

Summary of Testimonial

Boarding School Survivor

- I am Timothy Christian Allen Buck Also known as Ayo. I am the grandson of Rena Whitecloud born Rena Gray. We are enrolled Muscogee Nation. We have lineage to Billy Powell also known as Osceola Yahola. I am writing this with the permission of my 95 year old grandmother who attended Haskell Institute. She was born in 1926.
- After conferring with my grandmother, she was 14 years old when she began attending Haskell High school in 1940. She would go home only in the summers and return in the Fall. She attended for nearly four and a half years this way.
- After watching the May 12th SubCommittee Hearing, I fully support this Legislation
- Thank You for holding a place for the people to be heard.

TESTIMONIAL OF T C BUCK

May 24, 2022

United States House of Representatives
217 Ford House Office Building

For Congressional Use for the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous People of the United States,

Yesterday, May 12th, I received an email from (N.A.B.S.) asking to share my testimony and experiences of my native family in conjunction and because of Boarding School policies.

Few can express my perspective as a third generation Attendee of Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. No other individual could share the first hand experiences I attained while I attended College at Haskell Indian Nations University.

Today, My ninety-five year old grandmother is staying with me temporarily while we wait for the Muscogee Nation to fix her air conditioning; this the day after Tulsa, Oklahoma experienced it's first 90 degree day of the year. Her eldest son, Douglas Whitecloud, my uncle, called and asked if she could stay with me until the problem is resolved.

I am staying with my mother after a recent divorce. I have the house to myself while my sister is at a Special Olympic event in Stillwater with my mother chaperoning.

I am excited to have my son for the weekend so that he and his great-Grandmother can play. Greyson Buck will be three years old on the 21st of May. My expectations for him is to exceed and go to college, to decide, for himself, what is right, good, and true.

We are biracial. Este-cate momen este-hetke. Father and mother were eight-teen and nine-teen, respectively. The first time my father saw me, it was in the hallways of his high school at Nathan Hale High School in Tulsa.

When my father passed away when I was twelve, it was a year after his brother Chebon passed away. So when we ordered their headstones there was an error on my father's headstone sharing the same year as his brother. This simply fix is yet to be resolved. Their mother, Rena "Bell" Whitecloud was born in October of 1926. As a living library, I have often questioned her on many topics, as to be expected, her testimony is much of mine. Before beginning on this subject, I imagined what my grandmother and women's leader at Bemo Indian Baptist Church in Bixby, Oklahoma. I had the pleasure of talking with her on this subject before, and her answer was the same, yet again: "Everyone's story is different. Everyone has a story." - Rena "Bell" Whitecloud

There is always some new detail when we re-examine the past together. Inevitably, for the first time, these "oral traditions" I am dictating directly to page, as a "Testimonial. It is time for me to warn you of the following accounts as they are graphic. As some detail are expressly left out of respect for the living, I offer these words to anyone that votes in good faith. My very existence is



political. Let me justify myself by saying that I am a registered Independent. My occupation was at one time journalist for Mvskoke Media at Muscogee Nation. Mu works towards objectivity may have been naive.

Born March 4th, 1985 at Tulsa Regional Hospital. My mother had a broken foot and unmarried. her father, a football coach, vacuum salesman and writer for Right to Life Crusade as a part of the anti-abortion lobby, shared my image in a promotion.

Within the next year, my name was changed after a blood-test confirmed my father's paternity. I received a CDIB card and Tribal Citizenship card. Visit with my father and his family began to occur regularly. As members of the Bixby, Oklahoma Bemo Indian Baptist Church, we traveled and fellowshipped at other Native American Church in the Region.

My mother's side of the family were in twined with the Church of the LatterDay Saints. Historically, moving from Kansas to Oklahoma, my great-grandmother Hariette McDowell lived in Skiatook, Oklahoma. Her youngest daughter, my grandma Betty Bothell lived across a busy street from my grandma Rena in Tulsa.

I share my love for them equally between them.

One night, less than a mile from his home and from me, his friend, while driving under the influence, crashed into a parked car, killing my father. The driver was critically injured, that was the last I have heard about him. As just a child, it was a bad dream. I have become acclimated to funeral customs of certain families and tribes. I grew up active in many sports, football first and foremost, baseball, basketball, wrestling in eighth grade when I got 3rd and state in the Heavy Weight Division. My school was Division 6A. The Union "Redskins", a public school in Tulsa. Just recently in tradition of other institutes, they have voted to change their mascot to the "Red Hawks". The irony in this is that my name in Mvskoke is "Ayo," which means "Hawk".

Before I left to attend college almost immediately after i graduated from high school, I travelled to California with a friend in his Mustang. We stopped in Colorado. We camped outside and at times, in my friends backyard. We explored National Parks until we had to go to SanFrancisco As soon as I couldn't afford to travel, I used the last of my father's inheritance on a ticket home. It wasn't long before I was accepted and began attending classes at Haskell Indian Nations University. I remember being told by a sousing of warnings about the school and not to attend. the more I began asking questions the more I learned about my shared experiences.

Recounting Rena "Bell" Whitecloud:

Rena, the oldest, was sent to Haskell While it was still a high school. Haskell Institute did not start as a High School but an elementary school for first nations and indigenous/aboriginal, villages incorporated and sovereign peoples. I know this now. Had it not been for the education from the very same grounds that walked relatives and friends. I would not have the associates in Liberal Arts and my Bachelor degree in indigenous American Indian Studies with an emphasis in sovereignty.

Why here? Why these subjects?

I quite sports in tenth grade because I prayed for guidance. I saw a way, for me, to be prouder of myself, with god's help and mercy. I was strong enough to defy my football coach of a grandfather. i instead went to Tulsa Technology Center's Lemley campus for photography. I had little in scholarships and I applied after testing poorly to Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) as my first and only choice. My first semester was a blur. It became apparent that I had test anxiety. I failed to finish the semester because I didn't attend my finals. Sent home I heard of more stories from others that had attended that and other boarding schools. There were those that disapproved of me quoting sports, there were those that warned of drugs and alcohol, and there were stories of love.

Douglas Whitecloud Sr. met Rena "Bell" Buck at Haskell Institute. Douglas, Otoe-Missoria tribe of Oklahoma. They would eventually marry and have two sons, Douglas Jr. (Chink) and Johnny Whitecloud.

Rena's Father, Moses Gray (1901-1983), had three brothers. One Willie Bemo (Seminole) fought in France in World War I (one), the great war to end all wars. He survived and returned home. Little record is because of an infamous fire that destroyed many military records. With help from the Sequoyah National Research Center at the University of Arkansa I was able to connect through a facebook post. I have just now started to retrace these steps. Oral accounts of Willie Bemo goes as follows:

Rena "Bell" had this to say, "He taught me how to count in Mvskoke and in English. He could read." Her mother, Manoah Gray (1909-2002) was a church leader at Bemo Indian Baptist Church, after all our families lived on the very land they started the church is on. Yes, the church was built to help Native Americans, and also anyone who needed help and turns to the church, god, Christ Jesus. These songs in both english and Muscogee travelled from church to church and shared throughout many tribes. I believe it is because these churches of many nations and denominations had sanctuary. If one believes in a higher power, than they will also believe in absolute sovereignty. These "Church Grounds" held in common were meeting places and alters with graveyards.

Willie Bemo visited his brother and niece, Moses and Rena. Willie was Drunk but a handsome man. He left his guns in his car and Rena was sent to get them in the dark. She did what she was told.

Willie is also remembered as up setting his wife, probably because of drinking. She scolded him on the street. she made a stance, Willie turned to shoot a hole through her dress and apron between her legs. And with that he left.

Near the end of his life, a Sunday began when a known physically abusive husband had gone to church without his wife because she could not show her new marks. Willie Bemo, after seeing to the woman, rode a horse to church to shoot the man in the church courtyard. Killing the man.

It was tradition to have the victim's family find justice. Although Willie Bemo's death is unknown nor placed in newspaper, it is suspected that his grave marker was destroyed. He found his home in Wetumka. Dawes Rolles and Allotment land also can be found through records.

Of all the tribal land that the majority of Bixby, Oklahoma is situated on, south of the Arkansa River. The story is recounted by elders of a family of many children. The head of the house had passed away leaving the poor widow and mother with her little children susceptible to selling their land while the man swindled them with paperwork switched the amount of land the women was intending to keep with the parcel intended for him, at a price of a horse and buggy.

Land that held churches stayed in the hands of the Native Americans that built them. The denomination of these churches have a direct link to the churches meant to take care of the tribal people picked by the Federal Government of the United States of America.

A Founder of this church and husband and preacher it is known that many Native Practices were done in secret. The division between one form of worship and the presence of another form of worship caused backlash. Some traditions and individuals adapted by surviving in secret.

Moses Gray was also known as Moses Harjo. He changed his name to Gray to distinguish himself from the the many Harjos. He was able to do so when he was enrolled in Allotment.

Once sent to Haskell, Rena excelled. She knew numbers and letters from Willie Bemo. She was first to go to school. Patsy, her sister, would follow after. Soon Rena's sister Patsy caught (TB) tuberculosis and was sent back to Oklahoma and soon went to Talihina. Rena said she almost cried but that Patsy didn't care either way. Rena spent many years going back and forth to school in Lawrence.

She graduated and married Douglas Whitecloud Sr. and had children. Douglas Whitecloud Sr. would eventually die from alcohol related complications.

Rena would eventually remarry to a man known as Wahoo Buck, whom also attending Haskell. They would eventually have two boys Chebon and Nathan, my father. Of all her children, my father was the only one to not attend Haskell. Rena and Wahoo split because of an infidelity. The history of the Buck family is well documented. Wahoo is noted to have had a televised "Gospel Hour" on local television. There are many Buck's that are gospel singers. Their attendance in boarding school is unknown to me.

When Douglas Jr., Johnny, and Chebon attended Haskell it was a Junior College or Technical School. They were beginning to celebrate their culture.

Rena was a good older sister, and took care of smaller children. Herself small in stature, told me a story. A boy had caught the flu during her time at the school in Kansas. Even though she helped nursed the boy who eventually died there, perhaps the last one to be buried at Haskell Graveyard in Lawrence, Kansas. She was grateful she, herself didn't get sick.

My uncle attended Haskell institute and some how, volunteered for the Army around the time of the Korean conflict and Vietnam War. Johnny, drafted, chose the Navy. Raised in the Church, Native American Rights and the American Indian Movement, Douglas Jr. served as Chaplin. Johnny Whitecloud Passed away shortly after the Pandemic hit the U.S.

It was told to me that Rena and Patsy's mother Manoah Gray occupied a federal building in Washington D.C.

Rena's children would need baby sitting while she worked. Often, she would take her children to a home near present day Bacon College. Chebon had a traumatic experience at the Orphanage involving sexual abuse. Much of that was kept from me.

Rena worked many years at the local post office. Her eldest son, Douglas, worked and retired from the post office as well. Douglas and Johnny both led Native American Church meetings or "Peyote Meetings". They danced at Pow-wows and celebrated god. Many times they attended funeral and helped others in the tribe.

When I started my academic career, I saw a side I didn't consider. Looking at my standing further knowing my own history was a part of the curriculum. "Peyote Road" while also being a book, is also a movie about the importance of Religious freedoms granted to Native Americans. It also stars my uncles; Douglas Jr. and Johnny and others like Russel Means. The movie "Peyote Road" was shown in class, and I saw my uncles on the screen. I graduated and also received a certificate of Federal Records Management Training signed by the Archivist of America and a certificate in Permaculture Design. In 2016 my grandma attended my graduation ceremony at Haskell. We walked around and I asked questions. She spoke of certain places being haunted, and I knew too well. Chebon and my dad are both buried at Red Rock Cemetery in Oklahoma. Johnny is buried in Wisconsin.

There is much, much more stories like these. I need to find out more about my relatives. I need to know about the classes of my Uncles, and the classes of my Grandmother and her sister, and my grandfathers. I need to know the military records of my uncles. I need to know where Willie Bemo is buried. Moses Gray and Manoah Gray are buried next to each other at Bemo Indian Baptist Church in Bixby, Oklahoma, were my relatives and cousins still live and maintain the land and Church. I need to know how my Great Grandmother Manoah Gray is related to Osceola-yahola of Florida. What classes did Wahoo and Douglas Sr. take while at Haskell? Who was the boy that my grandmother help while he lived his final days and is believed to be buried at Haskel? There's more I could write but I'm working under a deadline. Rena is alive today, May 25th, 2022.

Sincerely yours,

Timothy-Christian Allen Buck