

# MVSKOKE FOOD

*Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative*



BFR Stephanie Berryhill is growing Indian pumpkins at the Wilson Community garden.

**Autumn or Fall**

October  
Calendar

**October 13, 2012**

Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program - Graduation Day in Poteau. MFSI has five graduating students - Larry West, Stephanie Berryhill, H. June Marshall, Richard Belcher, Mike Bear.

**October 15, 2012**

Earth Day, MCN Mound Building

**October 31, 2012**

MCN Annual Pink Party, Covelle Hall, OSU Campus, Okmulgee 1 - 4 pm

Dacey Barnett  
Office Assistant

A welcomed change of season is when *Rvfo-hake/hakof* (Fall or Autumn) begins on the 22nd of this month, *Otowoskuce* (September). We will experience the winding down of the fruitful duties of all vegetation that has performed to their best during *Tasahce* (spring) and *Meske* (summer). As the life (sap) is drained from all vegetation then we can see the transformation of the change that takes place in the leaves as she graces us with the vibrant colors of fall. As the change of seasons takes its course and to which we have no control over, its nostalgia is full of magic, from the heat of the sun to the coolness of the evening, it is ever so welcomed.

Fall brings football games, Halloween activities, state fair, etc.

-If you didn't plant a fall garden, you can plant a cover crop in your garden so that it will reap the nutrients for next spring.

-You can get a soil sample and then you have all fall and winter to add nutrients into your garden.

For the Mvskoke people at the time of first contact, gathering was important year round but also followed a seasonal cycle. In the spring and summer pickings included wild grapes, blackberries, mulberries, strawberries, apples, and plums. In the fall, chestnuts, pecans, hickory nuts, black walnuts, and acorns were ready for gathering. Also sunflower seeds were also easy to harvest and store for winter.

Mvto!

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STEPHANIE BERRYHILL  
SUE WHITE



This past weekend I celebrated my grandchild's first Birthday. It is our first grandson so needless- to-say, I am a very proud Pa Paw. When I talk to him, I can't help but remember what things my Grandfather used to say to me:

"Cover your head when you go out in the cold, because heat escapes through your head". "Don't suddenly awake a sleeping Dog, or you might get bit". "Yes Sir and no Ma'am" are the proper responses for anyone a year older than you". "Never use yourself as a yard stick for others because you might come up short". "The most precious moments in life are those spent with family and close friends". "Remember to be thankful for the small things in life or you will never appreciate the big things".

Those are just a few of the things he would say. But the biggest example of life and how to live it was in the words he never spoke at all. I watched how he handled situations that come in life, things like death, and hate, and laughter, and jealousy, and anger, and mashed fingers, and stubborn children, and changing seasons, and loss, and gain, and love, and forgiveness.

I watched him break ground on soil, sow seeds and witness the amazing growth cycle of vegetables, fruit and herbs. He and the soil seemed to be as one, he could grow things that others could not, and I admired his tenacity for life. He was truly an "elder of elders".

The amazing thing about my memories of my grandfather is that I find myself repeating the same lessons to my Grand-child. The Muscogee people are known for passing stories, histories, and life lessons on to the younger generations. I pray that practice never ends: it is what makes us who we are, and continues to strengthen our future.

Blessings to all of our Elders and the life lessons they have passed on to younger generations.

Darrell Fox, Executive Director  
MFSI

"Blessed are those that can give without remembering and receive without forgetting." — Author Unknown

## Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative and the Beginning Farmers & Ranchers Program by H. June Marshall, Community Coordinator & BFR Program Participant

One year ago, MFSI became a sub-contract with the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture to work with the other sub-contract neighbors introducing farming and ranching techniques to other farmers and ranchers in our respective areas. During the past year, we have accomplished the following in meeting the challenge of recruiting Native Americans and others to become mentors/trainers in the program:

We received nine grant applications with commitment forms. We had eight enrolled in the horticulture track: Stephanie Berryhill, H. June Marshall, Richard Belcher, Larry West, JoAnn Skaggs, Ray Hunt, Melodie Reader, and another interested BFR from Tulsa (MFSI did not know her, she enrolled through the Kerr Center and not through MFSI. She did not show for any of the sessions). MFSI had two beginning farmers enrolled in the livestock track: Spencer Bear and Duane Polk, both of whom did not complete the program.

Our home-based community, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, is a small city, population 13,022 with 53.3% White, 21.3% Black, 13.6 Native American 1.5% Hispanic, and 4.7% Other. The main sources of food are Walmart, one

local supermarket chain with two retail outlets and two Dollar General Stores. The surrounding counties in the MFSI service area are much the same with some having a higher Native American population in the more rural areas. The opportunity to teach what we have learned through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program has helped rejuvenate farming in our local community. Many are now beginning small gardens in their backyards. MFSI has a small seed bank where we give our seeds out during the spring. Growers are returning seeds to MFSI for use next year.

One of the target goals is to bring educational opportunities to the twenty-five community centers within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. The opportunity to reach all the beginning farmers and ranchers are also within our tribal communities (townships), churches, and traditional ceremonies to which MFSI is being invited to participate. MFSI has gone into our community centers either to provide a harvest meal using the food we have grown or from local farmers, provide educational opportunities, or being involved at events. We share the BFR program at all events looking (recruiting) for beginning farmers and ranchers to participate in next year's program.

We have been invited to the following: Dewar, Sapulpa, Okmulgee, Wetumka, Wilson, Checotah, Hanna, Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town, Pickett Chapel United Methodist Church in Sapulpa, Youth Loan Sessions at Okmulgee, Wilson, & Bristow, MCN Food Day; MCN Pink Party, and MCN Senior Service meetings. MFSI has held three training sessions at the MFSI offices with one of the BFR as instructor (Richard Belcher): two herb growing classes in January and March and a compost class in May 2012. Our classes were held in the evening, and the participation has been very good. Our neighbors are asking that we offer another herb class. MFSI is in the process of offering a "Farmers Talk" session with our local neighbor farmers and ranchers. The Oklahoma Farmers and Ranchers Association (Mike Everett) will be a part of this talk.

We offered three cooking classes on Osafke, pumpkin and seed saving, and Cvtvhakv Blue Dumplings. Classes were held at the Wilson Indian Community on February 12, 19, and 26. Stephanie Berryhill, one of the BFR, demonstrated how to prepare Osafke.

MFSI also set up classes on Food Handlers training for the community on June 18 and 20, 2012. MFSI also showcases local chefs using locally grown food, and we prepare and serve three traditional summer camp meals for an elementary school in Tulsa. MFSI Dicey Barnett and H. June Marshall attended a workshop in Stillwater sponsored by the Chickasha Nation and OSU, July 30 through August 1, where MFSI prepared and served a traditional meal for the "Eagle Adventure" workshop participants. Fresh organic produce and healthy recipes were used. MFSI is to prepare a healthy meal for seventy students at the Muscogee Nation College on September 15, 2012.

We advertise in the local newspapers, Muscogee (Creek) Nation newspaper, on local radio, and MFSI newsletter that is published and distributed every month. The MFSI newsletter is circulated to approximately 500+ neighbors through the post office, 421 online subscribers as well as published on the MFSI website. We continue to highlight (with stories and pictures) our local farmers and ranchers and neighbors in their farming, ranching, and gardening efforts. MFSI developed a Beginning Farmer and Rancher and Youth brochure that are being shared wherever we go.

MFSI depends on our neighbors. We partner with others serving

minority and small farmers and ranchers to host educational events, provide training, share facilities and as we support each other's work. We continue to network, share information, learn from and serve as leadership with several national organizations.

MFSI is also sharing the agriculture program with our children and youth. The Kerr grant has provided us with a goal of working with our youth. Stephanie Berryhill is the Youth Coordinator and has introduced our youth to gathering and identifying plants. She has taken the gardening to the Henryetta after school program and to a Girl Scout troop in Mason where MFSI presented two trees for their garden. She has made many field trips in the woods and Wilson Indian Community farm introducing the children and youth to nature. The youth are working in the farm helping with planting, harvesting, and cooking. Currently, we are working with an elementary after school program in Tulsa (Park Elementary) every month teaching eating healthy foods, providing healthy snacks, and introducing the kids to farming and ranching.

Two MFSI staff members attended the Better Process School (canning and processing of foods) sponsored by the Oklahoma State University Robert M. Kerr Food and Agricultural Products Center,

Stillwater, in May 2012. Another staff member has begun training in Tulsa to become a Master Gardener. Another MFSI staff member is working on policy that has successfully implemented the Muscogee (Creek) Food and Fitness Policy Council and has created a food policy model to guide future actions.

Mike Bear, BFR participant, has successfully been growing purple hull peas organically in the Wilson Community for years and has received advice and knowledge from the BFR program to improve methods of growing them. Mike stated he is very pleased with the program.

The experience of working with other farmers and ranchers has strengthened MFSI's knowledge, networking, helping MFSI to mentor and train other beginning farmers and ranchers, all of which has opened many doors for us to learn and grow. The Beginning Farmers and Ranchers program is now accepting applications for those beginning farmers and ranchers who would like to make a commitment to come to training for a year (6 months out of the year, all-day training on a Saturday) where classroom and hands-on training will be given. We are almost complete with the first year's program. Our graduation will be held on Saturday, October 13, 2012. Now it is time for the first graduating class to begin mentoring and training other farmers.

## MCN Senior Services Meeting by Sue White, NICOA

Dacey Barnett and Sue White attended the Senior Services meeting on Wednesday, September 5, 2012, 10 am, held at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Mound Building. Rev. Dave Dunson, now the manager of the Senior Services, led the meeting on “Grandparents raising grandchildren.” Information on the Temporary Assistance for

Needy Families (TANF) was presented. TANF is a block program to help move recipients into work and turn welfare into a program of temporary assistance. As grandparents or other family members are raising grandchildren, the temporary assistance will help. Information was also presented on behavioral health and substance abuse

particularly on being aware of meds in a household. Meds must be kept locked up away from children. Dacey and Sue passed out info on the upcoming MFSI symposium, “Water, Fire, Earth, and Food,” to be held Friday, September 21, 2012, at the Mound Building. The next meeting of the Senior Services will be October 3, 2012.

A Few Pictures of MFSI and their Neighbors. MFSI has taken many pictures of what we do all year long. More can be seen on our website: <http://www.mvskokefood.org>



Larry West helping mix fertilizer at George Kuepper's fertilizer demonstration



Wetumka Indian Community gardeners planting tomatoes outside the Center. MFSI provided seeds and plants and information on “how to” grow tomatoes and bell peppers.



Left: Local gardener produced veggies from MFSI seeds.  
Right: Gardener Dennis has three tiered garden spots in backyard. Also growing onions alongside his home. His home is behind the local Walmart in Okmulgee.





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October 2012

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Check out the MFSI Website for more articles:

<http://www.mvskokefood.org>

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