



# MVSKOKE NEWS

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## NATIVE AMERICANS TARGETED IN DRUG REHAB FRAUDS

TRIBAL CITIZENS WERE TRAFFICKED TO CALIFORNIA AS PART OF AN ONGOING HEALTH INSURANCE BILLING FRAUD

BY JERRAD MOORE

LOS ANGELES – Insurance company Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma was awarded a consent judgment of \$7.5 million on June 16. The judgment is the result of a civil case in the United States District Court in the Central District of California, Southern Division, filed on April 10, 2024, against Asana Recovery Inc., Beachfront Sober Living Inc., Asana Buy Sell Inc., and other defendants.

In the complaint, BCBSOK alleged that Asana Recovery Inc. recruited a Native American citizen and former patient as a “body broker.” This individual, identified in the complaint as KB, was paid kickbacks to locate potential patients for Asana.

In June 2023, KB contacted another member of the same tribe via social media who resided in Oklahoma and was suffering from substance use disorder.

After convincing the tribal member to enroll in Asana for treatment, the victim was flown to California at no charge. Upon arrival at the Asana facilities, the complaint alleges that the victim was stripped by Asana employees, who took the victim’s cell phone and personal belongings. The victim had originally agreed to stay at the facility for 30 days, but was then required to sign a 90-day agreement with Asana.

The complaint alleges that during the stay at the facility, the victim received substandard treatment. When they tried to leave, Asana would not return their clothes, personal belongings, or cellphone. Asana then forbade the victim from leaving.

Some time later, when the Asana staff were occupied, the victim was able to escape the facility. The victim found a person on the street nearby and used their cellphone to call for help.

The victim’s health benefits plan was issued by BCBSOK, which alleges that Asana billed the insurer thousands of dollars for fraudulent treatment. This instance is just an example of the broader insurance fraud scheme outlined in BCBSOK’s complaint.

According to BCBSOK:

To start the scheme, Asana had to find and induce patients into treatment. To do this, Asana paid kickbacks to body brokers to find and ship BCBSOK members from Oklahoma to California for “treatment,” paid active patients for phone numbers and “leads” for potential patients who might be in need of treatment, targeted potential patients with false sales pitches, and paid patients to provide “positive” online reviews in an effort to cover-up the deluge of negative reviews



Asana Recovery Inc. Fountain Valley, California location (Asana Recovery online promotional images.)

that were flooding online resources for those seeking SUD treatment.

Once enrolled, Asana provided minimal or non-existent treatment. Oftentimes, treatment was overseen by other patients and/or individuals who were not licensed or qualified.

Like (the victim), many patients desired to leave when they realized treatment was not forthcoming. Because this would thwart the ability to bill insurance, Asana went to appalling lengths to stop patient departures, such as: cutting off phone access, refusing to return patient belongings, and - worst of all - refusing to provide

patients their needed medications.

For other patients, Asana induced them to stay through “employment,” during which Asana often continued to bill for insurance, thereby obtaining free labor through insurance payments.

Once a patient completed detox treatment, Asana in conjunction with Beachfront and Asana Buy Sell provided free housing to induce patients to receive their “outpatient” treatments with Asana so insurance payments could continue to come in. The defendants here are the entities and individuals who spearheaded this scheme. For them, SUD treatment was just a cover

for their ultimate prize: money. And they got a lot of it: over \$10 million in ill-gotten gains from BCBSOK alone.

The \$7.5 million judgment entered in the case is a consent judgment- the judge issued the order with the consent of all parties.

Using Asana social media posts from June 2023, Mvskoke Media identified KB as Kimberly Brave. On a June 12, 2023 Facebook post, Brave posted her Asana Recovery business card along with a solicitation for “family and friends” struggling with addiction to join the California program.

Brave is currently the

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## LIGHTS, CAMERA, CLASSROOM!

THOMAS BERRYHILL SHARES HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ACTING AND FILMMAKING WITH STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION

BY BRADEN HARPER

OKMULGEE – Mvskoke citizen Thomas Berryhill has been busy in the local Oklahoma film scene. He has worked on background roles in local film productions, including “Fancy Dance” and “Twisters.” His television credits include Sterlin Harjo’s “Reservation Dogs” and “The Lowdown.” Building on his industry knowledge, Berryhill earned his program completion certification from the Cherokee Film Institute.

Berryhill took classes in all stages of filmmaking, including the creative and financial sides of the industry. The institute offers scholarships and discounted rates to Cherokee Nation citizens and citizens of federally recognized Tribes. Berryhill received a scholarship for two of his courses. For those curious about the program, he encourages them to apply, regardless of how much they know about film.

“It’s built for students to

get into the industry, it’s for anyone that has interest in it,” Berryhill said. “You don’t really have to have any kind of prior experience, just willingness and knowledge to go up there and take these courses.”

Berryhill currently serves as a recruiter for the College of the Muscogee Nation. Although he is no longer a college student, Berryhill continues to pursue learning new topics. He has taken classes at the Actor Factory and Cody Mayo Studios, both Oklahoma-based centers that train actors seeking careers in the film industry.

The movie that inspired Berryhill to become a filmmaker is the 1996 live-action/animated feature “Space Jam,” starring Michael Jordan. He remarked that he is excited to see new features and shows like “Gangland” and season two of “The Lowdown.”

With each new lesson in filmmaking, Berryhill becomes even more driven to pass on what he’s learned.

“I want to be a vessel of knowledge so I can help pass it on and hopefully no one has to pay these expenses,” Berryhill said. “At least see there’s a pathway to go and how I can help them follow that pathway.”

Berryhill said CMN now offers courses that teach the fundamentals of storyboarding, cameras, and improv.

Commenting on his immediate personal plans, Berryhill said he has short film scripts ready to shoot; he just needs to build a film crew and acquire the additional film equipment necessary. Berryhill also established an improv team at Cody Mayo Studios. The team will perform dinner theater at a new location, to be announced soon.

Those interested in applying to the Cherokee Film Institute can visit the website at [cherokeefilmstudio.com](http://cherokeefilmstudio.com). Courses are offered at the Owasso Tulsa Tech campus and at Cherokee Film Studios, 16990 E. 116th St. N.



Thomas Berryhill sets up his Sony FX30 for shooting. (Braden Harper/MM)



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Program Manager for Osage Nation Family Violence Prevention. Mvskoke Media contacted Brave with questions about her knowledge of the alleged fraud and recruitment tactics, but has not received a response as of publication.

Mvskoke Media also contacted Asana Recovery Inc. but did not receive a response. Asana Recovery Inc. is still in operation.

Mvskoke Media has not found any criminal charges filed in relation to the fraud allegations.

On Jan 1, 2025, BCBSOK discontinued access to non-urgent, non-emergent out-of-state care for members of Blue Advantage PPO and Blue Preferred PPO, except for care in counties in Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri that border Oklahoma. However, members can obtain a waiver for out-of-state care, provided the care is not available in Oklahoma. Members must also receive the waiver before the care is administered for it to be covered.

The BCBSOK case is an example of an ongoing problem in Indian Country. One month prior to the events alleged in the BCBSOK complaint, the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General issued a consumer alert about fraud schemes targeting vulnerable Native Americans in relation to behavioral health outpatient treatment centers.

*“What we are witnessing in Los Angeles and Orange County is nothing short of a trafficking crisis targeting our people, and Muscogee (Creek) Nation citizens are among those being directly victimized.”*

*- Hope Craig-Corlew*

**A Mvskoke Voice**

Mvskoke citizen Hope Craig-Corlew is the Board Chairwoman and President of United American Indian Involvement, Inc., a human services organization serving urban Native Americans in Los Angeles. In her role at UAII, Craig-Corlew shapes policies that affect Urban Native people and works in an advocacy role.

Craig-Corlew and the UAII have seen firsthand how victims of these frauds are left unhoused with little to no financial resources. “Our organization has been forced to repeatedly step in to provide emergency shelter and fund reunification efforts, transporting people back to

their reservations or states of origin, using local housing budgets intended to serve our permanent Los Angeles Native community,” Craig-Corlew wrote in an email to Mvskoke Media.

“We have seen this happen during the holidays. We have seen it happen to couples. We have seen it happen to people who had no idea they were part of a fraud scheme until they had nothing left.”

According to Craig-Corlew, UAII has conducted an investigation into these frauds. As in the BCBSOK complaint, victims often have kinship or community ties to the body brokers. “Recruiters, often members of our own community, themselves victims who are being exploited and presented with these roles as career opportunities, are using social media platforms and word of mouth to lure Native American tribal members from states including

Oklahoma and Arizona to Southern California,” Craig-Corlew detailed.

“They are promised free luxury addiction treatment. What they receive instead is placement into often unlicensed sober living homes and fraudulent ‘treatment facilities’ that exist for one purpose: to drain their insurance benefits, including Medicaid, through systematic billing fraud.”

The UAII identified over 30 rehabilitation facilities that appear to have been created to exploit this type of fraud. The results of the investigation were submitted to the FBI. UAII also contacted the California Department of Justice and continues to document individual cases and data on the ongoing multi-state fraudulent billing scheme.

To further raise awareness of the issue, UAII has met with the California Department of Social Services and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill.

According to Craig-Corlew, there has been little response. “In my view, the response from local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement has been minimal, that’s precisely why we’re raising public awareness. We’re being targeted, and it feels like no one is taking

it seriously,” Craig-Corlew wrote.

“What we are witnessing in the body brokering of our relatives and the abandonment of our children amounts to a modern form of self-termination and erasure, a crisis that demands the Nation’s immediate and unequivocal attention.”

There are common tactics to the scams to be aware of. Craig-Corlew shared, “If someone contacts a Muscogee Nation citizen, through Facebook, through word of mouth, through any channel, offering free luxury addiction treatment in California, that is a red flag. The brokers are not strangers. They are often known to the community. They are our people, being used against our people. That is what makes this crisis so devastating and so urgent.”

Craig-Corlew stated that UAII has not received a formal response from the California DOJ or the MCN Attorney General’s office.

Mvskoke Media contacted the MCN Executive Branch, but Chief Hill declined to issue a statement at this time.

For anyone with information about the fraud schemes, contact the DHS Office of the Inspector General tip hotline at 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477).

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor: Wildlife Deserves Our Respect

As a citizen and someone who attended this year’s Muscogee Nation Festival, I left with mixed emotions after watching the alligator wrestling demonstration.

Like many others, I appreciate opportunities to learn about wildlife and understand that these demonstrations have long been part of festivals across the South. However, I believe it is appropriate to ask whether our entertainment should ever come at the expense of an animal’s welfare.

Throughout the event, the alligator’s mouth was taped shut while children and adults were encouraged to sit on, hold, and pose with the animal for photographs. From my observations, the animal’s eyes were also covered, and between demonstrations it appeared to be confined inside a culvert with a solid lid that was drilled shut during a day when temperatures reached the upper 90s and the heat index climbed even higher. Those observations raised serious concerns for me about the animal’s comfort, stress, ventilation, and overall welfare.

I recognize there may be explanations for some of these practices. Covering an alligator’s eyes may be intended to reduce stress, and securing the mouth is commonly done to protect handlers’ safety. However, these practices should not prevent us from asking important questions about whether the animal’s physical and behavioral needs were fully considered.

As a community that values stewardship of the natural world, I believe we should expect transparency regarding animals used in public exhibitions. Were licensed veterinarians involved? How long was the alligator restrained? What standards governed its housing, temperature management, hydration, and rest periods? Was the enclosure designed to provide adequate ventilation during extreme summer heat?

These questions are not intended to attack the Festival, its organizers, or the handlers. Rather, they reflect a desire to ensure that wildlife is treated humanely while also protecting public safety. Education about native wildlife can be meaningful without placing unnecessary stress on the animals themselves.

The Muscogee Nation has a deep cultural connection to the land and the creatures that share it. That connection calls us to be thoughtful stewards and to continually evaluate whether our traditions and public events reflect the respect we have for all living beings.

I hope this letter encourages a constructive conversation about animal welfare, transparency, and how we can continue celebrating our culture while ensuring that every animal involved is treated with dignity and compassion.

Respectfully,  
Chloe Harjo

RECLAIMING STORIES THROUGH ART

SOUTHEASTERN NATIVE ARTISTS SHARE THEIR VOICES, TRADITIONS, AND CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND IN AN EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM BROKEN ARROW

by KATY LEARD

BROKEN ARROW – Preservation of history has long since been the purpose of museums, but at The Museum Broken Arrow, one exhibition is giving Native artists the opportunity to tell their own stories.

Reclaiming Turtle Island: Native Resistance and Resilience, on display through Aug. 1, features works by members of the Southeastern Indian Artists Association exploring Indigenous resilience and cultural continuity.

The Museum Broken Arrow intentionally hosts at least one Native-focused exhibition each year as part of its commitment to honoring the region’s history and cultures. Located on Muscogee land, the museum partnered with SIAA to create a space where Indigenous artists can share their own stories and perspectives through contemporary art.

For museum Executive Director Mickel Yantz, the exhibition reflects the broader role museums play in the preservation and sharing of Indigenous stories, providing a platform for communities to share their own perspectives and experiences.

“Museums are about storytelling, and this artwork is, obviously, about so much storytelling,” Yantz said.



“Where the Green Moss Grows” by Carly Treece (Image: SIAA)

Creating that space has become a priority for the museum. Yantz said Native artists, like many artists, often have limited opportunities to showcase their work, making exhibitions like Reclaiming Turtle Island especially meaningful.

“There’s just not enough space, I think, for artists in general, let alone Native artists,” Yantz said. “For us to be able to open this up, it gives artists - both older artists and

newer artists - that avenue to express themselves, to share their stories.”

That opportunity represents more to the featured artists than just having their work displayed in a gallery. It creates a space between Native artists and the community where perspectives, histories, and connections to the land can be shared directly.

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# MATRIARCHAL LEGACY FEATURED AT MVSKOKE WATERS GALLERY

THE "MVSKOKE MATRIARCHY: WOMEN OF OUR NATION" EXHIBIT PAINTS A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PORTRAIT OF THE TRIBE'S MATRILINEAL HERITAGE

by BRADEN HARPER

JENKS – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s longstanding matrilineal heritage and culture is available to view at the Mvskoke Waters Gallery. The exhibit “Mvskoke Matriarchy: Women of Our Nation” opened on Tuesday, April 7, and runs until Saturday, Aug. 1. It features work by 25 artists across different disciplines.

“Mvskoke Matriarchy” marks the gallery’s second exhibit and features 30 works. Its first and inaugural exhibit was “Mvskokvke: Road of Strength”, which reflected the Tribe’s history, culture, and sovereignty. The facility is still relatively new, opening in December of 2025. It is the first Tribally-owned art gallery in the Tulsa area.

The exhibit is co-curated by Mvskoke Waters Gallery Tech Shelley Patrick (Mvskoke) and artist Carley Treece (Mvskoke/

Tsalagi). Artists featured in the exhibit include Andrea Day, Leslie Deer, Phyllis Fife, Bette “Jody” Foshee, Joy Harjo, Faith Harjo-Jones, Breanna Hill, Brittany Hill, Robin Fife Jenkins, Amanda Rutland, Melinda Schwakhofer, and Okcate Smith McCommas.

Artwork came from on and off the Mvskoke Reservation, including one from Exeter, England. The exhibit features paintings, prints, baby moccasins, dresses, quilts, and jewelry.

An Este Cate Hokte Suletawv (Mvskoke Women’s Honor Guard) uniform is on display in the center of the exhibit, recognizing Mvskoke women who have served in the armed forces.

To co-curate the gallery is a dream come true for Patrick. She is currently pursuing her master’s degree in arts administration. Her contribution to the exhibit is a modern, non-

form-fitting sundress.

According to Patrick, visitors have connected with the exhibit on some level.

“Everyone who comes in, regardless of whether or not they are Muscogee or just a member of the community or somebody visiting from out of state or out of country, they all find some rapport with this artwork, with the meanings of it, the themes,” Patrick said.

“They all have something to say. Especially those in our community that have grown up around, either in Muscogee Nation or around Muscogee Nation.”

One corner of the exhibit features a kitchen with items commonly found in homes, on the grounds, and in churches. It features kitchenware, including a pounding stone for corn, a sofkee spoon, and a dipper from Thlewarle Indian Baptist Church. A recipe book from the 1970s includes tradi-

tional recipes for wild onions and blue dumplings.

One of the exhibit’s largest pieces is a map designed by Mary Edwards Smith. She was well-known for revitalizing the Creek Double False Braid rim, a method unique to traditional Creek basketry.

Patrick has personal connections to many of the works on display. Four of her aunts, her mother, and her grandmother all contributed artwork. An image of her great-grandmother is also included.

Patrick said each artist was chosen based on how the Nation’s history and culture influenced their works.

One of the oldest pieces in the exhibit is a swing jacket made by Patrick’s grandmother, Carmen Griffen Fife. Next to the jacket is a case full of wooden buckles and hand-carved buttons. Fife passed when Patrick was still young

but left a major impact on the gallery tech.

“It’s special to share our legacy, to share everyone’s legacy, to share the importance of the matriarchs in our lives. It’s something we talk about all the time, all of us. It’s the importance of the people in our Nation and to ourselves and to each other, and especially the women because we are a matrilineal society, our clan system, descended from our mother’s bloodlines,” Patrick said.

After “Mvskoke Matriarchy” concludes its run at the gallery, Patrick said an exhibit featuring Mvskoke men co-curated by Randy Kemp and Johnnie Diacon will be on display in August. A date and title for that exhibit will be announced soon.

Mvskoke Waters Gallery in the Jenks Riverwalk is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Shelley Patrick holds a newspaper clipping featuring her grandmother, Carmen Griffen Fife. (Braden Harper/MM)



(Braden Harper/MM)

## HICKORY GROUND ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE AT THE SANTA FE INDIAN MARKET

MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION CO-SPONSORS "SACRED SITES PROTECTION: THEN AND NOW", A PANEL ON THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND SACRED PLACES

by BRADEN HARPER

SANTA FE – Justice for Hickory Ground continues its campaign to bring awareness to desecrated sacred sites at this year’s 104th annual Santa Fe Indian Market. In a press release, the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts announced that a “Sacred Sites Protection: Then and Now” panel will be co-sponsored by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and will run on Friday, Aug. 14, from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. (MDT).

The panel will feature ground leaders from Oce Vpofv, the Justice for Hickory Ground movement, and the MCN. The panel continues the efforts to protect the Muscogee (Creek) Burial site and the ongoing fight to return ancestral remains to their rightful resting place. Accord-

ing to MCN Principal Chief David Hill, supporting the fight for sacred sites is important to the Nation.

“Native artists have always been essential to carrying forward our cultures, our histories, and our identities,” Principal Chief Hill explained. “But the sacred places, lands, and traditions that inspire them are increasingly under threat. That is why the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is honored to support Native artists through SWAIA and the Santa Fe Indian Market and to help draw attention to the threats facing sacred places across Indian Country and the urgent need to protect them.”

MCN Secretary of Culture and Humanities RaeLynn Butler, Mvskoke filmmaker Sterlin Harjo, and actor Dallas Goldtooth (Mdewakanton Dakota/Diné) are slated



(Courtesy: Southwestern Association for Indian Arts)

speakers on the panel. Items on the panel’s agenda include sacred places, cultural survival, and “the role of storytelling and art in protecting what matters most.”

Following the panel, a ticketed event, “Sacred Places 2026: A Night of Music, Storytelling, and Art,” celebrates the power of Indigenous artists who protect culture, preserve memory, and inspire action. Hosted by Artists for Hickory Ground, it features well-known Indigenous artists and actors, including Zahn McClarnon (Hunk-

papa Lakota), Gary Farmer (Cayuga), and Joy Harjo (Mvskoke).

SWAIA Executive Director Jamie Schulze (Northern Cheyenne/Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) explained that this year’s market will greatly benefit from the support it has received from MCN and fellow sponsors.

“Indian Market is the place where Indian Country comes together every August,” Schulze said. “When Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, Chick-

asaw Nation, and Cherokee Film all invest in the market in the same year, it underscores that Santa Fe Indian Market has become a national convening point for Native art, storytelling, and policy dialogue. We are grateful to our tribal sponsors from across Indian Country who partner with SWAIA’s mission to bring Native arts to the world.”

Supporters can keep up to date on the Justice for Hickory Ground movement on its Facebook page, Justice for Hickory Ground.





(Braden Harper/MM)

# EXPERTS SEED ACTION AND HOPE

## CONSERVATIONISTS, POLLINATOR EXPERTS, AND TRIBAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS ON MANAGING ECOSYSTEMS, PRESERVING POLLINATORS, AND PROTECTING LAND SOVEREIGNTY AT THE 2026 TRIBAL ALLIANCE FOR POLLINATORS CONFERENCE

BY BRADEN HARPER

*This story is our third in a series by the Mvskoke News team focusing on climate solutions on the Mvskoke Reservation. This year, Mvskoke Media has been part of the Climate Beacon Newsroom Initiative, a collaboration between the Indigenous Journalists Association and the Solutions Journalism Network. Solutions journalism rigorously examines evidence-based individual, group, and community responses to social problems. The initiative supported our newsroom’s skills development in story production, specifically stories focused on responses to climate and environmental challenges.*

BIXBY – On a quiet, serene, family allotment outside of Bixby on the Mvskoke Reservation sits the Euchee Butterfly Farm, a haven for many unique airborne pollinator species. The farm annually hosts the Tribal Alliance for Pollinators Conference, a two-day event featuring speakers on habitat restoration and conservation advocacy. The farm is owned by Director Jane Breckinridge (Euchee/Mvskoke), a pollinator conservationist who monitors the challenges these populations face in the wild.

Step inside the farm’s indoor aviary and you will find it to be the residence of many different airborne pollinator species, including Blue Morphos, Caligo, and Paper Kites. Their home is outfitted with everything the pollinators need to thrive: a running water pipe system, climate-controlled temperatures, and plenty of rotting fruit to consume.

Outside the aviary, the farm encompasses 14 acres of true original native prairie remnant- it’s never been plowed. According to Breckenridge, there are over 400 plant species and many animal species. The farm also has documentation on several species not found anywhere else in Oklahoma.

Pollinators living outside the farm are not so lucky. So far in the 21st Century, pollinators have undergone significant change. Shrinking habitats, invasive plant species, and pesticides have all contributed to significant population decline. The National Library of Medicine reports that over one-fifth of native North American pollinators are at elevated risk of extinction.

The goal of the Tribal Alliance for Pollinators Conference is to inspire and uplift participants while informing them on the steps they can take to protect pollinator populations. Breckinridge’s solution is education about actions like growing milkweed, delayed mowing, and avoiding pesticides.

“What we do at these conferences and with the lineup of speakers that we have is not only give people a context of why it is important to do this for our lands, and for ourselves, but it also gives practical advice on ‘how do we do this?’” Breckinridge said.

“We try to do a balance of that, to lift people up who feel discouraged about it, give a cultural context,

and give practical advice on how to restore the lands, how do we help the butterflies, how do we help these pollinators in decline.”

This marks the 11th year for the conference. A total of 150 were registered to attend, with 20 different Tribes represented. Breckinridge said registrants came from as far away as Arizona, California, Nebraska, and New Mexico, illustrating that pollinator population decline is not an issue exclusive to the Mvskoke Reservation or the state of Oklahoma.

This year’s conference featured a lineup including monarch butterfly expert, Dr. Orley “Chip” Taylor; wild bee expert, Dr. James Hung; and MCN Office of Environmental Services Director James Williams. While speakers presented research on the current state of the environment, they also included ways to preserve and restore it.

Although conferences can attract large audiences and serve as a conduit for invaluable information, Breckinridge warned that the environment is every community member’s responsibility, not just select individuals. Education must be disseminated among the entire population, not merely a portion.

“This is something we’re all invested in, not just citizens of the Mvskoke Nation Reservation, not just as Indigenous people, but as humans on this planet,” Breckinridge said. “It’s time that we step in. Our non-human relatives are starving to death because we’ve lost so much habitat. If we all want to keep this big, beautiful planet the way we like it, we must do something about it.”

Breckinridge has personally noticed changes in the environment, such as fewer fireflies during warmer seasons.

What they would expect to see is some ups and downs in the amount of pollinators, but what they’re seeing is that the amount is practically in freefall.

“You normally see sort of variations in pollinator populations, and that’s to be expected, but this decline has been pretty consistent over probably the last 5 to 10 years, significantly, and the populations are not recovering,” Breckinridge says.

Breckinridge also notes that the weather in Oklahoma has changed drastically, affecting populations.

“It’s warmer at a lot of the times than it should be, which is, it changes the quality of the nectar, and it also changes the metabolic needs of the insects and the pollinators themselves. So you’ve got a lot of variables going on there,” she adds.

“You’ve got increased use of pesticides, and then also the continued use of a lot of herbicides. We’ve got a lot of different factors coming in at the same time that are really, really stressing these populations.”

Although the populations are dwindling, Breckinridge believes it is not too late to step in and help these struggling species.

“As an older person, I can see it in my lifetime. I

can see changes in the 22 years since I moved back to Oklahoma,” Breckinridge said. “We’re at a crossroads, but I don’t think it’s too late. The time for sitting on the couch and feeling depressed about it is over.”

“We all have to do what little bits we can to get this problem solved.”

### Wildflowers and native plants

One small thing people can do is plant more native species, such as wildflowers, which provide pollinators with a food source. The farm collects, saves, and distributes native species seeds to the community. This enables community members to create pollinator habitats in their own backyards.

Collin Spriggs (Cherokee) works at both the Euchee Butterfly Farm and TAP and spoke about land restoration and native plants during the conference. In an interview with Mvskoke News, Spriggs suggested that if people want to help pollinators, the best thing to do is plant native plants with as locally sourced seed stock as possible.

“The same species of plant can be found from Oklahoma to Minnesota, to Illinois. Those places are quite different. The organisms in those environments may be the same species, but they have developed micro-adaptations to the local ecosystems,” he added.

Dr. Hung, a Professor at the University of Oklahoma who works with both the Oklahoma Biological Survey and the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory, acknowledges that when it comes to pollinators, bees take up most of the spotlight. While they are an incredibly important part of the ecosystem, Hung notes that the focus should shift to more pollinators beyond bees.

“Just like how teaching everyone to raise goats and beef cattle on every acre of green grass is counterproductive to preserving our natural ecosystems, raising honey bees—which are native to Europe and feral (some would even say “invasive”) in North America—will not have a positive impact,” Hung said to Mvskoke News.

“This has been one of my big educational campaigns—to help people understand that honey bees are an indispensable livestock from the perspective of our agricultural endeavors, but not a target for conservation and not usually part of the solution, but part of the problem when it comes to protecting nature in North America,” he adds.

Hung encourages people to research which plants in their local area help pollinators most and plant seasonally. Hung also encourages people to create habitats for pollinators to live in, whether in your backyard, at your school, or at the park.

“The ‘field of dreams’ hypothesis in ecology states that ‘if you build it, they will come.’ If you have a larger property, you can even specifically target rare pollinators for protection by planting specific plants,”



Hung said.

Citizen science

Dr. Taylor is the founding director of Monarch Watch, a nonprofit outreach program that educates others about ecological issues and conserves monarch butterfly populations. The organization spends time researching monarch migration patterns.

Taylor, who lives in a rural area, says he used to get annoyed by chirping crickets that would come into his house. The chirping has ceased. He now sees very few crickets, junebugs, or fireflies around his property.

Monarch Watch is nationally recognized for its Monarch Waystation Habitats, community-created environments that are enriched with milkweed and

tor data aside from monarch butterflies. Regarding bees, scientists are still working to document exactly how many species are in Oklahoma, with the current estimate at roughly 470.

Leaf piles and delayed mowing

One of the simplest things a person can do, according to Spriggs, to help certain pollinators is to delay mowing and delay destroying leaves that fall in the winter. The delay provides certain pollinators an easy-to-use home to hide from the weather.

“Some quick suggestions are to ascribe to the ‘leave the leaves’ ideology. Many species of insects, in a variety of life stages, use this habitat to overwinter. It’s their winter home, basically,” Spriggs says.

A future path

Moving forward, Taylor believes there is still much research to be done on pollinator population declines. He explained that areas with low human activity are also seeing declines in pollinator populations. However, the solutions for the average citizen could not be clearer: we need to make space for pollinators.

“The scientists need to dive into the solutions. The citizens have to be responsible for maintaining the habitat. It’s a citizen thing, it’s an advocacy thing,” Taylor said.

Although experts have different approaches to sustaining pollinator populations, they all agree that education is the key to making a difference. Educational lectures and advocacy can disseminate information and keep the public informed, enabling them to get

*“We’re not just collaborating to see how we can help pollinators, but how we can more effectively help our lands. That is the foundation to our sovereignty, our connection to our lands.”*

*- Jane Breckinridge*

nectar plants. Anyone can create their own waystation- plans are detailed on their website. If it meets Monarch Watch’s criteria for a sustainable habitat, it can be registered amongst the other 55,553 waystations across the U.S.

“What can we do? Create habitats, that’s about all that you can do. What every organism needs is a habitat specific for that organism,” Taylor said. “What we have to do is protect the fundamental habitat that supports that species.”

Waystations contribute to monarch conservation by providing breeding areas, larval host plants, and energy sources for adults to fuel the fall migration to Mexico. They are free of pesticides and can be found almost anywhere: home gardens, schools, businesses, and parks.

Beyond monarchs, Hung notes that the average person can contribute to scientific understanding by using sites like iNaturalist.org to report pollinator sightings and provide scientists with data to better support pollinator recovery. These scientists can then take that data and, according to Hung, “use your observations to build models to formulate better preservation plans for pollinators.”

This recommendation is based on the fact that, according to Hung, Oklahoma has very little pollina-

“Delay mowing heavily in the spring, “No Mow May.” If an individual hays their property, they can implement rotational/alternating schedules to allow summer and fall plant species to go to seed,” Spriggs adds.

**Pesticide use**

Finally, Breckinridge states that the easiest thing people can do is to declare their homes, farms, or workspaces a non-toxic zone, free of pesticides and herbicides that harm pollinators.

“Take a portion of your yard, your farm, your work, your apartment complex, you know, those places where you frequent or you live... If you can declare at least a portion of it as a non-toxic zone, a safe zone free of pesticide and herbicide, so that those pollinators can get what they need and survive, that alone does some good,” Breckinridge said.

Hung recommends that people be careful about the chemicals and pesticides they use in their homes or on their farms.

“You can also employ eco-friendly chemical management (using fewer pesticides etc.) in your range-lands or neighborhoods,” he said.

involved regardless of their level of expertise on the issue.

Breckinridge explained that the solution is not without its limitations. Education does not always mean action.

“I think the only real limitation is apathy. Are we, collectively and individually, going to choose to do the right thing for our lands, our people, and our non-human relatives? If the answer is yes, and I think the answer is a resounding yes from our Mvskoke and Yuchi people, then there are no limitations on how far education can get us towards solving this problem,” Breckinridge said.

Taylor says that combating climate change is everyone’s responsibility. “That’s a citizen thing, and that’s an advocacy thing. We have to advocate for the things we don’t know we need to maintain. The idea is to maintain the status quo as long as we can,” Taylor says.

“The race against climate change is really going to catch up with us.”

The experts urge that if each member of the community does their part, no matter how small, pollinators could see a drastic improvement in their habitat.

A habitat that is just as hospitable, welcoming, and cozy as the aviaries and acres found at the Euchee Butterfly Farm.



Collin Spriggs demonstrates seed processing at the Euchee Butterfly Farm from start to finish. (All Photos: MM)





(Image: MCN CPRT)

# HONORING AND ADVOCATING FOR MVSKOKE CHILDREN

## CPRT HIGHLIGHTS THE NEEDS OF MVSKOKE CHILDREN DURING FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH

BY SHAYLN PROCTOR

OKMULGEE – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Foster Care and Adoption Department hosted events in May for Foster Care Awareness Month. “Our Steps of Hope” allowed MCN employees to leave messages of encouragement and support for Mvskoke children and families who are in care. They also hosted Mvskoke Onuckuce (storytelling) at the College of the Muscogee Nation and spoke to the Bristolow Indian Community about their services.

Brittani Morgan (Mvskoke) wants to clear up a misconception about the children in their system. The MCN Certification Placement Recruitment and Training Program (CPRT) Manager sharedshare that what children have been through doesn't define who they are. The program believes that every child deserves a chance and a sense of love, and that they deserve to grow up with stability and structure. No child should ever question their own worth.

“I think sometimes the community gets scared by the ages or behaviors, but if you think about it, the things that they’ve been through are things that no child ever deserves to go through,” Morgan said.

“So the misconception that there are ‘bad children’ or ‘the perfect child,’ that’s never going to be a thing because they’re in the situation at no fault of their own. So they’re just trying to find any way to cope, to heal, to feel loved.”

Morgan recognizes that many families are apprehensive about welcoming teenagers into their homes, yet she

points out that teenagers are simply looking for love and connection. “They want to understand why they had to go through things that they’ve been through,” Morgan said.

Morgan spoke to Mvskoke Media about the program, what they do, and the difference they try to make for the Native children in their care. CPRT has approximately nine programs under MCN Children and Family Services, according to Morgan.

The program holds events every year to raise awareness in the community. This awareness aims to encourage others to show support, gain knowledge about their program, and open their homes to Native foster children.

This year, their program decided to do something new: pop-up events, such as “Our Steps of Hope.” For this event, the community came out to draw images and quotes for the families that they’re working with at MCN Children and Family Services.

“So when they walk into the building, they can see these and just be hopeful and inspired,” Morgan said.

They’ve also included their annual wear teal day where departments compete to see who can wear the most teal at the MCN.

Foster Care Awareness Month is important to Morgan because it’s an opportunity to recognize everyone involved in foster care, including the children and families.

The department has changed the phrase “foster homes” to “resource homes” because of negative associations within the communit. “It’s about bringing awareness to them and what they do, also about our everyday advocates here in

the office who are working hard every single day to do the things that have to be done once a child comes into care,” Morgan said.

### A focus on reunification

As a care program within the tribal community, their program is focused on and centered around reunification.

“Everything we do is being a support while these children are in care, but our ultimate goal is getting them back home with mom and dad if possible. I think because of the things that have happened to our tribe in the past, the generational trauma, everything that’s negative about Foster Care in tribal communities. I wish more people would understand that we do want these children to go home,” Morgan said.

Morgan stated that their side is not the Western image of foster care that everyone has in mind. She hopes that people would ask more questions instead of assuming that they don’t want these children to go home, “Because when they don’t go home, they lose that identity,” Morgan stated.

“Even though we’re constantly doing everything we can to make sure they maintain that connection to their culture and community, that they know their identity, they know where they come from, the strengths of being Mvskoke Creek, their language. We are constantly pushing this and also working with our resource homes to make sure they’re learning,” Morgan said.

One of the pressing needs for the children is to get the word out, ask questions, and help their program change the narrative on foster care.

Also, recognizing how

open and accessible the culture is getting.

According to MCN Foster Care and Adoption, “Culture is medicine. Maintaining ties to tribal communities, ceremonies, language, and family connections can help Native foster youth feel grounded and supported during difficult transitions.”

“I think those are things that help, even if we just had citizens willing to share their stories, share their culture, be a part of our events that also teach our resource homes things that they should be passing down to the children who come into care,” Morgan shared.

### A familiar concept

To Morgan, foster care isn’t something new to Mvskoke culture. “I believe that our community has always done foster care in some way. We just didn’t call it that,” Morgan said.

“We’re very family-centered, so when things got hard as a child, and some of the kids would go stay with family members, their grandparents, their aunts, I feel like that was our way of doing foster care while mom and dad needed to go figure things out, so we’ve been doing that.”

During resource home training, even in the beginning, when certifying a home until their first placement, the program is always focusing on reunification.

The program receives calls from people who want to adopt or are wondering how often they have children available for adoption, but Morgan always repeats that it’s reunification until it’s not.

“Sometimes it keeps our numbers low as well because

it takes a lot to be able to strictly foster care and build those connections and start loving a child to know that they will be leaving you,” Morgan said.

Last year, their department reached its highest number of homes, and their numbers are dropping slightly as relatives’ homes close, as children are being reunified, Morgan stated.

“We hit the highest number of relatives’ homes we’ve ever had, and that to me is showing that the community is being a little more trustworthy. Maybe we are getting the word out there that we’re not all bad,” Morgan said.

“We do want kids to go home. Now that numbers are dropping because children are being reunified, it’s showing our efforts are working by reaching out to as many relatives to keep that child within their family.”

Morgan can feel the impact the month of events had.

“There are a lot of really great families who just have it in their hearts to help a child until they can go back home to mom and dad. I feel our events are very impactful, and I wish we could have a lot more,” Morgan said.

The program emphasizes that you don’t have to foster to make a difference. There are many ways to help, including mentoring Native youth, supporting foster families, donating supplies, and sharing resources.

For questions, call 918-732-7869, request Morgan or their director, Michell Bender.

## ART SHOW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

That connection is reflected in the way Muscogee citizen Carly Treece creates her artwork. The Tulsa-based visual artist uses oil and cold wax to create abstract works inspired by the land around her and her personal experiences.

“I feel like it’s very important for us to tell our own stories,” Treece said. “Nobody tells our stories the way that we do.”

The exhibition as a whole highlights the diversity of Southeastern Native art through a variety of media, subjects, and colors. Part of SIAA’s mission is helping audiences better understand the range of artistic traditions and perspectives found throughout the region.

SIAA President Mary Lupton (Cherokee) said the organization works to create a supportive, resourceful community around its artists.

“We are a group of Southeastern Native American artists that get together every month to get to know each other, conduct business, and to promote Southeastern Native American art,” Lupton said.

Treasurer Shelley Patrick (Muscogee) said SIAA was created to highlight a region of Native art that is often overlooked.

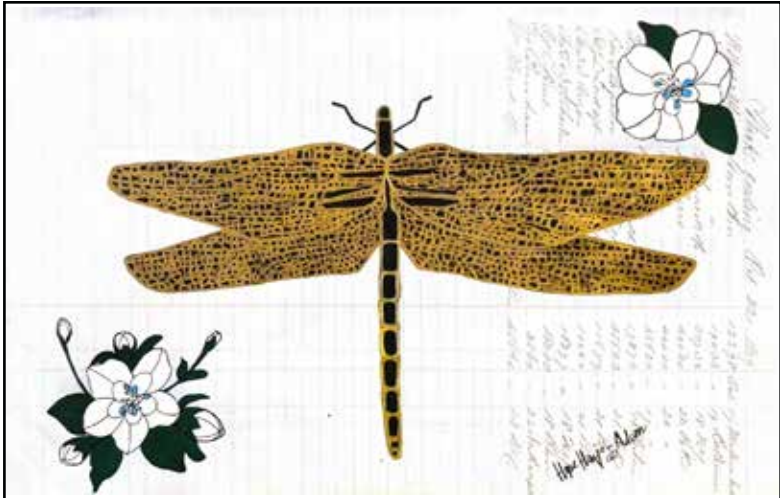
“There are not many, if any around here, organizations that are specifically tailored to promoting and practicing Southeastern Native American art specifically,” Patrick said. “We needed an organization specifically to promote and to educate and to discuss our purpose as Southeastern

Indigenous artists.”

For Lupton, part of that education is challenging the misconception that Native art has one specific look or style. She said that many people still have a limited understanding of what Native art can be. Through exhibitions like Reclaiming Turtle Island, artists can show the range of ways Native identity can be expressed.

“We’re honoring our traditions, but we’re also showing that we’re contemporary people in our art,” Lupton said. “Being able to kind of disprove those assumptions people have about us through our art.”

One of the most important messages that the artists and organizers behind Reclaiming Turtle Island hope visitors carry with them is an expanded understanding of Native art.



“Messenger of Change” Hope Harjo (Mvskoke) image courtesy of SIAA

“There’s a lot of different stories and voices that I think are important to listen to,” Treece said.

Lupton said she hopes visitors will walk away recognizing the continued presence and resilience of Native communities.

“I really hope they remember and see that we are still here,” Lupton said.

“Reclaiming Turtle Island: Native Resistance and Resilience” was displayed through Aug. 1, giving visitors an opportunity to learn the stories and experiences of Southeastern Native artists



# MVSKOKE CITIZENS COLLABORATE ON CAMBRIDGE ARTICLE

WIGGLE-MATCHING CARBON DATING METHODS TRACE THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE OCMULGEE MOUNDS BACK TO 1160 AD

BY BRADEN HARPER

CAMBRIDGE – Researchers from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the University of Georgia, and the National Park Service collaborated on research involving carbon dating. The results were published in the article, “Collaborative Archaeology, Public Parks, and the Importance of Chronology at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park” is featured in volume 91, issue 1 of the journal “American Antiquity” published by Cambridge University Press.

The research provides a chronological framework for the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, a traditional site of the Mvskokvlke. The project sought to uncover the history of communal areas, a chronology of migrations, and a chronology of site abandonment.

The authors conclude that the history of the Ocmulgee Mounds is complex and needs to be understood through the connection between the area and the present MCN. Ocmulgee still has a strong influence over the Tribe, as seen in its structures, such as the Mound Building and Council House.

To learn more about the history of the Ocmulgee Mounds, the article stresses that further research is necessary and must involve collaboration among researchers, the MCN, and Mvskoke descendants.

The Ocmulgee Mounds have endured over 12,000 years of human activity and are the ancestral homeland of the MCN before forced removal to Indian Territory. It saw conflict during the Civil War in the 1800s and is the site of the largest archaeological dig in American History in the 1930s. During the excavation, hundreds of thousands of Muskogean artifacts, includ-

ing pottery, tools, and spears, were unearthed.

According to the article, researchers dated timber samples from the Earthlodge community building using a method called wiggle-matching. The technique provides a calendar date for archeological objects once used by humans. In this project, maize and carbonized wood were dated. According to the study’s data, wiggle-matching suggests that timbers from the Earthlodge were cut after AD 1160, indicating a later use of the site than previously thought. It also suggests that the occupation of the area was not short-lived and supports evidence for migration.

### Collaborative Research

MCN Secretary of Culture and Humanities Rae-Lynn Butler and Mvskoke citizen Turner Hunt were among the scholars who collaborated on the article. Other authors include Victor D. Thompson, Jennifer Birch, Alex Cherkinsky, Carey Garland, Greg Golya, Carla Hadden, and J. Mark Williams. The article stresses that the research it presents would not have been possible without the collaboration of historians from the MCN. It states:

Consequently, the impetus and idea for this work originated from Muscogee Nation and not from the collaborating archaeologists. These collaborations, however, were born of us working together on a variety of other initiatives, including collaborative archaeology field schools and NAGPRA work (see Roberts Thompson et al. 2023).

Finally, as our new work demonstrates, the time for a more collaborative approach to research is at hand in the region, and it is becoming



The Enfulletv-Mocvse in Archaeology Field School in front of the Mound Building in Okmulgee. (Image Credit: Gano Perez Jr.)

more widely practiced. This road has not always been easy, and many people have paved the way for the kind of collaborative work that we present here.

Thompson, who serves as the executive director for the Georgia Museum of Natural History, remarked that it was an honor to collaborate with the Nation on the research. He said working with Tribal historians opened his mind to new ways of thinking about the past. According to Thompson, collaboration between academic institutions and Tribes regarding ancestral homeland research needs to be valued and practiced.

“I do think that the future of archaeology is collaborative,” Thompson said in a statement to Mvskoke Media. “While collaborations start with individuals, the wave of the future will be its institutionalization with broader organizations, such as my own university. Such practices are important because as they become institutionalized, they allow us to normalize collaboration as a practice so that it becomes part of everyday archaeological thinking on the part of everyone.”

Butler defines collaborative research as a mutualis-

tic relationship in which both parties benefit. Likewise, her department is seeking further opportunities to collaborate on research. According to Butler, the research on the Ocmulgee Mounds helps validate the Nation’s oral history of the region.

“Collaborative research means all participants benefit from the study. There is a long history of academic researchers conducting research on or about indigenous communities without their knowledge or support,” Butler said.

The inclusion of Mvskoke citizens throughout the project illustrates a way to strengthen the Tribe’s connection to the homelands.

“Many books and articles have been published on Mvskoke people and our history without our knowledge. We begin to attend academic conferences and meet researchers to break this cycle. We believe research is strengthened when our knowledge and voice are used as the primary source.”

Hunt has traveled to Macon on multiple occasions to provide tours, discussions, and classes on the Indigenous perspective of the homelands. Hunt and Thompson

both agree that collaborative research should continue. He feels that collaborative archaeology strengthens the field.

“Collaborative Archaeology gives a voice to people who have been historically disenfranchised by the discipline of archaeology. I view it as an opportunity to reframe the narrative of Muskogean history in our homelands. It is a better foundation for the discipline of archaeology than the previous versions that often left Native voices out.” Hunt said.

Butler said her department has reviewed more than 50 research projects and will continue to collaborate on archaeological projects in the homelands. Butler argues that increased collaboration broadens access to collections of Muskogean artifacts.

“When we participate in the research, we reestablish our connection to our ancestors and strong ties to the present,” Butler said. “Many times, you hear archaeologists refer to the indigenous peoples they study by names like, ‘the Ocmulgee people’ or ‘the Lamar people’ or ‘Mississippians’ and then saying they went extinct.”

“We are still here; we obviously are not extinct.”

### The Ocmulgee Muskogean Landscape Project: Managing Tribal Lands that Contain Cultural Properties and Sacred Sites

Turner W. Hunt, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

#### Introduction

Ocmulgee Old Fields Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) in Red

MCN's 126 acres (Yellow) to preserve the known cultural resources and promote awareness of MCN ancestral ties to the area.

In 2019, MCN purchased 126 acres within the Ocmulgee Old Fields Traditional Cultural Property (TCP). The Ocmulgee Old Fields was the first TCP east of the Mississippi, declared eligible in the 1990's. The property MCN purchased within the TCP is the first lands in our ancestral homelands that we have reacquired.

Archaeological work in the 1930s and later in the 50s identified numerous cultural features across the entire Brown's Mount formation. The nation purchased the property knowing it contained known cultural resources with the intent of preserving our heritage.

The land will benefit many generations of Muscogee citizens who have the opportunity to return and visit their TCP. However, management of the property comes with its fair share of challenges. MCN THPO is mimicking the same processes many land managing federal agencies must complete, (Section 110, Historic Properties Management Plan, etc.).

#### Steps for Management

##### Identify Cultural Resources

- Background Research – Gathering any/all archaeological information. Notes, Summaries, Publications. Locate repositories for previous excavations. Ocmulgee Park, UGA, SEAC
- Pedestrian Survey
- 50-60% unsurveyed
- Non-Invasive Testing GPR, Gradiometer, Resistivity, etc.
- Relocate Past Excavation Units
- Phase I Testing / Delineating
- Determination of Eligibility, less needed as any resources within the TCP is a contributing factor

##### Identify Activities to Take Place

(A) The property has 2 acres of planted pine Thinning, pest management, debris cleanup  
(B) Road/Trail access & establishment  
(C) Tours for Muscogee Citizens  
(D) Collaborative Archaeological Research  
(E) Vegetation Control Rx Burn, Invasive Species Mitigation

##### Develop Protective Measures & Stipulations

(A) Pine Thinning must be done by hand and cut small enough to be hand carried.  
(B) Phase I along any proposed trail/access routes  
No cuts – Only crushed aggregate applied above grade  
(C) Ensure emergency access, rest locations, above ground sign installation  
(D) Enfulletv Mocvse Field School - Archaeological Research in Collaboration with MCN  
(E) Best Practices for undergrowth vegetation control, coordination with USFWS

#### Collaboration

##### Okmulgee, OK to Ocmulgee, GA - 580 Miles

The distance between our current capital and our ancestral capital is a challenge. However, we are also presented with great opportunities. NPS, USFWS, have both offered assistance in one way or another as federal agencies. UGA has assisted tremendously in many areas and now by adding special expertise in current methodologies.

##### Partners:

It would be near impossible to manage property 580 miles away without good partnerships.

- USFWS manage the lands adjacent and are able and willing to assist as needed and working the possibility of providing office space nearby.
- NPS, our partners who manage the Ocmulgee Mounds have provided information about NPS-affiliated lands that can be a source of assistance
- UGA, assists in our CRM responsibilities, training, curation, networking, background, field school, the list can go on and on...

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences  
Department of Anthropology  
Laboratory of Archaeology  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

##### Goals

- 1 – Protect and Preserve Muskogean Cultural Sites on MCN lands within MCN TCP
- 2 – Promote regular visitation by Muscogee Nation Citizens
- 3 – Enfulletv Mocvse Archaeological Field School
- 4 – Sustain a healthy ecosystem by properly managing natural resources

Former MCN Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Turner Hunt presented his original research, “The Ocmulgee Muskogean Landscape Project: Managing Tribal Lands that Contain Cultural Properties and Sacred Sites,” at the 2023 Southeastern Archeological Conference. (Image Credit: MCN Department of Historic Preservation)



# FOR CENTURIES, NATIVE WOMEN HAVE BEEN TOLD TO ‘TRUST THE DOCTOR.’ THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN DISASTROUS.

BY SUZETTE BREWER, THE IMPRINT

*Editor’s note: Part one of two | This story was originally published by The Imprint, a national nonprofit news outlet covering child welfare and youth justice. It is a project for the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism’s National Fellowship and its Dennis A. Hunt Fund for Health Journalism.*

Patti Jo King’s life was just coming into focus in the spring of 1972. She was a young mother working her way through college in Riverside, California, and had joined the Red Power Movement — a nationwide uprising of Indigenous resistance that demanded self-determination, enforcement of treaty rights and an end to systemic oppression of Native Americans.

Thoughtful, precociously well-read and ambitious, the 20-year-old Cherokee Nation tribal member had dreams of becoming a writer, a teacher or maybe a doctor.

But in April of that year, an ER visit for abdominal pain and a suspected ovarian cyst changed the course of her life.

Weeks later, she was seen by a gynecologist at what was then known as the Parkview Community Hospital in Riverside. He immediately insisted on “exploratory surgery,” which was scheduled for the following morning, according to his notes in King’s medical records.

King, now 73, was asked to sign a vaguely worded waiver that made her uneasy.

She recalls it mentioning the word “sterilization.”

King says her doctor dismissed her concerns. “There’s nothing to worry about, because this isn’t gonna happen,” she recalled him telling her. “It’s just in case.”

In multiple interviews over the past year, King explained why she went ahead and signed, despite her misgivings.

“My mother was with me and she was this tiny Cherokee lady who believed in doctors, because that’s how she was raised,” she said. “I was young and healthy, and I didn’t think I necessarily needed ‘exploratory surgery’ for a cyst that could lead to being sterilized.

“But she told me: ‘Trust the doctor.’ So I signed it.”

The next day, May 10, 1972, King woke up in a recovery room confronted by her smiling surgeon.

She recalls the physician telling her: “Well honey, sell your stock in Kotex forever, because you’re never going to have to use another one for the rest of your life.” His words burned into her memory. “We took everything.”

Still groggy from the anesthesia, King struggled to understand what had just happened, noting that his glib — even cheerful — demeanor belied the enormous gravity of a full hysterectomy. Her life would never be the same.

“That’s how I found out I was sterile,” she said.

King’s story is just one among tens of thousands of



In the 1970s, Patti Jo King was a young mother working her way through college in Riverside, California. (Provided photo)

Indigenous women, men, and children sterilized in the 20th century — often without their consent, or through misinformation and intimidation, including threats by social services to remove their children into foster care.

The account described in this article is based on a review of King’s medical records by a reporter and an independent medical expert, with her permission.

Representatives of Parkview Community Hospital did not respond to repeated requests for comment on King’s account of her experience.

### A legacy of control: sterilization, surveillance, erasure

Beginning as early as the 1800s, the U.S. government began implementing policies based on an emerging “science of race improvement” as a means of enforcing a hierarchy of social control. British scientist Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, developed the theory of “eugenics” in 1883 to promote selective breeding of humans that he claimed would improve hereditary traits in the name of genetic purity.

Rooted in white supremacist and colonial ideologies, Galton’s ideas became state-sanctioned policies in the early 20th century. In 1907, Indiana enacted the world’s first statute authorizing the compulsory sterilization of people labeled “unfit,” which other states and nations soon replicated. Targeted populations included Black and Latino people, immigrants, the incarcerated, people with disabilities, the poor, homosexuals and anyone defined in vague terms as “socially inadequate.”

American Indians and Alaska Natives, in particular, were subjected to systemic reproductive surveillance and control due to their limited legal protections, language



Patti Jo King in her home in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. (Photo:Shane Bevel/The Imprint)

barriers, and dependence on Indian Health Service facilities in remote, impoverished tribal communities. These conditions made them targets for coercion, misinformation, and medical abuse, in a system that was mandated by treaty to provide healthcare to Native Americans in exchange for the loss of their lands. Consequently, they were sterilized at far higher per capita rates than any other group.

More than just policy failures or negligence, however, these acts were part of a broader effort to eliminate Indigenous people using reproductive oppression as a form of ethnic cleansing.

In her groundbreaking book, “Reproduction on the Reservation,” Brianna Theobald describes the effects of these policies on women and reproduction on the Crow Reservation in Montana. Central to the government’s agenda was the “Save the Babies” campaign — a public relations effort launched in 1916 with deeply racist and paternalistic motives that portrayed Native mothers as irresponsible or unfit, thus justifying the aggressive removal of their children and the imposition of fertility restrictions.

“It was a government policy that was implemented and carried out by the medical establishment, which had enormous discretionary authority and control over the bodies of Native people,” said Theobald, an associate professor of history and affiliate faculty in the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies at the University of Rochester.

Indian Health Service (IHS) hospitals became “training grounds for new and inexperienced physicians who were practicing on Native women and girls in order to be accepted into the College of Obstetrics and Gynecology,” Theobald added. “It was a systematic way of reducing birth rates — and by extension, Native populations — that was funded by the federal government.”

Moreover, the American Board of Surgery promoted this policy by establishing required quotas for operations that surgeons had to perform to complete their residencies, which only incentivized the abuse. “Let’s face it, we’ve all talked women into hysterectomies who didn’t need them, during residency training,” one surgeon admitted.

On the front line of this grim campaign were “field matrons,” white women whose sole job, as agents of federal policy, was to monitor, regulate and enforce Euro-American standards for mothering and childrearing in Native American homes. Theobald’s research estimates that up to 45% of Crow women were sterilized during this period, reflecting trends of 25% to 50% among Native American women nationwide.

### Stealing reproductive freedom in Indian Country



Thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women in Canada were also sterilized through forced and coerced surgeries from 1928 through 1973, under the same eugenics policies as the United States. (Archival Image: Canadian National Archives)

Whether at IHS hospitals or public hospitals, many Native women were subjected to the pretext of “exploratory surgeries” with vaguely written waivers that removed any trace of legal liability, leaving them vulnerable to sterilization whenever they sought medical care for any reason.

Government coercion also played a role, as women were forced to choose between sterilization or losing welfare benefits in impoverished communities where unemployment rates were as high as 70%.

“Our people were desperately poor — they were starving. And they were confronted with awful choices about whether to sterilize or lose their benefits, which could mean absolute destitution,” said Abigail Echo-Hawk, a member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma who is director of the Urban Indian Health Institute and chief research officer of the Seattle Indian Health Board. “These policies have had and continue to have long-term impacts on the crises in our communities that build on one another, including depression, suicides, alcohol, substance abuse, domestic violence and ongoing, generational trauma.”

The passage of Title X of the Family Planning Services and Population Research Act in 1970 dramatically expanded federal funding for contraception and sterilization services. Initially funded at \$6 million, the program’s budget ballooned to more than \$100 million within two years. Some of these funds were directed to IHS facilities, fueling a sharp increase in sterilizations among Native people.

What had been promoted as “family planning” was, in reality, a government-funded assault on Indigenous reproductive rights carried out by the medical establishment with brutal efficiency.

Thousands of Native adults and children were trapped in medical systems where their reproductive rights were stripped away, often during treatment for minor conditions. Scholar Jane Lawrence has written that some patients, for example, received tubal ligations or vasectomies during routine procedures to remove their tonsils or appendix —only to discover years later they had been sterilized.

Under Title X, “the government began subsidizing 90 percent of the cost of sterilizations performed through the IHS,” according to a 2021 legal journal article titled “The Enemy is the Knife: Native Americans, Medical Genocide, and the Prohibition of Nonconsensual Sterilizations.”

The article further notes that these financial incentives drove a sharp surge in procedures: “Doctors and hospitals received only small subsidies for most forms of birth control, [but] a sterilization could earn as much as \$720.60.” Over the following decade, the number of federally funded sterilizations of Native Americans



increased by more than five times.

Some victims included students in federal Indian boarding schools, who were subjected to forced sterilizations at IHS facilities without their knowledge and without their parents being notified.

“Students were being raped and impregnated by school personnel,” Echo-Hawk said. “But they decided if you sterilize them, they can’t get pregnant.”

At its core, Echo-Hawk says, the intended goal was the deliberate reduction of Indigenous birth rates. But sterilization was not merely a method of population control. It was a strategic assault on tribal continuity, sovereignty, and territorial rights, aimed at weakening Indigenous claims to their lands, resources, and treaty protections — by erasing future generations. Hence, by the end of the 1970s, birth rates fell by up to 75% in some tribal communities.

“This is what structural racism looks like when the government and the medical establishment become complicit in the mass sterilization of Native people,” Echo-Hawk said, “which was incentivized and paid for with federal funding.”

‘These Indian women breed like rabbits’

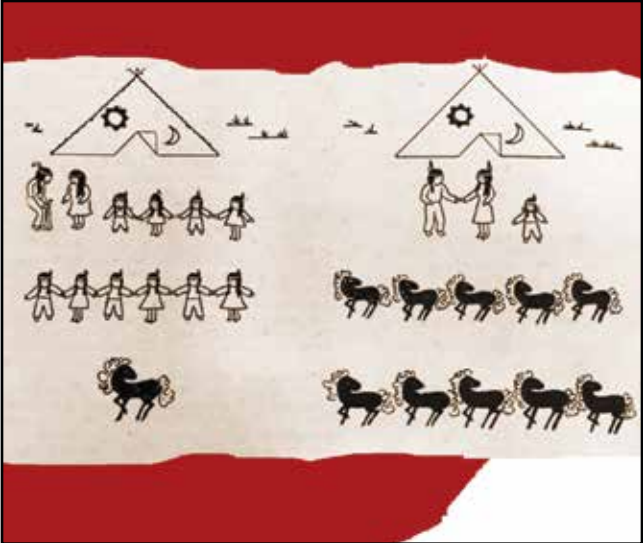
Devastated, depressed and in full-blown menopause at the age of 20, Patti Jo King was resigned to the fact that she would never have more children. She remained in Riverside with her mother and went on with her life, continuing to raise her young daughter, Portia, who was 2 years old at the time. She later finished her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Northern Arizona University.

But a subsequent conversation with a friend who had been the scrub nurse for her 1972 surgery haunted her for years. The nurse told King that as she lay unconscious, the surgeon dryly commented to those in the operating room that “These Indian women breed like rabbits.”

The remark shocked King to her core, and convinced her that the doctor set out to sterilize her because she was Native American.

“It was a despicable, prejudicial thing to say about his own patient,” she said. “It always made me think that he knew exactly what he was doing.”

In the early 1980s, King moved to Berkeley with her daughter and husband for new jobs. When she enrolled in a Bay Area health plan, she retrieved her patient records



Cartoon illustrations from a government pamphlet promoted sterilization by suggesting that Native families would become prosperous by having fewer children. Critics denounced the imagery that reduced Indigenous families to crude stereotypes and portrayed Native birth rates as a problem to be managed. (Archival Image: U.S. Government.)

from the facility now known as Parkview Community Hospital Medical Center. They included the reports she had never been given after her surgery.

The doctor’s surgical notes and the lab’s pathology report revealed she had been given a full hysterectomy for “moderate inflammation” that had blocked one of her fallopian tubes from a ruptured cyst. King’s records showed no evidence of cancer, tumors, sepsis or any other emergent or life-threatening condition that would have necessitated the complete removal of all of her reproductive organs, according to Dr. Amelia Huntsberger’s independent evaluation for this article.

With King’s permission, the Oregon-based obstetrician/gynecologist reviewed the pre- and post-surgical records, pathology reports and clinical condition at the time. Huntsberger concluded that, in her opinion, a full hysterectomy was medically unnecessary.

“Taking out the reproductive organs of a 19- to 20-year-old is a big deal, and the clinical circumstances in her case did not seem to warrant that kind of drastic action,” Huntsberger said. “She was not in danger and this was not a surgical emergency. But her fertility was taken away by what could have been treated with antibiotics — even at that time.”

Moreover, King’s surgery took place less than 24 hours after her office visit, leaving her no time to reconsider or seek a second opinion — as she alleges that no one explained her rights or options.

What King read in the medical records confirmed her long-held suspicions.

“That pathologist’s report slapped me into reality. I couldn’t believe the vile deception — and the way the doctor had placated my trusting mother made me furious,” she said. “I began to realize that genocide was still alive and well in America, and I wept for all the unborn children used as collateral in the quest for dominance and political hegemony.”

But the weight of what had happened to her also hit hard internally.

“I was plunged into a deep depression because I wanted more children and I wanted my daughter to have siblings,” King said. “But that was never going to happen and I spent years agonizing over it.”

Confronting the past, reshaping the future

In the early 1970s, Dr. Constance Redbird Pinkerman-Uri, a Cherokee and Choctaw physician and lawyer,



The “Eugenics Building” at an early 20th-century state fair, where exhibits promoted the idea that society could be improved by controlling who was allowed to reproduce. The eugenics movement’s pseudoscience shaped sterilization laws targeting those deemed “unfit.” (Photo: American Philosophical Society, Wikimedia Commons)

opened her own investigation into suspicious and involuntary sterilizations at Claremore Indian Hospital in Oklahoma. The impetus came from one of her patients who had undergone a hysterectomy in 1966 at the age of 20 but was told by her surgeon she could receive a uterine transplant — which was a lie, as no such procedure was developed or available until many decades later. In fact, the first uterine transplant in this country was not successfully performed until 2017, and even today remains an exceedingly rare and experimental operation.

Pinkerman-Uri, along with several other Indigenous medical professionals at Indian Health Service facilities across the country, began demanding action from Sen. James Abourezk of South Dakota, then chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs. Subsequently, Abourezk asked the General Accounting Office to conduct an investigation into sterilization abuses.

In 1976, the GAO investigation — which included four IHS facilities in Albuquerque, Phoenix, Oklahoma City and Aberdeen — found that 3,406 Indigenous women had been sterilized in a 46-month period, including 36 under the age of 21.

Since then, however, critics have faulted the investigation as fundamentally flawed, since it only covered four of the 12 IHS regions, excluded patient testimonies, relied narrowly on signed waivers, and ignored coercive tactics and doctor misconduct. Numerous sources now estimate that up to 70,000 Native women were sterilized from 1970 to 1976.

Pinkerton-Uri had concluded that only 100,000 Native women of childbearing age remained nationwide — creating an urgency in addressing the scale of harm to Indigenous communities and the long-term demographic, cultural, legal and political consequences for Native nations.

“Their intentions about why they were doing this was not a secret in Native communities,” said Echo-Hawk. “We have to talk more and tell the truth about what happened — because from truth comes healing.”

In the late 1970s, Native women from around the country began forming advocacy groups, including Women of All Red Nations (WARN), to fight back against a system that had methodically deprived them of their reproductive sovereignty and their basic human rights. They demanded justice, accountability, and an end to coerced sterilizations and medical abuse.

Subsequent policy changes at the Indian Health Service included stricter informed consent guidelines; a 72-hour waiting period; bans on sterilizations for women

under 21; consent forms translated into Indigenous languages; and increased oversight of IHS and federal health programs for Native people.

In the early 1980s, when King became fully aware that she had been sterilized for a treatable condition, she sought legal advice from a medical malpractice attorney in Riverside regarding how to hold the doctor and hospital accountable. But by that time, she learned, the statute of limitations for filing suit in California had long passed.

To date no one has ever been held liable or criminally accountable, and the federal government has never offered an apology for the abuses that occurred at its medical facilities serving Native Americans.

But the wall of silence has begun to crack. On Feb. 19 the New Mexico Legislature voted to open an investigation into the forced sterilization of Native American women — a long-overdue step toward truth and accountability.

Bearing witness to a hidden history

Today, Patti Jo King is a retired professor of American Indian History and Indigenous Studies now residing on the Cherokee Nation reservation in Oklahoma. Her daughter Portia, now 55, has four children and four grandchildren of her own and lives near her mother.

King, who eventually received her Ph.D in American Indian Studies from the University of Oklahoma, has spent decades writing, teaching and advocating for Indigenous causes, in the hope that her work will help expose historical injustices, empower Native communities, and support the fight for sovereignty and healing.

Her message reflects a powerful shift from historical silencing and control to empowerment and reproductive sovereignty for Indigenous women. She speaks to a broad movement for birth justice — reclaiming bodily autonomy, honoring traditional knowledge, and confronting generations of systemic oppression with resilience, agency, and a vision for future generations.

“We are a matrilineal community of strong women who have always had a powerful role in our leadership,” said King, who is currently working on, “Charlatans, Hucksters and Spiritual Orphans: American Indian Ethnic Fraud in Academia,” her second book.

“Your relationship to your child and childbearing is the most powerful statement you can make in the continuance of our communities — so guard it, advocate for yourself and pass it on to the next seven generations.”



Patti Jo King holds a photo of herself as a young mother with her daughter. Image: Shane Bevel/The Imprint)



# JULY MCNNC COMMITTEE COVERAGE

BFJ APPROVES TRIBAL DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND DATA SOVEREIGNTY TASK FORCE BILL, SMELTER PLANT BAN PASSES JOINT COMMITTEE, AND BRIDGE REPLACEMENT LEGISLATION PASSES LNC

LAND, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND CULTURE  
Tuesday, July 14

**Grants**  
**Muscogee (Creek) Nation Traditional Church Summer Trip Grant:**  
First Indian Baptist Church – Maurice Morgan \$3,000.00  
Silver Spring Baptist Church – Todd Been \$3,000.00  
Thewarle Indian Baptist Church – Eugene Whitlow \$3,000.00  
Little Cussetah Baptist Church – Ray Samuel \$3,000.00  
Solid Rock Baptist Church – Todd Parker \$3,000.00  
Belvin Baptist Church – Jordan Kanuho \$3,000.00  
Arbeka Ceremonial Ground – Bradley Hicks \$20,000.00

**Muscogee (Creek) Nation Church & Ceremonial Ground Camp Grant:**  
Duck Creek Ceremonial Ground – Victoria Tiger \$20,000.00 Approved \$19,987.00  
Hutche Chuppa Indian Baptist Church – Ann Parton \$20,000.00

**Muscogee (Creek) Nation Church & Ceremonial Ground Emergency Grant:**  
Creek Chapel Methodist Church – Mary Lee \$41,000.00

**Legislation**  
**TR 26-040** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to submit a Fiscal Year 2026 Tribal Wildlife Grant application to the Bureau of Indian Affairs passed 4-0. Representative Cody Phillips sponsored the legislation.

The grant, in the amount of \$179,865,000, will aid the MCN in properly managing, understanding, and regulating native pasture restoration and quail populations.

**TR 26-041** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to execute separate memorandum of agreements with Tulsa, Creek, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Muscogee, McIntosh, and Hughes counties, Bixby and Glenpool cities, and to apply for federal funding through the Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Transportation Facility Bridge Program to fund bridge constructions for thirty-five (35) bridge replacement projects. Representative Dode Barnett sponsored the bill, which passed 4-0.

The cost of the projects will be covered by awards under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

**NCA 26-105** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of the First Nations Development Grant for the benefit of the Department of Culture and Humanities. Representative Robyn Whitecloud sponsored the bill, which passed 4-0. (\$45,000.00)

According to the legislation, the funds amount to \$45,000 and will be used to help defray the costs associated with “Sacred Places 2026: A Night of Music, Storytelling, and Art,” held at the Santa Fe Indian Market.

**NCA 26-106** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of the National Park Service Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) Grant for the benefit of the Historic and Cultural Preservation Department. Rep. Phillips sponsored the bill, which passed 4-0. (\$94,912.00)

According to the legislation, the funds, in the amount of \$94,912,000, will be used to ensure the protection and preservation of Mvskoke historic and cultural resources.

**NCA 26-107** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing an appropriation in the amount of \$200,000 to the Real Property Escrow Revolving Fund. Representative Anna Marshall sponsored the bill, which was postponed for 60 days.

HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE  
Tuesday, July 14

**Fire Department Applications**  
Hitchita Area Fire Protection Association \$5,000.00

BUSINESS, FINANCE, AND JUSTICE  
Thursday, July 16

**TR 26-042** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to execute an engagement letter for legal services between the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Commerce and the AIM Law, Limited Partnership. Representative William Lowe sponsored the legislation, which passed 2-0.

According to the legislation, outside legal counsel representing the Nation requires approval by a Tribal resolution.

**TR 26-043** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to execute an engagement letter for legal services between the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Commerce and the Jacobson Law Group. Rep. Lowe sponsored the bill. It passed 2-1. Rep. Golden opposed the bill.

The engagement letter is required in order for the MCN Department of Commerce to receive legal services from AIM Law.

**TR 26-044** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises, LLC (“MNGE”) Board of Directors to execute the third amendment to the Margaritaville Trademark Sub-License Agreement. Representative Robert Hufft sponsored the bill, and Representative Lucian Tiger co-sponsored it. The bill passed 2-1. Rep. Golden opposed the bill.

According to the legislation, the agreement will extend the Margaritaville operating agreement for five years, ending on Monday, August 25, 2031.

**TR 26-045** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation establishing the Tribal Digital Infrastructure and Data Sovereignty Task Force and providing for coordinated development of Tribal digital infrastructure initiatives on the reservation. Representative James Factor sponsored this bill. Speaker Randall Hicks, Representative Cody Phillips, and Rep. Tiger co-sponsored the bill. It passed 2-1. Rep. Golden opposed the bill.

According to the legislation, the task force will include one representative from the Attorney General’s office, one representative from the National Council, the Principal Chief, the chairman of the BFJ committee, the Speaker of the National Council, and one representative from

the Tribal Utility Authority.

**NCA 26-099** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Principal Chief to execute and file the Articles of Organization with the Office of the Secretary of the Nation to form “Muscogee Studios, LLC” under the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Limited Liability Company Act and approving the operating agreement for “Muscogee Studios, LLC.” Rep. Lowe sponsored the bill. It was postponed indefinitely, 3-0.

If adopted, the studio will “engage in economic development ventures and other activities in furtherance of governmental objectives of the Nation and for the advancement of its members.”

**NCA 26-100** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation appropriating funds to Muscogee Studios, LLC. Rep. Lowe sponsored the bill. It was postponed indefinitely, 3-0.

If adopted, the studio will receive \$375,000 in funding.

**NCA 26-101** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending NCA 18-057 (A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Principal Chief to execute and file the articles of organization with the Office of the Secretary and Commerce to form “Fountainhead Creek Golf Course, LLC” under the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Limited Liability Company Act and approving the operating agreement for “Fountainhead Creek Golf Course, LLC.” Rep. Lowe sponsored the legislation, which was postponed indefinitely 3-0.

If adopted, “Fountainhead Creek Golf Course, LLC” will become a limited liability company wholly owned by the Nation.

**NCA 26-102** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending Title 17, Chapter 2, entitled “Trade and Commerce Authority” and establishing the Muscogee (Creek) Development Corporation. Rep. Lowe sponsored the bill. It was postponed indefinitely, 3-0.

If adopted, the legislation will amend the language “Authority” to “Corporation.” It adds language updating the authority and makeup of the Trade and Commerce Authority board.

**NCA 26-103** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending NCA 26-046 (A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation approving and authorizing the Principal Chief to execute and file the articles of organization with the office of the secretary of the nation to form “MCN Outdoor, LLC” under the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Limited Liability Company Act and approving the operating agreement for “MCN Outdoor, LLC”) Rep. Factor sponsored the bill. It was postponed indefinitely, 3-0.

If adopted, “MCN Outdoor LLC” will become a limited liability company wholly owned by the Nation.

**NCA 26-108** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation creating a new Chapter 11, entitled “The Muscogee (Creek) Development Corporation” in MCNCA Title 17.

If adopted, the new chapter will define the authority of the “Muscogee (Creek) Development Corporation.” It will enable it to carry out business and eco-

nom ic development projects. It will also define the makeup of a board of trustees and officers.

**NCA 26-109** A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending MCNCA Title 37, § 2-203 entitled “Permanent Fund.” Rep. Hufft and Rep. Tiger sponsored the bill. It passed 3-0.

The legislation adds language to include an employee raise/initiative fund and a cultural and language fund, both supported by the MCN permanent fund.

HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE & BUSINESS, FINANCE, AND JUSTICE JOINT  
Tuesday, July 22

**TR 26-046** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to execute a detention services agreement with the Creek County Juvenile Detention Center. Representative Dode Barnett sponsored the bill, and Representative Cody Phillips cosponsored it. The bill passed 9-0.

According to the bill, the agreement will be governed and constructed according to Oklahoma law and will be exclusive to the state and federal courts located in Creek County.

**TR 26-047** A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation opposing the construction and operation of any aluminum smelter upon the Reservation Lands of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Representative Anna Marshall sponsored the bill. Representatives Thomasene Osborn, Lucian Tiger, Lowe, Mary Crawford, Galen Cloud, Cody Phillips, Darrell Proctor, and Sandra Golden co-sponsored the bill. It was passed as a due substitute 9-0.

According to the bill, an aluminum smelter is scheduled to be constructed in Inola this year. It claims that the potential pollution generated by the smelter will affect areas of the Mvskoke Reservation, creating “generational environmental trauma.”

VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



Curtis J. Smith  
U.S. Marine Corps  
1976 - 1979

The Muscogee Nation Veterans Affairs Services Office is proud to honor Curtis J. Smith for his dedicated service to the Muscogee Nation, U.S. Marine Corps and the United States. Curtis honorably served for over three years and is a recipient of Rifle Expert Badge and Good Conduct Medal.

Mvto Curtis for your selfless service to your country and your community.

The Veterans Spotlight is submitted by the MCN VASO.

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IN MEMORIAM

Funeral services for Derrick Anthony Moore, 31, were held Tuesday, July 14th, at 10:00 a.m., at the Wetumka High School auditorium. Derrick passed away unexpectedly on July 8th at his home in Wetumka, OK.

Derrick, also known to most as “D-Mo”, was born on May 22, 1995, in Ada, OK, to Angela (Yahola) Sleet and Marcus Moore.

Derrick attended Wetumka schools and graduated in 2013. While in high school, Derrick was a standout running back, helping lead his team to multiple winning seasons, including one that earned a spot in the state championship game in 2010. He was also a state champion in powerlifting, breaking many state records.

After high school, Derrick attended Northeastern State University in Tahlequah on a football scholarship. Later, graduating from East Central University with a degree in kinesiology.

More recently, Derrick found work at Iron Horse Security as an armed guard. It was an unexpected career path, but one he loved and enjoyed. While at Iron Horse, he was given opportunities to travel throughout the state for various security details.

Derrick loved his family. He was a good son, brother, grandson, and nephew.

He loved gaming, lifting weights, and dancing, though he was not the best dancer. Derrick also enjoyed spending time with his cousins.

Derrick is survived by his mother, Angela Sleet, bother Gayland “Drae” Moore, and sister, Aiyana Sleet, all of the home, father, Marcus Moore, of Seminole, OK, sister Kalli Moore, of Horntown, brother Ethan Davis of Seminole, OK, grandparents Mr. & Mrs. Winfred McCreary of San Antonio, Tx, and his papa Thomas Yahola and wife Phyllis of Wetumka,



Derrick Moore

OK. Derrick is also survived by his aunts Chris Moore of Macon, GA, Cassie Moore of Birmingham, AL, and Eve Moore of Seminole, OK. Aunts and uncles Thomasene and Jeff Osborn, Asi Yahola, Leah Underwood, Lenora Crump, Melinda Smith, Opothle Yahola, and Danielle Hicks all of Wetumka, OK. Derrick also leaves behind a large extended family and many friends.

Preceding him in death are his grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. Lee Moore, Jr., his uncle, Galand Moore, grandma “Pinky” (Bemo) Yahola, and cousin Cameron Osborn.

Pallbearers are Darrick Deer-Buxton, Alex Hicks, Khalil Moore, Chance Fish, Ubaldo Rojas, Saybion Battles, Ethan Davis, and Maurice Sleet. Honorary pallbearers: Asi Yahola, Opothle Yahola, Terrence Yahola, Lewis Yahola, Jeff Osborn, Jeremy Clanton, Emvnycke “Lucky” Yahola, Josiah McPerryman, and Nash Smith.

A wake service was held on Monday, July 13th, at 7:00 p.m., at The First Assembly of God Church in Wetumka, OK.

Internment was at the Yahola Liketv family cemetery, northwest of Wetumka.

Services will be under the direction of Parks Brothers Funeral Home of Wetumka, Oklahoma, and officiated by Rev. Darrel “Bo” Gibbs, assisted by Coach Vick.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

**Elder’s Meeting**  
Okmulgee Elder Nutrition Center  
Wednesday, Aug. 5, 9:30 a.m.  
1021 N. Seminole Ave., Okmulgee

**Indigenous Independence: America at 250**  
Gilcrease Museum  
Helmerich Center for American Research  
Items from the collection that highlight the Indigenous influences leading up to and during the American Revolution  
Now- August 7  
Monday-Friday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.  
guided tours from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Coffee and Donuts**  
Veteran Affairs Services Office  
Thursday, Aug. 13, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.  
1006 Bear Lane, Okmulgee

**Native State Slow-Pitch Tournament**  
Muscogee Nation Recreation  
Friday, Aug. 14 - Sunday Aug. 16  
Men, women, and coed tournament  
\$300 entry fee, \$150 deposits due by Monday, Aug. 3. Must provide CDIB card at registration.

2950 Warrior Rd, Okmulgee  
For questions, contact 918-605-4048

**Santa Fe Indian Market**  
Saturday, Aug. 15, - Sunday, Aug. 16  
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
121 Sandoval Street, Santa Fe

**Southern California Outreach Beyond the Reservation**  
Saturday, Aug. 22, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Hilton Orange County/ Costa Mesa Hotel Ballroom  
3050 Bristol Street, Costa Mesa, CA  
For more information, call 918-732-7613

**Grandparents’ Day Elders’ Talent Show**  
Elder Services  
Wednesday, Sept. 2, 9 a.m  
All performances must be preregistered by Wednesday, Aug. 19, must be an MCN age 55 years or older  
2950 Warrior Rd, Okmulgee  
For more information, contact 918-732-7765

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PROPERTY INQUIRY

Hesci, I am a Mvskoke Citizen currently living in TX and would like to return to live on the Muscogee Reservation. I am looking for land of at least 3 acres, up to 40 acres or more, to settle back home. I am a private Creek individual, not an agent or company, and would love to hear from owners directly. Please email land address or coordinates or offers to donnishaspicer@yahoo.com or text to (713) 478-2278

LEGALS

IN AND OF THE DISTRICT COURT MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION  
OKMULGEE DIVISON

In the Matter of the Adoption of: )  
David Rhett Posio )  
DOB 05/01/2024 )  
Case No. AD-2026-7 )  
CYNTHIA FREEMAN  
COURT CLERK

SERVICE OF NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

STATE OF OKLAHOMA TO: CODY LYNN POSIO

TAKE NOTICE that a stepparent adoption action and application to adjudicate minor eligible for adoptions without consent of natural father were filed on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March 2026 in the District Court of Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Okmulgee Division, State of Oklahoma, Case No. AD-2026-7 styled *In the Matter of Adoption of: David Rhett Posio* by Petitioner, Chaz Ian Richard Riddle. The action alleges that the consent of the natural father is not necessary under MCNC 6 § 1-901.  
You are notified that you must appear in the District Court of Muscogee Creek Nation, located at 2501 Lvmhvike, Okmulgee, OK 74447 on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of October 2026 at 9:00 a.m. to either contest or consent to the adoption. Failure to appear could result in the Court granting a default termination of your parental rights.  
Given under my hand and seal this 10 day of July, 2026.  
Tammie Olin  
DEPUTY COURT CLERK

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

IN THE MATTER OF: )  
D.M., DOB: 04/25/2011; )  
H.L., DOB: 08/15/2016; )  
P.D., DOB: 11/24/2024; )  
P.M., DOB: 03/13/2013; )  
S.L., DOB: 09/03/2008; )  
Alleged Deprived Child(ren). )  
Case No. JV 2025-383-20  
CYNTHIA FREEMAN  
COURT CLERK

NOTICE OF HEARING TO:  
Phillip Sherman, Natural Father as to S.L.

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 September 03, 2026 @ 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 OF THE DISTRICT COURT

IN AND OF THE DISTRICT COURT MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION  
OKMULGEE DIVISON

In the Matter of the Adoption of: )  
MAKENZIE ANNE WILLIAMS, )  
DOB 09/26/2012 )  
CONNOR ROBERT WILLIAMS, )  
DOB 09/16/2014 )  
MADILYNN MARIE WILLIAMS, )  
DOB 9/16/2014 )  
Case No.: AD-2026-14  
CYNTHIA FREEMAN  
COURT CLERK

SERVICE OF NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

STATE OF OKLAHOMA TO: CRYSTAL ANNE WILLIAMS

TAKE NOTICE that a stepparent adoption action and application to adjudicate minor eligible for adoptions without consent of natural mother were filed on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of May 2026 in the District Court of Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Okmulgee Division, State of Oklahoma, Case No. AD-2026-14 styled *In the Matter of Adoption of: Makenzie Anne Williams, Connor Robert Williams, and Madilynn Marie Williams* by Petitioner, Bobbie Lee Williams. The action alleges that the consent of the natural mother is not necessary under MCNC 6 § 1-901.  
You are notified that you must appear in the District Court of Muscogee Creek Nation, located at 2501 Lvmhvike, Okmulgee, OK 74447 on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of August 2026 at 9:00 a.m. to either contest or consent to the adoption. Failure to appear could result in the Court granting a default termination of your parental rights.  
Given under my hand and seal this 10 day of July, 2026.  
Tammie Olin  
DEPUTY COURT CLERK

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

IN THE MATTER OF: )  
D.M., DOB: 04/25/2011; )  
H.L., DOB: 08/15/2016; )  
P.D., DOB: 11/24/2024; )  
P.M., DOB: 03/13/2013; )  
S.L., DOB: 09/03/2008; )  
Alleged Deprived Child(ren). )  
Case No. JV 2025-18  
2026 JUL -6, P 4 27  
MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION  
CYNTHIA FREEMAN  
COURT CLERK

NOTICE OF HEARING TO:  
Jeromie Michael Dye, Natural Father as to D.M.

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 September 03, 2026, @ 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 OF THE DISTRICT COURT



Muscogee (Creek) Nation

CESO

NATIVE OWNED

Business

EXPO

10AM - 3PM

RIVER SPIRIT CASINO RESORT

8330 Riverside Parkway | Tulsa, Oklahoma

03 SEPTEMBER 2026

CONTACT

SONNY BEVENUE

918.549.2962

BAYLEE CARPENTER

918.549.2969

CHELSEA POTTS

918.549.2740



THE MUSCOGEE NATION



RIVER SPIRIT<sup>®</sup>

CASINO RESORT

TULSA

PREVENT

the SPREAD

of RESPIRATORY VIRUSES



COVER YOUR COUGHS & SNEEZES



WASH HANDS OFTEN

For at least 20 seconds



STAY HOME WHEN SICK

including having a runny nose, sore throat, and/or cough



KEEP AIR CIRCULATING & VENTILATED



STAY UP TO DATE

with your vaccinations, including Flu, RSV & COVID-19

MCNHealth

EXPRESS CARE CLINICS



COUNCIL OAK

10109 E. 79TH ST.

TULSA, OK 74133

918.233.9550



OKMULGEE

1400 S. WOOD DRIVE

OKMULGEE, OK 74447

918.591.5733

HOURS OF OPERATION:

MON-FRI (7AM-7PM)

SAT-SUN (9AM-5PM)

WALK-INS WELCOME



NO APPOINTMENTS NECESSARY

SERVING CITIZENS OF  
FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES

creekhealth.org

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