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MVSKOKE NEWS

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GEORGIA HARJO TAKES OU INDIGENOUS ROYALTY CROWN

THE FORMER JUNIOR MISS MCN AND MISS INDIAN OKLAHOMA REFLECTS ON HER NEW ROLE



Former Miss Indian OU alongside Miss Indian OU Georgia Harjo before officially crowning Harjo at the OU spring powwow April 18. (Photo Courtesy: Micheal Griffin)

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

NORMAN – Former Junior Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation (2023-2024), Georgia Harjo (Mvskoke) won Miss Indian OU 2026-2027. The public and non-profit administration major ran on a platform of “Honoring Our Ancestors.” Harjo’s experience running for this year’s pageant was long, but she was dedicated. She explained that this pageant was a little different from previous competitions.

“I didn’t know that, the fact that we meet every single week. So starting February, when the applications closed up until the week before pageant night. Every single Wednesday, we would meet as a group, and it really helped us bond and get to know one another and just practice how we do our performance on stage,” Harjo said.

One of Harjo’s favorite parts of this pageant was encountering the diverse perspectives of her fellow contestants. Some contestants were from Oklahoma, including far-flung parts of the state she hadn’t been exposed to. Harjo enjoyed learning more about how they do things in their home.

Harjo met contestants Lila Reynolds (Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians) and Emily Ward (Wyandotte/Seneca/Delaware), and saw fellow Mvskoke contestant Amari Turner.

“It was really interesting getting to hear how they do things in their community and what differences there are. It was nice because with our weekly practices, it even got to a point where we could discuss

and talk about our differences and similarities between our Nations and how we do things,” Harjo said.

Harjo explained that not only is she an enrolled Mvskoke citizen, but also a Choctaw, Seminole, and Cheyenne descendant.

“Because I’m also Choctaw, and so it was really nice getting to talk to Mississippi Choctaw contestant and learn more about how they did it back in those homelands too,” Harjo said.

Preparation and support

Harjo has been raised to always be as prepared as possible, so before even practicing, she knew what she would do. Prepared, Harjo sought to represent her culture and history as fully as possible.

“I really wanted to do a display of our Mvskoke culture and history. My presentation was specifically about our people’s experience on the Trail of Tears. So I created a painting and performed a song on the flute, and I also wanted to tie in the intertribal identity with Choctaw Nation,” Harjo said. “It was a lot of interesting practicing things I already know and things I don’t know, such as playing the flute.”

What inspired Harjo to run for this role? The current OU freshman had known about the title and had a few people on campus, alongside her family, encouraging her to run.

“It was really nice hearing support. I’ve done titles before, but I had only briefly considered doing this college title due to wanting to focus on

my studies. But many of them said that I would bring a really good perspective and bring honor to representing all my different cultures,” Harjo said.

Harjo looks back at the moment she won the crown with amusement at her own reaction, which is caught on video.

“I just covered my face with my hands, and I looked down, and I was like ‘Oh my gosh, they called my name, that’s me!’ Then just the happiness and pride that comes with that cause I get to serve now in this role and do everything I wanted to do. I get to make my plans happen, and it just made me so happy,” Harjo said.

As she held the title and wore the crown, Harjo felt good because she believed the judges and the community saw her put forth her best effort in this pageant.

“I feel like I was trusted kind of like with this torch to carry on from all the past representatives into the future, and hopefully I’ll inspire this next group of girls, whoever will run this next year, to do the exact same thing and represent their people to the best of their ability,” Harjo said.

Service and inspiration

After being a former Jr. Miss MCN and Miss Indian of Oklahoma, this title makes her want to do better for Native students and her tribe.

“I want better for this group, for this organization, so I always see a space, and I want to do my best to fill it properly

GEORGIA HARJO

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MCN TULSA SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT IN JEOPARDY

OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT RULES THAT TULSA NEEDS STATUTORY APPROVAL

BY JERRAD MOORE

TULSA – On Thursday, May 27, the Oklahoma Supreme Court assumed original jurisdiction and issued its opinion in State of Oklahoma v City of Tulsa. The case was originally filed on August 20, 2025, by Governor Kevin Stitt in response to the settlement agreement between the City of Tulsa and the Muscogee Creek Nation.

The court issued a writ of mandamus compelling Tulsa to obtain statutory approval in order to proceed with the agreement. A writ of mandamus is an order from a court to a government official to perform public duties.

At issue in the case is whether the settlement agreement is an extension of the pre-existing cross-deputization agreement between MCN and Tulsa. According to the order:

The Settlement Agreement, while reaffirming some principles found in the Cross-Deputization Agreement, serves a distinct and independent purpose. It does not merely extend existing terms; rather, it establishes a new legal framework with different obligations that the parties are required to fulfill. Therefore, the Settlement Agreement is an independent cooperative agreement, separate and distinct from the Cross-Deputization Agreement.

To be legally enforceable, intergovernmental cooperative agreements made on behalf of a political subdivision must comply with statutory requirements. Under § 1221(D)(1), such agreements become effective only upon approval by both the Joint Committee on State-Tribal Relations and the Governor. Here, neither the Joint Committee nor the Governor approved the Settlement Agreement. The Court holds that the Settlement Agreement is invalid as a matter of law until such time as Tulsa secures the mandatory statutory approvals.

This opinion and the order do not affect the cross-deputization agreement between MCN and the City of Tulsa.



Representative Robyn Whitecloud. (MCNNC)

REP. WHITECLOUD CASE JUNE UPDATE

NEXT COURT DATE SET FOR JULY 6

BY JERRAD MOORE

OKMULGEE – Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council Representative Robyn Whitecloud was in the MCN District Court on Monday, June 1. As previously reported, Rep. Whitecloud was charged with four felony counts of preventing or attempting to prevent performance of official acts (MCNCA Title 14, § 2-803) on Jan 16.

On Monday, Rep. Whitecloud appeared in person in court, and her attorney, Ryan Connonie, appeared virtually via video call. Connonie told the court that he had received a plea bargain offer from the MCN Attorney General’s office earlier the same day, and would like time to discuss it with Whitecloud. Judge Nalani Ching agreed and set the next court date in the matter for July 6.

Mvskoke Media will have ongoing coverage of this developing story.

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Three out of four proposed amendments passed by citizens

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MCN Veteran Micheal Coon honored with Quilt of Honor

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Who got first place in Jacks?

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Highlights from Chief’s recent D.C. trip

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GEORGIA HARJO
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and bring respect, recognition, and honor to our Mvskoke people, but all the tribes that I come from and even all the tribes in Oklahoma as well,” Harjo said.

From her previous pageant experiences, Harjo had served as a community representative, going out to do work, meeting the elders and the youth, educating about her tribe, sharing her culture’s art, sharing the language, and being a good role model.

“I have been questioned before, ‘Why was I running for this title?’ I’ve already done so many other ones that seem like they’re bigger, but going to what I said in the beginning. I see a need in my community, and I see a care, something I want to do for my people,” Harjo said.

In her new role as Miss Indian OU, she wants to be a source of inspiration for others to pursue higher education, and she would like to continue doing so. Harjo wants to let others know that the university has an amazing Native American student program.

“You have space to come practice your culture, we have so many cool things, whether it’s the Art Club here, the language groups, language classes, we have stickball on the South Oval very often. It’s really a great space to foster Native Pride, I think,” Harjo said.

The title also comes with a scholarship, which will be helpful. Harjo had no idea of which college she wanted to attend when she was younger and had heard of the Miss Indian OU title.

“I remember seeing that title, and I was shocked because I was like, ‘That stuff still continues in college?’ I didn’t know that. But even though I didn’t know where I wanted to go yet, she (Miss Indian OU) inspired me to also run. I want to do that for others, I want to make the title known and let kids in High School know, ‘Yeah, we have space here at OU for Native students.’ Come and check it out, it’s really amazing,” Harjo said.

Harjo feels happy to represent this title, not just for herself, but for her Tribe at OU. She knows that there were so many Miss Indian OUs and began researching when the last time a Mvskoke citizen was represented with this title was.

“It’s always that question of ‘Did they represent it or did they come from multiple identities?’ That’s always hard, and I’m having an interesting time navigating that as well, but it’s been a while since the very last representative that was out there speaking the Mvskoke language and wearing the Mvskoke regalia,” Harjo said.

“So being able to be the first one in a long time has shown me a responsibility to share an accurate portrayal of our people, who we were in the past, and who we are today, and who we can grow to be in the future. I feel like I really was able to do that through my talent presentation, talking about our history, and also through my regalia. I always make all of my own dresses, and my mother makes my jewelry. I make my moccasins,” Harjo said.

Harjo views this title as a huge responsibility to her Tribe; she believes MCN doesn’t always receive representation every year. “But I’m very happy to contribute to the awareness of who we are this year. It’s been a really great year for our Tribe, with so many girls stepping up and running in these different titles in the community,” Harjo said.

“Even the new Miss and Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma, they are both Mvskoke. So just being able to be part of the legacy and representing our women and our people, it really makes me proud.”

Honoring Our Ancestors

One component of this title is that Miss Indian OU hosts platform events. Harjo explained that part of the competition is a platform, something you believe in and want to promote. Each semester, this title has to plan an event, on or off campus, to raise students’ awareness of that platform.

“My platform is ‘Honoring Our Ancestors’ and kind of what I want to do with that is acknowledging all of our different Tribal groups here at OU and having cultural exchange in a way, making it so that no one is scared to ask questions, whether you’re from here or you’re not from here,” Harjo said.

Being crowned Miss Indian OU has been an interesting experience. Harjo has had to juggle her freshman year and the American Indian Student Association, which hosts the pageant. “I did face many different obstacles, which I’m glad I made it to the finish line now, and I was able to do it. I can’t wait to see what we do next year,” Harjo said.

Harjo acknowledges that college is a difficult place to navigate, and she wants to create a space where they can all get together and share about who they are.

“Whether it’s asking about how to enter a powwow, stompdance, or how to create a ribbon skirt or make a stickball, anything like that. That’s what I wish to do this semester,” Harjo said.

Take the step and try

One piece of advice that Harjo would like to give: no one is perfect, and everyone is learning. If you’re nervous or afraid, take that step and try. Harjo mentioned that there are so many different perspectives and ways of doing things, but just do your best and ask questions. She says she wasn’t as knowledgeable about the language or culture as she is today.

“But through studying and asking questions, putting aside my fears, I was able to grow into the young woman that I am. Now, a lot of times I know youth are scared to ask questions, and it’s hard to get past that step. I would just say, just try and just be respectful while you do it,” Harjo shared.

“As long as you have an honest want for that knowledge, there’s nothing that can harm you. There’s nothing that can hurt you. Everything, whether it’s pageants or it’s life, it’s all about growth, and I think a lot of us forget that we’re all constantly growing.”



Georgia Harjo at the annual OU powwow on April 18. (Photo Courtesy: Michael Griffin)

THREE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS PASSED

NCA 26-060, CHANGING “MUSCOGEE” TO “MVSKOKE” IN THE CONSTITUTION FAILS

BY BRADEN HARPER

MVSKOKE RESERVATION – The May 30 Special Election unofficial results are in, and three out of the four referendums will now become law after receiving the required two-thirds (66%) support from voters. The vote on the special justice appointment process received 76.29%; the vote on the referendum voting processes received 78.35%; and the vote on term limits for council representatives received 81.88%. The vote to replace “Muscogee” with “Mvskoke” received 57.36%.

17 voting sites across the reservation were open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. The Muscogee Nation Election Board reported that the Glenpool Indian Community Center voting site did not open until 9:26 a.m. and remained open until 9:26 p.m. to accommodate voters. The unofficial results were published on Facebook on Saturday, May 30, at 10:33 p.m. According to the Muscogee Nation Election Board, all results are unofficial until Friday, June 5, at 5:00 p.m. (CST).

Official Results

NCA 26-060 was a proposed amendment to “Replace ‘Muscogee’ with the traditional spelling of ‘Mvskoke’ and delete the word ‘(Creek)’ throughout the Constitution, including the illustrated official Seal in Section 3 of Article I of the Constitution, and establish the following savings clause in a newly created Section 4 of Article I of the Constitution.” All laws and official acts carried out by the Tribe before the name change would still be in effect. It received 57.36% of the total 2,831 cast votes.

NCA 26-061 allows the Principal Chief to “Appoint Special Justices to fill any vacancy/recusal on the Supreme Court so that every case in the Supreme Court will be heard by seven (7) Supreme Court Justices.” The appointed Special Justice serves only in the particular case for which they were chosen, and their term expires at the end of the case. It received 76.29% of the total 2,826 cast votes.

NCA 26-062 lets “Constitutional Amendments to be allowed on the General Election Ballots if adopted by two-thirds (⅔) vote by the National Council 90 days prior to a General Election.” It is the responsibility of the Principal Chief to set the election date by request of the National Council within 30 days. It received 78.35% of the total 2,790 cast votes.

NCA 26-063 is an amendment that will “Establish term limits for the National Council Representatives.” Each representative will be limited to three four-year terms, consecutive or nonconsecutive. This will not include partial terms to fill vacancies. It will begin with the filing of Seat A terms beginning in January 2028. received 81.88% of the total 2,793 cast votes.

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The Mvskoke News reserves the right to edit all submissions for space, style and grammar. Receipt of submissions does not obligate The Mvskoke News in any regard. The Mvskoke News is mailed from Stigler, Oklahoma to all enrolled Muscogee (Creek) citizens’ households upon request. Inquiries should be directed to Mvskoke Media.

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

“I wish to represent the University of Oklahoma and our Indigenous students so that I may serve as past titleholders have, to continue this legacy and help inspire others in their educational journey, and showcase the community within the University of Oklahoma. I wish to honor our ancestors and encourage others to learn and teach our cultural ways. I’m humbled and grateful for this opportunity.”

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LEARN THE MVSKOKE LANGUAGE ONLINE

FUTURE ZOOM CLASSES WILL BE OPEN TO ANY ENROLLED CITIZEN

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

OKMULGEE – Help for beginners taking the first steps in learning the Mvskoke language can be found in online Zoom classes. The sessions, presented by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Mvskoke Language Program, have been held for quite some time and provide these resources to help students keep practicing even after the sessions end.

Though they aren’t meeting right now, they will start back up soon.

MCN Mvskoke Language Program Project Coordinator Johnny Childress (Mvskoke) explained the program’s goal of hosting online sessions and what they do during the hour-long sessions.

Childress said that this had been going on for a long time before he started working at their department. Childress shared that he even took online Zoom classes for months and months before coming to work with the department.

Sometimes people can’t make time to attend a Mvskoke language class, or they have responsibilities that get in the way, which is why they offer

these classes. Participants can join from their phones or computers.

“The goal is to further people who may not have an opportunity to come in to go to the college and learn or won’t have an opportunity to go to the community classes. So it’s for people that either live too far away from these places, or kind of living on the go,” Childress said.

“This is to offer language learning to people who don’t have those traditional ways of getting it, and also kind of establish foundations for people to start learning; those are the big goals.”

Typically, their online classes run in six-week increments, but due to events in the spring and their upcoming camps, they aren’t able to complete a full six weeks. So they call these shorter online classes “mini-mesters,” which splits them in half.

During these online Mvskoke language learning sessions, their own staff will teach the classes.

What they plan to teach is geared toward the beginner level of learning the Mvskoke language, because new groups

of citizens join at different times.

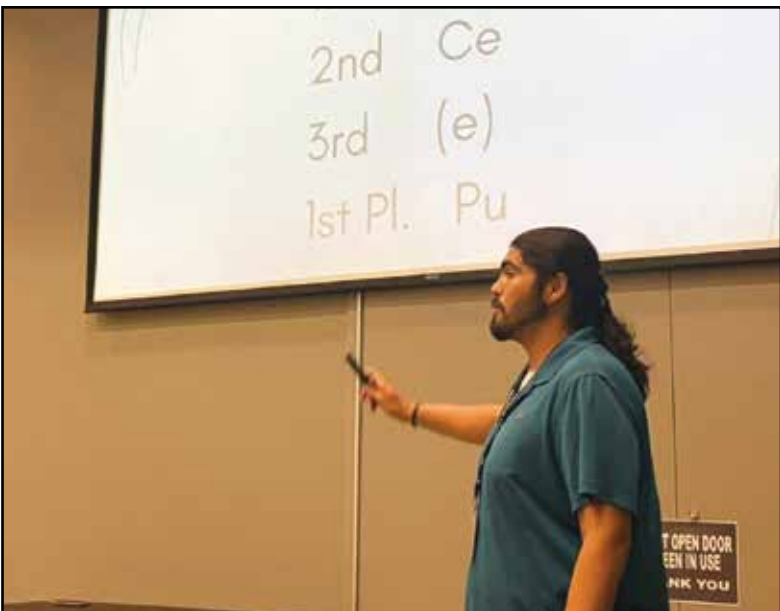
“You never know who’s going to be in there, and oftentimes it can be newer folk. So it tends to skew to the beginner side of the learning spectrum. A lot of the foundational stuff we want to give them so that they can feel comfortable to move on with the learning on their own or find ways to study, in traditional ways. I’d say, they’re going to get a lot of the foundations that they need to get started learning,” Childress said.

Any citizen enrolled through MCN or with direct Mvskoke ancestry can join these sessions, according to Childress.

When teaching online sessions, Childress said there are sometimes as few as 6 or as many as 50, depending on the day.

While being able to do this, Childress feels that it is amazing that their program does offer these online Mvskoke Language Zoom sessions.

“It shows the difference in attitude from when I first started trying to learn 10+ years ago. The only available



Johnny Childress teaches students the Mvskoke language. (Image Courtesy: MLP)

stuff online was what the college had; little phrases on their website. The Red Stick Warrior Association had just started putting stuff out, I remember back then but there wasn’t much opportunity to learn and get to be part of sharing all this wonderful information we have, it feels really good to get to do that,” Childress said.

Childress encourages anyone who does have the time to hop into the Mvskoke language online Zoom sessions, even for a few minutes, to get some exposure to the language.

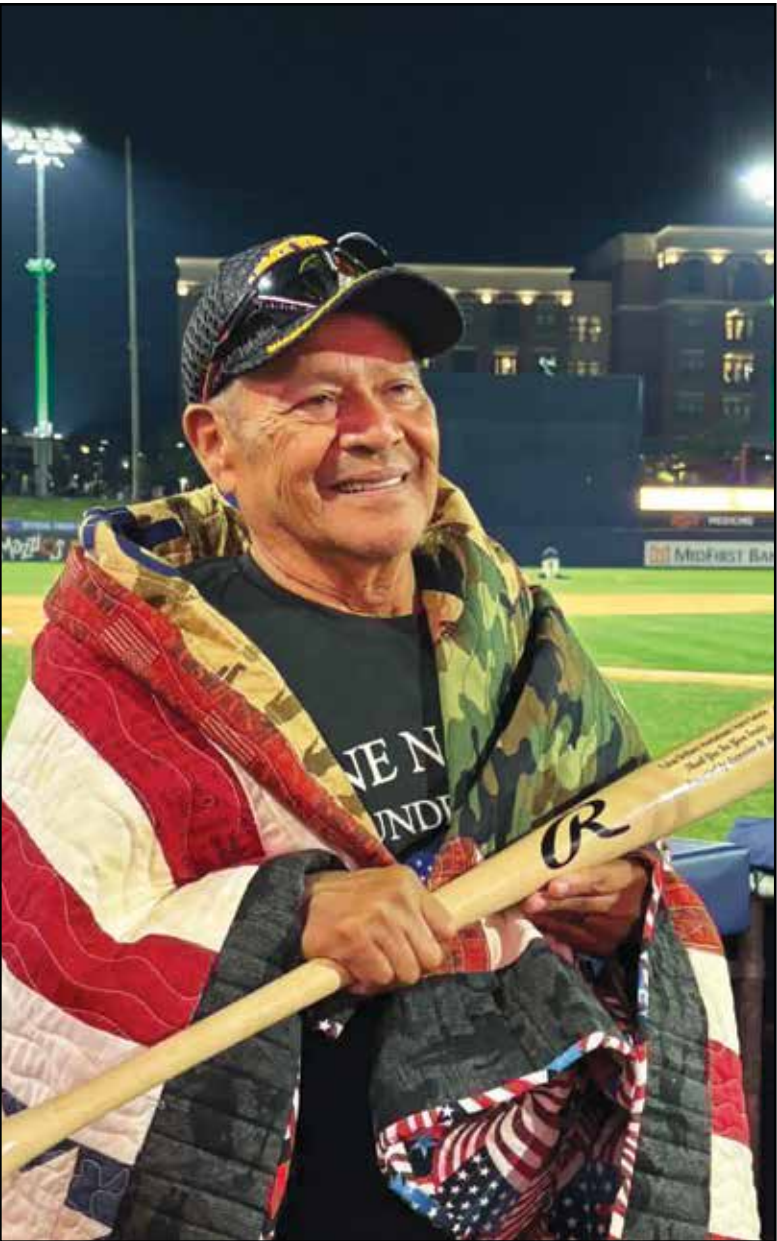
“Don’t be afraid of anything about the language. It’s not daunting. I like to point out in my classes how much more

straightforward that it is than English in a lot of ways so don’t be scared to take part,” Childress said.

For future online Mvskoke Language sessions or if you have trouble signing up using their QR code, you can contact Childress at 918-549-2963 or their main number at 918-304-3362.

To follow along with their program, events, or new online sessions of Learn Mvskoke Online, follow them on their Facebook page, Mvskoke Language Program.

Their program offers resources to take steps into learning the language on their website at mvskokeopunvk.com



Michael D. Coon is honored with a Quilt of Valor. (Courtesy: Nancy Coon).

VETERAN HONORED FOR MILITARY SERVICE AND ABIDING ADVOCACY

MICHAEL COON RECIEVED A QUILT OF VALOR AND SELECTED AS THE HOMETOWN HERO AT THE TULSA DRILLERS' MAY 16 GAME

organization that advocates for Indigenous veterans in the United States. In 2022, he helped bring the War at Home Memorial to Broken Arrow. The memorial features the silhouettes of 20 soldiers who lost their lives to suicide, including his son, Michael K. Coon. Since his son’s passing, Michael D. Coon has been a staunch advocate for veterans who struggle with mental health.

“I don’t want to see another veteran or another parent have to lose their child like I had to bury my son,” Michael D. Coon said. “That’s been on my mind since the day I lost him. I make it a point to make sure this is not going to happen anymore.”

Suicide rates for veterans have declined in the last five years. According to the 2025

National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report released by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023 saw 44 fewer veteran suicides than 2022. However, the report explains that continued prevention efforts, like personal connection and support, are still crucial for veterans at risk of suicide.

Michael D. Coon also works with Patriot Rehab Services, an organization that treats veterans with substance abuse issues. Located in New Iberia, Louisiana, the organization offers an eight-week rehabilitation program with 24-hour facilities staffed with psychiatrists and registered nurses. The program serves both men and women veterans and addresses the unique traumas they carry.

Michael D. Coon explained that it is his mission to honor every veteran with a Quilt of Valor. He believes veterans deserve their service to be properly recognized and honored. Last year, he helped select and honor Mvskoke veteran Tom Pickering as a Hometown Hero in 2025. He is currently seeking other Native American veterans for the honor and encourages everyone who sees a veteran in public to thank them for their service.

“When you see a veteran, always remember to shake their hand, put your hand over your heart, when you see them, thank them for their service because it means a lot to veterans who don’t think people care,” Michael D. Coon said.

BY BRADEN HARPER

TULSA – Michael D. Coon (Mvskoke) is a Vietnam-era U.S. Army veteran who comes from an enduring family tradition of serving their country. Michael D. Coon served with the XVIII Airborne Corps Headquarters Company as G2 Intelligence. His father was the late Phillip Coon (Mvskoke), a World War II veteran and a survivor of the Bataan Death March. His son, the late Michael K. Coon, was a veteran who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf. In honor of Michael D. Coon’s military service and his efforts to support veterans, he was selected as the Hometown Hero for the Driller’s home game on Saturday, May 16.

During the game, Michael D. Coon was presented with a Quilt of Valor. The handmade quilt was made by Rita Roberts and Shauna Schwarm. Quilt of Valor is a nonprofit that provides quilts to veterans, symbolizing healing.

“This award is not for me. I advocate a lot for the veterans, but when I receive awards, it’s for the family of the veterans, it’s for all veterans. It’s like they’re standing up there with me when I’m receiving that award,” Michael D. Coon said.

On the same day, Michael D. Coon was one of the featured speakers at the 6th Annual Gold Star Families Memorial Honor Ride. There, he spoke on the topic of veterans who struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder. The event featured 300 motorcycle riders escorting Gold Star Families from Veterans Park in Broken Arrow to the Hard Rock Casino in Catoosa. A Gold Star Family refers to family members of a service member who died in service to the United States.

Michael D. Coon has dedicated his life to serving other veterans in need. He currently serves as the Sergeant-At-Arms for the Native American Indian Veterans, a nonprofit



Over 300 motorcycle riders escorted Gold Star Families on a ride from Broken Arrow to Catoosa. (Courtesy: Nancy Coon)



April Rinner achieved her educational goals with hard work and faith (image courtesy April Rinner)

MVSKOKE CITIZEN CELEBRATES DEGREE MILESTONE AFTER TWO DECADES IN NURSING

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

OKMULGEE – April Rinner recently earned her doctoral degree from Oklahoma City University and said the Muscogee (Creek) Nation supported her throughout her academic journey. An Aristocrat Scholar, Rinner has also volunteered in Native communities to assist with opioid overdose prevention and education efforts. She shared that she is a descendant of four tribes (Creek, Cherokee, Osage, and Sioux lineage) and that her ancestry is connected to Native leaders and Chiefs.

Rinner had to juggle being a student, a wife, a mother of four boys, and working multiple jobs. However, she has had significant help from her family and Tribe to reach this milestone.

Rinner has been a nurse for nearly 20 years, and when she first started, she worked in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). While she enjoyed that work, she always wanted to become a teacher.

“I just kind of pushed it aside because I worked hard to earn my nursing degree, but I quietly held onto a dream of being a professor and teaching students. I even wrestled in college with deciding between an education and a nursing degree,” Rinner said.

One day, a nursing professor who became her mentor came into the NICU where Rinner worked, and she shared with the professor that she had always wanted to teach. The professor encouraged her to pursue that dream.

“She told me about her career path and how she was able to manage it, but I also had two very young children at the time, and I was somewhat intimidated about trying to balance being a mom and also going back to school, but I earned my master’s in 2017 in Nursing Education,” Rinner said.

Afterward, Rinner was motivated to pursue her doctorate; however, she and her family decided it would be best to wait. Rinner later had two more children and supported her mother as she passed away from cancer.

“During that time, I was able to be there with her, and I also had two more children, which was very important to me. Later, I was able to go back for my Doctorate of Nursing Practice degree in Nursing Education,” Rinner said.

Throughout her journey, Rinner faced challenges with juggling her life priorities with student responsibilities. She had children to take care of and spent many late nights working and writing while trying to keep her family a priority. However, she acknowledged that her husband was very supportive of her throughout the way.

“There have been weeks where I would think ‘Okay, we have to get through this week, and then the next,’ while trying to juggle late night practices and games, and

then carving out time for school when I got home while everyone’s asleep,” Rinner said.

Rinner explained that earning this degree was a surreal moment. Especially getting the Aristocrat Scholarship from the Muscogee Nation Scholarship Foundation, “which was a tremendous honor. It was a very competitive scholarship. I was shocked that I got this,” Rinner said.

“They awarded me with an academic excellence award because I had the highest GPA in the MSN-DNP program, and I was a little bit shocked by this because even though I worked really hard, I didn’t expect this, especially while juggling my boys. They’re at the age where they’re in multiple sports, and I work in four different nursing roles,” Rinner said.

In her nursing career, she works at the School of Nursing at Saint Francis Hospital, where she teaches on the clinical side. She has students who attend the University of Oklahoma and the University of Tulsa. Rinner also has a background in teaching at Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, her first role in education many years ago.

Currently an employee at Saint Francis, she teaches virtual courses for the University of Tulsa, something she did while also earning her doctoral degree. Additionally, Rinner works as a school nurse at her children’s school.

Presently, Dr. Rinner holds two board certifications: Clinical Nurse Educator (CNE) and Certified Academic Clinical Nurse Educator (CNEcl). Rinner explained that while each certification has a distinct focus, both are grounded in evidence-based practice and nursing education. One certification emphasizes clinical education and professional development within healthcare settings, while the other focuses on teaching and learning in academic environments.

“I’ve worked very hard to get to this point, and getting to the finish line is very surreal. I wasn’t expecting the honors that the school awarded me, and my project also has been a tremendous blessing because I was able to implement it at the hospital,” Rinner said.

“I remember what it felt like starting as a new graduate nurse, and I couldn’t have tried to set a pathway to get to this point. I could not have orchestrated the divine appointments throughout my journey. The unexpected encounters with nurses and hospital leaders, the paths that crossed at just the right moments, and the doors that opened along the way. Everything fell into place with my project aligning perfectly with my vision for mentorship and mentoring the next generation of nurses.”

She felt that it was her calling to teach the next generation of nurses. Rinner gets sad when the semester ends.

“I would grow to love them, and I would see both their strengths and weaknesses. It’s a meaningful bond whenever you can come alongside someone who’s anxious,

scared, and new to the profession. Being someone they trust who can support and guide them through a challenging time is deeply rewarding for me,” Rinner said.

While in the beginning, when she had her boys, she cut back hours when they were first born and when they were little, but at that time, Rinner would start to miss her students. She gradually picked up more hours and tried to get more time with her students, too.

“I just fell in love with that, and that’s one of the main reasons why I wanted to pursue a Doctorate. It was also a lifelong dream that I had growing up, I always either wanted to be a teacher, a nurse, or a doctor, and now I’ve become all three essentially,” Rinner said.

For anyone who wants to do what Rinner is currently doing or get a doctorate degree, she wants them to go for it, and she will never regret getting this degree because, to her, it’s a passion.

Rinner stated that many nurse educators are very passionate about their work. She had the privilege of working with some of the best. She knows that sometimes nurses can get burned out by what they do; however, for Rinner, this was her lifelong dream and it just keeps getting better. She says she always knew she eventually wanted to mentor students as much as possible.

Growing up as a citizen of MCN, she is a proud Oklahoman with Indigenous roots on her dad’s side, which she carries great pride in. She grew up visiting her Papa’s house on Cheasquah and Red Bird Road in Muskogee.

“Where my family would jokingly say we were ‘just a bunch of Okies from Muskogee.’ As a little girl, I did not yet understand that those words reflected generations of Tribal leaders, chiefs, and a rich lineage rooted in four Tribal nations,” stated Rinner.

As an Indigenous person, she wanted to give back and honor her heritage and roots.

Rinner has also volunteered in Native communities to support opioid overdose prevention and education efforts. “I’ve had the honor of volunteering at medication take-back events with Tribal communities. There is a significant need for opioid education and initiatives that promote awareness because of the challenges associated with opioid misuse in some Native communities. I value the opportunity to volunteer, spend my time, and give back to my people in that way,” Rinner said.

Rinner is deeply appreciative of the MCN and the many scholarship opportunities available. When starting back to school, Rinner had no idea how they were going to do it financially, but with the support from MCN, it was a blessing for her.

She believes that her faith has been her driving force in getting to where she is now.

Rinner shared, “I think that it’s definitely shaped me and made me stronger because I’ve learned how to trust and really rely on my faith in God through this.”

SENIOR GAMES PROVIDES FRIENDLY COMPETITION FOR ELDERS

ACTIVITIES AND FELLOWSHIP CAN HELP ELDERS' PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

by SHAYLN PROCTOR

OKMULGEE – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Health Promotion and Wellness team within the MCN Public Health Department hosted its annual Senior Games at the Mvskoke Dome on May 21. They had a putting contest, cornhole, jacks, a fitness walk, a dance, a free-throw basketball contest, and a softball throw contest. This was for individuals aged 55 years and older, for any enrolled Tribal member. Seniors were offered a free meal and a free shirt with a BP check.

The games are held every year to promote healthy aging and encourage physical activity, creating meaningful opportunities for elders to stay active and socially connected. “It’s a way to support their overall health while honoring their role in our community,” said MCN Health Promotion and Wellness Director Duane Meadows (Mvskoke).

“We also appreciated our volunteers, including Tribal Council representatives who helped judge events, and Principal Chief David Hill, who provided the opening welcome.”

Meadow’s believes that the turnout was very strong, with nearly 300 people attending. Seeing everyone participate in these games and bring a ton of energy throughout the day was very encouraging to him.

During the games, participants were divided into age groups: men and women aged 55-64 and 65+. This was to help ensure everyone had an equal opportunity to enjoy the competition.

They started the day with a fitness walk, followed by a dance warm-up to get the crowd moving. Then they began the contest events.

“One of my favorite parts of the event is seeing the group competitions like cornhole and basketball free throw. These activities bring out a lot of interaction, encouragement, and laughter, and you can really see the camaraderie among participants,” Meadows said.

Meadows stated that they like to focus on activities that are safe, inclusive, and adaptable to different ability levels. These types of activities can help improve mobility, strength, balance, and cardiovascular health.

“Our goal is to incorporate movements that support daily function, balance, and coordination while still being enjoyable and engaging. We also take into consideration what our elders enjoy and provide a variety of activities that offer both fun and friendly competition,” Meadows said.

Their department likes to ensure that these activities help reduce the risk of falls and support elders' independence. They believe that this is important as well as being socially active with one another.



Jack Yargee and Annette Hicks-Yargee (Shayln Proctor/MM)

Meadows spoke about how this supports mental and emotional well-being and reduces isolation.

“Events like the Senior Games are about more than physical activity. The event brings us together for health, culture, and community. It takes a collaborative effort to make it successful, and we’re grateful to everyone involved. We look forward to continuing to grow and improve this event each year for our elders,” Meadow said.

For safety reasons, MCN EMS was on standby in case of emergencies. Their department also partnered with MCN Senior Services and had great support in planning the day from the MCN Elder Services Office Manager, Angi Neumeyer (Mvskoke). This event brought in MCN Public Health Nurses for first aid and the MCN Health Prevention Program, which provided blood pressure checks and additional prizes.

What Meadows enjoys most about hosting these events for the elderly is seeing all of the elders come together to have fun and support one another.

“It’s very rewarding to provide an event that promotes health while also building community. Seeing the smiles and knowing they feel valued and appreciated makes it all worthwhile,” Meadows said.

He even said there was positive feedback from the elders, especially regarding the shirts provided by the program.

Abbie Larney (Mvskoke) and Mariam Beaver (Mvskoke) spoke about this year’s Senior Games and their thoughts on it.

Larney came to see all the elders and to enjoy good fellowship; she also enjoyed the lunch provided. Larney wanted to try out some of the activities, especially the jacks.

Beaver, however, didn’t participate in any activities, but she did enjoy seeing people that she hadn’t seen in a long time. Larney also agreed with Beaver.

Beaver believes it is great that the elders can participate in events like this. She is very appreciative that this department puts on events like this for them. “I think it’s really good, it’s good for the seniors. They get a chance to get out,” Beaver said.

“I’m glad too that they do something for us elders. I enjoy it, I think Creek Nation is doing a good job,” Larney said.



Senior medalists celebrate the podium (Shayln Proctor/MM)

Senior Game Results:

Men- ages 55-64:

- Free Throw:**
1st place- Rob Deere
2nd place-Tony Roberts
3rd place-Mike Proctor

- Softball Throw:**
1st place-Adam Fox
2nd place-Rob Deere
3rd place-William Fixico

- Golf Putting:**
1st place-Mike Proctor
2nd place-Kenneth Hill
3rd place-Mitch Jack

- Cornhole:**
1st place-Mike Proctor
2nd place-Marcus Proctor
3rd place-Kenneth Hill

- Jacks:**
1st place-Randall Hicks
2nd place-William Fixico
3rd place-Tony Roberts

Men- ages 65+

- Free Throw:**
1st place-Charlie Proctor
2nd place-James Bender
3rd place-Lowell Wesley

- Softball Throw:**
1st place-G K
2nd place-Gary Warrior
3rd place-James Bender

- Golf Putting:**
1st place-Thomas Coon
2nd place-Turner Bear
3rd place-Larry Spencer

- Cornhole:**
1st place-James Bender
2nd place-Speedy
3rd place-Justin Barnett

- Jacks:**
1st place-Bobby Lena
2nd place-James Bender
3rd place-Gary Warrior

Women- ages 55-64

- Free Throw:**
1st place- Marsha Wilbanks
2nd place-Barbara Sands
3rd place-Mary Narcomey

- Softball Throw:**
1st place-Sherri Freeman
2nd place-Mary Narcomey
3rd place-Marsha Wilbanks

- Golf Putting:**
1st place-Carol Harjo
2nd place-Mary Narcomey
3rd place-Pam Harjo

- Cornhole:**
1st place-Karen Bias
2nd place-Carolyn McNac
3rd place-Charlene Colber

- Jacks:**
1st place-Marsha Wilbanks
2nd place-Charlene Colbert
3rd place-Sherry Bear

Women- ages 65+

- Free Throw:**
1st place-Linda Tiger
2nd place-Kim Stout
3rd place-Robin Jimboy

- Softball Throw:**
1st place-Edna Blair
2nd place-Rita Hinson
3rd place-Kim Stout

- Golf Putting:**
1st place-Leona Fish
2nd place-Nancy Conley
3rd place-Judy Williams

- Cornhole:**
1st place-Barbara Oneil
2nd place-Eliose Johnson
3rd place-Francine Lowe

- Jacks:**
1st place-Linda Hicks
2nd place-Mary Walters
3rd place-Maggie Coon



Abbie Larney and Mariam Beaver spoke about this year’s Senior Games. (Shayln Proctor/MM)



Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Rental Coordinator

The Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is seeking a motivated and detail-oriented **Rental Coordinator** to support the administration of our rental and low-rent housing programs. This position serves as a primary point of contact for tenants and applicants while coordinating program activities such as move-ins and move-outs, inspections, tenant communication, and rental assistance processing. The Rental Coordinator also helps ensure that housing programs are administered in compliance with **federal housing regulations, including NAHASDA and HUD program requirements**, as well as HASNOK policies and procedures.

Ideal candidates will have:

- A **high school diploma or equivalent** (some college preferred)
- At least **1 year of customer service experience**
- **Property management, housing program administration, or accounting experience preferred**
- Ability to understand and follow **federal program compliance requirements** related to housing assistance
- Strong organizational, communication, and problem-solving skills
- Proficiency in **Microsoft Office and database systems**
- Ability to maintain **confidential tenant and applicant information**
- A **valid Oklahoma driver's license**

This role is ideal for someone who enjoys helping community members navigate housing programs while ensuring services are delivered professionally, efficiently, and in accordance with federal housing regulations.

An application for employment can be found at www.hasnok.org. Submit your application, resume, and a copy of your valid driver's license. Applicant will be subject to a nationwide background check, motor vehicle report, and drug screen. You may contact administrativeofficer@hasnok.org (405) 257-6604, should you have questions. Position open until filled. The Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity employer with Indian Preference.

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Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Computer and Information Technology Systems Manager

The Computer and Information Technology Systems Manager (IT) is primarily responsible for achieving the IT department goals and objectives by coordinating, directing, monitoring, and evaluating the daily operation of all departmental functions and staff. Ensures the efficient and effective provision of information technology (IT) serves to meet the needs of The Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma (HASNOK.)

An application for employment can be found at hasnok.org. Submit your application, resume and a copy of your valid driver's license. Applicant will be subject to a nationwide background check, motor vehicle report, and drug screen. Please submit your information to: HASNOK, Attn: Administrative Officer, P.O. Box 1493, or 120 West 4th Street, Wewoka, OK 74884, or email administrativeofficer@hasnok.org (405) 257-6604. Position open until filled. The Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity employer with Indian Preference.



Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Overnight Residential Support Specialist

The Overnight Residential Support Specialist ensures the safety, supervision, and well-being of residents during nighttime hours. This position provides trauma-informed, culturally competent care in alignment with MVCT's mission and maintains compliance with tribal, state, and federal guidelines. The role requires awake, alert supervision throughout the night shift, regular room checks, and documentation of resident activity and facility conditions.

An application for employment can be found at hasnok.org. Submit your application, resume and a copy of your valid driver's license. Applicant will be subject to a nationwide background check, motor vehicle report, and drug screen.

Please submit your information to:
HASNOK, Attn: Administrative Officer, P.O. Box 1493, or 120 West 4th Street, Wewoka, OK 74884, or email administrativeofficer@hasnok.org (405) 257-6604. Position open until filled.

MUSCOGEE MUSINGS

WITH PRINCIPAL CHIEF HILL

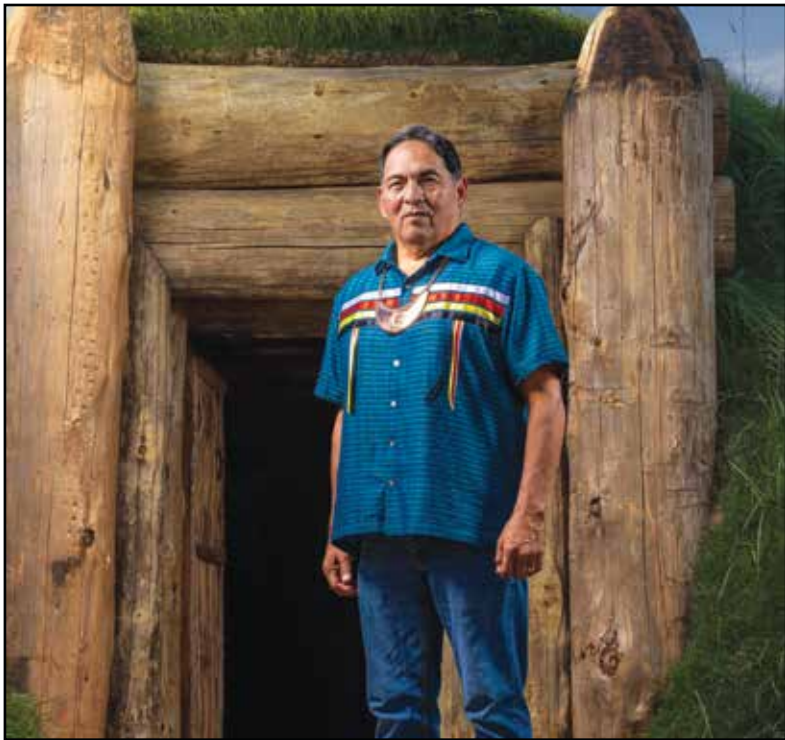
Hesci! Stonkon follakcv?

Summer time is knocking on the door, and things are heating up here at Muscogee Nation as we head into a big month.

We're already underway with the 50th Annual Muscogee Nation Festival and expect a great crowd and a wonderful time during our main event weekend. I want to remind everyone that we will have plenty of cooling and hydration stations on site, and plenty of security and personnel to make sure that all our guests and citizens have a safe and enjoyable celebration.

As I write to you all today, I do so from the United States Capitol City of Washington, D.C. I am here for the week, alongside a Muscogee delegation, for meetings with several of our legislative partners on issues of concern and have the attention of the Muscogee Nation. It's important that we lobby decision-makers here and provide them with the information they need to make sound decisions that affect our interests. To us, it is of great importance that any legislation dealing with land-into-trust matters include provisions to protect sacred sites. We've fought too hard, for too long, for justice to not continue our efforts to the very end, where we can find an acceptable resolution.

On Thursday, June 4, we had 8 hours of back-to-back meetings with a collection of 9 different Senators and Representatives. It's hard to describe the level of fatigue that hits you after a day like that on The Hill. But it's truly an honor and privilege to do this work, as our ancestors



once did. The memories of their long journeys to get here to fight for us give me strength.

During our visit, we also had the incredible opportunity at The National Archives to view seven treaties in which the Nation was a party. We viewed the following:

- Ratified Indian Treaty #17: Treaty with the Creeks and Secret Article signed at New York, August 7, 1790
- Ratified Indian Treaty #25: Treaty with the Creeks signed at Colerain in Georgia, June 29, 1796
- Ratified Indian Treaty #61: Treaty with the Creeks signed at Fort Jackson, August 9, 1814
- Ratified Indian Treaty #116: Treaty with the Creeks signed at Indian Springs in the Creek Nation, January 8, 1821
- Ratified Indian Treaty #125: Treaty with the Creeks

signed at Indian Springs, February 12, 1825

- Ratified Indian Treaty #144: Treaty with the Creeks signed at Washington, DC, January 24, 1826
- Ratified Indian Treaty #183: Treaty with the Creeks signed at Fort Gibson, Arkansas River, February 14, 1833

What an excellent opportunity to see these living pieces of history!

We had a very productive week, but I'm anxious to return home. We have lots to do and several big things coming up. I appreciate the chance to share these things with you all and look forward to more columns coming your way.

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

MVTO,
Chief Hill

VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



The Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs Services Office is proud to honor Geri E. Wisner for her dedicated service to the Muscogee Nation, U.S. Marine Corps and the United States. Geri honorably served 4 years and is a recipient of several honors: National Defense Service Medal, Meritorious Mast, Expert M-16 Badge (4th Award).

Mvto Ms. Wisner for your selfless service to your country and your community.

The Veterans Spotlight is submitted by the MCN VASO.

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NEW CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER OPENS IN WETUMKA

THE CENTER INCORPORATES CULTURAL EDUCATION INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

BY BRADEN HARPER

WETUMKA – Students enrolled in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Daycare system in Wetumka now have a new facility to play, learn, and grow. The Nation cut the ribbon on the Wetumka Child Development Center on Monday, June 1. Guests at the opening ceremony toured the facility and playgrounds featuring Mvskoke and Indigenous cultural motifs.

During opening remarks, MCN Principal Chief David Hill remarked that the facility serves future generations of Mvskokvike. The Tribe’s goal for the center is to make students feel at home, especially for those who live on the Mvskoke Reservation south of I-40. For Principal Chief Hill, making students feel at home means incorporating Mvskoke culture, language, and imagery into the classroom.

“These kids are the future generation. We want them to feel at home,” Principal Chief Hill said. “Adding our culture and history to this building, it’s all about investing in our youth.”

National Council Speaker Randall Hicks echoed Principal Chief Hill’s comments. “As Muscogee people, we understand that our children are sacred gifts,” Speaker Hicks said.

He is excited to see the positive impact the center will have on the Wetumka community.

“The lessons they learn today will shape the leaders, language speakers, educators, and community members of tomorrow. When we invest in early childhood education, we invest in the future strength of our Nation,” Speaker Hicks said.

MCN Secretary of Community and Human Services Carmin Tecumseh-Williams remarked that the Nation’s daycares are special because they teach students from a young age what it means to be Mvskoke, and set them up for success.

“Our children will not only be taught manners, they will be taught our culture and our language,” Williams said. “We are the beginning point of who they are to become successful, progressive Creek people. That’s what we set out to do and that’s what we’ll do here.”

The Wetumka Child Development Center is located at 602 OK-9. The Nation will cut the ribbon on another Child Development Center in Okemah on Monday, June 8, at 10 a.m. That center will be located at 309 North 14th Street, Okemah, OK.



TOP: The new play area at the development center uses Indigenous and Mvsoke motifs. (Braden Harper/MM) BOTTOM LEFT: Playgrounds at the Child Development Center feature Mvskoke and Indigenous motifs like teepees, canoes and clan animals. BOTTOM RIGHT: One of the new rooms of the Child Development Center is furnished with new cribs and tiny tables and chairs.

LEGALS

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

IN THE MATTER OF
THE GUARDIANSHIP OF:

JUSTIN J. PORTILLO,
An Incapacitated Adult.

FILED
JUN 20 9 35
Case No. GD-2026-16
COURT CLERK

FIRST AMENDED ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING PETITION
FOR APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL GUARDIAN

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to all persons interested in the person or property of JUSTIN J. PORTILLO, that there has been filed in the District Court of the Muscogee Creek Nation a Petition praying for the appointment of JEANINE “AMY” PORTILLO as General Guardian of the Person and Estate of JUSTIN J. PORTILLO.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that the 16th day of July 2026, at the hour of 9:30 o'clock a.m., has been designated as the time for hearing said Petition before the Judge of the District Court, Muskogee Creek Nation District Courthouse, 2501 Lvmhvike, Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447, when and where all persons interested in JUSTIN J. PORTILLO may appear and contest the same.

Dated this 20th day of May, 2026.

Judge Signature

JUDGE OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

A.P.; DOB: 12/30/2024,
Alleged Deprived Child(ren).

DISTRICT COURT
Case No. JV-2025-14
JUN 27 10 07
CYNTHIA FREEMAN
COURT CLERK

NOTICE OF HEARING TO:

ANTHONY PRADO, Natural Father to A.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 Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Tribal Complex in Okmulgee, Oklahoma on August 06, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

YOU ARE HEREBY INFORMED that it is sought by the Muscogee (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 Signature

JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

IN THE MATTER OF
THE GUARDIANSHIP OF:

D.E. AKA D.E. dob 6/9/1999,
An Incapacitated Adult.

FILED
MAY 28 2026
Case No. GD-2026-41
CYNTHIA FREEMAN
COURT CLERK

ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING PETITION
FOR APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL GUARDIAN

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to all persons interested in the person or property of DESAREA EMERSON AKA DESERA EMERSON, that there has been filed in the District Court of the Muscogee Creek Nation a Petition praying for the appointment of GLENDA SUE RILEY as General Guardian of the Person and Estate of DESAREA EMERSON AKA DESERA EMERSON.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that the 11th day of August, 2026, at the hour of 10:00 o'clock A.m., has been designated as the time for hearing said Petition before the Judge of the District Court, Muskogee Creek Nation District Courthouse, 2501 Lvmhvike, Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447, when and where all persons interested in DESAREA EMERSON AKA DESERA EMERSON may appear and contest the same.

Dated this 29 day of May, 2026.

Judge Signature

JUDGE OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Mvskoke Matriarchy Exhibit
Mvskoke Waters Gallery
Curated by Carly Treece and Shelley Patrick
Exhibit runs from Tuesday, April 7 thru Saturday, Aug. 1
500 Riverwalk Terrace, Suite 115, Jenks

Take Out Tuesday
Fife Indian United Methodist Church
Tuesday, June 16, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Home cooked meals start at \$7, all are invited.
For questions, call 918-478-9227

Council House Program Activities
Creek Nation Council House

All activities are from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Wednesday, June 17, Fingerweaving
Thursday, June 18, Stamp-ing Canvas Bags
Friday, June 19, Bone-bead Necklace Making
Tuesday, June 23, Mvskoke Design Earrings
Wednesday, June 24, Inter-active Storytelling
100 W. 6th St., Okmulgee

Elder’s Meeting
Okmulgee Elder Nutrition Center
Wednesday, July 1, 9:30 a.m.
1021 N Seminole Ave, Okmulgee

Coffee and Donuts
Veteran Affairs Services Office
Thursday, July 9, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
1006 Bear Lane, Okmulgee

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, contact 918-549-2800



Caleb Adjip
School: Owasso High School
Bio: Caleb Adjip is a recent 2026 Owasso High School Graduate. He is the grandson of David Dunson. He is a 4.0 student. He is active in the Owasso Young Life organization. He plans to major in Business and is currently on an internship program in Atlanta, Georgia.

Braylen Aikins
School: Jenks High School
Bio: Braylen is the daughter of Brian and Crystal Aikins. Her brothers are Brian and Brandon Aikins. Paternal grandparents are Elizabeth Aikins and the late Abraham "Abe" Aikins. Maternal grandparents are Kathy Guthrie, Robert "Bobby" Wegley and Virginia and the late Ed Wertman. Paternal great-grandparents are the late Ethel and Abraham John Aikins and Leo and Lucille Wallace. Maternal great-grandparents are Cogee Keith-Long, David Long and the late Walter Keith. She is the great-great-granddaughter of the late Principal Chief Claude Cox. Braylen is Nokose Clan. Braylen has been on the Jenks Girls' golf team since the 8th grade. She is a four-year letterman in golf. Braylen competed in many tournaments throughout her high school career and earned several top-10 finishes. Braylen will be attending Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge in the fall and majoring in nursing.



Kalie Amos
School: Lamar University
Bio: Kalie Amos, daughter of Billy and Tina Amos from Oklahoma City, OK, graduated Cum Laude from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. As a student-athlete on a softball scholarship, Kalie earned a Bachelor of Science in University Studies.

Tayshon Brown
School: Lone Star Community College
Bio: Tayshon earned his Associate of Arts (AA) in Criminal Justice from Lone Star Community College and plans to continue earning his Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice or Law in Texas or Arizona.



Laurel Burkholder
School: Northeastern State University
Bio: Laurel Burkholder graduated this month with a Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology, earning a perfect 4.0 GPA and graduating summa cum laude. Throughout graduate school, she remained committed to both academic excellence and serving others through communication sciences and disorders. Her studies focused on helping children and individuals develop the speech, language, and communication skills needed to succeed in school and everyday life. Beginning in August 2026, Laurel will start her career as a speech-language pathologist in a public school setting, where she looks forward to supporting students and making a positive impact in her community. She is honored to celebrate this achievement with her family, friends, mentors, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation community that encouraged and supported her throughout her educational journey. Laurel hopes to continue advocating for students and helping children find confidence through communication as she begins this next chapter in her professional career.

Amaree Chotkey-Hill
School: Glenpool High School
Bio: Amaree is the daughter of Tonia Chotkey and Dwayne Hill Sr. She is the granddaughter of Chester and Kitty Chotkey and the late Donzel and Rebecca Hill. She has participated as a manager for 4 years for softball, basketball, and track. She has taken part in Creek Class and MCN Challenge Bowls.

She also graduated from Tulsa Technology for Nursing Transitions and will take another course for LPN before going to the University of Oklahoma this spring for Registered Nurse. When she is not going to school or work, she enjoys being with friends and family.



Beverly Cohen
School: Wellesley College
Bio: Beverly Cohen, the daughter of Etan Jacob Cohen and Emily Bowen Cohen, graduated from Wellesley College with a degree in Psychology and Religion. She will be attending Harvard Divinity School in the fall. She is the proud granddaughter of the late Dr. Don Bowen and great-granddaughter of Mary Etta Smith.

Dani Cohen
School: Princeton University
Bio: Dani Cohen, the daughter of Etan Jacob Cohen and Emily Bowen Cohen, graduated from Princeton University with a degree in Anthropology. She will be attending Berkeley Law School in the fall and hopes to focus on Tribal law. She is the proud granddaughter of the late Dr. Don Bowen and great-granddaughter of Mary Etta Smith.



Maccabee Cohen
School: Crossroads School
Bio: Maccabee Cohen, the daughter of Etan Jacob Cohen and Emily Bowen Cohen, graduated from Crossroads School in Santa Monica, CA. He will be attending Harvard University in the fall. He is the proud grandson of the late Dr. Don Bowen and great-grandson of Mary Etta Smith.

M. Christian Conant
School: Norman High School
Bio: M. Christian Conant is the son of Michael and Charlotte (Fish) Conant of Norman, Oklahoma. He is the grandson of the late Reverend Charlie Fish and the late Anna Givens Fish Cobble of Wetumka, Oklahoma, and of Star Conant and the late Nancy Conant-Schneider of Norman, Oklahoma. He is of the Fuswvlke Clan. Christian is a graduate of Norman High School and a member of the inaugural class of the Oklahoma Aviation Academy. His honors include the National Honor Society, the Oklahoma Indian Student Honor Society, the Aviation Academy Honors, and the National Society of High School Scholars. He will attend the University of Oklahoma to study engineering or meteorology after taking a gap year.





Callie Coon
School: Okemah High School
Bio: Callie Coon is a proud Mvskoke Creek citizen and is a member of the Bird Clan. Callie is the daughter of Priscilla Fixico and Vincent Coon and the granddaughter of Helen Fixico, Bonita Coon and the late Billy Coon. She is also the great-granddaughter of Marie Berryhill. Callie is a graduate of Okemah High School, where she was valedictorian. Callie participated in basketball, softball, and cross country for four years, and in track for three years. She will be continuing her education and running career at Southern Nazarene University in the fall.

Gala Cooper
School: Columbia University
Bio: Gala Cooper - Columbia University - Bachelor of Science- Civil Engineering through the Muscogee(Creek) Nation Higher Education Program. Winner of the school's Tullio J Borri '51 Award in Civil Engineering.

Next up - One of 65 US college graduates selected for a year-long fellowship with the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) for Young Professionals in Germany, then a one-year Structure Analysis of Monuments and Historical Constructions (SAHC) Master's degree at the Universidade do Minho (Portugal) and Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya – BarcelonaTech (Spain).



Ethan Cox
School: Katy High School
Bio: Muscogee tribal citizen Ethan Cox, of Katy, Texas, graduated from Katy High School on May 18th, 2026. Ethan is the son of Matthew & Wendy Cox, with his Mvskoke inheritance from his paternal grandfather, Dr. Doug Cox, longtime physician and state legislator from Grove, OK. Ethan's academic focus was the AP Computer Science program at Katy High. Ethan received recognition for his dedication to the school band program, playing trumpet for 7 Years.

A proud member of "That Roaring Band from Tiger Land", Ethan was especially fond of marching season and cheering on the nationally recognized Katy Tiger football team. This fall, Ethan will continue his studies at the College of the Muscogee Nation, where he will obtain an Associate in General Studies, before moving on to OSU to complete a Bachelor of Computer Science.

James DeSantis
School: Hilliard Davidson High School
Bio: James is the son of Mardee (Dalton) and Anthony DeSantis. James is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on his maternal side. He is of the Tiger Clan. He is the great-grandson of the late Willie (Bummie) James and Imogene Scuggins James. James is the recipient of the Cathy Tebay Business Award. James will attend Columbus State Community College and then Franklin University to pursue an accounting degree.



Jeanie DeSantis
School: The Wellington School
Bio: Jeanie Janell DeSantis is the daughter of Mardee (Dalton) DeSantis and Anthony DeSantis. Jeanie is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. She is of the Tiger Clan. She is the great-granddaughter of the late Willie (Bummie) James and Imogene Scuggins James. Jeanie is a varsity basketball and varsity soccer MVP, and an MSL scholar-athlete nominee. She is summa cum laude, a Quest Bridge Scholar, Wellington ROAR Award, Wellington George W. Stewart Award for Courage, received the College Board Indigenous Recognition Award, and is a member of the National Honor Society. Jeanie will be attending Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, Terre Haute, IN, to play basketball and major in mechanical engineering.

Lori Dreiling
School: University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
Bio: Dr. Dreiling received her Doctorate of Education in Adult and Lifelong Learning. Dr. Dreiling is the Director of Human Resources at Pittsburg State (KS) University and is a Management professor in the Kelce College of Business. Dr. Dreiling's dissertation looked at the connection between workplace wellness activities and job satisfaction in manufacturing. She and her husband, Duane, reside in Carl Junction, MO, but will be retiring to Lake Eufaula, near Stidham, after she retires from the University in 2027. She is the daughter of Janetia Scott and the late Cherry M. Scott of Stidham, OK.



Julie Estabrook
School: University of Oklahoma
Bio: Julie Kim Estabrook achieved a 4.0 GPA and earned a Master of Arts in Educational Psychology with a Certificate in Neuropsychology for Teaching and Learning. She is the daughter of Kirk and Ada Stevens from Tulsa, and the granddaughter of Della McQueen, Deer clan, who lived in Eufaula, Tulsa, and Okmulgee. She earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Oklahoma and still holds her OU football season tickets, faithfully supporting the Sooners. She currently lives and works in the Dallas-Fort Worth area as a Psychometrist at UT Southwestern Medical Center's Neuropsychology Clinic. Advancing her education in her profession expands her knowledge, supports continued growth in her career, and enhances her ability to provide high-quality patient care.

Savannah Fish
School: Tulsa Community College
Bio: Savannah Cheyenne Fish is from Harrah, Oklahoma, the daughter of Brad and Mindy Fish. Granddaughter Joe Chochie Fish-Creek. Maternal Grandparents Oaks Locust and Juanita Springwater McCarter - Creek/Cherokee.

Savannah plans to further her career as a Dental Hygienist working for Dental Depot in Oklahoma City. Loves in her life are God, her son Ace Lane Fish, and rodeoing as a member of the Indian National Final Rodeo Barrel Racer and Breakaway Roper.



Xavier Francis
School: Yukon High School
Bio: Xavier Francis, born in 2008 to Nathanael D. Francis and Tiffany M. Paddyaker, is the grandson of the late Rev. Dion O. & Augustine A. Francis and Daren T. Paddyaker (Kimberly) & Sheryl L. Piper (Wayne). Xavier honors the teachings passed down through his relatives and community. He also maintains a strong and personal relationship with his Lord and Savior, which guides his daily life. Xavier is a senior at Yukon High School, where he holds a 3.1 GPA and competes as a varsity wrestler in the 215-lb weight class. His dedication on the mat has earned him multiple top-four finishes, including third place at both the COAC Tournament and the OSSAA 6A West Regional, qualifying him for the OSSAA 6A State Championships.

Xavier's family is proud of all his accomplishments and the strong character he continues to show.

Melissa Gibson
School: University of Oklahoma
Bio: Melissa is of the Wind Clan. Daughter of Gino & Shelly Roanhorse and wife of Phillip Gibson. She is a proud member of the Mvscogee Nation, Big Cussetah Methodist Church, and Avbeka Ceremonial Grounds. Melissa graduated from Mvscogee Creek Nation College with an Associate degree and continued with her education to earn her Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in behavioral studies from the University of Oklahoma. Melissa graduated with a 4.0 GPA. She plans to pursue her career in working with Indigenous people and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.



Juanita Gonzalez
School: Northeastern State University
Bio: Juanita Gonzalez is a wife, mother of three, and member of Thlopthlocco Tribal Town. Following a rare brain AVM rupture in May 2022 and a challenging recovery, Juanita witnessed the lack of support and resources available to families. She returned to school with a commitment to improve outcomes and support for brain injury survivors, their loved ones, and Indigenous communities.

Juanita graduated from Northeastern State University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and minors in Chemistry and Forensic Psychology. During her time at NSU, she served as President of the NSU Broken Arrow Psychology Club and is a member of AISES and NSU AIBL. She is also a PCORI Ambassador and 2025–2026 Native Forward Scholarship recipient. Her interests include mental health advocacy and patient-centered research. Through Leadership Tulsa New Voices, she will serve as a board intern with Ability Resources while beginning NSU's Clinical Counseling graduate program this fall.

Logan Gonzalez
School: East Central High School
Bio: Logan has dedicated the last 4 years to JROTC, participating in veteran's parades and flag-raising ceremonies for fallen soldiers. Academically, he excels, earning 4 honor student certificates, and at Whataburger, his 1st job, he has worked for 2 years and earned 2 employees of the month awards. Logan proudly bought his 1st car, a 2022 Dodge Charger. Invited by 10 universities, he will pursue an associate's degree in business management, determined to build a successful future.





Alivia Goodman
School: Southwestern Oklahoma State University.
Bio: Alivia Ann Byrd Goodman graduated from the Southwestern Oklahoma State University's College of Pharmacy on May 1, 2026, receiving a Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree. The convocation and doctoral hooding ceremony took place at the Pioneer Event Center in Weatherford, Oklahoma. During the ceremony, she was recognized for Excellence in Outpatient Pharmacy Practice. Alivia will be beginning a residency at Cherokee Nation W.W. Hastings Hospital in Tahlequah, OK. Dr. Alivia Goodman is a member of the Wind Clan of the Muscogee Creek Nation and the daughter of Anthony and Tracie Byrd of Okmulgee. She is the granddaughter of Melinda Byrd, of Okmulgee, and R. David and Debbie Walker of Okmulgee. Alivia is the wife of Eli Goodman.

Alina Harjo
School: Glenpool High School
Bio: Hesci! Alina Harjo cvhocefkv tos momen vm eliketv. Hotvlkvike tos, my tribal town is Kialegee, and I am a member of the Randall Indian Baptist Church. I'm 18 years old, graduated from Glenpool High School, and while there, I served as NASA (Native American Student Association) president for 2 years. I've competed in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation challenge bowl for all 4 years of High School. I've played soccer for Glenpool for 4 years. I'm an active member of the Mvskoke Nation Youth Council and the Wind Runners. In 2025. I won the Mvskoke Nation Youth Award for "Voices Of Change". I'm also an active member at the Glenpool Mvskoke Community. My mom's name is Annee Harjo, and my grandma's name is Pamela Harjo. My great-grandparents were the late Leonard & Augustine Harjo. In the Fall, I plan to attend the College Of The Muscogee Nation for Native American Studies.



Andres Harjo
School: Eufaula Dormitory
Bio: Andres Harjo is the son of Rachel Huerta. Andres has attended Eufaula High School for his senior year. He is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Andres has participated in cross-country and track. He intends to follow his dream of becoming a soccer player and to attend SWOSU, where he will major in psychology. Andres has enlisted in the National Guard and hopes to have a family of his own in the future.

Jasmine Harjo
School: Okemah High School
Bio: Jasmine Elizabeth Harjo is a proud Mvskoke Creek. She is from the Deer clan and her tribal town is Weogufka. Jasmine is the daughter of Coy and Marcina Harjo. She has 3 brothers, Elijah, Jaden, and Coy Jr. Jasmine is a graduate of Okemah High School. She also attended Wes Watkins and received a 2-year certificate in the multimedia program. She received outstanding completer. Jasmine played 2 years of basketball before getting injured. She played 1 year of softball. She was a part of the Esta Cate club. She will be attending the University of Arkansas in the Fall. Jasmine's major will be political science and minor in legal studies.



Neccettia R. Harjo
School: College of the Muscogee Nation
Bio: Neccettia was born in Ada, Ok to Michael and Sharon Proctor. She is married to Tenetke C. Harjo with 5 children-Tysie, Sadie, Tenetke II, Nokuse, and Opal, and 1 grandson, Hercules. She is a resident of the Mvskoke reservation in Okmulgee, OK. She is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Tvlahasse Wvkokaye Ceremonial Grounds and Vhvlkvike (Sweet Potato) Clan. She has graduated with an Associate's Degree in General Studies, earning PTK honors. She currently works for the Beyond the Reservation Department here at the Muscogee Nation. Her plan is to attend another college to earn her Bachelor's degree in Education.

Joshua Haskew
School: Northeastern State University School of Business
Bio: My name is Joshua Haskew, and I recently graduated from Northeastern State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration with a focus in Project Management. I'm continuing my education by pursuing a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Northeastern State University. My mother is Ginia Haskew, and my brother is Ryan Haskew of Glenpool. My late father was Joe Haskew of Tulsa, and my late grandmother was Virginia Asbury of Eufaula. I cannot begin to thank my family and friends for their support as I continued my educational journey. I currently work in tribal gaming in Tulsa in a Management Position and hope to use what I have learned to assist the team in whatever way I can. I also want to thank the Muscogee (Creek) Nation for its commitment to supporting citizens who want to further their education.



Nyah Heneha
School: Graham-Dustin High School
Bio: Nyah is the daughter of the late Anita Heneha. The granddaughter of Angelita Heneha and Barton Looney. She is the 2026 valedictorian of the Graham-Dustin High School class. She is Eco clan and will be attending OU in the Fall for sonography (baby ultrasound). She is a member of the Thewarle Indian Baptist Church. She's the youngest of three, and we are very proud of you, Nyah!!!!

Jaren Hergert
School: Plainview Public Schools
Bio: Jaren Daniel Hergert is a 2026 graduate of Plainview Public Schools in Plainview, Nebraska. His parents are Danny and Donna (Ybarra) Hergert. His maternal grandparents are Julian and Mary Ybarra of Manhattan, Kansas, and his maternal great-grandparents are the late John and Nancy (Chupco) Frank of Okemah. He is a member of the Tiger Clan, and his tribal town is Tuckabatchee.

Jaren was regularly on the Honor Roll, the bowling team, and participated in band and choir during his high school years. He also took pictures for the yearbook. Jaren attended the Mvskoke Youth Language Camp for four years. He plans to major in Geology at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, South Dakota, in August.



Simeon Hill
School: Eufaula Dormitory
Bio: Simeon Hill is an honorable and proud member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. He has attended the Creek Nation Eufaula Boarding School since the first grade. Simeon is the son of Vanessa Hill and the grandson of Bunny Hill, both of Eufaula. He has participated in Eufaula's football, track, and weightlifting teams. Simeon is a two-time regional weightlifting champion and state qualifier. He was also a member of ENACC, and he is an active member of his ceremonial grounds. Simeon plans to attend Haskell Indian Nations University as a member of the track and field team and will pursue degrees in exercise science and business. In the future, Simeon hopes to open a recreation center where people of all ages can enjoy being active together, just as he did growing up in the dorm and participating in school activities.

Saleema Hinkle
School: J.R. Arnold High School
Bio: J.R. Arnold High School graduate Saleema Hinkle completed her studies with honors, earning a 4.2 GPA and recognition as an AP Scholar. This fall, she will attend Ringling College of Art and Design to pursue a degree in Illustration. Saleema is the daughter of Kaothar El-Far and Lucas Hinkle. Though Saleema was born in Weinheim, Germany, while her parents were stationed there, she's spent most of her life in Northwest Florida. She visits grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins in and around Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, and Lima, Ohio, as often as possible.



Lucas Jennings
School: Okmulgee High School
Bio: Lucas Allen Jennings is a Senior graduating from Okmulgee High School and Green Country Vo-Tech in carpentry. He is a member of the Deer Clan and of the Thlophlocco Tribal Town. He is the son of Virginia Sloan and Chad Jennings. Grandparents Pamela Culey, James and Joyce Jennings. He participated in football, wrestling, and baseball.

Sarah Elizabeth Johnson
School: Bishop Killey High School
Bio: Sarah Elizabeth Johnson, a proud graduate of Bishop Kelley High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, has distinguished herself through both academic dedication and athletic achievement. During her high school years, Sarah excelled in track and field, particularly in shot put and discus, where her hard work, discipline, and competitive spirit earned her recognition and success. She has been a committed student-athlete, balancing classroom demands with the dedication required to compete at a high level. Sarah's perseverance and passion for athletics have opened an exciting new chapter in her life. This fall, she will attend Northwestern Oklahoma State University on a track scholarship, where she plans to continue developing her talents and pursuing her goals. Her family and friends are incredibly proud of all she has accomplished and look forward to seeing the many great things she will achieve in the future as she begins this next journey.





Amanda Jones
School: DeVry University
Bio: Associate in Applied Science with a concentration in Business and Healthcare Administration with honors

I have continued on to pursue my Bachelor's of Science in Business in Technical Management with a concentration in Criminal Justice

Davian Jones
School: Sapulpa High School/Central Tech Sapulpa
Bio: I plan to continue my education at the College of Muscogee Nation in Criminal Justice to pursue a career in Law Enforcement with Muscogee Nation Lighthorse Police as a criminal investigator.



Kunawv Kaulaity
School: Eufaula Dormitory
Bio: Kunawv Kaulaity, a proud citizen of the Comanche Nation and descendant of the Muscogee, Fort Sill Apache, and Kiowa Nations, is a 2026 graduate who has spent 12 years at the Eufaula Dormitory. During her time there, she has been actively involved in the National Honor Society, the Student Council, and ENACC. She has also dedicated four years to band, serving three years on the leadership team, and two years as a member of the cheer team. As a Gates Scholar representing the Class of 2026, Kunawv will attend the University of Oklahoma, where she plans to study human health. She intends to remain involved in her ceremonial practices and continue giving back to her community. In the future, she hopes to pursue occupational therapy and work toward opening OT, PT, and SLP clinics in Native communities to improve access to care across reservations.

Mahiyah Khan
School: College of Muscogee Nation
Bio: Graduated with an Associate's in Natural Resources and a certificate in the Mvskoke Language.

"Don't let what you can not do interfere with what you can do."

May your dreams be bigger than your fears. Your kindness and courage make us proud every single day. We know how hard you worked to get here. Every sacrifice you made, every hard morning, every choice to keep going when it would have been easier to stop. Keep reaching for your dreams.

Congratulations, and we love you, Mama and Baba



Mariam Khan
School: Christopher Newport University
Bio: Graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a certificate in the president's leadership program.

"Take pride in how far you've come and have faith in how far you can go."

To say we are proud of you would be the understatement of the year. Watching you succeed is our greatest accomplishment. The qualities that got you through the hardest parts of this journey are the same ones that will carry you through everything that comes next. Never underestimate them.

Congratulations and love you, Mama and Baba

Timothy Lee Jr.
School: Southwestern Oklahoma State University
Bio: Timothy Ray Lee Jr., from Altus, Oklahoma, has graduated from Southwestern Oklahoma State University with a BS in Computer Science. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from his class. Timothy was awarded the 2026 Distinguished Student Award in Computer Science. He was also awarded the 2026 Everett Dobson College of Business & Technology Outstanding Student for Computer Science. He maintained a 4.0 throughout his entire time at SWOSU. He will be staying in Weatherford and pursuing a career in his field. Timothy is the son of Stephanie and Chris Moore. Grandson of Pauline Lewis and Mike Jefferson.



Kyan Leonard
School: Tri-Village High School
Bio: Kyan Leonard is the son of Ryan and Cheri Leonard of Greenville, OH. The grandson of Steven Powers (Dayton, OH), the late Sherri (Frank) Powers of Dayton, OH. Great-grandson of Sim & Mary Lee of Okemah, OK.

He is a 2026 graduate of Tri-Village High School. He participated in 4 years of concert band, pep band, and marching band, and served as drum major. He was also a band teacher's aide for the past three years. While attending high school, he also participated in college credit classes. 4 years of archery, 2 years of track, and 1 year of power lifting.

Kyan will be attending Wright State University in the fall, where he will major in Music Education.

Ethan Marshall
School: Jenks High School
Bio: Ethan Andrew Marshall graduated from Jenks High School. Ethan is the son of Lucy Marshall, the grandson of Floyd and Diane Marshall, and the great-grandson of the late Martha Watashe and the late Floyd Marshall Sr.

Ethan would like to take a year off from school to join the workforce and, later, pursue welding or a technical school. Ethan enjoys music of all kinds, skateboarding, drawing, video games, and spending time with family & friends.



Alexis McHenry
School: University of Oklahoma
Bio: Alexis McHenry is proud to graduate from the University of Oklahoma (Tulsa campus). She cannot wait to give back to her Mvskoke people; she has learned so much and is very excited to start putting her skills and knowledge to use. She earned her master's degree in Social Work and is continuing her path by working towards becoming an LCSW. She wants to help make a difference in the lives of children and young adults. Specifically working somewhere in the IHS realm, in the future, helping our Native American children and young adults. She wants to be their listening ear and let them know that they don't have to walk this path alone. She wants to empower these youth to make better choices and lead them down the right path.

Claudia McHenry
School: Oklahoma State University
Bio: Claudia Hotlvkve emvliketv momen Tvlmocvse emvtlvwv tos. Helvpe en cuko rakko tos. Arlene Isham momen Joe McHenry eckvlke tos. Christine Wolfe tate momen Billy Wolfe tate ecke fvc-cat eposvlke tos. Jessie Cox tate momen Arthur McHenry erke fvccat eposvlke tos. Oklahoma State University emvhavv cuko svhlvhwecat os momen respoynvks. Master of Public Health vketecnvks. Vketecof, Este Merkatat momen Este Vfasthokekat lopotken kerrvvnks. Respoynof, 3.786 GPA ocet ownvks. MVTO!

Claudia is Wind clan and her tribal town is Tvlmocvse. Helvpe is her ceremonial ground. Arlene Isham and Joe McHenry are her parents. Her maternal grandparents are the late Christine Wolfe and Billy Wolfe. Her paternal grandparents are the late Jessie Cox and Arthur McHenry. She went to college and graduated from Oklahoma State University. She studied for her Master of Public Health. When she studied, she concentrated on Rural and Underserved Populations. She graduated with a 3.786 GPA.



Janaya McIntosh
School: Northeastern State University
Bio: Janaya McIntosh, who is of the Panther Clan and Eufaula-Canadian Tribal Town, recently earned her Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology from Northeastern State University. While at NSU, she was nominated for the Spring 2026 Outstanding Graduate Student Award and received the Project DREAM Scholarship, a federally funded initiative designed to prepare specialized professionals to support children with high-intensity needs in local school districts.

A dedicated community leader and church member at West Eufaula Indian Missionary Baptist Church, Janaya formerly served as the 2024–2025 Miss Muscogee Nation and was recently crowned 2026 Miss Indian Oklahoma. Her platform focuses on empowering Native voices and advancing culturally responsive healthcare practices. Following graduation, she looks forward to serving pediatric populations within her tribal community through her advanced training. She is grateful for the Lord's guidance and the support of her family, friends, and the Muscogee Nation. Mvto!

Jasah McIntosh
School: Ganado High School
Bio: Jasah A. McIntosh of the Panther Clan and the Eufaula Canadian Tribal Town recently graduated from Ganado High School in AZ. She graduated in the Top 10 and was class valedictorian. Jasah also graduated from Northland Pioneer College with her Arizona Curriculum of General Education Associate Degree. She is the FIRST graduate from Ganado High to walk the stage receiving her diploma and college degree! Alongside serving as Ganado's National Honor Society Chapter President, she also participated in Student Council. For all four years of high school, she was the captain of Cross Country, Basketball, and Track & Field. In her senior season, she earned First-Team All-Region and Second-Team All-State. Jasah dedicates her time to inspiring, influencing, and teaching in her community. She is always grateful for the Lord's guidance and grace, for he has engraved a path for her near future. Thank you to family, friends, and community members! Mvto!





Jayce Daniel Miller

School: Oklahoma State University
Bio: As a proud sixth-generation Oklahoman and citizen of the Muscogee Nation, Jayce Miller recently graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in Agriculture after beginning his higher education journey at Murray State College. Throughout his college career, Jayce built strong connections through agriculture, public service, and leadership opportunities while balancing family life with his wife and two-year-old daughter. His experience in municipal government, non-profit leadership, and state government has strengthened his passion for serving rural Oklahoma communities. Looking ahead, Jayce plans to continue his career either in the agriculture industry or in government service, where he hopes to make a positive impact on future generations across Oklahoma.

Dayson Nix

School: Preston High School/Green Country Technology Center
Bio: Dayson West Nix is a 2026 graduate of Preston High School and Green Country Technology Center. Dayson is a member of the National Technical Honor Society. He is the son of Matthew Nix, grandson of Lea Ann Nix, and great-grandson of Senator Robert L. Miller and Lydia Jane Miller.

He plans on pursuing a career in construction.



Cedric Nathaniel Noriega

School: Pima Medical Institute
Bio: Cedric Nathaniel Noriega graduated from the Pima Medical Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with an Associate of Occupational Science Degree in Physical Therapy. His parents are Carmelita and Chris Natseway of Glenpool, Oklahoma. His siblings are Cale and Chance Natseway. His maternal grandparents are the late Manuel Noriega and the late Ramona (Harjo) Noriega. His paternal grandparent is the late Robert (Bill) Jones. Cedric is Mvskoke and Seminole and is of the Deer Clan.

Congratulations Cedric, we are so proud of you! Just know your grandparents are smiling with pride from up above.

Gentry Parker

School: Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts
Bio: Muscogee (Creek) Citizen Gentry Stone Parker joins the class of 2026 as a graduate of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts. He excelled in piano, played varsity basketball and pickleball, served as a Chinese and math tutor, participated in Beta Club, and maintained a 4.0 GPA. He earned a Senior Excellence Award in both Chinese and Mathematics. Gentry is a member of the National Honor Society. This fall, Gentry will continue at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette on an academic scholarship, where he will major in Biology. We celebrate Gentry's academic accomplishments and his commitment to leadership, service, and personal growth. His achievements reflect a legacy of perseverance, education, and community pride. Gentry is the great-great-grandson of Jeanetta Haikey Beaver Bland, great-grandson of Amos and Stella Beaver, grandson of Vance and Barbara Beaver, and the son of John Parker and Haikey Star Beaver.



Mia Powell

School: Broken Arrow High School
Bio: Mia Powell graduated from Broken Arrow High School. During her time at BAPS, she attended Tulsa Tech for Photography, was a member of the Native American Student Association, Mock Trial crew, participant in the MCN Challenge Bow, 2022-2024 Broken Arrow Intertribal Powwow Princess, a member of the Mvskoke Nation Youth Council, 2025 MNYC Member of the Year, a Mvskoke Wind Runner, and former 2025-2026 Jr Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Mia is also a committee member for the National Indian Health Youth Board, representing youth from all over. Mia plans to attend Oklahoma State University this fall, majoring in Sports Media. At OSU, she will intern with Marketing and Fan Engagement, gaining access to sports sidelines. She hopes to use her photography skills and love for sports to pursue her dreams in the NFL or NBA. Mvto!

Preston Powell

School: Okmulgee High School
Bio: Preston has played basketball for 4 years, football for 1 year, and track (discus and shot put) for 3 years. He received the 2026 All-Around Jim Thorpe Award with JOM. He also received a 2026 Team Player award for Basketball.

Preston is the son of Valerie Taryole and Vernon Powell, Sr. of Okmulgee. His maternal grandparents are Kenneth and Darlene (Frank) Taryole. His great-grandparents are the late Van and Sophia (Coon) Taryole of Nuyaka, and the late John and Nancy (Chupco) Frank of Cromwell.

His paternal grandparents are Rick Powell and Pam Johnson. His great-grandparents are the late David Powell and Vena Mae (Sampson) Randall, and the late Lax and Bessie Johnson.

He is of the Tiger Clan. His tribal town is Tukvptce.



Yazmine Faye Reagan

School: Preston High School
Bio: My name is Yazmine Faye Reagan. I am 1/4 Mvskoke and Deer Clan. I am a student at Preston High School. I have been involved in varsity cheer for 4 years and track, which has helped me build discipline and confidence. I am a member of the National Honor Society at Preston and the National Technical Honor Society at Green Country Technology Center. At GTC, I studied cosmetology, which has become a big part of my future goals. This summer, I will earn my cosmetology license and begin the next step in the beauty industry. In my free time, I enjoy going to the movies and swimming with family and friends. After graduation, I plan to work in cosmetology and continue learning in the field. My long-term goal is to open my own salon. I want to create a place where people feel confident and comfortable.

Cael Elyas Rector

School: Liberty High School
Bio: Cael Elyas Rector is a valedictorian graduate from Liberty High School. He is the son of Jesse and Jennifer Rector. He has attended Tulsa Community College concurrently in his junior and senior years and plans to attend Oklahoma State University in the fall to major in Ag Business with a minor in Wildlife Management.

As a lifelong hunter, he hopes not only to own a lot of land someday but also to put his degree to work, focusing on conservation and land management to benefit small communities and tribal lands like the area he's grown up in. His investment in rural regions is meant to inspire others to use resources in ways that allow us all to continue enjoying nature well into the future.



April Rinner

School: Oklahoma City University
Bio: Nearly 20 years ago, I began my journey in nursing, often questioning whether I had chosen the right path while quietly carrying a dream of becoming a teacher. Coming from generations of inspiring educators, that calling never left me. While working in the NICU, I reconnected with a nursing professor who became a mentor and encouraged me not to give up on my dream, even as I balanced life as a wife, mother to four boys, and dedicated nurse. By God's grace, I recently earned my Doctor of Nursing Practice degree in Nursing Education from Oklahoma City University, graduating with the highest GPA in the MSN-DNP program.

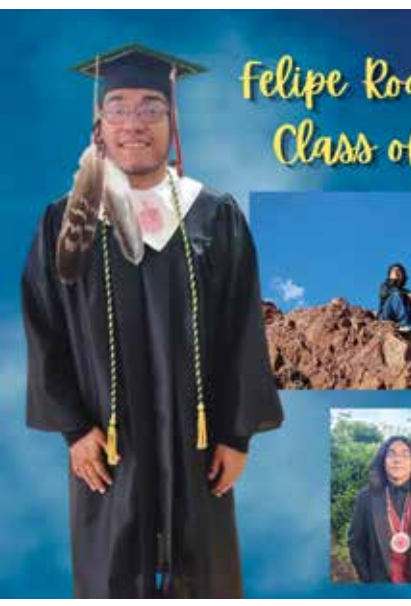
Kind regards and Mvto!

Felipe Rodriguez

School: Skiatook High School
Bio: Felipe Rodriguez is a proud graduate of Skiatook High School and a former member of the Muscogee Nation Youth Council. Throughout high school, he enjoyed playing sports, traveling, spending time with family, and giving back to his tribal community through service and involvement.

Before transferring to Skiatook High School, he played the trombone in the Edison Eagles High School Band, where he developed both musical talent and school spirit. He also dedicated time to learning Mvskoke culture and traditions, building meaningful relationships with many elders in his community.

He looks forward to continuing his journey with the values of leadership, community, and cultural pride guiding his future.



Tabor Runser

School: Drummond High School
Bio: Tabor Runser is a graduating senior at Drummond High School, passionate about academics and athletics. In addition to completing high school coursework, he has taken concurrent college classes at Northern Oklahoma College during his junior and senior years. His goal is to attend Oklahoma State University, majoring in Business with a pre-law focus, and then pursue a law degree at the University of Oklahoma.

Outside of academics, Tabor is an avid sports enthusiast. He enjoys playing baseball and attending sporting events. In his free time, he also enjoys playing golf. Tabor is driven by personal growth and the excitement of new challenges. Whether in the classroom or on the field, he strives to give his best and make the most of every opportunity.

Carter Russell

School: Southern Nazarene University
Bio: Carter Russell graduated from Southern Nazarene University in May 2026 with a Master of Arts in Sports Management and Administration. While at SNU, she served as a Graduate Assistant in Athletic Communications, serving as the primary media contact for seven NCAA Division II athletic programs. In her role, Carter managed game-day media operations, wrote recaps and feature stories, maintained official statistics, supported social media and digital content, assisted with broadcasts and livestreams, and provided photography coverage for athletic events. Prior to SNU, Carter earned her bachelor's degree in Communication from the University of Oklahoma and gained professional experience with the Oklahoma City Baseball Club. Carter hopes to continue building her career in collegiate athletics, ideally at the NCAA Division I level. She is especially thankful for the support of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, whose encouragement and assistance helped make her educational journey and achievements possible.





Leila Russell
School: Eufaula Dormitory
Bio: My name is Leila Russell. I am a proud member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe. It has been an honor to stay at the Eufaula Dormitory. I've been going here for 4 years, and I've had an amazing time and met so many cool, interesting people. The dormitory has helped me out so much by always being there for me whenever I needed them. I love how they always teach us Creek and encourage us to keep our culture. After I graduate, I plan to attend college and work as a cosmetologist and a real estate agent. One day, I plan to travel the world and learn all sorts of languages.

NaTalia Sewell
School: Missouri Southern State University
Bio: My name is NaTalia Makiya Sewell. I graduated from Missouri Southern State University with my Bachelor's Degree in Exercise Science. I'm grateful to be a part of Creek Nation Higher Education Program! I will be continuing my athletic and educational pursuits at Midwestern State University, working to get my Master's in Exercise Physiology this coming August!



Bryndon Smith
School: Harrah High School
Bio: Bryndon has played team sports all his life: basketball, football, soccer, and he will be continuing his talent into the college level by signing a scholarship with the Southern Nazarene University in OKC on their bowling team. He will study for a degree in sports Management. Bryndon is a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation and a descendant of the Southern Cheyenne Tribe of Oklahoma and the Seminole Nation. Parents are Desiree Smith and the Late Brandon Lena; Grandparents are the Late Dinka Lena and Marsha Nibs-Lena; and Jerri and Larry Smith.

Magdalyn Rayne Smith
School: Spring Mills High School
Bio: Magdalyn Rayne Smith graduated summa cum laude from Spring Mills High School in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Maggie is the daughter of Kelly Jo Seaton; the granddaughter of Redonna and the late Larry Seaton of Paden; and the sister of Kalyska and Willow Smith and Laramie and Collin Leedy. She is Hotlvkve, and her tribal town is Hitchite. Maggie is the great-great-granddaughter of original enrollees Ollie (Grayson) Moody and Rockey Cochran, and is also of Cherokee descent. A member of the Honor Society, Maggie has been active in Air Force ROTC, demonstrating leadership while marching alongside fellow cadets, loudly and proudly calling cadence in various events. She has also been recognized by the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for academic excellence, dependability, character, and leadership. Maggie will attend Tarleton State University in Texas to pursue a bachelor's degree in social work, followed by her master's.



Jeremy Tecumseh
School: Northeastern State University
Bio: Jeremy Tecumseh is a Mvskoke Creek citizen who was raised in the Wilson-Henryetta area. He recently graduated from Northeastern State University with his Bachelor's in Health and Human Performance- Recreation/Fitness. Jeremy also likes to give back to his community by coaching young athletes in multiple sports, including wrestling, baseball, and football. He has had to overcome many obstacles along his journey to his degree, such as alcohol and drug addiction, but has persevered and accomplished his goal. Mr. Tecumseh continues to share his knowledge and testimony with those around him whenever he gets the chance. He plans to continue his education to earn his Master's. Jeremy hopes to share his knowledge and experience with the Mvskoke tribe and teach about the importance of health and the different ways it can affect you.

Zechariah Louis Tecumseh
School: Wilson High School
Bio: Zechariah is the son of Samantha and Garrett Sands. He participated in Baseball, Basketball, Cross Country, Football, Track, and Wrestling, and was a member of the National Honor Society. He is also active in his church, Little Cussetah United Methodist Church. This fall, he plans to attend NEO to wrestle and pursue an Associate's degree in Criminal Justice.



Gabrielle Tholstrup
School: Haskell Indian Nations University
Bio: Gabrielle is of the Nokose Clan and Cheyaha Tribal Town. She is the daughter of Becky and Greg Tholstrup, the granddaughter of the late Bob and Helena (Chalakee) Allen, and the great-granddaughter of Peggy and Reuben Chalakee. Gabrielle previously earned her Associate of Science in Business Administration from Butler County Community College of Andover, KS. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Certificate in Records and Information Management from Haskell Indian Nations University of Lawrence, KS. While attending HINU, she served as the Junior and Senior Representative for the Student Government Association. She intends to pursue a career in government, with a particular focus on records management, and she plans to continue her education by earning an MBA.

Jeremy Thomas Jr.
School: Henryetta High School
Bio: Son of Kayla Hurn & Jeremy Thomas Sr., Grandson of Leticia & The Late Raymond Hurn, Late Dennis Kennerson & Late Barbara Thomas. Jeremy Dennis Thomas Jr. attended Henryetta High School with plans to go to a Trade school for HVAC. Jeremy is a proud Mvskoke Nation Citizen.



Mekko Tyner
School: Kiefer High School
Bio: Mekko Tyner is a Valedictorian for the 2026 Kiefer High School senior class. He attends Central Technology Center in Drumright, studying Pre-Engineering (Honors). Mekko is concurrently enrolled at Tulsa Community College and the College of the Muscogee Nation. He is a three-year member of the National Honor Society, National Technical Honor Society, and the Oklahoma Indian Student Honor Society. Mekko plays the trombone in the Kiefer Trojan Marching Band and Jazz Band. He was selected All-State from the OSSBDA in 2026. Mekko is a five-year member of the MEOBDA Honor Band. In 2026, he earned a superior rating from the OSSAA State Solo Contest. Mekko is a member of the Academic Team and was selected All-Conference. His Ceremonial Ground is Tlvhasse Wwkokayeln. He is the son of Dawn and Mekko Jamison Tyner. the fall, Mekko will attend the University of Michigan and major in Electrical Engineering.

Christian Ugalde
School: Nimitz High School
Bio: Christian Ugalde, Tiger Clan, will graduate from Nimitz High School in Irving, Texas, on May 30, 2026. Following graduation, he will attend Ecclesia College in Springdale, Arkansas, where he will continue both his education and baseball career.

Christian is the proud grandson of Rev. July Tecumseh & great-grandson of the late Isreal Tecumseh and Wisey Scott-Tecumseh. His hard work, dedication, and commitment have brought him to this exciting milestone, and his family celebrates his achievements as he begins this new chapter of his life.



Denise Varner
School: Saybrook University
Bio: Denise Varner, a citizen of the Muscogee Nation, received her Master of Science in Integrative Medicine and Mind Body Health from Saybrook University in January 2026. Her undergraduate degree is a BS in Nursing from California Polytechnic University, Humboldt. As a nurse generalist trained to work in rural Public Health, she served California reservation communities as a primary ambulatory care nurse and disease prevention health educator. Administrative roles include board positions for urban medically underserved Indians and all underserved populations, including a directorship of the San Diego American Indian Health Center. Inspiration for her career decisions came from her traditional healer grandfather, Amos Yargee, working with plant and root medicines to heal common ailments and use energy healing modalities and aromatherapies in her nursing care for those who are intolerant of pharmaceuticals. She is a coauthor of the women's anthology Cinderella Monologues: True Stories of Overcoming Adversity.

Boston Villar
School: Ponca City High School
Bio: Boston Tyler Villar graduated from Ponca City High School on May 22, 2026. While going to school, Boston also attended Pioneer Technology Center during his senior year. He was involved in Business Professionals of America (BPA), was on the E-Sports team, and was a student ambassador. He also made the director's honor roll. He has been taking classes in visual communication and plans to continue in the fall. Boston is the son of Lydia and Greg Villar of Ponca City, Ok. His family is incredibly proud of him and all his achievements and looks forward to seeing what the next chapter brings.





Jasmine Washington

School: Okmulgee High School
Bio: Jasmine Keva Washington graduated from the Okmulgee High School class of 2026. I plan to attend the College of the Muscogee Nation this fall. I will be taking general studies until I decide on a major. I am Mvskoke Creek, Cherokee, and Lakota. My parents are Brenda Good Voice-Washington and David Washington.

Faith Nicole Watkins

School: Hanna High School
Bio: Faith Watkins is the daughter of Dale, Deborah, and the late Joy Watkins, and the granddaughter of Dale and Eva Watkins of Hanna, and the late Marlene Bennet and James Goble. Faith graduated as the valedictorian of Hanna High School and was a part of the National Honor Society. She took online AP classes through the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics and concurrent courses through OSUIT. Faith participated in basketball and track and served as an editor on her school's yearbook and newspaper. Faith plans to attend the College of the Muscogee Nation and then transfer to OSU to earn a degree to become a financial analyst.



Enoch Jonas Wiley

School: Chelsea High School
Bio: Enoch Jonas Wiley, son of Shevonne Wiley, graduated from Chelsea High School on the 23rd of May.

Kell Wiley

School: Ponca City Senior High School
Bio: Kell Eli Wiley, son of Fell and Sabrina Wiley, graduated from Ponca City Senior High School and completed a basic Firefighter/ EMT course concurrently at Pioneer Technology Center on May 22, 2026. During high school, Kell played Varsity baseball and was chosen to participate in the NWOBCA All-Star game at NWOSU campus in Alva, OK.





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