

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

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Lizanne Holata
Executive Director



Indian Paint Brush
Photo by Ric Denney

Lizanne Holata To Head The Work Of MFSI As Executive Director

(Hensci estonko!) Hello and how are you? I'm excited to introduce myself as the Executive Director of MFSI. My name is Lizanne Holata and I grew up in Okmulgee county, Morris and Wildcat Junction area specifically around fields and fields of corn. Already the season is in full swing and we've started working with our partners on many projects for

growing veggies. We look forward to starting our own pilot whole foods production program with our brothers and sisters in the Creek communities. I look around and see the buds growing on the trees. The tulips and daffodils are gorgeous and my allergies are in full swing. We're already getting calls to till gardens, but we can't seem to get a break in

the rain! If there is anyone out there who wants tilling done, please call. So for those of you who got your garden in the ground and its growing already, please feel free to send us a picture. Life is good when you see your efforts bear fruit!



Lizanne Holata is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and has lived most of her life in Morris. Her tribal town is Hecete and she is of the Wind Clan. She spent most of her adult life working for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in the clerical field and received her degree from Oklahoma State University.

Lizanne came to MFSI as a volunteer in 2004. She gave many hours to MFSI by cooking for all our large gatherings and teaching others how to cook our cultural foods. Through her position at Muscogee (Creek) Nation she was able to sit on our advisory committee giving us her knowledge and energy. For the past three years she has been on the Board of Directors where her insight helped us to expand our programs and just this January, she became our Executive Director.

MFSI

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Earthworms - Collection & Uses

by Joshua D. Castleman



Earthworms collected from pavement after a period rain

A Brief History

During the last ice age the range of terrestrial worms or earthworms in North America was reduced by the long periods of glaciation. Many of the worms we are familiar with today are non-native invasive species from Europe and Asia. Worms were likely transported and first reintroduced to the northernmost areas of what is now the United States by European settlers who came to the continent. Soil and rocks were used in ships to adjust the ballast weight and once the ships were docked or moored the rocks and dirt could be dumped to re-adjust the ballast. Worms were also likely brought over unknowingly in soil attached to the root ball of plants, which were brought to the new world to be transplanted. Today the use of worms as a fish bait also contributes to their spread. Early historical accounts and uses of worms by Native Americans prior to European contact are virtually

non-existent due to the lack of native worms in the area where the early settlers landed.

Collecting

Worms can be collected in a variety of manners. You can use a shovel dig for worms however, if the soil is extremely dry you likely won't be able to dig deep enough to collect any worms. Worms can also be found under boards, plywood, sheet metal and other debris as well as leaf litter which are in direct contact with the soil. Perhaps the easiest way is to collect them is from paved surfaces after a period of rain. Although worms don't have lungs like us they still need oxygen to breathe. When the ground becomes saturated with water worms are unable to breathe and come to the surface for air.

In the Garden

We often hear that worms are needed for good healthy garden soil however, it might also be said

that worms need good healthy soil. In locations where the soil is compacted worms do help with aerating the soil. However, in areas where the soil is not compacted worms can change the aeration of that soil as well, which might not be desirable. Worms do help to introduce organic matter into the soil however; they also eat a lot of organic matter as well. Remember that the range of native earthworm species was severely reduced during the last ice age and so many of the ecosystems especially those in the northern part of the continent, which developed after the end of the ice age did so without worms. Worm castings (worm humus or manure) are used in gardens, flower beds and flower pots as fertilizer. Worms known as “red wigglers” are most typically used to produce castings for these

purposes.

Fish Bait

Worms make excellent bait for a variety of fish species. The worms commonly sold in the store for fishing bait are known as “nightcrawlers” and are non-native. They received the nickname nightcrawler as they are often found crawling on the surface of the ground at night. There are native nightcrawlers however; they typically only grow a couple inches in length. When the smaller nightcrawlers are used as fish bait the entire worm might be placed on the hook. However, the larger store bought nightcrawlers are often cut or torn into smaller pieces.

As a Food Source

If a long day of fishing doesn’t go your way, remember that worms are also edible by humans.

Worms are nutritious and high in protein. Since worms eat dirt you will want to purge them. This can be done by using your fingers to physically push the dirt out of the worms, or placing them in cornmeal to replace the dirt located in their intestines, or by putting them in cool water for an hour or so. Most articles suggest boiling them multiple times after purging to remove the mucus from the body. After the worms are purged and the mucus is removed you can prepare the worms in a manner limited only by your imagination. Several preparation methods and recipes can be found online. Always be sure of the identity of any wild plant or animal before consuming any part of it and consult a variety of resources and knowledgeable individuals.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation donation to MFSI launches Mvskoke Whole Foods Production Project in Five MCN tribally chartered communities

By Stephanie Berryhill

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative is pleased to announce that it is launching a Mvskoke Whole Foods Production Project that will offer 125 Muscogee (Creek) tribal community families from Morris, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Tulsa, and Wetumka with organizational support and informal training sessions to produce and grow food.

The Mvskoke Whole Foods Production Project (MWHFPP) will provide five tribally chartered community organizations with planning tools for planting, seeds, soil, transplants, and plant growing

and maintenance handouts through classes. It will also have a part that includes food preparation, cooking, and preservation classes that will help tribal community families prepare selected crop harvests with the healthiest ingredients so that they may explore and create ways to eat healthy whole foods that taste good to them.

The project is recruiting 125 highly interested and committed tribal community families who will attend MWHFPP sessions that will involve a planning period for planting, a session of non-technical information on planting,

maintaining, and harvesting plants and an in-field demonstration class experience.

All five communities were given a food survey in order for MFSI to learn about their community and individual interests related to food production. The survey inquired about whole food favorites for eating, supplies that are needed for them to produce food, crop varieties that they are interested in growing, and interest/skills in specific areas of food production. The surveys results were reviewed and are referred to on an on-going basis to determine what community

members want as well as the best approach for the presenting programming at each community. The pilot community for running this project began at Wetumka Indian Community Center in 2013. Wetumka Indian Community initiated interest in growing by requesting MFSI's assistance. Wetumka has many experienced growers who enjoy social activity related to coming together to plan and do planting activities—such as in-door seeding in the early months—or to make backyard or container gardens at their homes. Tulsa Creek Indian Community Center has a plentitude of gardening space and members plan to work on a community garden.

MFSI's growing practices are grounded in what is popularly called "sustainable agriculture," which includes many of the ways that our grandparents and great-grandparents have always raised food. MFSI will present classes from a perspective of soil ecology and consideration of the soil food web, which is the community of organisms living all or part of

their lives in the soil and include the tiniest one-celled bacteria, to algae, fungi, protozoa—also worms, birds, and animals. The premise is to grow healthy food by first feeding the soil. Community gardens will be prepared by adding organic matter made from the breakdown of soil, leaves, vegetable and fruit scraps, egg shell, *etc.*, and is the first line of action for bed preparation. Community members that want to do "container gardening"—growing in containers or pots—will blending compost with high-quality organic potting soil.

MFSI will also promote heirloom seed and traditional varieties of pass-along seed, such as Mvskoke *Cvsse* Indian Pumpkin. Pass-along and heirloom seeds have the ability to be grown, saved, and planted to be produced for the following year and years to come (with mindful consideration of time limitations on any given variety's crop "shelf life"). Controlling weeds and pests with natural solutions that do not include chemicals is also key to

sustainable methods of growing. Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative comes from a position of commitment to address problems related to health, specifically diet-related disease, and alleviating food insecurity through efforts to teach community families how to grow, gather, prepare, cook, and preserve healthy, whole foods. Crops, such as Indian pumpkin, that are culturally significant to Mvskoke people will also have high importance for production and also include corn varieties traditionally used by Mvskoke peoples. Equally important is a community-centered approach to offering such programming to tribal families in ways that they can work into their busy day-to-day lives, at locations that are in close proximity to where they live, and at places that they are comfortable seeking such learning opportunities.

This project work was generously supported through a recent appropriation from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in March.

Upcoming Events

June 3 – Senior Service Meeting, held at Elderly Nutrition Center, 10 AM – 11:30 AM. This meeting will have presentations on pest control and funeral home. Senior Service meets every first Wednesday of the month.

June 18-19 – State Master Gardener Conference, "Change Your World," Gordon Cooper Technology Center, 1 John C Bruton Drive, Shawnee, OK. Register: On-Line or By Mail, State Master Gardener Conference, \$45/Person Registration—June 5 Deadline. <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/events/mg>

June 20 – 2014 Farm Bill Specialty Crops Workshop, MFSI office, 100 East 7th St, Ste. 101 Okmulgee, OK. Workshop sponsored by the USDA/MFSI - 9 AM until 3 PM. For information: Contact J. Marshall at 918.756.5915. Free workshop! Lunch provided.

June 25-28 – Mvskoke Nation Festival, CreekFestival.com. Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tourism & Recreation – 918.732.7992

Okmulgee Farmers Market - every Tuesday & Friday, come and visit the market on the Creek Council House lawn, 8 AM until 1 PM.



*3 sisters
corn, beans & squash*



*Wild onion dinner
Springfield Church*



*Corn donated by
Board Member Kent Sanmann*



*Tomato plants donated by
Okmulgee Community Garden*



This marks the fourth year that MFSI and David Hogner, District Environmental Health Officer at the Okmulgee Office of Environmental Health Services has held food safety training classes at MFSI offices. Many attending the classes are getting ready for the upcoming Muscogee (Creek) Nation Festival, June 25-28.



(L to R) Janie Simms Hipp, Lizanne Holata and June Marshall at the 2015 Chickasaw Nation Dynamic Women's Conference and Forum

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MFSI Staff are here to help you.

Planning a move? Please call MFSI with your new address or sign up for our emailed newsletter online at www.mvskokeyfood.org

Our Mission is to enable the Mvskoke 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.

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, organized exclusively for charitable, educational and scientific purposes.

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

*100 E. 7th, Suite 101, Okmulgee, OK 74447
RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED*

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