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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tribe Breaks Ground on Safe Room Project at Pearl River Elementary School

CHOCTAW, Miss. – (February 14, 2017) – The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Pearl River Elementary School (PRES) Safe Room Project on Tuesday, February 14, at 1 p.m. in Choctaw, Miss. The ceremony featured remarks by Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson and PRES Principal Suzanne Hyatt.

This is Phase II of the \$1.6 Million project with the completion expected to be during the fall term of the 2017-2018 school year. The one-story, re-enforced concrete building will have the capacity to accommodate up to 900 people. Built to meet FEMA P-361 Safe Room standards, the room will be able to withstand 250-mile-per-hour winds.

“I am very thankful to FEMA and MEMA for their partnership and support in helping us to provide this safe room to our students, faculty and staff at Pearl River Elementary,” said Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson. “We want to do everything we can to protect our Tribal members and others who are in our care, and the building of this safe room is a step in the right direction.”

"This Safe Room is a result of a lot of work and collaboration," said PRES Principal Suzanne Hyatt. "The Safe Room will provide a safe shelter for all of our students and staff and we are very grateful for that."

Built in 1990, Pearl River Elementary School currently houses 618 students. The safe room will be built on the North side of the campus and is available for the school population and nearby community.

To learn more, contact the MBCI Office of Public Information at 601-663-7532.

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The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, under the leadership of Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson, has an enrolled membership of more than 10,000 people and is the only federally recognized tribe in the State of Mississippi. Headquartered in Choctaw, Miss., the Tribe has emerged as a leader in economic development. The tribe provides a range of governmental services including schools, a hospital, medical clinics, police and fire protection, courts, and a center for the elderly, among many others. Phyliss J. Anderson serves as the first female Chief in Mississippi Choctaw history.



Fact Sheet

- \$1.6 million project between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.
- FEMA/MEMA is covering 95% of this project under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, with MBCI covering the rest of the 5% through tribal revenue and in-kind donations.
- The 5,600 square-foot concrete structure is engineered to service students, teachers and staff at Pearl River Elementary School and residents and workers in the nearby community.
- The safe room will be able to withstand winds up to 250 miles per hour. Built to meet FEMA P-361 Safe Room standards; tornado-resistant.
- The building of the Safe Room is Phase II of the project. Phase I included architectural and design planning.
- Contractors: IKBI, Inc. of Choctaw, MS is construction company on record; Major Design Studios of Starkville/Columbus, MS is the architect company on record.
- Construction on the safe room will begin February 15, 2017, and will be completed during the Fall term of the 2017-2018 school year.
- The safe room will be located on the north side of the current elementary school building located at 470 Industrial Road, Choctaw, MS 39350.

Tornado Facts:

- Tornadoes are considered to be the most dangerous and serious natural hazard affecting MBCI Tribal communities.
- All of the MBCI communities have a long history of tornadic activity.
- During the past 60 years, a combined total of approximately 201 tornadoes were reported in the counties that contain an MBCI community. These storms resulted in 54 deaths and approximately 724 injuries.
- Property damage totaled approximately \$268 Million.

