



MVSKOKE NEWS

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HEALTH "TURNS DIRT" ON HEALTHCARE FACILITY

THE HOLDENVILLE HEALTH CENTER WILL BRIDGE THE GAP IN SERVICES IN THE SOUTHERN REGION



Tribal leaders and MCN Health Department leaders "turn dirt" on the new Holdenville Health Care facility. (Braden Harper/MM)

BY **BRADEN HARPER**

HOLDENVILLE - Muscogee (Creek) Nation Press Secretary Jason Salsman described the past few years as "one of the most aggressive eras of Mvskoke expansion in history." The most recent chapter in that expansion was the groundbreaking ceremony for the Holdenville Health Center on Wednesday, Feb. 18. Tribal leadership and Muscogee Department of Health leaders gathered for the opening of a healthcare facility that will serve Tribal citizens in an area without easily accessible healthcare options.

According to a release from the MCN Health Department, the clinic is part of a \$185 million BOK financial package that will construct two state-of-the-art facilities

in Holdenville and Sapulpa. The 67,000-square-foot facility will include primary care, dental, behavioral health, and optometry services. It will also have outdoor wellness spaces to encourage long-term healthy living, including basketball, volleyball, and pickleball courts. The facility was designed by James R. Childers Architect Inc. The facility will be located at 3311 N. 370 Rd, just south of the Holdenville Regional Office.

Tribal leadership acknowledged the gaps in healthcare services in the southern region during opening remarks. According to MCN Principal Chief David Hill, this is another step in the Nation's vision of providing healthcare in every corner of the Reservation.

"This is another step for-

ward in keeping our promise of aggressive expansion in healthcare," Principal Chief Hill said. "We know how important it is to invest in the entirety of our Reservation from border to border, from rural to cities. We have to meet every need exactly where it's at."

For MCN National Council Speaker Randall Hicks, the clinic's groundbreaking represented something more than just turning dirt. It means that no matter where Tribal citizens live on the Mvskoke Reservation, they will have consistent, nearby access to Tribal health services.

"Today marks the beginning of something important. Not just the start of construc-

HEALTH
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USGAO REPORT DOCUMENTS FREEDMEN LITIGATION HISTORY

BY **MEREDITH JOHNSON**

WASHINGTON - The following is an excerpt detailing the legal and litigation history of the Muscogee Freedmen and their descendants, taken from the United States Government Accountability Office report titled "Information on Freedmen Descendants of the Five Tribes."

Mvskoke News is printing selected excerpts from the report specific to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. The GAO report included appendices for each of the Five Tribes that detail Freedmen descendants' Tribal citizenship eligibility and the Tribes' 1866 Treaties with the United States regarding Freedmen status. Each appendix also contains a history of Freedmen litigation in federal and tribal courts. The following is taken from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation section of Appendix II: Legal Appendix with Additional Information on the Five Tribes. Mvskoke News has only formatted the appendix for print; it has not been edited or changed.

The full report, released on Jan. 14, was requested by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs after the 2022 oversight hearing on Freedmen status, which covered the 1866 treaties between the U.S. and the Five Tribes. It can be found on the GAO website.

To what extent are Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen descendants currently eligible for citizenship in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation?

According to a recent court decision, Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen descendants are entitled to citizenship in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. However, as of November 2025, Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen descendants' ability to obtain tribal citizenship was an evolving matter. As discussed below, in July 2025, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Supreme Court ruled that references to "by-blood" citizenship in the Tribe's Constitution were unlawful and void. The Court directed the Muscogee (Creek) Citizenship Board to apply the relevant 1866 Treaty and issue citizenship to any future applicants of Freedmen descent.

However, in August 2025, the Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation issued an executive order directing the Tribe's citizenship office to continue accepting citizenship applications from Freedmen descendants, but not to issue them citizenship cards, or any other membership identification, until the Tribe's law and policy had been fully reviewed and amended to meet the qualification requirements under the 1866 Treaty. The Muscogee (Creek) Supreme Court's ruling and the Principal Chief's executive order were issued toward the end of our review and the ability of Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen descendants to obtain tribal citizenship was a developing situation. As of November 2025, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation had not enrolled any of the Tribe's Freedmen descendants.

What key provisions of the 1866 Treaty with the Muscogee (Creek) relate to the status of Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen and their descendants in the Tribe?

Article 2 of the 1866 Treaty with the Creeks states, "The Creeks hereby covenant and agree that henceforth neither slavery nor involuntary servitude . . . shall ever exist in said nation; and inasmuch as there are among the Creeks many persons of African descent, who have no interest in the soil, it is stipulated that hereafter these persons lawfully residing in said Creek country under their laws and usages, or who have been thus residing in said country, and may return within one year from the ratification of this treaty, and their descendants and such others of the same race as may be permitted by the laws of the said nation to settle within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Creek Nation as citizens (thereof,) shall have and enjoy all the rights and privileges of native citizens, including an equal interest in the soil and national funds, and the laws of the said nation shall be equally binding upon and give equal protection to all such persons, and all others, of whatsoever race or color, who may be adopted as citizens or members of said tribe."

What key court cases pertain to the Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen and their descendants' status within the Tribe since the 1866 Treaty?

Citizenship Board of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation v. Grayson and Kennedy (2025): Plaintiffs, who are Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen descendants, filed this case in the District Court of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in 2020, challenging the Citizenship Board of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's denial of their applications for citizenship. In 2023, the district court held

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ONASHE MEETS AT CMN

TRIBAL COLLEGE STUDENTS BUILT CONNECTIONS ACROSS COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

BY **SHAYLN PROCTOR**

OKMULGEE - This year, the College of the Muscogee Nation hosted the annual Oklahoma Native American Students in Higher Education (ONASHE) Regional Conference on Feb. 13 and 14. The conference brought together Tribal college students from across Oklahoma.

The goal of the ONASHE conference is to strengthen Native student communities by building connections they can use later within their own communities/institu-



L-R: General Education Instructor Dr. Melvin Calls Him, Jr. CMN Research Specialist Sadie Littlecreek, and Outstanding Leader winner University of Oklahoma student Graycianne Bennet. (Shayln Proctor)

tions, hopefully breaking down barriers between campuses.

According to CMN, the organization's impact can be seen in the stories shared by students and professionals: "Many describe how participation at ONASHE helped students feel more confident in their higher education journeys, reminding them they were not alone and that they had support systems extending beyond their own college campuses."

CMN Research Specialist and Chair of the planning committee

for the National Conference, Sadie Littlecreek (Absentee Shawnee/ Mvskoke), has highlighted what she hopes this will bring for the Native students.

"For these students, I'm hoping to show more about community efforts, getting your higher education learning, and then bringing back that work to your community. That's the kind of centralized goal of what we're doing at the college in

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IHS SEES HIRING PUSH

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

WASHINGTON – The Indian Health Service announced its largest hiring initiative in the agency's history. IHS is currently recruiting and hiring qualified professionals within clinical, public health, administrative, and leadership roles.

IHS's goal under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is to "make America healthy again." The IHS has completed a comprehensive workforce plan for the hiring initiative.

According to the IHS press release, "Secretary Kennedy has emphasized the importance of fully staffing IHS facilities to help advance and strengthen our mission of providing the highest quality health care services possible to our patients. His leadership has been instrumental in ensuring that IHS has the flexibility, resources, and support needed to execute this hiring event on such a large scale."

Currently, the IHS is operat-

ing at a near-30 percent vacancy rate. According to IHS Chief of Staff Clayton Fulton, "Our friends, families, and relatives need the best available health care providers who are focused on our shared goal of raising the health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level, and this hiring initiative will go far in helping us accomplish that goal. This is an exciting time to join the Indian Health Service."

There is a wide range of staffing needs, including physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, and professionals in behavioral health, public health, environmental health, health administration, and more.

"Our goal is to raise awareness of not just career opportunities at IHS, but also the transformative work already underway to fortify the foundation future generations will build upon," stated IHS.

Information on positions is available at the IHS Jobs website and USAJobs.gov.

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that Freedmen and their lineal descendants were entitled to tribal citizenship under the 1866 Treaty and ordered the Citizenship Board to reconsider the plaintiffs' citizenship applications. The Citizenship Board appealed this decision, and in 2025, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Supreme Court upheld it, ruling that the 1866 Treaty "clearly extends these citizenship rights to the 'descendants' of the Creek Freedmen."

In reaching its conclusion, the Court considered the history of the Tribe, finding that "the historic Creek Nation believed the Treaty of 1866 demanded citizenship rights be given to the Creek Freedmen" and that "this was [the Tribe's] position . . . for over one hundred years, until the adoption of the 1979 Constitution." The Court rejected the Citizenship Board's argument that because Article 2 of the 1866 Treaty did not specify that the rights were to extend "forever" or "permanently," the Tribe retained the right to exclude Creek Freedmen from tribal citizenship. Instead, the Court held, the lack of a specified endpoint at which Freedmen descendants could be excluded signaled that Freedmen descendants could not lawfully be excluded from tribal citizenship "both at the time of [the treaty's] ratification, and for as long as there are living lineal descendants." Accordingly, the Court held that the Citizenship Board had acted contrary to law in denying the plaintiffs' citizenship applications, and that "any reference to 'by blood' citizenship, specifically in the [1979 Constitution], but also in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Code, or in any associated . . . rules, regulations, policies, or procedures is unlawful and void ab initio." The Court then ordered the Citizenship Board to issue citizenship to the plaintiffs, as well as any future applicant able to establish a lineal descendant on the Freedmen Roll. Following the Court's decision, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation filed a petition for rehearing. The Supreme Court denied the Tribe's petition, finding that the Court had fully considered the issue and a rehearing was not warranted.

Following that decision, the Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation issued an executive order directing the Tribe's citizenship office to continue accepting citizenship applications from Freedmen descendants, but not to issue them citizenship cards, or any other membership identification cards, until the Tribe's law and policy had been fully reviewed and amended to meet the qualification requirements under the 1866 Treaty. Thereafter, in October 2025, the Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen descendants who filed the case above sought to have the Muscogee (Creek) Supreme Court enforce its ruling and order the Citizenship Board to issue them citizenship cards immediately. In response, in November 2025, the Muscogee (Creek) Supreme Court ordered the Citizenship Board to provide monthly status reports, with the first report covering, among other things, (1) actions taken by various tribal entities to update the Tribe's code, rules, and internal policies and procedures, and (2) what the Citizenship Board asserts is a reasonable timeframe for completing all necessary steps prior to issuing Freedmen descendants citizenship documents pursuant to the Court's July 2025 order. The Muscogee (Creek) Supreme Court ordered that the first status report be filed by December 5, 2025.

MCN MVSKOKE LANGUAGE PROGRAM HOLDS MONTHLY SKILLS PRACTICE

THE MVSKOKE LANGUAGE CIRCLE IS OPEN TO ALL



Citizens at the MLP language circle can practice their Mvskoke language skills with fellow learners in a supportive atmosphere. (Image Courtesy: MLP)

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

MVSKOKE RESERVATION - The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Mvskoke Language Program (MLP) has launched a Mvskoke Language Circle. This monthly meeting is held across the reservation's communities, and anyone can join.

This can help learners either enhance their skills or start learning the language. MLP wanted to create a community for language learners and help them practice with people at their level. They also host the meetings to offer language resources to speakers and learners. Walk-in registration is allowed, and participants can also sign up online.

"Whether you are just begin-

ning or already conversational, this event will help you strengthen your skills while meeting others who share the same passion for revitalizing and speaking Mvskoke on a daily basis," stated MLP.

During these language circles, citizens are divided into three levels; however, they can choose the one they feel most comfortable with. There are MLP language speakers who will be helping teach each level.

Later, towards the middle of the teaching, there are breaks where the MLP department serves learners a free meal, then break back into their groups.

"Our goal is to connect language learners and speakers, building a community where

everyone can grow together," stated MLP.

These language circles have been held at various Indian community centers, including Morris, Holdenville, Sapulpa, Koweta, and Dewar. The meetings will be held every third Tuesday of each month.

Their next language circle will be at the Okmulgee Indian Community on March 17th from 10 am - 2 pm.

For more information or to sign up, contact the MLP program at 918-304-3362. For MLP updates, visit their website at mvskokeopunvkv.com or their Facebook page, Mvskoke Language Program.

CANVAS-ING FOR SUPPORT

TULSA ART STUDIO RAISES MONEY FOR INDIE FILMMAKER

BY THOMAS JACKSON

TULSA – Mvskoke citizens had a chance to make Valentine's Day cards, meet an indie filmmaker, and help raise money for a grassroots film project that shines a light on the plight of caregivers in an event held at the Four Mothers Collective in Tulsa on Feb. 7.

The film, which will be made by Julie Little Thunder (Southern Cheyenne), is titled "The Self She is Now." The film tells the story of Kendra Keahbone, an Indigenous writer who decides to take care of her mother, Evelyn, who has dementia. She finds herself over her head and asks her sister, Liz, for help. Keahbone learns about herself and her family, becoming a better person in the process.

Attendees could bid on art, enter a raffle to win artwork inspired by The Wizard of Oz, eat food, and make Valentine's Day cards.

Artists included Carly Treece (Mvskoke, Cherokee), Robert Taylor (Blackfoot, Cherokee, Osage, Black Dutch), Lauren Kelly (Citizen Potawatomi), Dan Rocky (Mvskoke, Cherokee),

Travis Mammedaty (Kiowa), and Natalie Miller (Chickasaw), among others who donated pieces of art for the fundraiser.

Treece, the President and Creative Director of the collective, felt honored to host the event in their space.

"It's been very successful, and I'm glad to help raise funds for Julie Little Thunder and her film. I'm very honored for her to have it in this space and hold it here for her. I hope she makes the money to help produce the film, and I'm excited to see it once it's finished," Treece said.

Little Thunder was thankful to Treece and the other members of the Four Mothers Collective for making the event happen.

"I was happy with the turnout, and I can't thank Carly Treece and Four Mothers Collective enough for providing us with such a welcoming space. This was only the launch of our fundraising event, and I feel confident we will be able to raise more money with our raffle and art auction over the coming weeks," Little Thunder said.

Little Thunder encouraged anyone who wants to help with the project to visit <https://www.facebook.com/selfsheisnow/> and register online. The drawing for prizes will be shown live at the end of the month.

Those who wish to donate directly can do so at <https://tinyurl.com/theseisnow>.



Julie Little Thunder speaks with attendees at the Valentine's Fundraiser. (Thomas Jackson/MM)

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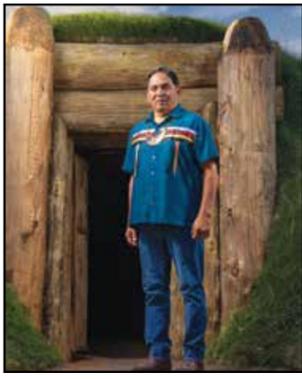
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MUSCOGEE MUSINGS

WITH PRINCIPAL CHIEF HILL

Hesci! Stonkon follakcv?

This is my first entry of Muscogee Musings for the Mvskoke News, and I'm excited for the opportunity to address citizens in this format, to discuss the happenings of our Nation's highest office from a personal standpoint. And 2026 has gotten off to a tremendous start, so let's get to it...



We began the year by making history, as the first ambassadorial group from the Muscogee Nation to visit the United Kingdom. Back in 2024, while attending the annual Sovereignty Symposium, I had the pleasure of meeting Baroness Emma Nicholson from the House of Lords in British Parliament, and she indicated that her office had come in possession of several documents of Muscogee correspondence with England from the 18th Century. She invited the Nation over for a goodwill visit, and an opportunity to gift these documents to us. In addition, we visited government-to government with the Baroness and her staff to identify ways to work together promoting our shared histories moving forward. We spent the day at Westminster observing Parliament, had wonderful conversation over English tea, and finished our visit with an evening service at the iconic Abby.

The next day, we visited a private collection at the British Museum. There was a Muscogee man named Josiah Francis, or "Helvs Haco," who visited London for about a 16-month period in the late 1700s. We viewed his personal clothing items for the first time — his overcoat and his leggings, moccasins, hand-woven belts, sashes and a bandolier bag he carried. We're in discussions of possibly doing a loan so that those items can come over here and so that our citizens can see them. I was awe-struck seeing the intricate handwork of his clothing and how the designs resembled many we still see today.

From there, we took the 4-hour train ride to Edinburgh, Scotland. As I looked out the window at the rolling hills and the cold North Sea waves capping hard into the coast, I thought about our ancestors that first traveled here and made this connection. What a journey that must have been!

Our first night in Edinburgh included a visit to Holyrood, which is the home of Scottish Parliament. We visited with MSP Stephen Kerr, exchanged gifts, and spoke with him about our shared history and our desire to re-connect and work together as collaborative Nations. He agreed with the sentiment, and has invited us back to address full Parliament and further this cause.

The next day, was the main event. Our Culture and Humanities Department and NAGPRA office had been in contact for two years with the Anatomy Department at the University of Edinburgh to repatriate Muscogee and Yuchi ancestral remains. There were six ancestor remains. They were given to the Phrenological Society sometime before 1858, a separate entity from the University. They inherited the collection to the Department of Anatomy at some point and were donated by Professor W. Byrd Powell, who was an American physician and strong believer in the 19th-century pseudoscience of phrenology. He studied Native American remains and was trying to find links between the measurement, intellect, and character traits. It was a popular theory during the colonial era. Phrenology formulated racist theories of inferiority based on the shape and dimensions of remains. And the university has been trying to correct the negative impact that this kind of work has had on communities. Seventy-five years ago was the first repatriation event ever recorded in Scotland. And now, teamed with the University of Edinburgh, we completed the first international repatriation in history! An incredibly moving and emotional feat for our Nation. I was asked about this repatriation, and what it means, so I reflected on the trouble we've had here in the States with Auburn University and the continued search for Justice for Hickory Ground. I said, "We had to travel over 4,000 miles and cross an ocean to receive the kind of dignity and decency that we still cannot find here at home."

It's a 9-day journey that none of us will ever forget, and I hope it's remembered for the lasting impact it has on our Nation.

Until next time, take care of yourselves and each other.

MVTO,
Chief Hill



TOP: MCN Delegation including (back row (L-R): MCN Press Secretary Jason Salsman, Assistant NAGPRA Coordinator Abigail Dairaghi, MCN Ambassador Jonodev Chaudhuri, MCN Deputy Secretary of Culture & Humanities Anthony Beaver and (front row L-R: MCN Secretary of Culture & Humanities RaeLynn Butler, Second Chief Duck Creek Ceremonial Ground Scott Stafford, MCN Principal Chief David Hill with University of Edinburgh Principal Professor Sir Peter Mathieson. LEFT: Ambassador Chaudhuri gifts Professor Mathieson a Southeastern gorget. In remarks to Mvskoke Media, Ambassador Chaudhuri emphasized the importance of the trip. He stated, "It was one of the most meaningful trips that I've ever taken on behalf of Muscogee Nation in my entire life, but beyond that, it's one of the most meaningful trips I've ever been on, period. The symbolism of the moment, coupled with the actual justice of returning ancestors was absolutely profound." (Images Credit: Neil Hanna)



TOP: The MCN Delegation on the floor at the Scottish Parliament. RIGHT: MCN Principal Chief David Hill with MSP Stephen Kerr, wearing a gifted Southeastern gorget. In addition to the repatriation work, this trip also allowed the Nation to improve its relationships with other nations. Ambassador Chaudhuri told Mvskoke Media, "In addition to our work at the University of Edinburgh to bring back our ancestors, we also engaged in significant diplomatic work on behalf of the Nation that will help return or access critical documents that are important to the nation... and these will help cement relations with both England and Scotland, hopefully, for generations to come." (Images Courtesy: MCN Facebook)



HEALTH

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tion, but the strengthening of health, opportunity, and care for our people," Speaker Hicks said. "This project represents commitment to accessibility healthcare, to the well-being of our citizens, and to building a healthier future for generations to come."

Tukvpytce District Representative Anna Marshall serves the Holdenville community. She knows firsthand the unique struggles her district faces. During her remarks, Rep. Marshall shared that the new facility will be built on the Jacobs family allotment-she grew up around the original allottee owners, who have now passed on. According to Rep. Marshall, they would be proud to know that their allotment was being used to serve fellow Tribal citizens.

"As all those elders and ancestors have prayed for us, and here we are today because of those prayers. We stand on



MCNNC Speaker Randall Hicks addressed the crowd during remarks at the Holdenville Health Center groundbreaking. (Braden Harper/MM)

"THIS CLINIC WILL BE A PLACE WHERE THOSE VALUES CONTINUE, WHERE PEOPLE FEEL WELCOMED, RESPECTED, AND SUPPORTED. TODAY WE'RE NOT JUST TURNING DIRT, WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS." - RANDALL HICKS

those strong ancestors," Rep. Marshall said. "When we say 'What can we be?', let's be healthier, let's be more resilient."

Secretary of Health Shawn Terry said that over \$100 million has been invested in communities in the southern region over the past eight years. He described the Health Department's investment as "grassroots prevention." According to Terry, the Holdenville Health Center will solve a major problem plaguing patients in the region: contract health.

"Today, in most of our facilities, 85% of all these referrals get approved within about the first two hours of when the physician writes that referral. It should be that easy here (Holdenville) as well. We're committed to making that happen," Terry said.

According to Terry, more construction projects are planned for MCN Healthcare facilities on the reservation.

2026 MCN CHALLENGE BOWL AT CMN

THE LARGE ELEMENTARY DIVISION SAW 44 TEAMS COMPETE IN THE ANNUAL COMPETITION

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

OKMULGEE – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation held the 26th annual Challenge Bowl throughout the month of February. The challenge is managed by the MCN Johnson O'Malley Program and hosted by the College of the Muscogee Nation. The challenge helps youth learn about Mvskoke culture, history, government, and language while using traditional values. Each division is split into 3 days: High School, Middle School, and Elementary School.

MCN Challenge Bowl Volunteer Coordinator/MCN Department of Housing Systems Operation, Melinda Deeringwater (Mvskoke), explained how this challenge bowl was established in 2000.

"The common goal is to develop Tribal pride within our youth. They learn about our culture, government, and language," Deeringwater said. "It brings the schools together as well as the community, MCN employees, and even our citizens. Within the last five years or more, we've even had our elderly citizens volunteer, so that was a good thing. It gets them out there, and they enjoy the kids too."

According to Deeringwater, this year's competition participation was strong, and the elementary division was the largest, with 40 teams.

Deeringwater enjoys the whole competition; she has been a volunteer for 24 years now. Deeringwater enjoys coordinating and organizing the competition, from forming

teams to assigning rooms.

"I enjoy seeing all the kids, their participation, and their eagerness to compete. I've seen most of them, probably from the elementary age all the way through the high school years. So it's just good to reconnect and see those kids," Deeringwater said.

She has noticed that all the students are eager to compete and has observed them studying in the hallways.

For these challenge bowls, MCN employees and community members prepare each year for the competition. They hold monthly core meeting sessions for volunteers.

"It's a lot of work, but seeing the faces of those kids, parents, and the sponsors doing that competition. Then the final award ceremony is very worthwhile," Deeringwater said.

This year, there were many volunteers, and Deeringwater had to create more positions, such as golf cart drivers, to help some sponsors or volunteers get around CMN's campus quickly.

Deeringwater appreciates CMN and CMN's President, Dr. Monte Randall, for allowing them to use their campus.

She wanted to give a shout-out to the JOM core committee and the employees for their effort in putting this challenge bowl together. Deeringwater also wanted to bring notice to their volunteers for always stepping up to help in any way.



Results:

High School-

1st place: Glenpool Underclassmen

2nd place: Beggs Lvste

3rd place: Glenpool Seniors

Middle School-

1st place: Glenpool Tenetke

2nd place: Glenpool Wtokyehatte

3rd place: Glenpool Hotvle Rakko

Elementary School-

1st place: Glenpool Tvstvnkvkvlke

2nd place: Glenpool Kaccvs

3rd place: Glenpool Tenetke

Top-Bottom: 2026 MCN JOM Challenge Bowl First Place Champions: Elementary- Glenpool Tvstvnkvkvlke, Middle School- Glenpool Tenetke, High School- Glenpool Underclassmen. The Glenpool Challenge Bowl Teams had a strong showing for the 26th annual competition. The district swept nearly every category, but were hindered by Beggs Lvste's 2nd place finish in the High School Division. (Images Courtesy: Facebook)



(PBS)

NAVAJO ARTISTS WEAVE TOGETHER PROSPERITY AND HARDSHIP

TRADITIONAL WEAVING IS A WAY OF STORYTELLING THAT DEFINES THE WEAVER, THEIR FAMILY, AND THEIR CULTURE IN A NEW PBS WEB DOCUMENTARY

BY BRADEN HARPER

NAVAJO RESERVATION – Traditional Navajo weaving is on full display in PBS Voices' "The Story in Us." The new documentary series celebrates global storytelling traditions. Traditional weavers Tasheena Littleben (Navajo) and Barbara Teller Ornelas (Navajo) are featured in episode one titled, "How Navajo Weavers Keep an Ancient Art Alive." The episode was produced by Isabel Guayasamin and was filmed on the ancestral lands of the Navajo Nation in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Tucson, Arizona. It was published on the PBS Voices YouTube Channel on Thursday, Jan. 8.

"The Story Within Us" follows storytellers from various cultures around the world. It takes a deep dive into those cultures, showcasing how their stories are shared. "How Navajo Weavers Keep an Ancient Art

Alive" focuses on the intricacies of the art and the stories behind the artists.

Littleben said she wants to be known for having the courage to make art, even if the final result is not a masterpiece. Ornelas is an award-winning artist, but her proudest achievement is passing down the tradition of weaving to her children and grandchildren.

Ornelas' grandfather's clans are One Who Walks Around and Red Streak Across the Face. Weaving since she was five or six years old, Ornelas has woven the stories of the Navajo people for most of her life. Ornelas describes sitting in front of a Navajo loom as "sitting in front of the universe." She described the bottom of the loom as representing an Earth bar, the top a sky bar. The right of the loom represents day, the left night. The vertical strings across the loom represent rain.

The pattern Ornelas is seen weaving is called Two Grey

Hills. It features four patterns that represent sacred mountains. According to Ornelas, her family has been weaving for over seven generations. According to the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, the Two Grey Hill design exclusively uses natural wool colors, including black, tan, white, and gray. The patterns are recognized for the technical excellence of the weavers. Ornelas makes sure that every pattern she makes has a special meaning.

"Every family has a different story for their pieces," Ornelas said. "I put a lot of my own spirit and feelings into loom, I always make sure that there is something in there that represents my children and my grandchildren, my sister and my brothers."

Littleben's clans are Red Bottom Clan and Towering House Clan. She is a third-generation weaver and, like Ornelas, started weaving from a young age. The design Littleben weaves

in the series is called an Eye Dazzler. According to Arizona State University, the Eye Dazzler design uses bright colors and eye-catching elements. Littleben enjoys designing this pattern because of the colors she uses.

"I've learned that weaving was my medicine. It's when I feel the most centered with myself. My designs and patterns are inspired by my ancestors. Also incorporating myself as a Dine woman and the colors that I love."

Looking back at her own works, Littleben said weaving can tell a story about the weaver and what they were going through during that season of their life. Littleben's mother wove whether she was in a good or bad mood. She remarked that now is a hard time for artists on her reservation due to the economy. Ornelas said that, growing up, her family did not always receive payment in cash for their woven pieces. Often, traders

would determine the value of a woven piece and trade only dry goods.

Weavers like Littleben and Ornelas can be found at events such as the Santa Fe Indian Market, the largest in the United States. The 103-year-old market hosts many up-and-coming artists and attracts over 100,000 visitors each year. The market originally featured artists and works from Southwestern Tribes, now it features Indigenous artists from all over the United States. Ornelas has been a regular vendor since 1984. According to Ornelas, the responsibility for weaving should be shared by all Navajo people.

"Weaving is a birthright for Navajo people. Everyone who is Navajo should know how to do it," Ornelas said.

To watch this episode and other episodes from the series "The Story in Us," visit the PBS Voices YouTube channel.

VASO CONTINUES HOLIDAY-THEMED SOCIALS

HEARTS OF HONOR EVENT SEES PEER-SUPPORT SPECIALISTS LEND A HELPING HAND TO FELLOW VETERANS IN NEED OF COMMUNITY

BY BRADEN HARPER

TULSA - Heart-themed events are a common staple of February. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Veterans Affairs Services Office (VASO) joined in the festive spirit with Hearts of Honor, a Valentine-themed get-together for Mvskoke veterans. The event took place at the Tulsa Creek Indian Community Center on Thursday, Feb. 12. It offered bingo, treats, prizes, and a laid-back atmosphere for Mvskoke veterans to socialize.

Certified peer support specialists Matthew Davidson (Choctaw) and Stephanie Moore (Mvskoke) were present at the event to talk with veterans. According to the non-profit Mental Health America, peer support specialists have recovered from either addiction or mental health struggles and use their own experiences to help others. Davidson and Moore received their peer support specialist certification through the Oklahoma Department



The bingo prize table at the Hearts of Honor get together. (Braden Harper/MM)

ment of Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

Moore is an Army veteran who served from 2001 to 2010. She now volunteers for VASO. When Moore transitioned from active duty to civilian life, it was a hard adjustment and found the transition lonely. Over time, she began therapy through the Veterans Affairs system. The people who helped Moore through her mental health struggles inspired her to help others.

"A lot of the people who helped me had already been in my shoes. They were able to help me with what I needed to do," Moore said. "That, in turn, made me want to help others who were in the same predicament that I was in. Hopefully, they did not have to struggle as long as I did."

VASO Assistant Director Rachel Riddle (Mvskoke) said the holiday-themed socials are a great opportunity for veter-

ans to participate in the program and mingle. It was also a good opportunity to talk with peer support specialists within the Mvskoke veteran community.

"To see them (Davidson and Moore) get out and work together and spread their love and joy is special. It is near and dear to their hearts, and they give that joy to other veterans. It means a lot to the veterans, especially the elders who were not welcomed home after Vietnam," Riddle said.

Riddle also discussed how the loneliness epidemic affects veterans and their spouses. According to Riddle, veterans or veteran spouses who are widows can especially have a hard time if they live alone. Riddle said they are welcome to attend VASO events and socialize. Her favorite part of each event is seeing veterans smile when they feel appreciated for their service.

"Especially for the spouses that are widowed now, their spouse has passed and they're left home alone and that's all

they knew for so long. We always invite them out, they're always welcome to come," Riddle said.

Moore shared that she found her community through VASO, volunteering for events like Hearts of Honor. She has even found the experience of helping others healing. She loves her community so much that she doesn't mind making the three-and-a-half-hour drive from her home in Altus to the Mvskoke Reservation.

For those interested in becoming a certified peer support specialist, visit the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services website. There, resources are available to learn about the steps to becoming certified. According to Moore, the class lasts three days and can be completed online.

To stay up to date on VASO socials and events, visit their Facebook page, Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs. The department can be reached at 918-732-7739.

PHILBROOK SCREENS NEW DOCUMENTARY "POWWOW PEOPLE"

THE EVENT INCLUDED DISCUSSION WITH THE FILMMAKERS

BY THOMAS JACKSON

TULSA - The Philbrook Museum of Art has expanded its mission of creating community through art to include film with its series of events, titled Films at the Museum. It began with a Jan. 30 screening of the documentary "POWWOW PEOPLE," directed by Sky Hopinka (Ho-Chunk, Pechenga).

Prior to the screening, a panel including Hopinka, Executive Producer Sterlin Harjo (Seminole, Mvskoke), and Producer and Director of the Sundance Institute's Indigenous Program Adam Piron (Kiowa, Mohawk) spoke. During the panel, Hopinka, Piron, and Harjo spoke about why they made the film, the process of organizing the powwow, and their decision to screen it across the country.

For the filmmakers, rather than attending an ongoing powwow, they formed their own. They hosted it early in the week to avoid conflicts with previously scheduled gatherings.

The filmmakers invited singers, dancers, drummers, merch and food vendors, and the wider community to take part.

As Hopinka says on his website, the documentary also follows four particular people as filmmakers go through the process of designing and hosting the powwow, which was filmed at the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center in Seattle, WA, in 2023.

Hopinka and the producers felt it was necessary to show an honest, authentic depiction of gatherings like powwows. Harjo even joked that modern depictions often revolve around stereotypes.

"I think that the world sometimes feels like we can just drive out to the tall grass prairie somewhere, and if you look hard enough, you're going to see an Indian, in regalia, dancing alone for absolutely no reason," Harjo said.

Harjo spoke of how it's vital to see a depiction of a powwow, and all of the work that goes into it, giving it the respect it



LEFT TO RIGHT: Sterlin Harjo, Adam Piron, and Sky Hopinka discuss the filming process prior to the screening. Thomas Jackson/MM

deserves.

"It's so refreshing just to see these intimate close shots with the people that are participating in this, and kind of showing how community builds this event. It sort of shows that it speaks to the things that we miss when people from the outside are shooting slow-motion B-roll of dancers at

a powwow to be put over some dramatic music," he continued.

To quote Hopinka's description on his website, the goal of this depiction is to draw the viewer "into the textures, movement, and collective presence of the powwow," even describing it as "both a reflection of a beloved and complicated community

and a gesture toward the continuities of Native life."

For more information on Sky Hopinka's work, visit his website at <https://www.skyhopinka.com/>

For more information on events at Philbrook Museum of Art, such as their Films at the Museum series, visit their website at <https://philbrook.org/>

ROYALTY PAGEANT INCREASES SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

ANNUAL COMPETITION HELPS YOUNG WOMEN BUILD CONFIDENCE AND DEEPEN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF MVSKOKE CULTURE



MCN Royalty crowns. (Shaylin Proctor/MM)

BY BRADEN HARPER

OKMULGEE - Registration is now open for the 2026 Muscogee (Creek) Nation Scholarship Pageant. This year will see a \$2,000 increase in monthly scholarship awards for both the Miss and Jr. Miss positions. The Miss scholarship funds will jump from \$5,000 to \$7,000, Jr. Miss from \$2,500 to \$4,500. During the annual competition, each contestant is judged on their self-introduction, tra-

ditional dress, cultural talent or presentation, impromptu questions, and their knowledge of Mvskoke culture.

Pageant rules state that contestants must be enrolled MCN citizen. There is no blood quantum requirement to run. Those running for Miss, must be between the ages of 18-24 and enrolled in either a college or a vocational school. Jr. Miss contestants must be between the ages of 14-18 and enrolled in high school. Each contestant

must have a minimum grade point average of 2.5 and reside in the state of Oklahoma.

Miss and Jr. Miss traditionally serve as goodwill ambassadors for the MCN. Each princess reigns for one year and attends educational, social, cultural, and public events on and off the Mvskoke Reservation. According to the Mvskoke Royalty website, they serve as role models who embody the values of education, culture, and their chosen platform. Princesses are present

at each National Council Quarterly Session and the Mvskoke Festival.

This year marks the fifth year MCN Royalty Coordinator LuAnn Bear (Mvskoke) has overseen the royalty pageant. Over the years, she has seen many young women grow in confidence through the pageant events. According to Bear, many former contestants and princesses have received educational and professional opportunities made possible by the skills they acquired.

"They meet so many people that will help them in the future," Bear said. "We've had pageant contestants that have met other people and received other scholarships. One young lady interned for a company in D.C., now she works for them full time."

Leading up to the pageant in June, contestants attend events such as the Royalty Retreat and Royalty Ready to prepare for the competition. Contestants are also assigned a Mvskoke language coach. Bear said that it does not matter what language skill level contestants are at when they apply. The purpose of

the pageant is to help them learn and practice their culture.

A major staple of the competition is acquiring and exhibiting traditional regalia. Bear said that many contestants worry about where to find or make a traditional dress. Bear assures that pageant coordinators will do everything to set contestants them up for success. "We help them, the language coach helps a great deal. We show them where they can buy the regalia. Some of them have never had things made," Bear said.

Applications for both Miss and Jr. Miss are due on Tuesday, March 17, at 5:00 p.m. (CT). Applicants are required to attend the Royalty Retreat on Saturday, March 28. The location for this year's Royalty Retreat will be announced at a later date. Royalty Ready is set for Saturday, May 2. This year's pageant is set for Sunday, June 7, at RiverSpirit Casino & Resort.

For a full list of eligibility and rules, visit mvsokeroyalty.com. The department can also be contacted at 918-549-2601 or by email, lubear@muscogeenation.com.

SALT MEAT AND SAUCIE RETURN: "REZ COPS" SEASON 2 COMING SOON



L-R: Will Buck (Saucie) and Eric Yahola (Salt Meat) at Circle Cinema in Tulsa. (Photo Courtesy: Eric Yahola)

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

MVSKOKE RESERVATION- A new season of the show "Rez Cops" is in the works. The online show, available on Facebook, stars Eric Yahola (Mvskoke) and Will Buck (Mvskoke/Seminole) as Salt Meat and Saucie, and is produced by Justin McLemore and Blood Productions.

The show, a parody of the TV series "COPS," was originally called "ROTN" (Reservation

Officer of Tribal Nations), but their original cameraman, editor, actor, cowriter, and social media guy, Cedric Sweet, thought "Rez Cops" sounded better- the name stuck from there. Due to Sweet's schedule, they were replaced with McLemore and Blood Productions.

Yahola and Buck play "Salt Meat" and "Saucie" respectively. According to Buck, they created the characters for people

to enjoy, and they also resonate with their own personalities.

They began the process for each episode by coming up with certain situations and seeing what type of storyline they could add on from there. "One of us would write out a script. Then we'd all three look at it and make changes. And when we had a final script, we'd go to film. But we'd always just improvise it. So we'd hardly ever stick to the script," Buck said.

"I like to tell people that our script ideas come from 'stories told by my drunk cousin,'" Yahola added.

For McLemore, though, the meaning is different. "Full Blood Production is a Native American production company made to film Native American stories and movies across a wide range of genres. All self-financed, with 'Rez Cops,' it's a way to raise awareness that an actual Native American production is here in Oklahoma to film these stories in smaller communities," McLemore explained.

"Plus Eric and Will have a small town Indun Oklahoma charm to them that

needs to be told in a very comedian run and gun way! Rez cops also is content for the Black Fox Premier Full Blood holds every year! It is an awards show and a film festival/premier as it is held for one night."

Buck and Yahola enjoy making people laugh, and they hope the episodes will do the same. Buck wants to bring "laughter and be proud of us. Creeks doing Creek thangs. Aye. Well, I'm Seminole too. I hope Seminoles are proud of us too," Buck said.

"I hope it brings the big Oklahoma Laughs that our state needs! This material is material everyone can enjoy as it is very relatable. We hope to bring these two guys as OUR comedy native cop hero's!!," McLemore said.

Scenes from the first season were filmed at Holdenville, Wetumka, and Sasakwa. For season two, they plan to film a couple of scenes in the Sapulpa and Tulsa areas. They are currently finishing up the 1st episode of season 2 and hope to release it in April 2026.

McLemore added, "I enjoy

filming Rez Cops especially for the reason they are so relaxed on the production and leave that to us. We get to use our creative skills to film them! They trust our judgment, and they are both naturally hilarious."

According to Yahola, this season started in the summer of 2019. These were 10-12-minute episodes produced by Sweet. Buck and Yahola filmed and produced one other episode, bringing the total to 4 in season 1.

What's next

Buck is looking towards the future and what lies ahead.

He's done stand-up, and among Oklahoma Native Entertainment, he was the only comedian. Buck has performed at Lucky Star Casino, Thunderbird Casino, and MCN events. He has tried out three times for "America's Got Talent," but he didn't make it. He and Yahola performed at the MCN Creek Council House for Indigenous

REZ COPS

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comparison to other institutions," Littlecreek said.

Around 110 students attended this conference, representing a wide range of colleges. According to Littlecreek, students came from Oklahoma State University, East Central University, and Tulsa Community College.

On Feb. 13, they had a half-day banquet at the Tulsa River Spirit Casino, and their keynote speaker was Clinical Psychologist at Laureate Institute for Brain Research, Dr. Evan White (Absentee Shawnee). White's known for helping improve mental health within the Native communities; his research focused on psychological approaches to mood and anxiety disorders, according to the National Institutes of Health.

On Feb. 14, it was their full conference day at CMN; they had roundtables, workshops, and institutions sharing their work and projects. In the afternoon, they were

handing out ONASHE awards, and later CMN highlighted its CMN Extension Program and its Master Apprentice Program for the Mvskoke language.

Since 2008, when the ONASHE conferences began, the organization has seen growth and impact, shared by Native students and professionals across Oklahoma.

A University of Oklahoma college student, Graycianne Bennett (Cherokee), is a first-generation college student, and this was her first year attending the ONASHE conference. She spoke to Mvskoke Media about her experience.

"I think it's a great opportunity for the Oklahoma Native students to gather and to get to know one another across the state and across the different institutions," Bennett said. "It can be really isolating whenever you're in an echo chamber at your own institution, and so to be able to open up the doors at the other places and especially at a tribal college in a time like this in Oklahoma, I think it's important to be able to gather together."



Awardees are presented at the Regional ONASHE conference held at CMN. (Shayln Proctor/MM)

Bennett enjoyed meeting everybody, seeing new and familiar faces, and hearing different perspectives on what is going on at their college.

Bennett knows that her college is well-known in Oklahoma and that they're overwhelmed by what is going on there; however, she said it was good to know that other places are working just as hard and working alongside each other to reach

the same goal.

"I'm really thankful for the opportunity to be educated and to have access to all education. I'm a first-generation student, and so a lot of people in my community don't get to go to college," Bennett said.

Littlecreek has enjoyed hearing about all the new, exciting work that everyone has done, whether it's at an undergraduate, four-year, or

two-year institution, to people getting their master's and doctorates, all the way to faculty/staff who are involved in moving things forward.

"It's really exciting to get to see all these people showcasing what Native success looks like on a grand scale. Oklahoma has this rich culture among all these 39 tribes, and we all get to come together and just kind of share that," Littlecreek said.



Office of Environmental Services

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW) COLLECTION EVENT

Friday, March 27, 2026 / 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

OES Household Hazardous Waste Collection event WILL ACCEPT the following items:

- ✓ **AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS:** antifreeze, fluids, motor oil, oil filters, gasoline, polish, and waxes (NO battery acid)
- ✓ **PAINT PRODUCTS:** oil-based paint, spray paint, caulk, wood preservatives, wood stain products, paint thinners, and paint strippers
- ✓ **OTHER HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS:** toilet bowl cleaner, shower/tile cleaner, carpet cleaner, rust remover and more
- ✓ **LAWN CARE CHEMICALS:** bug repellent, fertilizers, flea & tick repellent, fumigators, herbicides, insecticides, mosquito fogger, pesticides, rodenticides, stump remover



OES Household Hazardous Waste Collection event WILL NOT ACCEPT the following items:

- ✗ **NO COMMERCIAL WASTE**
- ✗ **NO LATEX PAINT:** dry and throw away, (if the can is too full) spread paint over cardboard, wait for the paint to dry (both can and cardboard), and then throw away
- ✗ **ELECTRONIC WASTE:** answering machines, calculators, cameras, CD/DVD players, cell phones, pagers, holiday lights, modems, monitors, printers, radios, scanners, microwaves, etc.
- ✗ **MISCELLANEOUS:** any batteries, ballasts, fluorescent bulbs, tires, cooking oil and grease, Freon cylinders or compressed gas cylinders, home fire extinguishers, mercury thermometers, thermostats, nail polish, aerosols, unused ammunition, and unused fireworks



Muscogee (Creek) Nation
RECYCLE CENTER
 12675 Gun Club Road
 Okmulgee, OK 74447
FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT 918-549-2580





MCNNC FEBUARY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

HEW, Feb. 10
TR 26-006 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Thomasene Osborn sponsored the legislation.
TR 26-007 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Charles McHenry sponsored the legislation.
TR 26-008 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. McHenry sponsored the legislation.
TR 26-009 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Lora Harjo-King sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-023 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Mary Crawford sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-024 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-025 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Harjo-King sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-026 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-027 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-028 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-029 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Darrell Proctor sponsored the legislation.

LNC, Feb. 10
TR 26-010 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Galen Cloud sponsored this legislation.

TR 26-011 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Dode Barnett sponsored this legislation.
TR 26-012 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Robyn Whitecloud sponsored this legislation.

BFJ, Feb 19
TR 26-013 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative James Factor sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-030 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Robert Hufft sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-031 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Hufft sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-032 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative Lucian Tiger III sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-033 passed with a vote of 4-0. Representative William Lowe sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-034 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Lowe sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-035 was postponed until March with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Barnett sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-036 was postponed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Osborn sponsored the legislation.
NCA 26-037 passed with a vote of 4-0. Rep. Tiger sponsored the legislation.

2026 WILD ONION DINNERS LIST

Norman First American UMC Sat., March 7, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Adults \$16/plate, Kids 6 and under \$8/plate 419 S. University Blvd., Norman Vendor space available, call 405-561-1660.

Angie Smith Memorial UMC Sat., March 14, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. 601 SW Grand Blvd, OKC

Haikey Chapel Sat., March 14, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. \$15/plate 8815 E. 101st St., Tulsa Vendor Space available,

call 918-946-8169.

Mary Lee Clark UMC Sat., March 21, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. \$15/plate 1100 Howard Drive, Del City

Thlopthocco UMC Sat., March 21, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Adults \$12/plate, Kids 3-12 \$6/plate, Veterans w/ ID \$10/plate 324 E St. Louis Ave, Wetumka Vendor space available, call 918-346-0308

Big Cussetah UMC Sat., March 21, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Adults \$15/plate, Kids 10 and under \$8/plate 20566 Prairie Bell Rd., Morris Vendor Space Available, call 539-307-0108

Sand Creek Eufaula Baptist Church Sat., April 11, 11 a.m. All you can eat, Adults \$15/plate, kids 10 and under \$10/plate EW 131 Rd. Wewoka

Want to be added to the list? Contact us at info@mvskokemedia.com

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Income Tax Filing Vita/TCE Tax Program Open to all MCN citizens with a total household income of \$69,000 or less. In-office tax days are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, 8:45 a.m. - 3:45 p.m. by appointment only. 4900 N. Wood Drive, Okmulgee

Coweta Casino Hotel Grand Opening Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises Monday, March 2, 10 a.m. 13185 S. State Highway 51, Coweta

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

American Indian Festival of Words Tulsa City-County Library Begins March 2 and runs through March 21. Features free activities celebrating and

honoring American Indian culture and achievements. Visit tulsalibrary.org for dates.

Festival of Words American Indian Circle of Honor Award MCN citizen Judge Greg Bigler Saturday, March 7, 10:30 a.m. Hardesty Regional Library 8316 E. 93rd St. Tulsa

Coffee and Donuts Veteran Affairs Services Office Thursday, March 12, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. 1006 Bear Lane, Okmulgee

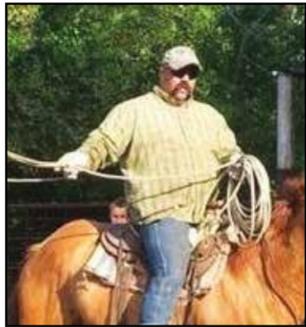
Tribal Women Veterans Summit Veteran Affairs Services Office Thursday, April 2, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. RiverSpirit Casino 8330 Riverside Pkwy, Tulsa Registration opens at 8 a.m. to all military veterans. To pre-register, call 918-732-7739

Spring Festival Tulsa Indian Club Saturday, April 11, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. The event will feature arts and crafts, an Indian Taco Sale, and exhibition singing/drumming. Jenks Riverwalk 300 Riverwalk Terrace, Jenks

Mvskoke Art Market Saturday, April 18, through Sunday, April 19 Times to be announced River Spirit Casino 8330 Riverside Pkwy, Tulsa

Health Shelf Donation Drive College of Muscogee Nation Health & Wellness seeks 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 For more information, 918-549-2800

IN MEMORIAM



Bradford Allen Fisher

Bradford Allen Fisher, a longtime resident of the Nuyaka area, passed away in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on Monday, February 16, 2026, at the age of 47. He was born on Wednesday, December 27, 1978, to Jerry Fisher and Joy Kay Reeder. Brad was proud to have grown up in the Nuyaka community. He attended Beggs Public Schools and graduated from the Beggs High School class of 1997.

Brad enjoyed working with his hands as a welder and loved riding horses and working cattle.

He also found great joy in helping coach his boys in Little League football.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his son, Clayton Fisher. Brad is survived by his daughter, Elizabeth Hicklin, and her husband, Zach; his sons, Nate Fisher and his wife, Candace, Hagan Fisher, and Dakota Fisher; twelve grandchildren; as well as Miranda Wakefield and her fiancé, and two bonus children, Marki and Myles.

The family will hold a private memorial service at a later time.



Mary Elizabeth Harjo

Mary Elizabeth Harjo, age 78, of Glenpool, Oklahoma, died Sunday, December 14, 2025, in Hochatown, Oklahoma. She was born on Thursday, May 22, 1947, to Bennie and Ella Joan Colbert Bender in Okemah, Oklahoma. In her younger years, Mary was a faithful member of Greenleaf Indian Baptist Church in Okemah, Oklahoma, where her faith and community were very important parts of her life.

Mary was a woman of deep pride, generous love, and a giving heart. She was very proud of her Muscogee (Creek) Nation heritage, which was woven into who she was and how she lived. Her family meant everything

to her, especially her three sons and their families. She found her greatest joy in being surrounded by those she loved most.

Mary adored her grandchildren and showed her love through care, time, and food. She had a special gift in the kitchen and loved cooking not only for her family but also for anyone in need of a good, hot meal. Her fry bread was especially loved and became a treasured family favorite that brought everyone together.

For 20 years, Mary worked in retail management in the North Texas area, where she served as a manager for several companies. She was respected for her strong work ethic, leadership, and dedication.

In her quieter moments, Mary enjoyed listening to R & B songs, country music, and Creek Hymns that brought her comfort, joy, and peace. She will be remembered for her generous spirit, her love of family, and the warmth she shared so freely with everyone she met.

Mary is preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Bennie Duke Harjo; her three brothers, Nelson Harjo, John Bender and Joe Bender; and her one sister, Leah Labrada.

Mary is survived by her three perfect sons and daughters-in-law, Bennie Jr. "Duke" and Kristy Harjo of Anna,

Texas; Bryan and Teresa Harjo of Gun Barrell City, Texas and Randall and Melissa Harjo of Allen, Texas; two brothers, Sam Bender of Cromwell, Oklahoma and George Bender of Sherman, Texas; four sisters, Betty Jones of Mt. Vernon, Texas, Debbie Ridge of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Benella Bender of Cromwell, Oklahoma and Alice Harjo of Arcadia, Oklahoma; six grandchildren, L.D. Harjo, Brittanie Martin, Dakota Harjo, Ashley Harjo, Lindsay Pollard and Joshua Harjo; fourteen great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews and many other beloved family and friends.

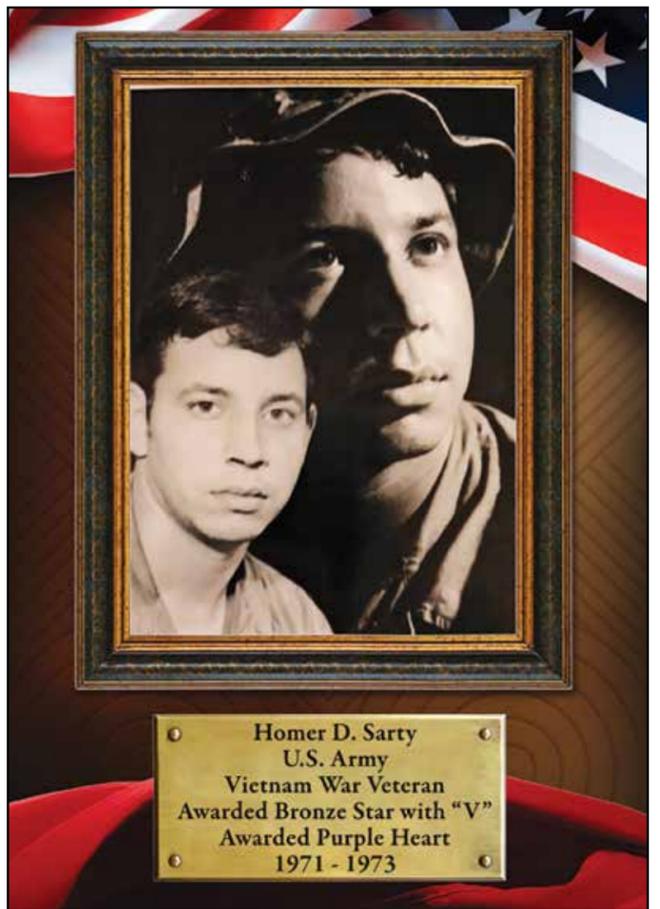
Mary's favorite sayings were "I have three perfect sons!" and "Harjo business, is Harjo business!"

A celebration of life will be held Saturday, March 14, 2026, at 2:00 P.M. at the Tulsa Creek Indian Community Center with Rev. Wayne Harjo and Minister Grover Wind officiating. Cremation services are entrusted to Bowser Family Funeral Home in Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

republishation upon request

Mvskoke News provides all Muscogee (Creek) Nation citizens who pass on a free obituary in Mvskoke News. Submissions can be sent to info@mvskokemedia.com, subject: obit.

VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



The Muscogee Nation Veterans Services Office is proud to honor Homer D. Sarty for his dedicated service to the U.S. Army, the United States, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Homer is a tribal veteran and honorably served just over two years from 1971 to 1973 and is a recipient of several honors: Combat Infantryman Badge, Bronze Star Medal with "V" device, Purple Heart Medal, Air Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 1 Bronze Service Star, and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. Mvto Mr. Sarty for your selfless service to your country and your community.

MVTO FOR YOUR SELFLESS SERVICE!

VASO CORRECTION

Mvskoke News receives VASO's spotlight from the VASO office and has no editorial oversight in the information provided in the spotlight. In the Feb. 1, 2026 edition of the Mvskoke News Veteran Spotlight submission "Homer D. Sarty," Homer Sarty was described as the "late Homer D. Sarty." After the spotlight's publication, Mvskoke News was contacted by Mr. Sarty, who is alive and well. We are reprinting Mr. Sarty's corrected spotlight.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Thank You! From the bottom of our hearts, we are deeply grateful for your kindness and support during this difficult time. Your presence meant so much to our family. Your gifts, your hugs, and prayers for our family was greatly appreciated. Thank You to Fishers Funeral Home, The Brick Plant, our Church families, and Ceremonial families, and Muscogee Nation for all you did to help us through our time of need during the loss of our beloved son, Aaron. From Brigita Leader families and Micheal Deer families.

CLARIFICATION

The story "Nation Breaks Ground on Tribal Courthouse" published on page six in the November 1, 2025 edition of the Mvskoke News contained a factual error. In paragraph nine, Judge Leah Harjo-Ware references the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936, not the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

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2026 American Indian Circle of Honor Honoring Judge Gregory H. Bigler
 Saturday, March 7 • 10:30 a.m.
 Hardesty Regional Library • Connor's Cove
 8316 E. 93rd St.
Book signing immediately afterward

The Circle of Honor recognizes an American Indian leader whose achievements and contributions enrich the lives of others and preserve American Indian culture and legacy. Gregory H. Bigler, Euchee, enrolled with the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma, is a tribal judge and lawyer who exclusively represents Native American tribes. He devotes much of his time to the Poiccat Euchee Ceremonial Grounds and has led efforts in Euchee language revitalization and tribal law advocacy. He is the author of *Rabbit Decolonizes the Forest: Stories From the Euchee Reservation*, published in 2024. Copies will be available for purchasing, courtesy of Magic City Books.

2026 AMERICAN INDIAN OF FESTIVAL WORDS

Celebrating American Indian heritage, culture, arts and achievements

Osage Language Class
 TUESDAYS, MARCH 3, 10, 24, 31 • 6-7 p.m.
 Skiatook Library • 316 E. Rogers
 Join Jacqueline Delong, Osage Nation Language Department teacher, to learn commonly used words and simple sentences.

Family Fun With Muscogee Nation's Tribal TANF
 SATURDAY, MARCH 7 • 9-10:30 a.m.
 Hardesty Regional Library
 For children.

Take and Make: Mystery Turtle Kits
 MARCH 9-31
 Dewaco Library • 314 E. Fifth Ave., Suite 202
 Pick up a mystery turtle kit to make at home. Kits are limited. For children.

Decolonizing the Kitchen Pantry
 MONDAY, MARCH 9 • 6-8 p.m. • MONDAY, MARCH 23 • 6-8 p.m.
 Zarrow Regional Library • 2224 W. 51st St.
 Facilitated by Chef Nico Williams, this workshop explores practices to incorporate traditional Native foodways into the modern kitchen pantry. For teens to adults.

Duno-Logah: Exciting Folktales From Native America
 MONDAY, MARCH 10 • 2-3 p.m. • Bidly Library • 20 E. Brickentledge
 Join Native America's greatest storyteller Will Hill as he regales us with stories of ancient America.

Native Hand Talk for Families
 MONDAY, MARCH 10 • 4-5 p.m. • Broken Arrow Library • 300 W. Broadway
 Join Mike Pottmoss as he teaches native sign language phrases and stories from the Hand Talk that the Native peoples of this land once used.

Native Culture Make and Take: Beaded Medallions
 TUESDAY, MARCH 17 • 2-4 p.m. • Nathan Hale Library • 6038 E. 25th St.
 Join Robin Tiger as she teaches the art of beading. Learn how to create and bead your own design. *Registration is required. For teens to adults.*

Native Culture Make and Take: Cherokee Pottery
 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18 • 2-5 p.m. • 3:30-4:30 p.m.
 Judy Z. Kishner Library • 10150 N. Cincinnati Ave. E., Sperry
 Join Cherokee potter Crystal Hauns for bottle stories and a hands-on workshop. Materials are provided. *Class size is limited. Registration is required.*

Native Culture Make and Take: Pony Bead Creations
 THURSDAY, MARCH 19 • 2-3 p.m. • Suburban Acres Library • 4606 N. Garrison
 Join Sheila Foster as she brings pony beads to life with fun, colorful key chains and other creations.

Coyote & Crow: Tabletop Role-Playing Game
 THURSDAY, MARCH 19 • 6-8:45 p.m. • Zarrow Regional Library
 Come and learn to play Coyote & Crow, an award-winning sci-fi and fantasy tabletop role-playing game, set in an alternate future where the Americas were never colonized. For teens and adults.

Native Culture Make and Take: Corn-Husk Dolls
 FRIDAY, MARCH 20 • 4-5 p.m. • Glenpool Library • 750 E. 141st St.
 Learn how to make a corn-husk doll, and learn about its purpose and history (through storytelling) among the Kiowa, Cherokee, Choctaw and many of their relatives east of the Mississippi River. *Registration is required.*

Native Culture Make and Take: Native Patchwork
 SATURDAY, MARCH 21 • 1-3 p.m. • Zarrow Regional Library
 Learn the basics for Native American patchwork. Tin sewing machines are provided or you may bring your own. Materials are provided to the first 20 people.

Register at www.tulsalibrary.org/events or call 918-549-7323

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REZ COPS
 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Peoples' Day. According to Buck, it was Yahola's only time performing in a comedy show, and he thinks Yahola did really well.

"Cheese told me about Eric (Yahola), his cousin, that did some videos. He was really funny, so I hit him up and we started exchanging ideas. Cedric (Sweet), did a show with him for Seminole Nation Chief Leonard Harjo. He was a social media all star and did all the filming, himself. And he was down to do something," Buck said. Buck has only been an extra in his acting career.

Buck added a last comment

about their series, "We just want to make people laugh and have a good time. And follow us on social media. Let us know if we've made you laugh, it goes a long way. Hopefully, we can keep doing it. And remember, support your local comedians. I like hamburgers too. Aye."

For those interested, Buck and Yahola share casting calls on Facebook a week or two before filming.

You can follow them on their Facebook page for updates on The Real Rez Cops, and watch video clips. They are currently working on launching their YouTube channel.

LEGALS

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

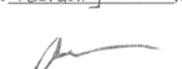
IN THE MATTER OF THE GUARDIANSHIP OF:) D.C., IL,) Minor Child.)	DISTRICT COURT FILED) Case No. <u>20-2021-084</u> P 12 32) MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION) CYNTHIA FIREBRAIN) COURT CLERK)
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ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL GUARDIAN

Notice is hereby given that KEISHA MILLER has filed in the District Court of the Muscogee Creek Nation, a petition requesting the appointment of a guardian of the person and property of D.C., IL, date of birth October 15, 2008.

And that the 31st day of March, 2026 at the hour of 9:00 AM o'clock, a.m., in courtroom of the Muscogee Creek Nation District Court has been appointed as the time and place for hearing the petition, when and where any persons interested may appear and show cause, if any they have, why such appointment should not be made.

DATED this 4th day of February, 2026.


 JUDGE OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

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