



MFSI NEWSLETTER

“Serving the Mvskoke people and our neighbors”

Tasahce Rakko (Big Spring)

April 2010

BUSY & EXCITING PLANTING SEASON AT MFSI!

by Rita Williams, Community Educator

MFSI HOSTS TRAINING

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty held a garden training in Okmulgee on April 5, 2010 with a young man who is a successful farmer known to this area.

Luke Fisher is a small scale vegetable grower near Bristow, Oklahoma. He comes from generations of farmers who have owned their own successful business, Fisher Farm and Feeds, for many years.

He has been growing a wide variety of produce for area farmers markets for the last two years and is starting asparagus production this season. Luke is also a registered nurse working part time at Bristow Medical Center and volunteers for several months each winter in Africa doing medical outreach and humanitarian work.

Luke gave a short power point presentation on how to build a low cost hoop house/greenhouse for year around growing, water reserve, plasti-culture growing experimentation as well as his favorite heirloom seeds. His knowledge of growing and using resources around your farm was an insight that many attendees took away from this training. He will be coming back in the near future for another training and we encourage you to watch for the training schedules.

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A Wild Onion Story

by H. June Marshall, Administrative Assistant

Wild onions seem to be a hot topic nowadays. Organizations around the area are hosting wild onion dinners to raise money for various causes. In fact, if you read the local newspapers, you will see that many communities are hosting wild onion dinners with all the trimmings. It is almost like a national holiday, similar to a Thanksgiving meal with all the favorite trimmings that go with the turkey and dressing. The trimmings for the wild onions will be salt pork, beans, sour cornbread, potatoes, Sofke, and many other dishes. I have been asking neighbors who prepare wild onions about their recipes. Everyone fixes their wild onions a little bit different. Some sauté the onions in a little bacon fat, some steam the onions in a small amount of water, some use a lot of eggs, others use very little eggs so you can savor the onions. If the recipe was passed down to you from your mom, grandmother, aunt, that is how you learned to prepare the onions. I would like to hear your favorite wild onion recipe. Was the recipe passed down to you? Who passed it to you? Did you learn on your own to cook them? Let us know. I am familiar with wild onions; my mom used to pick wild onions and make a meal out of them. I do not really remember how she prepared them, I just know she called them wild onions and we ate them. She also used to pick watercress along the creek, and we would eat that, too. I wished I had paid attention to my mother as she gathered edible plants in the woods, along the creeks, and in the fields. Her dad had a green thumb and always had a very large garden practically year round. Grandpa grew flowers, too.

MFSI

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MFSI Mission Statement

Mvsoko Food Sovereignty Initiative works to enable the Mvsoko People and their neighbors to provide for their food and health needs now and in the future through sustainable agriculture, economic development, community involvement, cultural and educational programs.

Office Hours

Tuesday -Friday
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Staff

Vicky Karhu
Executive Director

Ben Yahola
Community Coordinator

Dacey Barnett
Office Manager

June (Thomas) Marshall
Administrative Assistant

Rita Williams
Community Educator

Anthony Ciocco
Youth Coordinator

Reader Response

Noemi: I really loved how you have different kinds of writings in the newsletter.

Noemi: You said so powerfully that self-sustainability is a form of resisting colonialism and that sustaining yourselves and being independent (in terms of food, medicine, language, knowledge systems) brings you closer to freedom. And you emphasized that ‘the colonial structure won’t give us what we need’ and that Capitalism won’t support sustainability and while it might not be economically feasible at all times, you try to be prepared as much as possible to enact freedom whenever that day comes. I find that so powerful to say (and live!) it that way.

Next Month’s Question

What is your favorite wild onion story?

You can send us your feedback by visiting our MFSI facebook page!

MFSI welcomes feedback on all of the materials in our newsletter. You can email us at info@mvsokofood.org

Or mail to our office at
208 W 6th Street
Okmulgee, OK
74447



Clean Meat for All

by Vicky Karhu

Would you like to purchase meat that you know is free of hormones, antibiotics and feedlot grains? It is possible without paying the very high prices in health food stores. MFSI can help. Here’s how it works... We are compiling a list of meat producers who are willing to sell individuals an animal “on the hoof” meaning that it is still alive and feeding on pasture or whatever feed regimen the farmer/rancher has in place. Consumers can purchase this animal at an agreed on price and terms, making it their animal that the farmer is just boarding. When both parties agree, the animal is taken to the processor and the consumer (animal owner) deals directly with the processor as to how they want it cut up, etc. The consumer picks up the finished meat at the processor and pays for it there. This method is completely legal and works to the benefit of both farmer/rancher and consumer.

I have used this method for the last two years with a Mvsoko rancher to provide locally grown, grass-fed beef for my family. I paid \$600 for the steer, \$40 for transportation to the processor and \$240 for the processing. I received 420 pounds of natural beef for an average of \$2.10 a pound. Compare this to the price for grass-fed ground beef at Whole Foods (usually \$3.99 @ lb.) or any other sources. The meat I got included many steaks, ribs, roasts, etc. and is really good. I’ve already got my next one ordered for next year. One steer will fill up a medium sized freezer and provides many, many great meals. This same system can work for other types of meats and we are currently looking for any leads with chicken/poultry. If you are interested in being included in our list as either a producer or consumer, call Vicky at 918-470-3819 or MFSI at 918-756-5915.

FUND RAISING EFFORT!

MFSI TO RAISE FUNDS TO PURCHASE BUILDING

MFSI is beginning our *first ever* fundraising drive. And we need your help! As you may have already seen, we have been renting our 'MFSI Warehouse,' at 215 W 7th St. This space has already been put to use for workshops, movie nights, open mics, soon to have youth night, and many more activities! Our goal is have this building as a permanent home where we can offer organic products and foods, canning operation, farmers market all year long, training site, activities for the youth and elders, gardening supplies, heirloom seeds, gift shop, a certified kitchen, a resource center for our neighbors, tilling services, etc.

MFSI is sending this request to our regu-

lar USPS and EMAIL listing. If every neighbor would donate \$100 or whatever you can afford, we can purchase the building, and MFSI would be permanently grounded in downtown Okmulgee opening our doors to our communities! Our fundraising goal is \$50,000.00, we can do it with your help!

YOU CAN PAY BY PAY-PAL (ON THE MFSI WEB SITE) OR MAIL TO MFSI, 208 WEST 6TH STREET, OKMULGEE, OKLAHOMA 74447, OR COME BY THE OFFICE.

**We need your financial support!
Call us at 918.756.5915 and talk with us.**

Spring Gardening Guide

Hopefully your seeds, bulbs, and starts are in the ground and starting to grow. Perhaps you have been to one of the MFSI events and learned some new growing techniques.

This guide may help with some general information for planting your crops this year. Many of these crops can still be planted through June, so if you're running behind you still have time!

Vegetable	Planting Time	Seed Planting Depth	Spacing between seeds	Spacing Between rows	Days to Harvest
Bean (lima)	Apr. 15-30	1"	6"	2-3'	90-120
Bean (green or wax)	Apr. 10-30	1"	4"	1.5'	50-60
Bean (pole)	Apr. 10-30	1"	8"-12"	3'	60-90
Cantaloupe	May 1-20	1/2"	2-3'	3-5'	80-100
Cucumber	Apr 10-30	1/2"	2-3'	3-5'	50-70
Eggplant	Apr 10-30		1.5'	3'	80-90
Okra	Apr 10-30	1"	1.5'	2-3'	60-70
Pepper	Apr 10-30		2'	3'	90-110
Pumpkin	Apr 10-30	1"	3-4'	5'	90-120
Southern Pea	May 1-June 10	1"	4"	3'	85-100
Squash (summer)	Apr 10-30	1"	3'	4'	40-60
Squash (winter)	May 15-June 15	1"	4'	5'	110-125
Sweet corn	Mar 15-Apr 15	1"	1.5'	3'	80-100
Sweet Potato	May 1-June 10		1'	3'	100-120
Tomato	Apr 10-30		2-3'	4'	70-90
Watermelon	May 10-20	1"	5-8'	5-8'	90-120

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YOUTH SPEAKS

Why not live off the land?

By Chako, Youth Project Coordinator

All people at some point in their history, have a traditional earth based way of living. It was not by choice that our lifestyles were changed into the way we go about today. Oppression in the forms of colonization, genocide, displacement, enslavement, and a long list of other negative experiences, have torn us from our way of life. If we're aware of these things, why not go back to being who we are (have we given up)? Why not live closer to the earth? Below are some of the common excuses we make for not taking that courageous step to live a more traditional life style.

Myth one: "It is way, way too hard - being traditional is a rough, uncomfortable, grueling lifestyle." The reality is, of course, that being traditional is way better than the lives we live today! One study found that in the average Indigenous society, people work approximately 20 hours a week. Which would you rather do, spend 40 hours a week working in a city, sitting at a desk, counting dollar bills, cleaning, flipping burgers, etc. or 20 hours outside planting, growing, hunting, cooking, raising children, etc? Living traditionally promotes more leisure time, a much more relaxed, happy, social environment, and much more natural, enjoyable, healthy labor.

Myth two: "It is impossible to live traditionally today, it's a different time now, we can't go back." This is one of those things, if you believe it strong enough, you make it true. But the fact is, there are people all over the world, thousands and millions of them, who still live off the land. Even here in North America there are people of other tribes, rural non-Indians, hippies, Amish people, and all kinds of groups that choose to live in one 'traditional' way or another. Sure, the land has changed to an extent, water isn't as clean, weather is changing with global warming, and so we must adapt - but adapting is possible and other people are proving it everyday. Of course we can't "go back" to the old days, but we can move forward into this day however we choose. Whether that's living in a one room house with a dirt floor, growing our own foods, or living in a city apartment eating fast-food. Whether we want to speak a language that is not our own,

"Of course we can't 'go back' to the old days, but we can move forward into this day however we choose."

and that was forced upon us, or re-learn our own tongue.

Myth three: "Life is so much more fun with TV, cell phones, movies, wal-marts, etc." If the modern way of life was actually more enjoyable, more fun, more happy, then why is that virtually every group in human history has had to be FORCED to convert to the modern way and leave behind their traditional way? It's pretty clear that when people have a choice they choose the traditional way. Women, men, young and old have all fought to keep their traditional ways, to restore their traditional ways, in our history and everyone else's history. Those who experienced the traditional lifestyle loved it so much they sacrificed their lives trying to defend it. There could be no clearer example than that.

Myth four: "I don't speak the language, I wasn't raised in a traditional family, I don't know our ways enough." Few people today, Indian or non-Indian, were raised living off the land. Us young ones especially, don't know how to grow our own foods, can, preserve meat, the songs that go with planting and harvesting, our language, etc. So what? Those are things we need to learn, and we have the rest of our lives to learn them. We can't expect ourselves to go from city slicker to traditionalist in a day, or even a year, it's a life long process of growth. We are very, very fortunate that our ancestors have struggled every

generation to carry on the knowledge that still exists in our communities. It is up to us to keep that knowledge alive by living it everyday and passing it on to the future generations. Anyone can learn the basics of living more traditionally. Some things, like language, may take years. Sacred things may take a lifetime to learn, or even many generations. But if we didn't sit around blaming ourselves or feeling sorry for ourselves and actually tried, there's PLENTY of resources to help along the way. Again, there are many people who have lost their traditions entirely, who have no idea what language their ancestors spoke, their traditional songs and dances, but yet still set out to start a traditional way of living.

My conclusion is that we were all once free Native people living happy, healthy, balanced lifestyles. Colonialism/capitalism has violently uprooted us from our histories, our traditions, and from the earth. These forces of oppression have also tried to convince us that we can't

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Live off the land continued...

go back. We can't re-root ourselves in our own traditions, and we can't root ourselves in the earth where we're at. We have to give up and just root ourselves in technology and try to live off of that as best we can. From a young age we are told stories from dominant society to make us believe these things. We are fed these 'myths' and don't really have a space or time to critically question them. We must begin with knowing ourselves, and that means knowing our personal, family, tribal, and land



histories. If we know our history then we would fight to survive, to continue on, to resist the ongoing process that's destroying us, our way of life, and the Earth, Water, and Air. Loving ourselves means loving our ancestors, their land and way of life. If we love ourselves for who we are then we'd see our traditions not as something to escape but to fight for, to die for, and to live for/with. So let's not blame ourselves, not think it's impossible or make other excuses, but move forward and create the community we want to enjoy and pass on.

Busy Planting Season continued...

WILSON INDIAN COMMUNITY

On Saturday, April 3, 2010 the Wilson Indian Community held an heirloom seed saving class with Kent Sanmann from Norman, Oklahoma. Kent is Kiowa and Chickasaw and has been collecting heirloom seeds and been an experienced gardener for many years.

His topics covered various heirloom corns that he has been collecting from different tribes across the United States.

Kent stated that Americans eat about twenty varieties of plants, he talked about the diseases attacking our food in the U.S. as well as other countries. He commented on open and pollinated variety of plants and which ones cross pollinate and the fact that the older varieties were more nutritious for us.

Kent encouraged the audience to start seed saving for the next generation. He pointed out that although seed saving requires a greater commitment, it is important keeping in mind that the common twenty varieties could someday be affected by disease.

KOWETA SENIOR CITIZENS PLANT TOMATOES

Gardening fever has hit many people who love to be out in their yard and garden getting their hands in the soil this time of year.

We should never forget our Senior elders who wish to have gardens but are not able to plow or till the ground. They still desire some fresh vegetables and would love to walk out to a garden to pick a tomato and maybe some green beans but their health has disabled them in some capacity.

The Senior Citizens at the Koweta Indian Com-

munity center planted tomato plants and seeded some bell peppers last month with the assistance from MFSI community educator, Rita Williams, Adam Recvloche, and Wilson community member Barton Williams, who instructed the seniors.

The group of women wanted some patio tomatoes and someone to show them how to care for them. They all pitched in and worked together to do this project.

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative staff felt honored to be invited by the Seniors Chairperson Lucille Miller to come and help in any way we could.

We were invited back on April 13, 2010 to replot their tomatoes and peppers in larger containers.

OKFUSKEE GEARS UP FOR PLANTING

During the spring break in March, Okfuskee invited MFSI to come out and do some training for their youth. Staff members, Chako, Rita Williams, and Ben Yahola took seeds and potting trays for training and hands on planting.



After they seeded their plants, about 7 adults and 2 children drove to their community property located north of IXL to plant cabbage in their garden tilled by Chairperson, Simmer Hicks. The cabbage was supplied by community educator, Rita Williams. We plan to can the cabbage when it gets ready.

Wild Onion continued...

Did you know that wild onions are members of the lily family? Part of the lily family includes the Allium genus that contains about 500 species which includes the onion family (garlic, leeks shallots, onions, chives). Most of these plants are common in the northern hemisphere. Our Indian neighbors have been coming to MFSI selling their wild onions. If you have tried to find out where they are picking their onions, you may get a clearing of the throat, a smile, or possibly no response to your question. These wild onion patches are secretly guarded. I admire my neighbors that go out and pick and clean the onions. All I have seen are the onions cut up and bagged. Neighbors Joan Hummingbird and her mom brought two buckets of wild onions donated to my husband's church. Onions were not cleaned. So my husband and I washed, cleaned, pulled off the outer layer of the onion, cut, bagged, and finally put the onions in the refrigerator. We stayed up one night until 2 a.m. And we still weren't finished! Many thanks to Joan and her mom Novena.

Wild onions are a delicacy. When you go out and start to pick them, you must know your wild onions. Besides their distinctive oniony smell, they will have tall, fleshy, blade-like leaves connected to a small bulb. The onions that I have eaten and bought have small bulbs which makes for a tender onion. If you have a wild onion story, please share with us. Send us your recipes, stories, history, and please, do not tell us where your secret patches are!



FARMERS OF THE MONTH

Retired couple return to their roots by Rita Williams, Community Educator

Just 2 1/4 miles east of Prague, Oklahoma live Rudy Bailey and Joan Marlow. Both have been retired for ten years and have returned to their upbringing. Maybe that was not how they planned their golden years, but when they started to plant and grow it just evolved into an everyday enjoyment for the both of them.

Both grew up on farms, but for Joan her memory of the farm was playing in the fields. She grew up in Earle, Arkansas where her family farmed. Last year her brother, Marshall Humphreys, was named Farmer of the year. Joan said she did not know anything about growing until ten years ago. She studied and researched plants and now has many different varieties of sun and shade plants, geraniums, grasses, sweet potato vines, and more. Their speciality is the wave petunia hanging basket.

Bailey is a retired math and science teacher who started growing loblolly trees ten years ago. They were looking for another place to buy and Joan had her eye on property that was up for sale and already had two greenhouses on it. One was a seed house and the other was

40x302 ft long. While Rudy was on a fishing trip with his brother, Joan surprised him by buying the property and the rest is history.

They grow organic vegetables and Rudy does not use any type of fertilizer on his watermelons except what the cows give. They make their own sausage and purchase grass fed beef. With the busy months coming, he is currently looking for good help in his area. He says good help is hard to find.

Giving and growing has become a way of life for the both of them. Rudy does outreach counseling for students between the ages of three to eighteen years. They give the students an opportunity to learn and work on the farm. The students enjoy quality time with them around the kitchen table talking, playing games, eating or going skating. "They just want love," says Rudy.

Rudy who is 1/4 Cherokee mentioned his grandfather was also a farmer and having that legacy instilled in him he expressed his love for growing and farming to becoming one again with nature and Mother Earth.

"A mother with child is beautiful she is carrying life that will one day come forth. Such is Mother Earth, she too gives life and watching this take place no money can buy the satisfaction and experience we have gained."



MFSI Goings On

MFSI Gift Shop

By June & Dicey

MFSI thanks the community who have visited our office located at 208 West 6th Street to see who we are and what we do. Some mistakenly come in thinking it is our neighbor's shoppe next door. When they realize they are in the wrong place, they will ask, "What do y'all do?" We tell them that MFSI is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping our neighbors to provide for their food needs now and in the future. Some stay and will browse in our small gift shop. We are proud of our office, and of MFSI's many accomplishments. One of our staff, Rita Williams, developed a cookbook, A Recipe Booklet from Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative Staff. This cookbook is dedicated to the youth who contributed their time and creativity to the MFSI Youth Art Contest. The youth's artwork is displayed throughout the cookbook. Knowing that our youth developed the artwork makes the book very special, a collector's item. A favorite recipe is the "Bunny Salad." If you have daughters or sons you are teaching to cook, this would be a simple salad to prepare and serve. The recipe is as follows:

Bunny Salad

1 lettuce leaf

1 canned pear half, chilled

3 raisins

2 thin apple slices

2 tbs. low fat cottage cheese

Place lettuce leaf on plate. On top of lettuce, place one per half with the cut side face down. Using the narrow end of the pear, make a bunny face using 2 raisins for the eyes and 1 raisin for the nose, 2 apple slices for the ears, and the cottage cheese for the tail. This makes one serving.

Besides the cookbook, there are others items for sale. We have beautiful and colorful potholders that can be used in your everyday preparation of meals. They are so beautiful that you can just display them. We also have pillows with Native designs that can be put on your sofa or bed. My favorite pillow is the Indian hat with a feather. We still have plenty of tee-shirts from the 2nd Annual Food Sovereignty Symposium, with the theme "Our Seeds. Our Food. Our Survival," on the tee-shirt front. These shirts are tan with black lettering, 100% preshrunk cotton.

If you are looking for a good garden hoe, we have one for you. We have Prohoe, maker of Rogue Hoes. These garden and field hoes are made from recycled, tempered steel of an agriculture disc blade. Three types are available: Garden, Scuffle (for weeding), and Field hoes.

Find out who we are, sign up for our free newsletter, browse our gift shop, get some garden seeds. Thanks to all of you who have visited our shop. Call us if you have any questions.



SEEDS!

MFSI now has a limited number of FREE seeds to give away. Come into our office and take your choice of two packets of vegetable seeds and one packet of flower seeds, for free. We also still have a limited number of heirloom seeds for serious growers.

MFSI Calendar

April 17th

Town of Mounds 2nd Annual Earth Day Celebration at Mounds Veteran's Park and Community Center from 10am to 2pm. Recycling, "Create It" contest poster contest for students. MFSI mobile resource Unit, Tulsa Master Gardeners presentation, Tomato growing presentation, "Trash Off" event, and local vendors.

April 17th

Okfuskee Wild Onion Dinner at the Okfuskee Indian Community from 11:00am to 3:00pm.. *All you can eat* meal for \$6.00, \$3.00 for children.

April 14th, 21st, 28th

MFSI Youth Night at the MFSI Warehouse located at 215 7th St (entrance around back) at 6:00pm. Workshops on making traditional weapons, open mic to share music and poetry, and we'll be painting our Mobile Resource unit. All ages are welcome and free food will be served!

April 20th

Okmulgee Farmers Market meeting at 5:30 at the Okmulgee Maint Street office.

April 22, 2010

This year is the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Help celebrate Earth Day this year by planting a garden with vegetables, herbs or flowers, recycle, pick up trash in your neighborhood, use real dishes when serving meals, grow organic, plant a tree, talk a walk instead of watching TV, prepare a meal using fresh fruits and vegetables, stay at home and spring clean instead of using gas. There are so many activities that we can do to save our environment. Have a Good Earth Day on April 22 and all year long.

April 24th

Langston University Goat Field Day

April - October

Mounds Farmers Market 2nd & 4th Saturday, Greer Park (Corner of Commercial & 14th). Contact Melodie Reader at 991-9039 or email Melodies_broom@yahoo.com

May 26-28th

Annual Small Farmers Conference.



Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative
208 West 6th Street
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MFSI would like to thank the following funding sources for their continued support of our work: USDA/NIFA Community Food Projects and Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers; First Nations Development Institute; Honor the Earth Fund of the Tides Foundation; Seventh Generation Fund, the Jesse Smith Noyes, Harmon Foundations and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation