothers, Emanuel Joseph “Bugs” Hicks and Monroe “Moe” (MJ) Hicks.

Surviving are her siblings, Dr. Lahoma Ann Schultz (Bobby), Gary Dean Hicks, Johnny Allen Hicks and former sister-in-law, Sandra Kaye (Thornton) Wilson.

She is also survived by her loving sons, Kevin Soap (Dierdra) and Chewg Soap (Shannon). She was a devoted grandmother to Aaron Soap, Laurisa Roberts (Josh), Emery Soap, Shyla Marshall (Garrett), Tamra Jimboy (Isaiah), Caleb Soap, and Kay’ona Soap. Also surviving her are her cherished great-grandchildren: Kian, River, Xay, Zeke, Kinslee, Jayden, Aiyonna, Donniss, Elias, Trace and Zayne (twins).

She leaves behind to cherish many memories, her maternal matriarch, Katherine (Jones) Spurlock; her nieces, Faren Michelle Jenkins and Johanna Hicks; and her nephews, Cheyenne Donnell, Joseph Monroe Hicks, Ira Dean Hicks, Monroe Hicks, Jaden, Koltin and Bentley. Also left behind are her extended family, many friends, and many maternal and paternal cousins, too numerous to name, but each deeply loved.

Her family takes comfort in knowing that she has heard the words of Jesus, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of your lord.” (King James Version Matthew 25:21). Her legacy will live on in the hearts of all who were blessed to know her.

Viewing for Lawaunta was held Monday, December 22, 2025 at Integrity Chapel, a wake service followed. followed by wake services from 6-8pm. Viewing resumed Tuesday morning from 8-12. Pallbearers were Aaron Soap, Emery Soap, Caleb Soap, Ira Hicks, Joe Hicks, and Chris Soap. Honorary pallbearers will be Steve Watkins, Cheyenne Donnell, Thomas Sullivan, Jr., Charley Eisenberger, Dennis Bible, Jerry Wayne Bible and Ty Hicks.

VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



The Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs Services Office is proud to honor tribal veteran Robert L. Coon for his dedicated service to the U.S. Air Force, the United States, and the Muscogee Nation. Robert honorably served four years from 1986 to 1990 and is a recipient of the Air Force Achievement Medal, Air Force Good Conduct Medal and the Air Force Training Ribbon. Mvto Mr. Coon for your selfless service to your country and your community.

MVTO FOR YOUR SELFLESS SERVICE!

LEGALS

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

In the Matter of the Application of:)
Jason Robert Sawyer,)
Falon Eco Sawyer,)
Ajenna Rochelle Sawyer,)
And Minor Child A.O.R. Sawyer,)
By and Through Jason Robert Sawyer)
Next Friend,)
Petitioners.)
To Change their Name.)

DISTRICT COURT FILED
DEC 22 2025 1:51
Case No. 2025-187
CYNTHIA FREEMAN
COURT CLERK

**ORDER FOR AND NOTICE OF HEARING ON
PETITION FOR CHANGE OF NAME**

To Whom It May Concern:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that Jason Robert Sawyer has filed a Pro Se Petition for Change of Name in the above action in the District Court of Muskogee (Creek) Nation.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED THAT this Petition will be heard on the 27th day of January, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the District Court of Muskogee (Creek) Nation, located at: 2391 Lvnshilke, Okmulgee, OK 74447.

You may appear and show cause as to why any or all of the requested orders should not be granted.

SIGNED this 22nd day of December, 2025.

JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT

Jason Robert Sawyer, Esq. Se
1431 S Quince St.
Glenpool, Oklahoma 75033
(519) 238-8475
Petitioner
Notices should be sent to this address only.

Falon Eco Sawyer
Falon Eco Sawyer, Petitioner

Ajenna Sawyer
Ajenna Rochelle Sawyer, Petitioner

PUBLISH ONCE

Pro-se document drafting assistance provided by:
Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, Inc.
Community Justice Worker Program
4200 Perimeter Center Drive, Ste. 222
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
(405) 943-6457
Oklahoma Indian Legal Services and it's attorneys are not making an appearance in this case

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

DISTRICT COURT FILED
DEC 8 2025 3:23
Case No. 2025-180
CYNTHIA FREEMAN
COURT CLERK

In the Matter of the Application of:)
Paula Grummett,)
To Change Her Name.)

NOTICE OF FILING FOR CHANGE OF NAME

To Whom It May Concern:

Take notice that Paula Jean Grummett has filed in the above court a Petition to have her name changed as follows, to-wit: From Paula Jean Grummett to Paula Jean Grummett and that the same will be heard in the District Court of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation of Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, on the 27th day of January, 2026 @ 9:00 a.m., and that any person may file a written protest in the case, prior to the date set for hearing.

JUDGE OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

Page 1 of 1

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

IN THE MATTER OF:)
A.S.P.; DOB: 01/16/2019,)
Alleged Deprived Child.)

DISTRICT COURT FILED
Case No. 2025-24
DEC 24 2025 9:10
CYNTHIA FREEMAN
COURT CLERK

NOTICE OF HEARING TO:
Brandy Rose Payne, Natural Mother to A.S.P.

YOU ARE HEREBY GIVEN NOTICE that a Petition to Terminate Parental Rights has been filed against you in the above-styled and numbered cause and will be heard in the District Courtroom of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation, Tribal Complex in Okmulgee, Oklahoma on the 5th day of January, 2026 @ 9:00 AM.

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

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

JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT

Groundbreaking Ceremony
Sapulpa Health Center
Jan. 16 10 a.m.
4949 E. Hwy 117, Sapulpa

**Opunvkv Kerreyat Ipunkerrepvs/
Mvskoke Language Learner's Circle**
Jan. 20 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Open to all enrolled MCN citizens. Must have an MCN Citizenship card or CDIB card.
Koweta Indian Community Center
30925 E. 141st St. S., Coweta
For questions, call 918-304-3362

Income Tax Filing
Vita/TCE Tax Program
Starts on Feb. 2
Open to MCN citizens whose total household income is \$69k or under. In-office tax days are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8:45 a.m. - 3:45, appointment only.
4900 N. Wood Drive, Okmulgee

Elder's Meeting
Okmulgee Elder Nutrition Center
Feb. 4 9:30 a.m.
2900 N. Osage Pl. Okmulgee

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

Elder's Sweetheart Dance
Elder Services
Feb. 19 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Pre-register by Feb. 4. Open to MCN elders 55 and older. For information and to register, call 918-732-7765

Health Shelf Donation Drive
CMN Health & Wellness needs hygiene products, laundry detergent, and gently used blankets and pillows for students in need. Every five items will enter donors into a drawing. Donations can be dropped off at 2170 Raven Circle, Okmulgee.

PREVENT the SPREAD of RESPIRATORY VIRUSES

COVER YOUR COUGHS & SNEEZES

WASH HANDS OFTEN
For at least 20 seconds

STAY HOME WHEN SICK
including having a runny nose, sore throat, and/or cough

KEEP AIR CIRCULATING & VENTILATED

STAY UP TO DATE
with your vaccinations, including Flu, RSV & COVID-19

MCNHealth EXPRESS CARE CLINICS

COUNCIL OAK
10109 E. 79TH ST.
TULSA, OK 74133
918.233.9550

OKMULGEE
1400 S. WOOD DRIVE
OKMULGEE, OK 74447
918.591.5733

HOURS OF OPERATION:
MON-FRI (7AM-7PM)
SAT-SUN (9AM-5PM)

WALK-INS WELCOME
+
NO APPOINTMENTS NECESSARY

SERVING CITIZENS OF
FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES

creekhealth.org

MVSKOKEMEDIA • P.O. BOX 580 – OKMULGEE, OK 74447 • 918.732.7720 • MVSKOKEMEDIA.COM • @MVSKOKEMEDIA