

# Building a brighter future

## • CMN opens doors to opportunity



MNN/Ruth Bible

Pictured above are College of the Muscogee Nation Regent Mike Flud, President Robert Bible, Regent Blue C. Clarke and President of the Native American Student Association Rayshell Shabies at the college's December ribbon-cutting ceremony.

### Rebecca Landsberry

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OKMULGEE —With the new academic year now in full swing, College of the Muscogee Nation students are now cracking their books and practicing their Mvskoke in a new, state-of-the-art building, located at 1200 Highway Loop 56 in Okmulgee, Okla. The CMN dedication and open house were held on-site Friday, Dec. 17, 2010. The CMN encompasses eight classrooms, a library, computer lab, administrative and faculty offices and a conference room,

which are all heated and cooled by a geothermal system.

The décor incorporates Mvskoke culture and was designed by Beck Design of Tulsa and constructed by Nabholz Construction.

Native American Student Association President Rayshell Shabies welcomed the crowd and gave a student perspective of this historic event.

"We are very proud, proud to have such a wonderful

community. Today we are dedicating our college to our community, our students and our future leaders . . . Our leaders show us where we need to go and they also show us what we can do," Shabies said.

CMN Board of Regents Member Ramona Mason said a prayer in the Mvskoke language and CMN President Robert Bible addressed those in attendance after expressing his thanks to numerous tribal, local and state agencies connected to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

According to Bible, the next step in the process of building a brighter Mvskoke Nation is to add student housing and continuing to acquire grants and funding for further expansion.

Board of Regents Member Mike Flud discussed that the acquisition of the property from the neighboring Green Country Technology Center took some time and was made possible with help from multiple entities and the tribe's gaming revenue.

"The creation of this college was Chief Ellis' dream. . . None of this would have been possible, none, without the support and funding from our National Council," Flud stated.

Remarks from Vice Chairman of the CMN Board of Regents Dr. C. Blue Clarke provided a brief history of Mvskoke people and their ability to adapt and progress despite being surrounded by adversity.

"It is an amazing, amazing accomplishment . . . from prehistory through our more immediate ancestors in homeland of the southeast who survived Spanish wars and privation as well as the Trail of Tears traumas, to our immediate kinfolk in Indian Territory who reestablished the Muscogee Nation and its educational system after removal, after the Civil War, after allotment and statehood, all the way to the host of dedicated and visionary persons who steered long discussions to what is before us today. It is amazing. . . Mvskoke



**MNN/Ruth Bible**

Pictured above is the College of the Muscogee Nation time capsule, which will be opened at the college's 50th anniversary.

people are blessed people. We would not be here today after all our ancestors have been through if that were not true." Clarke said.

Clarke said these classrooms will be home to discussion from people from all backgrounds and each will have a voice.

"I am reminded of the annual ceremonialism of the Mvskolvke as well as the ancient Creek Confederacy. Diverse people come together to work for the common good, to renew themselves, to maintain balance within the universe and believe me, this universe needs some balance - It is similar in the classrooms of the College of the Muscogee Nation."

Clarke went on to mention that the opening of the doors of this institution will unlock opportunities for generations of Mvskokes to come.

"This event establishes unique opportunities and

challenges for the citizens of the Muscogee Nation. Not only is there an opportunity for higher education through the college, there is also an opportunity for elementary and secondary education because state and federal governments are suffering extreme budget tension. There could conceivably be Muscogee Nation chartered schools across the state, across the nation, across the world. Those opportunities, in turn, raise the question, 'Where do Mvskoke people want our college and with it, our tribal nation to be in five years, 10 years, 20 years, in the far future?'" he added.

Dr. James King, CMN Regional Director of Institutional Effectiveness commented on the filling of the time capsule, which will be opened on the CMN's 50th anniversary. Items donated from Mvskoke citizens included an MCN car tag, a copy of the Muscogee Nation News, NASA photo album, T-shirts, blueprints, a calendar, ball sticks made by Ronnie Sands,

a Mvskoke Bible and other documents pertinent to the opening of the CMN from students and staff.

“Our time capsule, as you see before you, marks the start of a new era of the College of the Muscogee Nation and has been built into the fabric of our first building. This is the centerpiece for our cultural plaza,” King stated.

As part of the tour, CMN Business Manager Jan Hart commented that Mvskoke culture was the inspiration for the design of the building.

The rotunda in front of the building also serves an illustration of this with the 16 Mvskoke clans encircling the CMN seal. Other elements include tribally adorned lighting, smart boards and actual

gaming tables to teach students with hands-on experience in the classroom.

“Even in the simplest things, we try to incorporate the Mvskoke culture,” Hart stated.

