

## Muscogee (Creek) Nation Renews Lawsuit over Desecration of Hickory Ground Tribal Lands

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The Poarch Band of Creek Indians' construction of a casino resort in Wetumpka, Alabama desecrated the human remains of Muscogee (Creek) Nation ancestors and now the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Hickory Ground Tribal Town, and the Tribal Town Chief have renewed a federal lawsuit demanding that the Poarch Band return the sacred site to its prior condition. The site known as "Hickory Ground" contains human remains, as well as cultural objects sacred to the Muscogee.

The 33-acre Hickory Ground site was acquired by the Poarch Band in 1980 using federal preservation grant funds. To obtain the federal funds, the Poarch Band promised to preserve the site "without excavation," as destruction of the site would "destroy[] the cultural history of Creek people." Hickory Ground is one of the most historically and spiritually important sites to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and was the tribe's capital before it was forcibly relocated in the 1830s to what is now Oklahoma. Hickory Ground is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is alleging that the "subsequent desecration and construction were executed unlawfully by Poarch and numerous federal defendants," according to the [motion](#) and the [amended complaint](#). The Muscogee are demanding restoration of the original site. In addition, Mekko Thompson, who has served as the traditional Chief of the Hickory Ground Tribal Town for more than four decades, is seeking monetary damages for the intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The suit alleges the Poarch Band and the federal government violated federal laws including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the

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Indian Reorganization Act, among others. The lawsuit expands upon a suit first filed in 2012 that was paused while all parties explored a settlement.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Hickory Ground Tribal Town and Mekko Thompson are represented by [Lauren King](#), a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.