

# MVSKOKE FOOD

*Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative*



June Marshall, MFSI staff member, center, leads a cooking demonstration that included foods such as beans, hominy and pork, Indian pumpkin, and osafke. Attending the event were, clockwise, right of Marshall; Ray Hunt, Okmulgee citizen, Lizanne Holata, MFSI Board of Directors' member, Ray and Carmilla Watson of Okemah, and Sheila Stevenson, Langston University Extension Specialist.

## Monthly Events

[www.mvskokefood.org](http://www.mvskokefood.org)  
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### January 6-7

#### Horticulture Industries Show

The HIS will be held at Tulsa Community College Northeast Campus, Jan. 6-7, 2012. The Theme is: "Propagating Success: Pursuing Excellence in Horticulture." For more information, please visit the website: [www.hortla.okstate.edu/his](http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/his)

### January 18 - 21

#### Southern SAWG Southern Region Farming Conference: Practical Tools & Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms

The Southern SAWG Conference will be held Jan. 18 - 21, 2012 at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock, AR. Short Courses, Mini Courses and Field Trips are available. For more information visit: <http://www.ssawg.org/2012-Conference-Program/>

### January 17 - March 6

#### Oklahoma Market Gardening School

This is an 8-week course in Chickasha, OK. Instructors from OSU, Noble Foundation, OSU Lane Ag. Center and Okla. Dept. of Ag, Food & Forestry will be teaching the classes. For more information visit: <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/events/pdf/2012OKMarket.pdf>

### February 11

#### Annual Plasticulture Conference

Small Farmers: World Class Innovators: This one-day conference in Moore, OK from 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. Early Registration - \$10 or \$15 at the door. Lunch provided for early registrants. Call (405) 522-5595 for info or (405) 522-4330 to RSVP.

## MFSI: 2011 A Year in Review

By: MFSI Staff

[mreader@mvskokefood.org](mailto:mreader@mvskokefood.org)

**M**FSI accomplished many goals in 2011, but highlighted successes, as follows, were mainly in three categories: education, hands-on farming/gardening and policy development.

**Education:** We successfully published a six-page newsletter throughout 2011. The newsletter is distributed to 421 online subscribers and 486 regular mail subscribers as well as being published on our website. We are especially proud of the regular mail distribution as it reaches many readers who do not have internet access and depend on the mail for communication about MFSI educational events, food and nutrition information, healthy recipes and food policy reports, *etc.* We know from feedback that our newsletters are thoroughly read and recirculated in the rural communities that we serve. Our

website had 10,361 visits between April and December this year. Our Facebook friends have grown to 558 and are still increasing.

We held numerous educational events during this grant period on topics such as sustainable livestock production, garden bulb planting, Farm Service Youth Loans, Keepseagle claims process, seed saving, Native foods and soap making, *etc.* We held educational events at elementary schools, churches, senior citizen centers, 4-H meetings and at our resource center. One of the most popular events was a Jamaican cooking class held at a local cafe owned and operated by a Native family from Jamaica. We initiated a new monthly event called "Brown Bags" where we offer educational classes and a healthy lunch at our Okmulgee office/resource center that has proved to be popular. We have continued to



# Making the Connection



By H. June Marshall  
Community Coordinator  
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**O**ur pastor gave a really thought-provoking sermon. What she said brought back good memories of my mother, grandmother and even my great grandmothers whom I have never met but I seem to know them because of the many stories my mother and dad told us about them.

I loved hearing those stories about our great grandmothers – about their love, courage, resourcefulness, intelligence (even though they did not have much schooling), and especially their love of the grand kids. Both my parents were reared by their grandmothers, and both state they owe their existence to them.

Once I got out of high school, I immediately left to go to a big city and that is where I lived until I returned to Oklahoma in 2004. I once said I would never live in Anadarko but I did live there for one year in 2008-2009. I had not been around the area for many years, and people were constantly asking me, “Who is your mother?”

This simple question is probably asked all the time. I inform them that my mother is Mary Akoneto Horsechief Miller and her mother was Sadie Redhorn Akoneto – and that is where I stop. My great

grandmother has an Indian name that I cannot pronounce. Once the person gets the question answered, they connect the lineage. I am related to so many because of my mom's side of the family.

People will ask, too, “Who is your dad? And you discover you are related to more people. The connection goes way back – all the way back to the beginning of creation!

We are tied to Mother Earth and all that is created within the fold of her wings. We are connected because of that One Great Spirit *And* the connection to our mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers...

We are tied to the earth so powerfully and wonderfully – it is in our souls so we cannot forget who we are. What are your connections?

You are probably wondering what this article has to do with food sovereignty. Actually, we are in the season where family and friends are especially important because of sharing and making memories. We will be sharing those memories over the meals of the holidays whether it be a piece of pumpkin pie, Sofke, green bean casserole, turkey, black eye peas, or some other delicious recipe. Many blessings to you and yours – stay connected.

## MFSI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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COORDINATOR

SUE WHITE  
NICOA

VICKY KARHU  
GRANT WRITER/ADVISORY

# Mvskoke Valor



Melodie Sivadon Reader, Communications Coordinator  
[mreader@mvsokkefood.org](mailto:mreader@mvsokkefood.org)

**M**vskoke (Creek) men and women have been quick to step up and protect the land we call home, from generation to generation.

While the call is not heeded by all, those who do serve our nation do so with honor. Their stories are told to both young and old throughout history to help preserve their heroism and the lessons learned.

As a young child, I recall our family celebrating and telling stories during family get-togethers.

These stories preserve our traditions and help pass along a little family history as well: at least, as well as we remember it.

My grandfather, Gene Sivadon, often told me stories of his time in the service.

I have a picture, tucked somewhere in the recesses of my memory, in which I recall seeing an old black and white photograph of him as a young Army sergeant. He is wearing a grass skirt on the beach, a world away, during World War II.

The stories behind the photos were wonderful and depicted a full spectrum of emotions: humor, sadness, regret, and sometimes even anger, but the time spent listening at my grandfather's feet was priceless.

My step-grandfather, Eldon "Ed" Hobbs, also served in the army and was part of those who stormed the beach at Normandy.

He would tell his stories and show his photos and medals. We were regaled with tales through the years and really enjoyed learning about my family's history and how it is entwined in our nation's history.

On Veterans Day, Muscogee (Creek) Nation honored our Mvskoke servicemen and women with a ceremony at the MCN Tribal Complex in Okmulgee, OK.

Many veterans and their families attended this event. It is great that we, as Mvskokvlke, continue the traditions and honor our veterans. Those who are actively serving and those who have lost their lives, are protecting our rights and freedoms.

For without our service men and women, our Christmas holiday may not be so easily celebrated

It is their sacrifice that gives us the opportunity to celebrate time with family and friends this holiday season. So as you enjoy your holidays with family and friends, remember to thank a serviceman or woman for helping make your freedom to celebrate a reality.

Mvskokvlke Tvstvvnke, MVTO.

## MFSI Corner

### Word Coinings

Stephanie Berryhill  
Youth Coordinator

**T**he staff at Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative is interested in knowing what Mvskoke words you, your family, or community can come with to describe foreign / new food introductions such as 'banana' and 'potato chips.' We recently asked "What you think or what do you think your grandmother or great-grandmother would have called it?" The first submission received which came the closest to the Dewar elders' new word "coinings" was sent by Ms. Millie Scott, who may stop by the office to pick up her T-Shirt anytime after Jan. 4, during regular business hours.

Potato chips: Vhv-tvskocē

Banana: wotkoeste-en hompetv or wotkoesterakko-en hompetv

### New Words: Chili & Crackers

Email your Mvskoke word suggestions to: [sberryhill@mvsokkefood.org](mailto:sberryhill@mvsokkefood.org) or mail to office.

## MFSI Office Info

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative  
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### Office Hours:

Monday - Closed

Tuesday - 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.\*

Wednesday - 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.\*

Thursday - 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.\*

Friday - 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.\*

\*(unless working in the field)

MFSI Staff are here to help you. Please feel free to stop in and visit.

[mvsokkefood@gmail.com](mailto:mvsokkefood@gmail.com)

[www.mvsokkefood.com](http://www.mvsokkefood.com)

## MFSI: 2011 A Year in Review (continued from page 1)

lead educational discussions in collaboration with the Muscogee Nation Food and Fitness Policy Council on a wide variety of food system topics.

**Farmer/gardener and staff training:** In the fall of 2011 we entered into a formal partnership with the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture to establish a distance learning center for farmers and rancher training in sustainable agricultural practices at our resource center. Our staff and selected farmers and ranchers are attending regular training sessions at the Kerr Center in Poteau, OK (a two hour drive away) in a train-the-trainers program, so that we can offer hands-on training in addition to the online distance-learning sessions. We have hosted numerous farming and ranching training workshops in the Wilson Community where MFSI has a large community garden and our program helps support several active market growers. One major accomplishment is the formation of the Okmulgee County Farmers and Ranchers Association, with MFSI leadership, that has been meeting regularly in the Wilson Community to learn about grass-fed cattle production, pasture management and other sustainable commercial production practices. We also sent farmers, staff and gardeners to training opportunities for value-added products at Oklahoma State University and the Food Sector Opportunity Program at the Taos County Economic Development Corporation in New Mexico. We provided scholarships for 10 farmers and ranchers to attend the Oklahoma-Arkansas Horticulture Industries Show in January 2010 and for 10 potential value-added producers to attend training at Oklahoma State University to prepare them for commercial production. We sent two staff, which worked with farmers and ranchers, to the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working

Group conference in Chattanooga, Tenn.

**Policy development:** Throughout the year the newly formed Muscogee (Creek) Nation Food and Fitness Policy Council (MCN FFPC) continued to meet to discuss food issues, and develop a logic model and work/action plan. MFSI hosted Mark Winne, nationally renowned food policy council development expert, to meet with the MCN FFPC to assist with organizational development. We guided the MCN FFPC in electing officers, establishing a regular monthly meeting time and place, establishing permanent seats on the council and beginning to identify and prioritize issues for legislative action.

At the national level we had input on the 2012 Farm Bill by participating in two listening sessions with the Community Food Security Coalition and two of our staff continue to work with the National Family Farm Coalition to construct platform statements to be delivered through these two national organizations.

Our programs are open to all people. We publicize our educational events in all media and usually have a mix of different people at these events. The farmers and ranchers we work with are of all ethnicities and generally are socially-marginalized and have low-income levels. This year we expanded our interactions with local black ranchers. We advocate for food sustainability by constantly being out in the communities, asking questions and making inquiries into needs and concerns. We held information and discussion meetings in six counties of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation covering several thousand square miles. We go where the constituents gather; feed and seed stores, churches, community centers, elderly nutrition centers, farmers markets,

and tractor supply locations. One outreach meeting was even hosted at an area stockyard. We take surveys at some of our events, obtain sign-in sheets with contact information for follow-up and publicity purposes and always ask questions wherever we go. We attempt to include diverse peoples and are proud to include cross-cultural makeup in the groups that we serve.

We have been active on several boards, advisory councils and committees. They are listed here starting with the most local and working up through the national level:

- Muscogee (Creek) Nation Food and Fitness Policy Council
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation Elderly Nutrition Program
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation Diabetes Program
- Okmulgee County Conservation District
- USDA Okmulgee, Hughes, Creek, Okfuskee and McIntosh counties service centers
- Okmulgee County Farmers Association (Advisory Team seat)
- Okmulgee County Farmers and Ranchers Association (Officer)
- Green Country Buy Fresh, Buy Local (Steering committee)
- Oklahoma Food Policy Council
- Oklahoma Farmers and Ranchers Association (Board seat)
- Oklahoma S.A.R.E. Advisory Council (Advisor seat)
- Tulsa Food Policy Council (Cultural Advisor)
- National Congress of American Indians (food sovereignty panel for two years)
- National Family Farm Coalition (Board seat)
- Community Food Security Coalition (Board seat and member of executive director search, diversity and international relations committees)
- U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance (Organizing committee)

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- USDA Office of Outreach and Advocacy Cooperators Strategic Action Team
- Rural Coalition
- International Institute of Indigenous Science (Advisory Team seat)

In addition to the above positions we are often asked to make presentations about our work and to provide cultural presentations based on traditional food practices. This year our Policy Coordinator was honored to be invited to speak on a food sovereignty panel at the Annual Meeting of Environmental Journalists in Miami, Fla. MFSI hosted a workshop on tribal food policy councils at the Community Food Security Coalition policy conference in Portland, OR. MFSI Executive Director was invited to be on a food sovereignty panel at an annual tribal sovereignty symposium held in Oklahoma City. He also represented MFSI in meetings with the USDA Office of Tribal Relations.

Locally MFSI partnered with the USDA Farm Services staff to participate in a local Earth Day event and poster contest. We participated in the annual tribal Diabetes Summit and Pink Party. Our staff made presentations to the Lion's Club, several church and community groups, 4-H and elementary school students. We also participated in the USDA service agency school field day. We co-hosted traditional meals with several communities and churches. Our staff collaborated with the USDA, tribal programs and community leaders and elected officials to carry out these projects. celebration with the MCN FFPC.

We advocate for grass roots, community-based approaches to all food system issues. In general, we are representing the needs, concerns and ideas generated in the rural, low-income farming and

ranching communities that we serve.

MFSI took the lead and partnered with the MCN FFPC to celebrate the first National Food Day by hosting a daylong, multi-faceted event and getting a proclamation of Food Day signed by Principal Chief A.D. Ellis. MFSI distributed informational handouts on childhood obesity, breast cancer and diabetes during the MCN FFPC meetings, tribal diabetes summit and Pink Party breast cancer awareness event.

In September 2011 we entered in to a contract with the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture to develop a distance-learning center at our resource center and to provide outreach to Native American farmers and ranchers.

This year we added three new members to the Board of Directors and had one member retire, one member move from the board into a paid community garden position and one member resign because of relocation. The three new members are two Muscogee citizens with extensive cultural knowledge and a Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma citizen who works for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Diabetes Program.

It is very gratifying to hear conversations going on among tribal citizens and others about the food system, food issues and creative ways to start to bring about food sovereignty in our service area. It is great to see families and community groups getting together to plant gardens, hold traditional meals, shop at farmers markets, *etc.*

We were very proud to be invited for the second year in a row to serve on the food sovereignty panel at the National Congress of American Indians. We were proud to be contacted several times by the

USDA Office of Tribal Relations for information and advice on improving relations with grass roots Native organizations. On the home front, it was gratifying to see so many gardeners and small farmers persevere in the extreme heat and drought of the 2011 growing season to provide fresh, homegrown foods. It was also exciting to see seasoned conventional "cowboys" entering into serious discussions about switching to grass-fed operations and holistic pasture management techniques.

We increased our work with youth significantly by doing after school, 4-H and community youth events. We estimate that we had over 2000 youth participants in educational and meal events. We plan to continue to work with as many young people as possible and search for young leaders who we can mentor and add to our staff.

MFSI is grateful to our community, farmers, ranchers, growers, and our partners, both local and nationally, who have made our success possible. We thank you for your continued encouragement and support of MFSI programs, which assist in making sustainable agriculture an attainable goal for local farmers and ranchers. Without your support, none of this would be possible.

We are looking forward to 2012 and continuing the work that we have begun in our tribal communities. *Mvto.*

**AFVCKĒ - OHROLOPĒ - MOCVŠĒ**

Happy New Year from our family to yours. May your 2012 be filled with bountiful harvests and many blessings. *Mvto!*

MFSI Executive Director,  
Board & Staff

**MFSI THROUGH THE YEAR**



Wilson Indian Community girl, Alaysia Williams, prepare tafvmpvce 'wild onions' for storage.



MFSI Education & Policy Coordinator, Rita Williams, (second from left), participates in a policy forum at National Congress of American Indians Conference, Oct. 30 - Nov. 4, 2011 in Portland, OR.



Kerr Center training for beginning farmers and ranchers held at MFSI offices, Sept. 24, 2011.



OASDFR board meeting held at USDA Okmulgee County Conservation District Offices, Sept. 10, 2011.



Mvskoke grandfather Mike Berryhill, Hvlpvtvlke and Kvssehtv Town member, shows his grandchildren, Eco and Emily, Ecovlke and Ocevpopfv Town members, a huckleberry tree.



MFSI 4-H Youth complete projects, August 2011, for the Okmulgee County Fair.

Check us out on Facebook!



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