



Maxine Wildcat Barnett, the oldest living first language Yuchi speaker, reads a book with Chaske Turning Heart, the youngest first language Yuchi speaker. (Jason Salsman/Multimedia Producer)

yUdjEhalA'wAdA: "SPEAK YUCHI"

GENERATIONS MERGE, IMMERSE IN LANGUAGE AT THE YUCHI HOUSE

by **JASON SALSAMAN**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

SAPULPA, Oklahoma — It would be hard to imagine that a 93-year-old woman and a two-year-old boy would have much in common to talk about.

But each week in the little yellow house just off of Main Street in Sapulpa, the Yuchi House, a generational gap is closed by the immersion of young and old with one common bond: the Yuchi language.

The Yuchi House is home to the Yuchi Language Project, a non-profit organization that is one of four model programs, which are part of Cultural Survival's Native Language Revitalization Campaign.

YLP is nationally recognized for being one of the few language programs implementing immersion teaching on a daily basis. Its mission is to create new young speakers of the language through breath-to-breath immersion methods with fluent elders and children.

Elders like Maxine Wildcat

Barnett and children like Chaske Ashtala Turning Heart.

Barnett, at 93, is the oldest living first language Yuchi speaker. She spends most days visiting with young people who are there every week conversing with her and instructors in hopes of keeping the culture alive.

In fact, it is a similar manner in which Barnett herself learned the language long ago.

"We had no kind of entertainment back then. This was before electricity, radio, television all this... we didn't even have a telephone," Barnett recalled. "So we listened to our grandmother. She would just tell and speak the language, and we would sit and listen. There were seven grandchildren in the home."



After 37 years, Oklahoma State University baseball will build a new facility replacing Allie P. Reynolds Stadium, named after the legendary Muscogee (Creek) pitcher. (Jason Salsman/Multimedia Producer)

LEGENDARY SUPERCHIEF'S STADIUM, LEGACY REMEMBERED BY LEGENDARY COACH

ALLIE P. REYNOLDS STADIUM HAS BEEN HOME OF OSU BASEBALL FOR 38 YEARS

by **JASON SALSAMAN**
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STILLWATER, Oklahoma — It is not the athletic feats of the late Allie Pierce Reynolds that have stuck in the mind of legendary NCAA baseball coach Gary Ward.

They certainly could have. Reynolds, a Muscogee (Creek) citizen famously nicknamed "Superchief," was a multi-sport star at Oklahoma State University (then A&M) before embarking on a 13-year Major League Baseball career pitching for the Cleveland Indians and most notably the New York Yankees.

It is Reynolds' Yankee lore that still resonates today. He won six world titles with the Bronx Bombers and was a six-time all-star who threw two career no-hitters. He is immortalized with a plaque in Yankee Stadium's famous Monument Park alongside names like Ruth, DiMaggio and Gehrig.

But on this hot, hazy Oklahoma day in Stillwater, Ward sits and watches Cowboy batting practice in the park that he helped bring to life and that for 38 years has bore Reynolds' name. He remembers the process of getting it built and how it showcased Allie's humility. To him, it was more impressive than any pitch Reynolds ever threw.

"We thought, 'we need to name this,' and I said 'Allie Reynolds is the guy,'" Ward said. "He and Arlene

came up and had dinner with us at the country club, it was the first time I'd ever met him. Very humble, very understated. He didn't have any problem making a (financial) contribution, what he had a problem with was he didn't want to be seen as buying his name on the stadium. I said "no, no you let me handle that," and we went through collegiate baseball and explained the story and that made it go."

Allie P. Reynolds Stadium has seen its share of success since officially opening in April 1981, mostly with Ward at the helm. The stadium's opening ushered in the booming era of Cowboy baseball in the 1980s that saw nine consecutive Big 8 titles and seven trips to the College World Series.

Ward recalls bidding for the first NCAA regional tournament in Stillwater, which in itself was the principal motivation behind getting the stadium built. OSU received news they had earned the hosting site on a Monday morning and began play that Wednesday, so it was a quick turnaround and a bit of a whirlwind for Ward.

The Cowboys advanced to the College World Series and when they got back home, Ward found out that Reynolds drove up to attend the regional. Due to the NCAA being in charge of press credentials and ticketing, Ward had no idea that Allie had not only come for the game, but wasn't able to get in.

"He and Arlene drove here, saw the crowd full, saw the line

and didn't pull any punches, just turned around and drove back home and didn't ever say a word. That's the character and humility of Allie Reynolds," Ward said. "You feel like you've made a major mistake in your life politically... I've felt bad about that for the last 40 years. I apologized and he just let it roll off of him. He said, 'no I need to be smarter and make sure somebody knows I'm coming.'"

In this era of sports, especially at the collegiate level, the games are almost secondary to the facilities arms race. Better locker rooms, better players. And stadiums built in the 1980s are not long for the world.

The charming old stadium nestled on campus in between Duck and Knoblock Streets is down to its last couple years. OSU announced and began construction on a \$60 million state of the art facility that will be one of the finest in the conference and the country.

Current Cowboy head baseball coach Josh Holliday is excited about the new stadium. It will be a game changer for his recruiting efforts and getting the best players to Stillwater. But the excitement about the new park also brings reflection from Holliday, who was a catcher for the Cowboys from 1996-99 and spent his entire career playing at Allie P.

The name on the stadium means something to him. He talked about the impact Reynolds' name and legacy still have on his players and those he recruits to this day.

"I think he stands out as a trailblazer," Holliday said. "What a gifted athlete he was. It's something our state can celebrate, our university and the Native American history of it we can all be proud of."

Athletic Director Mike Holder has been non-committal on the naming of the new stadium, only saying that for now it is known as Oklahoma State University Baseball Stadium.

Count Ward among those who wish to see Allie Reynolds' name live on inside the new facility. He understands maybe more than anybody what Allie's name meant to the future and continued success of OSU baseball.

"I taught my kids God bless momma, God bless daddy and God bless Allie P. Reynolds," Ward said. "That gift and his involvement and his name gave us the catalyst and the energy around our program that drove it."

Barnett was disconnected from her language when she went off to Chilocco Indian School. When she graduated and came back home to Sapulpa, she realized it was something she wanted to work to get back.

"Those that didn't have to go away to school like I did, they were still here speaking the language," Barnett said. "They'd say, 'can you still talk?' I'd say, 'well, I can't make a sentence, I know the words but I haven't used it.' But it's true you can, because I miss it now and I don't have the elders around to talk to that I used to all the time."

Little Chaske is not only being immersed in his indigenous language at the Yuchi House, but according to his grandfather, YLP Executive Director Dr. Richard Grounds, he's also been immersed in the language in his own home.

"He's now two-years-old and his mother has only spoken to him in Yuchi language all of his life. She's never uttered a single word of English to him," Grounds said. "He gets to talk back and forth with the elders, and it's very fun and very rewarding to have him engaging and interacting with the language."

For Barnett, it is not only a chance to use and teach her language every week, but also a tremendous blessing to see the younger generations using and speaking Yuchi.

"We have some teenagers that can carry a conversation, and that makes me real happy knowing that they can do it and they want to learn," Barnett said. "They learn so fast, just like him (Chaske). I just can't believe that, it's almost unbelievable. But you hear it and you see them and I just look forward

every day to being with them."

Grounds said seeing the Yuchi Language Project thrive with more young speakers learning from elders is extremely satisfying because it comes at the conclusion of 15 years of work the organization has spent with the UN on indigenous issues.

Grounds, along with lead language instructor Ryan Hill have made trips to advocate on behalf of their efforts and it has paid off with the U.N. General Assembly recently adopting a resolution proclaiming 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

For the organization, a range of stakeholders will be involved in the preparation of the Action Plan, which would provide guidance for a joint collaborative action by all stakeholders in order to achieve maximum coordinated impact and social change in society regarding the indigenous languages and their speakers. A large number of events relating to indigenous languages will be held, as well as a series of national and international expert meetings and initiatives will be launched around the world.

"We've been going to the permanent forum on indigenous issues to try and elevate our concern," Grounds said. "It's an opportunity to raise awareness, generate more support for our tribal languages."

Barnett said while she loves and looks forward to each day spent talking and teaching with the children, but at 93, it definitely "tires her out." She said it does her good because she has a purpose and her heart is happy.

"I sleep good every night," Barnett said. "I really do."



A group called the 'Tribe of Mayoki,' claims to have been endorsed by the Creek Nation east of Mississippi in 1959. They also say members of the Creek Nation are also members of the Mayoki tribe. (Pensacola News Journal)

GROUP IN SOUTHEAST CLAIMS TO BE TRIBAL STATUS

TRIBE OF MAYOKI CLAIMS CREEK NATION ENDORSEMENT

by **DARREN DELAUNE**
REPORTER

PENSACOLA, Florida — Another group has claimed to be a tribe, again. This time, they call themselves the 'Tribe of Mayoki.'

Their website does not give much information except that it was organized to perpetuate the spirit of friendship and hospitality extended by Indians to Don Tristan DeLuna and his colonists in 1559 when they landed on the white sands of the Pensacola area.

According to the 'Pensacola News Journal,' the group said local Native Americans have endorsed it.

Tvllahasse Wvkokaye Ceremonial Grounds Mekko, David Proctor, which is west of Okmulgee said it is upsetting that groups in the Southeast portray themselves as Native Americans.

"It has become a fashion," he said. "Groups vying for federal recognition."

Proctor said a lot of government agencies do not have a lot of information about these groups.

"If they look good on paper, a lot of state governments back in the Southeast really want Indian

tribes, so they will recognize a group like that," he said.

He also said he saw some of the pictures of the group wearing neon colored feathers and dressing like they were going to a powwow.

"They are disrespecting the people and tribes who dance in powwows," Proctor said. "Hopefully they aren't trying to call themselves Creeks."

However, they are.

Also in the 'PNJ,' the group told the publication in an emailed statement, 'the Creek Nation east of Mississippi endorsed the group in 1959 and members of the Creek nation are also members of the Mayoki Tribe.'

Mvsokke Media requested a statement from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the group and did not receive a reply by press time.

Proctor said he hopes whatever this group is going after is not going to happen.

"These people are not legit," he said.

He wished some of the tribal governments from the federally recognized tribes in the state would take a stand against groups such as this one.