





Courtesy photo

It's been a long couple of weeks here in South Florida and needless to say we are suffering from Hurricane fatigue. As I write this, please know that all of us here at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum are thinking of the Tribal community all over Florida, its family and friends, and we hope you are all safe and getting back to your normal routines. As we work to get the museum back in running order and open to the public I take comfort in the collection and the Tribe's history being safe, and look to it to remind me of the resilience of our Florida and Tribal community.

Some of the earliest references to hurricanes in our collection are found in letters written in the 1800s, but the earliest images are mainly from a set of photographs taken by William D. Boehmer during his time on the Brighton Reservation in the 1940s. The photo of a group of men repairing a bridge after hurricane damage is one of those images. This damage was more than likely sustained by the 1948 Category 4 hurricane near Boca Chica Key which then made landfall near Chokoloskee, Florida and crossed through the state out into the Atlantic.



Courtesy photo

Although many of the images we have are of damage caused by hurricanes, there are also those showing what a hurricane leaves behind or uncovers. Take, for example, a bingo dabber that was unearthed in 2005 at the old Bingo Hall grounds on the Big Cypress Reservation after Hurricane Wilma (a Category 3 storm at landfall). The dabber reads "Big Cypress Bingo We Set the Standard". Although a small and possibly inconsequential piece in some people's eyes, consider what this piece

demonstrates about the evolution of the Big Cypress Reservation and the Seminole Tribe's Gaming industry and how far it's come in spite of all sorts of external factors - like hurricanes.

And then, of course, there was Hurricane Andrew, a Category 5 hurricane at landfall. Everyone in South Florida in 1992 has their own Hurricane Andrew story likely to be told for generations. And many also have images or video from their experiences before, during, and after the storm. The museum's collection includes images of damage sustained at the Miccosukee Tribe Reservation.

Ultimately it is the spirit of the people affected that leaves the strongest mark in history. When I found pictures of food and supplies being staged to aid those affected by Hurricane Andrew, I was once again reminded of the strength of community; the same strength of community I feel today working on the Big Cypress Reservation and from our Seminole Tribe of Florida family. So as we continue to gather ourselves after Hurricane Irma, feel free to send us any images or stories of your experience so that one day we can be reminded once again of strength in adversity.

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