



BIG CYPRESS — USA Today gave the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum an early Christmas present this year, featuring the museum on the company's list of "Great places to honor the original



(Courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum)

Americans." The list also features Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Ohio, Connecticut's Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Spiro Mounds in Oklahoma.

The museum found out about the opportunity the weekend of their 20th anniversary celebration at the end of August. Carrie Dilley, the museum's visitor services and development manager, explained that Cécile Ganteaume, an associate curator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., mentioned the opportunity while at the celebration.

Dilley believes Ganteaume put in a good word for the museum to USA Today.

While other publications have featured the museum over the years, mostly about large events such as the American Indian Arts Celebration, Dilley said "to be included on a list like this is really special."

"It's just awesome to share the Seminole story with the greater area. It's not just Florida history; we're being recognized on the national level," she said. "It's the country's history and people are recognizing that. It's great exposure for the Tribe and the museum. ... To go neck-and-neck with some these well-known places is awesome."

While getting recognized by USA Today is a large accomplishment for the museum, Dilley said they still have huge plans ahead. One of these plans is a fundraising for a redesign of the museum's permanent exhibit. In June, they will also house an exhibit called "We are here" that focuses on Tribal departments and how they work together to serve the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

"This is a great testament to what we're trying to do here. We're not some isolated museum that people aren't familiar with," Dilley said on a final note. "We're getting our name out there. ... It just shows how tribes around the country are maintaining their history and culture and they're proud of that. They're not going anywhere."

To see the full list, visit [USAToday.com/travel](https://www.usatoday.com/travel).

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