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# The Seminole

Voice of the Unconquered



# Tribune

www.seminoletribune.org • 50¢

Volume XXXIII • Number 3

March 30, 2012



Photo courtesy of Ryals Lee Jr.

The iconic Florida State University mascots Chief Osceola and horse Renegade make their triumphant entrance into the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena for Brighton Field Day. The FSU mascot also served as the grand marshal of the parade.

## Brighton Field Day 2012

BY RACHEL BUXTON  
Freelance Writer

**BRIGHTON** — With more vendors, more entertainment, national television talent and an iconic grand marshal, the 74th annual Brighton Field Day didn't send anyone away disappointed Feb. 16-19 at the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena.

Making history and representing all that the Seminole Tribe stands for, Florida State University's mascot, Chief Osceola holding his spear and riding horse Renegade, entered the rodeo grounds on Feb. 18 as the grand marshal of the parade.

"Me being a Seminole Tribal member and a true Seminole Florida State fan, that horse Renegade and Chief Osceola, they represent and embody that unconquered spirit," said Norman Bowers, special assistant to the Chairman.

Bowers was instrumental in getting Osceola and Renegade to partake in the festivities, which was months in the making. Bowers approached Allen Durham, the owner of horse Renegade, during last season's first Florida State football game and asked if he would participate in Brighton's event. Durham was quick to accept.

"This is a tremendous honor for us to be here and be invited down to the Brighton Reservation," Durham said.

"To have the opportunity to call ourselves the Seminoles at Florida State, to represent the unconquered people of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and to have one of our students portray one of their most famous warriors, Osceola, at all of our home football games at Florida State shows how we feel about the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which is an unconquered people, a people to which we have a great respect and admiration for."

The Osceola and Renegade program dates back to the late 1970s, when Durham's father, Bill Durham, an FSU graduate, approached then Chairman Howard Tommie to ask for permission to portray Osceola. With permission, Durham's father made promises to Chairman Tommie that they would always conduct the program of Osceola and Renegade with great respect to the Seminole Tribe. The policy was made that

Renegade and Osceola would make no outside appearances aside from fan days and the occasional bowl and out-of-town games.

"However — this invitation — we were absolutely going to make the trip to the Seminole Reservation here in Brighton," Durham said.

"We will come in and make an entrance just like we do in Tallahassee at Doak Campbell Stadium with the spear flaming and we will come into the center of the rodeo arena and plant the flaming spear here at Brighton Reservation.

"It is a great, great honor for us, something we are excited about and we are just happy that the Seminole Tribe of Florida has invited us here today."

Also unprecedented to Field Day were the personalities from the national television show *Swamp Men*. Gus Onebear and Jonathan Cattail posed for pictures, signed autographs and assisted Tribal member Billy Walker during his alligator wrestling demonstrations.

Other events were more expected, but just as enjoyable.

On Feb. 17, Brighton preschoolers kicked off the day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in English and Creek at the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena amphitheater.

As is typical of Field Day, the first day of the festival was an educational day. Elementary students from surrounding counties packed the stands.

School children were given an opportunity to learn the culture and traditions of not only the Seminole Tribe but also those of other Native Tribes from across the country.

"Our school is very diverse, so, being that it is diverse, it is good to include our Native Americans," said Chetna Patel, a parent volunteer of Walker Memorial Academy in Avon Park.

"And right now I know fifth grade is studying social studies and they are learning about the Native Americans, so tying that all together is good for them to know where America's roots are from."

Students from Walker Memorial didn't just get to watch, they got to participate. International native hoop dancer Kevin Locke of the Lakota Sioux Tribe invited them to take part in one of

his dances. Locke said one of his joys is working with children to ensure the survival and growth of indigenous culture.

"It is a good experience for them to be that close and to be able to experience what they have experienced," Patel said. "To have to go out there and say OK we have been out there, we know what this is like."

Past performers, such as the Aztec Fire Dancers from Mexico City and the Haskell University Pow-wow Dancers, returned to show off their native dances. Spectators were invited to join in the fun.

"I love to dance," said Sandy Rudolph, who was visiting from Mentor, Ohio.

"And to see the Tribe show their way of dancing that they have done from the beginning of time is miraculous to me.

"That's why I got out there. I wanted to see and feel because you can feel the beat when you're out there. Thrilling, just thrilling to be with them and with their costumes and to talk to them."

Visitors also checked out numerous vendors selling traditional Seminole patchwork, beadwork, artwork and more.

Under the chickees at the culture camp, Tribal members demonstrated cooking, sewing and basket-making. Also, Seminole Okalee Indian Village displayed several exotic animals.

"The students learned a lot about Native American basket making, doll making, and they got to sample the traditional frybread and really get to see some real, exotic animals as well as learn about the alligator wrestling," said fourth-grade teacher Tracy Phillips from North Elementary in Okeechobee. "So it has been a lot of fun today."

No Field Day is complete without bucking bulls. To end the festivities, Brighton hosted a televised Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) rodeo with the PRCA's Xtreme Bulls rodeo as the finale on Sunday afternoon.

Next year will mark the 75th year for Field Day. What can people expect?

"We want to do something bigger and better," Bowers said. "I don't know what we're going to do, but we'll do it."

❖ See more FIELD DAY coverage on page 4A

## Seminole Tribe expands business operations

BY BRETT DALY  
Senior Editor

**BRIGHTON** — Since taking office in June, Brighton Board Rep. Larry Howard has looked to expand the Seminole Tribe of Florida's revenue beyond gaming and has turned to the reservation's land to do so.

With the support of the Board of Directors, he has revamped the citrus groves and sugarcane fields and reinstated shell pit operations. In addition, he has made improvements to the reservation's cattle operations.

"Everything is now in full operation," Rep. Howard said. "I think all these operations are needed because they bring revenue to our Board. I feel good about what's going on here; I feel proud of what's going on here. Things are looking up."

Rep. Howard said he hopes they can stay on this path for the betterment of the Tribe and for the shareholders of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc.

"I enjoy what I do each and every day," he said. "At the end of the day, it's all about the people of my community and the shareholders of our Tribe. I just want to say thank you all for the opportunity to represent the Brighton community and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. M.T.V.O."

### Citrus Groves

The Seminole Tribe established the Brighton Citrus Grove in 1984 with 40 acres of land. Now, the Brighton

Reservation houses more than 400 acres of citrus on two groves: the Flowing Well Grove and the Stone Beads Grove. Although originally intended to be a project for community use only, the groves — and the Seminole Pride Orange Juice label — have recently reached international markets.

Director of Citrus Operations Joe Tillman said the state of the groves reached nowhere close to potential before Rep. Howard took office. During the last 10 months, Tillman and his crew have worked diligently under the direction of Rep. Howard to remove and replace dead trees, clear vines and perform fertilizing and pruning. Their goal is to turn a profit from the citrus operations for the first time.

"Because of the Board's willingness to stay in agriculture, we are here today," said Tillman, who has 45 years of experience in the citrus business. "Big things are happening. That's why we're working as hard as we are."

Seminole Pride Orange Juice is 100 percent natural with no preservatives and is sold throughout the Seminole Tribe. Hard Rock Hollywood and Hard Rock Tampa each receive 1,500 gallons of Seminole Pride Orange Juice a month, Tillman said. In addition, the Coconut Creek, Immokalee and Brighton Casinos receive 240 gallons of juice a month, and locations such as the senior centers and schools in both Big Cypress and Brighton sell the product.

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## Board promotes business at Las Vegas summit



Brett Daly

President Tony Sanchez Jr. and Hollywood Board Rep. Chris Osceola promote their latest joint venture with Stiles Construction at the RES Trade Fair.

BY BRETT DALY  
Senior Editor

**LAS VEGAS** — The Seminole Tribe's Board of Directors recently traveled to the Reservation Economic Summit & American Indian Business Trade Fair (RES) in Las Vegas.

At the conference, the Board promoted their ongoing business operations, including a recent joint venture with Stiles Construction.

RES, which took place from Feb. 28-March 1, provided Indian Country with business information and training tailored specifically to Native entrepreneurs and Tribal organizations.

In addition, a two-day American Indian Business Trade Fair featured more than 400 exhibitors. The Trade Fair provided opportunities for American Indian suppliers to market their businesses, network and negotiate potential contracts with corporate and government buyers.

The Board utilized the Trade Fair to promote Seminole/Stiles Construction & Development.

Last year, the Board approved the partnership with the intention of expanding its operations in the construction industry.

With 61 years of experience in the

field, Stiles offered the resources and contacts the Tribe needed to expand its business off Seminole reservations and increase its market share.

Based in Fort Lauderdale, Stiles Construction is a branch of Stiles Corp., which is recognized for developing more than 37 million square feet of projects throughout Florida, including office, industrial, retail, mixed-use and residential projects.

The company plays a major role in each part of a project from design to development to construction. Their past projects include the construction of the Dolphin Stadium's \$200-million expansion and the Trump International Hotel on Fort Lauderdale Beach.

David Lowery, director of Public Projects for Stiles Construction, said the joint venture will allow Seminole/Stiles to secure federal set-aside contracting work.

The set-asides were created to help small and disadvantaged businesses compete in the marketplace and gain access to federal and private procurement markets, according to the U.S. Small Business Association's website.

❖ See RES on page 2A

**Immokalee hosts  
Seminole Moments**  
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**Tribal youth travel to  
Washington, D.C.**  
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# Tribal departments network at Reservation Economic Summit

BY BRETT DALY  
Senior Editor

**LAS VEGAS** — The Seminole Tribe of Florida had a strong presence at the recent Reservation Economic Summit & American Indian Business Trade Fair (RES) in Las Vegas.

Several Tribal departments, as well as Tribal business owners, made the 2,500-mile trek to network with Indian Country and market their businesses.

In its 26th year, RES is billed as the largest and longest running Native American business conference in the nation with about 4,000 attendees this year. The summit is sponsored by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED), a nonprofit organization that assists Indian enterprises and Tribes with their economic business development.

“Seminole are really the forerunners in many areas, and economic development happens to be one of them,” said Joel Frank Sr., a member of the NCAIED Board of Directors since 1989. “The idea of our Tribal members learning to negotiate with corporate America is strictly on another level. There’s a bright future for the Seminole Tribe.”

RES provides three days of business information and training for Native entrepreneurs, Tribal enterprises and organizations wishing to do business with American Indian businesses.

The conference also holds a two-day trade fair with more than 400 exhibitors, providing opportunities for American Indians to meet corporate and government buyers to market their organizations and companies, network and negotiate potential contracts.

Seminole Tribal businesses owners used RES to advance their own companies.

Steve Osceola, owner of Redman Builders Inc., attended sessions about alternative energy to determine whether he can incorporate the growing trend into his own business with the Tribe. This was his second year at the conference.

“I was amazed at the amount of Tribal businesses in Indian Country,” Osceola said. “The networking was amazing.”

Osceola, a licensed general contractor, formed Chief Development Inc. in 1998 and built various projects for the Seminole Tribe, including the Dorothy Scott Osceola building and the Senior Center on the Hollywood Reservation. He formed Osceola Contracting Inc. in 2004 to provide services including concrete work, wooden decks, home additions and repairs and small buildings. He expanded to create Redman Builders Inc. almost four years ago.

With a growing construction business, Osceola looks for ways to stay competitive and continue expanding his operations. At the summit, he had a chance to meet face to face with industry leaders and learn more about current renewable energy projects. He spoke with federal agencies like the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development and the U.S. Department of Energy.

“I encourage anyone who aspires to start their

own business or who is in business to attend RES,” Osceola said. “The resources are great, and we need to play a bigger part in RES in the years to come to show people what we can do.”

Tribal members Joe Osceola Jr. and his daughter, Jody, also attended RES sessions to learn new ideas for their business, Osceola Operations LLC.

The corporation connects suppliers with businesses in need of unique products within the hospitality and gaming industries. The company has been in business since 2005 and is a source for linens, in-room convenience items, electronics, furniture, fixtures and equipment for clients like Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.

RES offered Joe and Jody the opportunity to network with other Indian businesses that might lead to additional clients. The father-daughter duo plans to continue expanding their operations through these events.

“These things are really important for people who want to do business,” Jody said. “You get to meet a lot of interesting, motivated business owners and it motivates you, too. Business is booming in Indian Country, and we want to be a part of it.”

Karla Rivera, assistant manager of Native American Travel, also attended the conference to learn about the travel and tourism industries of other Tribes across Indian Country. Rivera said she learned about potential revenue-boosting opportunities for the Tribe and plans to return next year to promote the company.

In addition, the Native Learning Center (NLC) set up a booth at the Trade Fair to promote their upcoming fourth annual Summer Conference on June 5-7 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood.

NLC marketing Coordinator Christina Gonzalez said they attended RES to also spread the word about their free seminars. NLC offers free webinars to Indian Country based on five focus areas: housing strategies; culture and language; financial wellness; grant education; and Tribal government.

“Because we’re based in Florida, we wanted to attend to reach out to other Tribes,” Gonzalez said. “Native Learning Center is such a great resource for them and it’s free.”

Tribal member Stephen Bowers had a booth at the Trade Fair, as well, to promote his American Indian Veterans Memorial Initiative (AIVMI). The initiative is fighting for a memorial to be built in Washington, D.C. on the Vietnam Memorial Walk that represents an American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian near the Three Servicemen Statue.

RES marked Bowers’ first trip west of the Mississippi to advocate for greater recognition of Native American Indians’ involvement in every branch of the military in wartime. The grandness of RES helped Bowers reach a whole new audience.

“We haven’t met anyone who doesn’t support this,” Bowers said. “We plan on seeing it through to completion no matter how long it takes.”

For more information about the Reservation Economic Summit & American Indian Business Trade Fair, visit <http://res2012.biz>.



Paula Bowers-Sanchez performs *I'm Gonna Love You Through It* to promote cancer awareness during the Women's Luncheon at RES 2012. The event raised money for the American Indian Cancer Foundation.

## Paula Bowers-Sanchez performs at RES

BY BRETT DALY  
Senior Editor

**LAS VEGAS** — Tribal member Paula Bowers-Sanchez made a unique impact during the Reservation Economic Summit this year through a special music performance.

During a Celebrating Women in Business Luncheon, Sanchez sang Martina McBride’s *I'm Gonna Love You Through It* to help raise cancer awareness among Native Americans. Margo Gray-Proctor, Chairwoman of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, personally requested that Sanchez sing the song.

“This year, it was my privilege and honor to perform at the Celebrating Women in Business Luncheon and Fashion Show,” Sanchez said.

“As a businesswoman myself, I felt especially connected to the audience,” she said. “It was especially meaningful because proceeds from the show benefitted the effort to raise cancer awareness in Indian Country.”

The luncheon raised funds for the American Indian Cancer Foundation, a nonprofit organization that strives to reduce cancer and its impact on American Indian families through education, improved access to prevention, early detection, treatment and survivor support. They help raise awareness to the fact that

American Indians and Alaska Natives face alarming inequities in cancer incidence and mortality.

According to their website, American Indians have a 69 percent higher chance of getting cervical cancer than white people, an 83 percent higher chance of getting lung cancer and a 198 percent higher chance of getting liver cancer.

“Sadly, many of us have faced cancer, or have relatives or friends with this disease,” Sanchez said. “We struggle with the fight against cancer because cultural beliefs, misinformation, lack of access to health care and/or fear keep us from gaining the knowledge necessary to detect and cure cancer. We all have a responsibility to take part in causes such as this. I am thankful that I was able to be part of such a worthy cause.”

Sanchez said she hopes to have similar opportunities in the future and said RES offered her many opportunities.

“I want to thank the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development for the opportunity to take part in this year’s Reservation Economic Summit.”

“This annual gathering of Tribal businesses, Indian entrepreneurs and those who do business in Indian Country is essential and its sponsors deserve congratulations for a job well done.”

“RES2012 provided a platform not only for business development but to discuss multiple issues we face in Indian Country,” she said.

### RES From page 1A

Director Juan Menendez said the venture will not compete with existing Tribal construction businesses.

Instead, he said, Seminole/Stiles will utilize Tribal labor for its projects.

The joint venture was a clear choice for the Board; because the Tribe owns 51 percent of Seminole/Stiles and Stiles Construction incurs all liabilities, it can only turn a profit for the Seminole Tribe.

“This is just the beginning for the Tribe,” Lowery said. “This venture will give them a bright future for years to come.”

President Tony Sanchez Jr. said the Board used RES to lay down the foundation for Seminole/Stiles and start networking in an effort to spread the word about the venture. The next step will be following up with those connections to secure future projects.

“We’re looking to do things beyond reservation boundaries,” President Sanchez said. “I am very proud of the joint venture that we have. This administration has hit the ground running, and we’re going to keep burning the midnight oil.”

To further expand its operations outside of the gaming industry, President Sanchez said the Board will utilize the Tribe’s reputation to capitalize on other ventures as well.

“Every venture will have to be evaluated; every partnership will be looked at, but there’s nothing off limits,” President Sanchez said.

The Board has already expanded its citrus business to include shipments of its Seminole Pride Orange Juice to Santiago, Chile and hopes that will create other opportunities in Latin America. The Board has similar goals for its beef business, which currently ships to Korea, Japan and the European Union, as well as within the U.S. The Tribe has also pursued a wine partnership with Cuillo Wines, which supplies wines for Morton’s The Steakhouse and Lufthansa airlines.

A recent partnership with Mobile Mike – a local radio personality with Clear Channel Communications Inc. – is helping promote the Board’s endeavors through radio advertising, marketing and even vehicle wraps.

The ultimate goal of these partnerships, President Sanchez said, is for Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. to put money in Tribal members’ pockets and to help the Board operate on its own two feet.

In the midst of growth and expansion, the Board also recognizes the need to be intentional in its decisions.

Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank said the current economic climate calls for more efficiency. Therefore, the Board has made every effort to streamline operations while maintaining transparency; they hold frequent community meetings to keep Tribal members informed and involved every step of the way.

After all, “that’s who we’re working for,” Rep. Frank said.

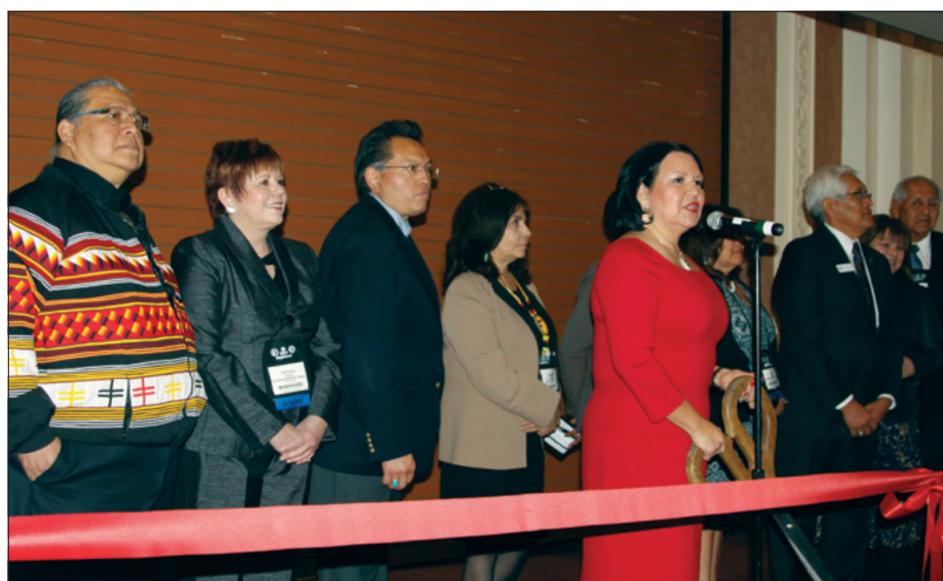
The Board hopes not only to have successful business operations but to also pave the way for future administrations, said Hollywood Board Rep. Chris Osceola.

“It’s a group effort, and we understand that,” Rep. Osceola said. “We have to work together to get things done, and I think we’ve been successful doing that. Everyone is very motivated to make things happen collectively.”

Rep. Osceola added that RES 2012 raised the Board’s awareness of Indian Country businesses and gave them the chance to see how other businesses have achieved success. He noticed a growing trend among alternative energy and said it’s something the Board may consider pursuing.

With high hopes for the future, the Board will continue to seek out new opportunities to expand its business at home and abroad.

“This administration is more open to new ideas,” Rep. Frank said. “The Board’s economic opportunities are a lot better than they have been in quite a while.”



Brett Daly

Chairwoman of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development Margo Gray-Proctor prepares to cut the ribbon to signify the opening of the RES 2012 Trade Fair. Seminole Tribal member Frank Sr., far left, has been a member of the NCAIED Board of Directors since 1989.



Brett Daly

Stephen Bowers and wife, Elizabeth, promote their American Indian Veterans Memorial Initiative (AIVMI) at the RES 2012 Trade Fair.



Brett Daly

Christina Gonzalez promotes the Native Learning Center at the Trade Fair.

The Seminole Tribune is a member of the Native American Journalists Association.

Letters/e-mails to the editor must be signed and may be edited for publication.

Subscription rate is \$35 per year by mail. Make checks payable to The Seminole Tribune, 3560 N. State Rd. 7, Hollywood, FL 33021  
Phone: 954-985-5702  
Fax: 954-965-2937  
Or subscribe online at [www.SeminoleTribune.org](http://www.SeminoleTribune.org)

The following deadlines apply to all submissions to The Seminole Tribune:

Issue: April 27, 2012  
Deadline: April 11, 2012

Issue: May 25, 2012  
Deadline: May 9, 2012

Issue: June 29, 2012  
Deadline: June 13, 2012

Please note: Submissions that come past deadline will be posted in the following issue.

Advertising: Advertising rates along with sizes and other information may be downloaded from the Internet at: [www.Semtribe.com/SeminoleTribune](http://www.Semtribe.com/SeminoleTribune)

Postmaster: Please send address changes to The Seminole Tribune 3560 N. State Road 7 Hollywood, FL 33021

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# Community

A

## Tribal citizens take part in 15th annual Big Cypress Shootout re-enactment

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — There is nothing like the pride that Seminoles get from reliving their victory.

The Big Cypress Shootout never fails to do just that. In its 15th year, the event continues to demonstrate what it was like for the Seminoles to go through a war that led to a costly, yet hard-earned triumph in preserving the Tribe's independence.

From Feb. 24-26 at Billie Swamp Safari, the Shootout offered the public a peak into the past with a re-enactment of The Second Seminole War that featured authentic weapons and war attire.

Plenty of other entertainment was also in store, including music, Seminole food, artisans, tomahawk throws, archery competitions, Seminole Stomp Dancing, venomous snake shows and alligator wrestling.

During the weekend, Tribal Liaison for Governor's Council on Indian Affairs Stephen Bowers led the Seminole Tribe Honor Guard in the presentation of colors. Flags representing the United States, Seminole Tribe, State of Florida and POW/MIA were displayed.

Bowers, who fought as a U.S. military soldier in the Vietnam War, gave an account on the re-enactment of The Second Seminole War between the Seminoles and the U.S. military that took place from 1835-1842.

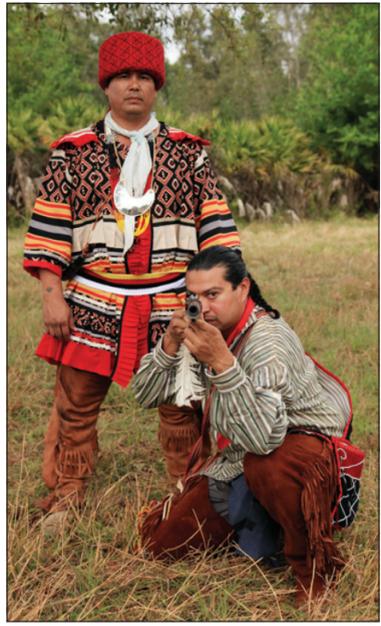
"It dramatizes what the actual battle would look like when we were defending our homeland," Bowers said. "We looked at the U.S. soldiers as invaders coming into our territory in a hostile manner. The history books have it the other way around."

The Seminoles, led by Abiaka — also known as Sam Jones — would go on to defeat the U.S. military in The Second Seminole War. The Seminoles operated in guerilla warfare to fend off the United States, Bowers said.

"Ordinarily, we would be fighting on foot," Bowers said. "We would hit, shoot, duck back into the bushes and wait for another opportunity to attack."

Bowers said he considers the victory a bittersweet moment in Seminole history; historians deem it the costliest Native American war in U.S. history.

"I'm happy, but we had to fight back the United States for our land," Bowers said. "It's like we won the battle, but we



Tribal members Vinson Osceola and Lenny Jim act out The Second Seminole War.

Atilano Nunez

didn't win the war at the same time. We're unconquered Seminoles, but we were restricted to reservations."

It's unknown how many Seminoles were killed or wounded during the course of the seven-year conflict. It is known, however, that Jones refused to offer a truce, compromise or surrender signal to the U.S. military — a key component in how the Seminoles earned its official status as Indian Country's only unconquered Native American Tribe in the U.S.

Bowers said he's happy with the Tribe's newfound prosperity, thanks, in great part, to his people's victory in The Second Seminole War.

"As a Seminole, I could now go out and buy a house anywhere I want to today in these times," Bowers said. "But [in the past], I would be restricted to my homeland on a reservation."

Bowers also said he was happy to have fought in the Vietnam War for his country, despite the fact that, at one point, the Seminoles were at odds with the U.S.

Government.

"I am glad we are victorious as a people," Bowers said. "The United States is my country as well, and I would defend it to the death. It's my duty to preserve our freedom and everything that's connected with it."

### Educational day teaches youth history

Feb. 24 served as the educational day of the three-day Shootout.

Tribal senior Moses Jumper Jr., who took part in the re-enactment, said he had the opportunity to speak with Tribal youth about the significance of The Second Seminole War.

"A lot of our kids don't really know too much about our history," Jumper said. "To actually see a portrayal of our battle is a wonderful thing for our kids to watch. It's just a good time to get a chance to teach our kids about it. This is a very important part of our Seminole history, and I don't think we should ever lose that."

Miss Florida Seminole Princess Jewel Buck made her first Big Cypress Shootout appearance on opening day.

Buck, who spent time with Seminole students from Brighton's Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School (PECS) and Big Cypress' Ahfachkee School, said she gained an appreciation for how the Tribe's ancestors battled to pave the way for her people.

"It's exciting to see a piece of our history out here," she said. "This is what makes us unconquered, and for the next generation to see that, words don't even describe how I really feel about it."

Buck also gave opening remarks at the re-enactment on Feb. 25.

"It's a very big honor," she said. "I know a lot of hearts and souls don't even get to see something like this. It's definitely been one of my pleasures to represent the Tribe in this capacity."

Naples Tribal citizen Jessica Osceola, a Tribal vendor at the Big Cypress Shootout, hosted a special sweetgrass basket demonstration for Seminole royalty and students from PECS.

"The more Tribal kids know about it, the more they're able to learn about our history," said Osceola, who has sold sweetgrass baskets for a couple years. "The re-enactment of the wars educates the kids because I think they get disconnected with all the modern technologies they have access to."



Photo courtesy of Food Network

Pastry chef Alon Gontowski competes on the set of Food Network's Sweet Genius TV show.

## Hard Rock pastry chef to appear on Sweet Genius TV show

BY KATHRYN STOLARZ  
Copy Editor

**TAMPA** — Seminole Hard Rock Tampa's pastry chef got a slice of the limelight this month.

Five-year employee Alon Gontowski competed on Food Network's *Sweet Genius* TV show.

"It was a total fun, exciting experience," he said. "What I enjoyed most was just the environment and the enthusiasm that came across from everyone."

Gontowski competed against three other pastry chefs from across the nation on the episode, which will air on April 5 at 10 p.m. on Food Network.

The chefs were given surprise ingredients, an inspiration and a limited amount of time to create a chocolate, candy and cake dessert. Gontowski could not reveal any details of the show, but he said he enjoyed the experience.

"It was high energy and totally rock 'n' roll," he said.

The winners from each round will advance for a final test, where renowned dessert chef and show host Ron Ben-Israel will crown the winning chef and award the *Sweet Genius* a \$10,000 cash prize.

Will Gontowski take the cake? We'll have to wait and watch. But Gontowski said he certainly brought some competitive qualities to the kitchen like his creativity and his ability to think quickly.

"I'm like a chameleon," he said. "I

adapt to whatever environment is at hand."

The cherry on top was coming back from filming and getting showered with attention at work. From high-fives to words of encouragement, he said the support has been incredible.

"I'm an in-house celebrity," he said. "It really lightens up your day and makes it all worth it."

Whether Gontowski wins or not, the experience was a career highlight in his more than 20 years of pastry experience, he said.

He plans on tuning in to watch the show with his wife and three children.

"My wife is my No. 1 fan," he said.

The Johnson & Wales University alumnus' other accolades include receiving a silver medal in the American Culinary Federation Pastry Competition and helping achieve a Guinness World Record for the world's largest wedding cake that weighed in at 15,032 pounds.

Earlier this month, Gontowski was also a guest host on *Daytime*, a partner of Southern Living magazine, and he said he wouldn't mind doing more TV appearances in the future.

To get him on *Sweet Genius*, Seminole Hard Rock Tampa's public relations manager Gina Morales reached out to Food Network.

"We need to expose our chefs," Gontowski said. "We have a lot of talent [at the Hard Rock]."

## Leah Minnick retires after 35 years as Director of Elder Services



Photo courtesy of Teresa Bass

Family, friends and community members came together to honor and congratulate Leah Minnick during a retirement party held at the Senior Center on March 1.

BY RACHEL BUXTON  
Freelance Writer

**BRIGHTON** — After 35 years of dedicated work with the Seminole Tribe, Brighton's Director of Elder Services Leah Minnick retired on Feb. 24.

Family, friends and community members came together to honor and congratulate Minnick during a retirement party held at the Senior Center on March 1.

"I didn't want nothing," Minnick said. "I told them I just want to walk out that door quietly."

However, her staff and her elders were not going to let that happen.

Minnick began working for the Seminole Tribe and the department, called Hot Meals at the time, on Nov. 17, 1976.

"I had been working outside in Okechobee, raising my kids there, and

somebody told me there was a job open if I wanted to come work for the Tribe," she said. "It was with the clinic. So I applied for it."

She traveled all the way to Hollywood to interview for the position. Although she didn't land the position she originally wanted, as she was leaving her interview, then director of Hot Meals Lottie Herald chased her down and offered her a job on the spot as an assistant cook for Hot Meals.

"She came running after me when I was fixing to leave and said, 'Leah, I was hoping they wouldn't give you the job because I got a job for you at the Hot Meals and, if you want it, you can start right away.' I said OK, and I've been there ever since," Minnick said.

After four years of promotions within the department, Minnick became the director.

She said at that time, Hot Meals mainly fed the elders. During her 35 years, she slowly added programs and events to the department.

"Time changed, things changed," she said.

As director, Minnick organized trips, bowling and horseshoe tournaments, holiday parties and anything else that added fun and adventure to the Department of Elder Services.

Minnick loved making it possible for the elders to experience things off the reservation and to see things they didn't know existed. Minnick said their trip to Alaska stands out above the others.

"That was the best trip ever," she said. "Happy Jones went on that trip to Alaska and just couldn't get over some of the things she saw."

Time quickly passed, and, before Minnick knew it, she had spent her entire career at the Department of Elder Services.

"It got to the point where my oldest daughter said, 'Mom, when are you going to retire? I don't want to come in there when you're still the director,'" Minnick laughed. "She turns 55 in August, so I got out just in time."

Minnick said she's going to miss her staff and planning activities, but she's looking forward to just being a senior. Thanks to Minnick's hard work and persistence in getting the new Senior Center in Brighton, she will get to fully enjoy it.

She admitted that she's still adjusting to retirement, but she has plenty to keep her busy, including straightening up her house and taking care of her cows.

Minnick also plans to take up sewing. Her mother was a seamstress and said she never learned to sew because she was busy working and raising her kids. Now that she will have the time, she would like to finally learn.

"It's never too late," she said.

While Minnick never thought she would spend her entire career in one place, she said things happen for a reason and that she must have been meant for the Senior Center.

She only has one regret.

"I should have kept a journal because I could have wrote a book...it would have been funny," Minnick laughed. "I had a lot of fun."



Photo courtesy of Kathreen Martinez

Ebony Tommie learns to ride a horse in a new program offered at Chupco Youth Ranch.

## New program has Fort Pierce saddling up for horse lessons

BY BRETT DALY  
Senior Editor

**FORT PIERCE** — The Fort Pierce community kicked off a new program this year to encourage kids to participate with extracurricular activities, and it has taken off.

Called New Beginners, the program teaches Tribal youth — and adults — how to care for and ride horses. Tribal member Shamy Tommie Sr., the director of Chupco Youth Ranch, teaches the classes.

"It's a good thing to teach kids about their culture," Tommie said. "If you can get them interested and keep them interested, you win."

Tommie said the classes, which are held every Tuesday and Thursday from 3-5 p.m. at the ranch, teach kids and their parents how to feed, groom, saddle and ride horses. Tommie also teaches them proper terminology for the equipment. The goal, he said, is to get kids riding, so they stay out of trouble.

"I think it's a great new program for our Tribal members and youth," said Kathreen Martinez, Fort Pierce community property manager. "It will keep them busy doing interesting, fun things."

In addition, the classes are a way for parents to spend quality time with their children, she said.

Fort Pierce Tribal member Sheree Sneed participates in the program with her son, Roger, and daughter, Ari-annah. Sneed said the program gives her and her family the opportunity to not only learn about horses but also to learn about Seminole culture, which is extremely important for Tribal members and descendants on smaller reservations who don't always have that opportunity.

"For the Tribe to put together a program like this is great," Sneed said. "It helps us learn about our culture. I make my kids participate in a lot of things that are educational. I want to keep them involved in anything positive that will keep them out of trouble."

The program currently has around 15 participants, but Martinez would love to see that number grow.

"We have had great participation from our community Tribal members and children," she said. "They have worked very hard these past few weeks. We look forward to more participation from our community Tribal members."

# Brighton Field Day Rodeo memorializes Fred Smith



Seminole Media Productions archive photo

Seminole Indian cowboy Charlie Micco and grandson Fred Smith ride on horseback on a Brighton cattle ranch.

**BY JUDY WEEKS**  
Freelance Writer

**BRIGHTON** — This year, the annual Brighton Field Day Rodeo was designated a memorial to honor Tribal icon Fred Smith for his contributions to the Seminole Tribe, his country, his community and his family from Feb. 3-4.

A proud statesman, lifelong cattleman, tough politician, historical pioneer and compassionate steward to his people and Compassa neighbors, Smith gave a lifetime of service to his fellow man.

Born into the Bird Clan on the Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation on Aug. 16, 1939, he was the son of Jack Smith Sr. and Leona Micco Smith.

Growing up in Brighton, Smith became a cowboy at an early age. He rode in the shadow of his grandfather, Charlie Micco, one of the founders of the Seminole cattle industry, from the time he was old enough to set a saddle.

He learned from the ground up about the hard work and determination required to bring a herd to market and carried those work ethics into his career.

Smith served his country overseas in the U. S. Army and returned home with

a strong desire to improve conditions for his people.

Despite the fact that they had recently adopted a constitution and established a Tribal government, the Seminoles suffered from poverty, social injustice, poor health and educational programs and a lack of economic opportunities while attempting to subsist on government and tourist handouts.

Determined to improve his Tribe's fortunes, he dove into government work, rising to become, first, the Brighton Representative, and, later, the Tribal Secretary/Treasurer.

In 1971, Smith was elected President of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. and Vice Chairman of the Seminole Tribal Council. With 16 years in these positions, he served longer than any other Seminole.

He became known across Indian Country for his business acumen and success in diversifying the new Tribal gaming monies into citrus, cattle, cigarettes and other business pursuits.

He was in high demand as a consultant and speaker to other American Indian Tribes who wished to emulate his business success.

From his office and from his cattle pasture, Smith modernized the Seminole

cattle industry.

He pioneered video auctions and group sales, made sure the Tribe had a voice in the Florida Cattlemen's Association, lobbied for cattlemen in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., served as vice president of the Intertribal Agricultural Council and played a major role in making the Seminole Tribe the nation's third largest calve producer, a distinction they carry to this day.

"Despite the fact that there were demands on his time 24 hours a day, my dad never lost sight of his roots or responsibility to his family," Camellia Smith Osceola said.

"He was there to put me on my first horse and held my hand as I met the daily challenges of growing up and eventually accepting the responsibilities of raising my own family.

"Even then, he never let go and became a strong influence on my son, Jarrid, whom I consider one of his achievements. He is my hero, and I will always remember him with his hat and boots on."

Rodeo was in Smith's blood, and he knew the rewards of creating opportunities for wholesome activities that encompassed entire families.

Partnering with his good friend Josiah Johns, who was an avid sportsman and athlete, he was influential in the creation of the rodeo arena in Brighton and was a strong advocate of the annual Brighton Field Day events. Together, they encouraged youth involvement and sponsorship in building a rodeo athletic program.

Johns passed away in 1983, but Smith kept their rodeo relationship alive and continued to sponsor the sport derived from the cattle industry, which has become a part of the Seminole culture.

Shortly after Smith's passing on Sept. 4, 1996, the rodeo complex in Brighton was named the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena in his honor.

Friends describe Smith as a quiet and soft-spoken man who was tough and could intimidate others in backroom politics and deal making.

His Indian name means "The One Who Holds the Heart." Most of his life was spent in service to the Seminole people, holding and protecting the heart of the Seminole Nation.

From the cattle pastures to the boardrooms, Smith improved the world and made life better for the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

*Peter B. Gallagher contributed to this article.*

# FSU's Osceola and Renegade come to Brighton



Photo courtesy of Ryals Lee Jr.

Norman Bowers welcomes Florida State University's Osceola and Renegade Team to the Brighton Reservation. The mascots made a special appearance at Brighton Field Day.

**BY ALLEN DURHAM**  
Special to The Tribune

In tribute to the unconquered people of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, my father, Bill Durham, an alumnus of Florida State University, created the Osceola and Renegade Pageantry — a Florida State University student portrayal the great Seminole warrior, Osceola, planting a flaming spear astride a horse named Renegade.

In 1977, my father met with Chairman Howard Tommie at the Reservation to seek permission for the portrayal of Osceola at Florida State University. He was greatly honored to receive the Tribe's support, and the tradition began in 1978.

The Tribe provided the first regalia for the portrayal of Osceola and still works with us to this day, more than 30 years later. Most recently, Tribal member Moses Jumper Jr. graciously provided us with a set of moccasins to add to our regalia received from the Tribe.

My father promised Chairman Tommie that the Pageantry would be conducted with great dignity and respect. To that end, the student who portrays Osceola is carefully selected.

The individual must maintain good grades, complete an essay on their desire to play the role, read about the life and impact of Osceola and have extensive experience riding horses, among other criteria.

Further, the Osceola and Renegade Pageantry is not associated with outside sponsors or companies other than Florida State University or the Seminole Tribe of Florida; also, Osceola and Renegade do not conduct any appearances other than at the Florida State University home football games, the annual FSU Homecoming Parade, FSU Fan Day and occasional bowl games or neutral site games.

Recently, we made a very special exception to our policy of no outside appearances. During the fall of 2011, I had the great pleasure to meet Brighton Council Rep. Andrew J. Bowers Jr.; Hollywood Board Rep. Chris Osceola; Hollywood Council Rep. Marcellus Osceola Jr.; Tribal member Moses Jumper Jr.; Special Assistant to Chairman James E. Billie, Norman Bowers; and several other members of the Tribe when they attended a Florida State University home football game.

Norman Bowers asked if we could bring the Osceola and Renegade

Pageantry to the 74th annual Brighton Field Day Festival and Rodeo. We were extremely honored to receive and accept this invitation.

Attending the Festival, which included Osceola and Renegade participating as grand marshal of the parade and planting the spear on the Reservation, was an incredible experience.

I was 7 years old when my father started the Pageantry in 1978, and I had the honor to portray Osceola when I was a student at Florida State University. To see the Osceola and Renegade Pageantry at Brighton Reservation along with my wife, whom I met at Florida State, our two sons and many members of the Renegade Team who have been such an important part of carrying out the Pageantry was an experience which we will cherish always.

The members of the Tribe who we met while at the Reservation were so warm and welcoming. We want to show great dignity and respect to a proud and unconquered people, and hope the members of the Seminole Tribe always know we strive to carry out the Osceola and Renegade Pageantry accordingly.

During the years, I have grown to know Kyle Doney and his family very well. We were extremely honored for Kyle, as a member of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, graduate of Florida State University and member of the Florida State University National Alumni Association Board of Directors, to have planted the flaming spear at several Florida State University home football games over the years.

The Doney family showed us their wonderful hospitality during our visit to Brighton. Kyle has been very kind to call the Osceola and Renegade Pageantry "The Tradition of Tribute."

A special thanks to Norman Bowers for all of his work in arranging our visit and to President Tony Sanchez Jr., Brighton Council Rep. Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Brighton Tribal member and rodeo director Amos Tiger, the Doney Family, Princess Committee Chairwoman Wanda Bowers, Brighton Tribal member Louise Gopher and countless other members of the Seminole Tribe who made our visit to Brighton so memorable.

Thank you to the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

*Allen Durham is the owner of Renegade and the director of the Osceola and Renegade Pageantry.*

# Fort Pierce senior's patchwork places first at Field Day



Photo courtesy of Kathreen Martinez

Fort Pierce Tribal member Mary Tommie displays her first-place ribbon for her patchwork at Brighton Field Day.

**BY BRETT DALY**  
Senior Editor

**FORT PIERCE** — Spending three days meticulously sewing 1 yard of patchwork paid off in a big way for Mary Tommie.

For her artistic efforts, the Fort Pierce senior took home first place in the arts and crafts patchwork competition during Brighton Field Day from Feb. 16-19.

"It makes me feel good to know I got first place," Tommie said.

Tommie began creating her patchwork in 2004, but she had been exposed to the Seminole tradition since her childhood.

Tommie's grandmother, Sally Chupco Tommie, first showed her how

to create Seminole patchwork, and Tommie helped her grandmother with the beadwork.

Tommie's mother, Marie Tommie, also exposed her to the craft. After Marie passed away in 2004, Tommie decided to make a concerted effort to sew patchwork.

"I want to keep the tradition alive," Tommie said. "There's nobody else here in Fort Pierce that's doing it, so I said, 'Let me take it on from here.'"

For her piece at Brighton Field Day, Tommie spent hours stripping the materials, sewing the pieces together and trimming, ironing and adding starch to her creation. She said she believes in perfection.

Despite the amount of time and patience it took, she said she thoroughly

enjoyed creating her piece. She said winning the first-place award at the event made all her efforts worthwhile.

"The Fort Pierce community is very happy and proud of Mary's work," said Kathreen Martinez, community property manager for Fort Pierce. "She does a beautiful patchwork and her sewing skills are outstanding."

Although Tommie does not create clothing out of her patchwork, she gladly sells it. She likes to keep her focus on her family's tradition of patchwork design and creation as well as on passing on her knowledge of patchwork to Tribal youth.

"I would like younger kids to take an interest in it so that the day I have to pass it on, there's someone here to keep Fort Pierce on the map," she said. "I want to carry on the tradition."



Photo courtesy of Ryals Lee Jr.

Brighton Council Rep. Andrew J. Bowers Jr. presents Allen Durham with a Seminole Tribe of Florida 50th Anniversary Commemorative Book in thanks for FSU's participation in Field Day.

# Brighton Field Day celebrates 74th year



Photo courtesy of Ryals Lee Jr.

Seminole royalty pose with Osceola during the 74th annual Brighton Field Day celebration, which took place from Feb. 17-19.



Rachel Buxton

Cattail from the television show *Swamp Men* feels out the alligator's temperament.



Rachel Buxton

Sisters Erena Billie, left, and Breanna Billie represent Brighton's royalty as Sr. Rodeo Queen and Brighton Seminole Princess.



Rachel Buxton

Byron Billie shows off his muscles to thank the judges for giving him first place in the 4-5-year-old clothing contest.



Rachel Buxton

Students recite the Pledge of Allegiance during the opening of Brighton Field Day.



Photo courtesy of Ryals Lee Jr.

Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr. and Board Rep. Larry Howard ride in the Field Day parade.



Rachel Buxton

Okalee Village Wildlife Supervisor Giselle Hosein hands 4-year-old Jailee Vasquez a baby alligator.



Rachel Buxton

A Haskell University pow-wow dancer demonstrates the Men's Fancy Dance.

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# Celebrating the lives of elders Frank J. and Alice Billie

BY JUDY WEEKS  
Freelance Writer

**BIG CYPRESS** — Family, friends and Tribal citizens acknowledged the important contributions of Tribal elders Frank J. and Alice Billie during a celebration of life and birthday party on Feb. 28 at the camp of Nancy and Michaelene Billie.

Born around the early 1920s, this brother and sister represent two of numerous children born to John Billie and Margaret Huff Dixie in their Wind Clan Camp in the heart of what is today Everglades National Park and the Big Cypress National Preserve.

While the actual time of their birth remains a mystery, government agencies have assigned them Jan. 1, 1925 and 1922 as their respective birthdates on record. Oral histories and a review of their accounts of actual events push these dates back a minimum of three to five years. Regardless, they represent a century of valuable Seminole history and have had a major impact upon the lives of current generations.

The life stories of Frank and Alice closely parallel the history of the Big Cypress Reservation, of which they are founding members. Their great grandparents had fled from the invading soldiers into the isolation of the Everglades swamp in an effort to avoid eradication or removal from their homeland. As small children, their parents and grandparents cautioned them against adopting outside ways and accepting education which could result in their assimilation and loss of culture.

During their early years, the Billie family hunted and trapped. They also sold their arts and crafts at the trading posts to supplement their needs. With the opening of the Tamiami Trail and encroachment of white settlers, their homeland was becoming restricted, and they began to rely more heavily upon the new economy that was evolving. Many of the people feared that cultural changes might follow.

A few Seminole villages had existed for several years in the isolated lands south of Lake Okeechobee, and the U.S. Government selected this area to set aside acreage for the Big Cypress Reservation. However, the Seminoles shunned intervention by the government in their lives, and it was not easy to entice them to move to this new place.

Through an unfortunate act of trickery, Alice became one of the first new residents at Big Cypress when she was hauled there for a visit on an old flatbed truck around 1939 or 1940.

It took all day for the journey on the muddy, pothole filled, log reinforced trace known as the Old Government Cut that joined Big Cypress with Immokalee. She was abandoned there to live off the land with the few families already in residence.

Relying upon the skills of her ancestors, she created a home for herself. During the years that followed, she was instrumental in building the Tribal community, and she raised a family.

A year or so later, her brother Frank followed. He was a deeply spiritual

individual who studied traditional medicine and the cultural background of his people. His heritage was very important to him, and he felt a strong sense of responsibility to preserve it.

Both Alice and Frank felt that the knowledge of their ancestors had been entrusted to them to be passed to the future generations, and they spent a lifetime striving to achieve this goal.

Eventually, Tribal leaders like Josie Billie and his brother Ingraham Billie Sr. followed the slow migration to Big Cypress with their families. The community continued to grow and thrive. Influenced by the arrival of the Oklahoma missionaries, particularly Stanley Smith, the residents embraced Christianity, and Frank and Alice were some of the first members of the newly founded church.

While Alice supported her family doing physical labor on the farms near the reservation and selling the products of her traditional arts and crafts, Frank learned to operate heavy equipment. He became a skilled grader operator and was instrumental in building many of the roads on and near the Big Cypress Reservation through his job with the government.

When the first cattle arrived at Big Cypress, Frank began the foundation for his own herd and participated in the establishment of the cattle industry for the Seminole Tribe. From open range grazing to improved pastureland, herd management and selective breeding programs, Frank did his part to build the productive cattle and range program that exists today at Big Cypress.

With their families fearful of acculturation into outside society, the Billies were denied an education. They both recognized that reading and writing would be necessary to preserve their culture rather than destroy it. They welcomed the arrival of the new Ahfachkee School and spent a lifetime encouraging youngsters to get an education.

"I am very fortunate that Frank J. took my brother Timothy and I under his wing," said former Chairman Mitchell Cypress. "With no children of his own, he opened his heart to us and became a driving force in the shaping of my life. He worked hard to keep me walking the straight and narrow and insisted that I go to school in Clewiston. He encouraged me to further my education in boarding school in Oklahoma and supported my decision to enter the military. He is one of my heroes, and I owe him a great deal."

Guests came from all across Seminole Country to honor Frank and Alice on their special day and show their appreciation to the Tribal icons. Attendees enjoyed live



Naji Tobias

Four generations come together to celebrate the birthday of Tribal elder siblings Alice and Frank J. Billie at the Nancy Billie Camp in Big Cypress on Feb. 28.

entertainment and a hearty meal at the Nancy Billie Camp in Big Cypress.

Nancy and Michaelene Billie coordinated the preparation of a traditional dinner that brought back memories of days gone by and provided an opportunity for everyone to experience a portion of their past.

"Wise men have said that in order to know where we are going, we must know where we came from and have pride in our heritage," Ronnie Billie Sr. said. "My mother and uncle always believed that it takes a village to raise a child and opened their hearts to their neighbors as they followed the camp tradition of sharing with each other."

Big Cypress Tribal Council Rep. Mondo Tiger, nephew of both honorees, was one of several speakers who paid respects to the Tribal pioneers during their special celebration.

"When you're a kid with no father growing up, you're very appreciative of someone who fills that role," Councilman Tiger said. "I hold a big, big spot for my uncle in my heart, Frank J. When I was growing up, he was working in the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) roads department. That's what got my interest in my early days. If it wasn't for him, I would have never gotten into construction."

The Big Cypress Councilman went on to discuss Alice's impact on his life.

"She reminds me of my grandmother so much," Councilman Tiger said. "It just

seems like my grandmother is still around every time I see her. She always gives me words of encouragement and gives me a hug when we're together. Those things mean a whole lot to me."

Several others offered words of praise, including former Tribal Chairman Mitchell Cypress, Big Cypress Tribal citizen Lonnie Billie and Big Cypress Tribal senior Jonah Cypress, who also gave out the special event's invocation and blessing.

Attendees waited in line to greet Alice and Frank, embracing them in thanks for the impact they made on their lives.

Special family guests included: Tribal seniors Nina and Ollie Tiger, who are both half-sisters of Alice and Frank; Tribal senior Thomas M.A. Billie, who is the son of Alice; Jane Billie, daughter-in-law of Alice; and Alice M. Billie, granddaughter of Alice, to name just a few.

Because of their limited command of English, Ronnie spoke on behalf of Alice and Frank.

"My mother and uncle often mention how much they miss the camp life they enjoyed while growing up," Ronnie said. "Everyone was a part of the daily life from the smallest baby to the oldest person. Today, you have made them the center of the activities, and they are grateful for the opportunity to share in the lives of their many friends and neighbors."

Naji Tobias contributed to this article.



Naji Tobias

Michealene Cypress, center, presents a birthday cake to Tribal honorees Frank J. Billie and Alice Billie toward the end of the Feb. 28 special festivities, located inside the Nancy Billie Camp.



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# Q-and-A with Moses “Big Shot” Jumper Jr.

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — After 38 years with the Seminole Tribe of Florida Recreation Department, the man everyone knows as Big Shot is retired.

Moses Jumper Jr., 62, a member of the Snake Clan, son of Betty Mae Jumper and Moses Jumper Sr. and grandson of Ada Tiger, single-handedly built Seminole Tribal Recreation into the finest program of its kind in Indian Country. Now, he has hung up his spikes.

The end of his Tribal Recreation career didn't come quite the way he wanted it to, intertwined with the Tribe's current streamlining of its financial infrastructure.

A Seminole sports hero and coach to thousands of Tribal youth, a man who thrived on the thrills of victory and found inspiration in the despair of defeat, Big Shot would have preferred to hear the roar of the crowd when he finally made it home.

As the Tribe's Poet Laureate, one of the best known Native poets in the world, he struggled to find the rhyme, even though he knows the reason he stepped down.

On March 7, *The Seminole Tribune's* Peter Gallagher, a friend to Big Shot for more than 25 years, stopped in to see him at his Big Cypress home. Here are the highlights of his interview. To read the full interview, visit *The Seminole Tribune's* website, [www.SeminoleTribune.org](http://www.SeminoleTribune.org).

**Tribune:** Moses, I look around your whole complex here and it seems like you got enough to keep you busy for a long time.

You got cows and dogs and antique cars and boats, a nice bass boat, airboats, swamp buggy . . . man, what do you need to work for?

Now's your time to relax and have a good time. Isn't that the way you look at it?

**Moses:** Oh yeah. But all of that has been a part of what I've been doing all along. That was all part of my passion for what I was doing the past 38 years.

The boats? I took kids out with the boats.

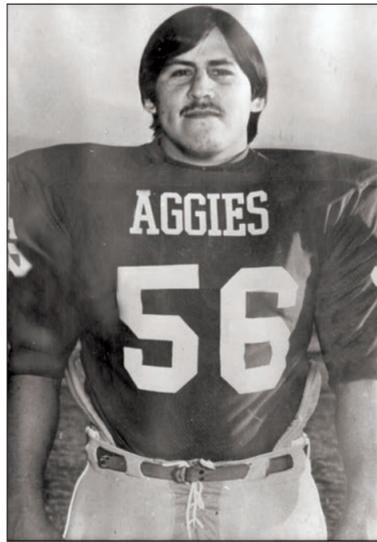
The buggies? You know there's pictures of the buggy rides we took, camp-outs that we've had.

And the cars, that's always been a lifelong collection. You know these cars didn't just come in here overnight.

Over the years I'd find one for sale or cheap, pick it up, fix it up and, of course, that contributed to our car shows that we started back in the '90s.

**Tribune:** Your job had already changed quite a bit over the last 10 years, right?

**Moses:** Yeah, I got more people working for me now under me. Yeah, it's not as much work as it was at the beginning of recreation, when I was a one-man band.



Seminole Media Productions archive photo

**Jumper played for the Panhandle State Aggies in Oklahoma as a linebacker.**

And I must say I have always had good budgets.

I have always had good cooperation from my Councilmen and Chairmen. I've worked under three Chairmen and numerous Presidents and, of course, you know all the Councilmen that have changed over the years. So all these guys that I worked under have always been cooperative, and they have always supported me in what I was doing.

For all the guys that have been over me in years past, I have nothing but praise for 'em in the way they supported the direction they saw that recreation was going. Now, today I don't know where that direction is going. I just hope it's the right way, and I hope they got a solid idea what they are trying to do, which I am sure they do.

**Tribune:** Think back on your early life. What kind of recreation was there for Seminoles when you were a kid?

**Moses:** When I was a kid, the only kind of recreation we had was government workers who would come in the summertime.

They would buy a little bit of equipment and take us for field trips now and then with whatever budget the government had for us.

Back in the '60s, they built recreation buildings on each reservation. I'm not sure if it was the Tribe or if the Feds paid for it.

Then, they would stock it with some recreation equipment and the government would sometimes hire a Tribal member or

work it themselves. And they eventually would close it up because the kids started school.

I was one of the kids who would break in to these old rec buildings and steal the equipment because we wanted something to do.

**Tribune:** You were in Hollywood. How was it on the other reservations?

**Moses:** There was nothing at all there, Pete. Now, of course, in Brighton they had the local school over there. And Big Cypress, if they wanted to play any sports they had to go to Clewiston. That was the closest place.

We had a few athletes who played during that time, but as far as an organized Recreation program, there was nothing there. And so, when I got back from school in 1972, I started working, did odd jobs.

I applied for Tribal Executive Director; I didn't get that. Since I had some background in animal agriculture, I applied to be Cattle Manager, but I didn't get those two big jobs.

I was kind of working around with James Billie at the Native Village and doing stuff there, and so, after that we were still working, and then Howard Tommie, Mike Tiger and Bert Jones approached me one day and said we want to start a Recreation program. I said OK.

They gave me a little budget and they said, you know, get something going on all the rezzes. They gave me a little budget to hire some Recreation people out on these reservations, and they wanted me to do the tournaments and all these different things.

I traveled to each reservation. I would often go in one day to Immokalee, Big Cypress and Brighton and come back to Hollywood, where I was living at the time. And that was in 1974, and so, that is how we started the Recreation program.

And it continued on and continued on and pretty soon it outgrew itself, so in 1995, the Councilmen wanted to take control of it, so they more or less took control of the program under each Councilman.

**Tribune:** You were the overall Director of Recreation at that time. How did that change affect you?

**Moses:** The Council itself took over my job. That was another decision that left a sour taste in my mouth because they didn't tell me what was going on at that time either. One day, they just took it over. Which it was good; it was another blessing for me because all they asked me to do was just stay in Hollywood and run the Hollywood Recreation.

So I didn't oversee the whole program anymore. Nobody oversaw the whole program. It was done by each reservation. So it was political and all that.

Back then, the Recreation program had all kinds of things going on and everybody — I mean everybody — was focused on Recreation. We had adults; we had kids; everyone was involved.

With Recreation, we are right here in the center of the rez, and we are always under the scrutiny of the Council and the Tribal members, and it had become a pretty big program.

**Tribune:** Seminole Tribe Recreation was generally regarded as one of the best Rec programs in all of Indian Country, right?

**Moses:** Well yeah! According to me. I have been a member of the NAAIA (Native American Indian Association) and the NAAA (Native American Athletic Association) and all the athletic associations that deal with Natives throughout the country.

I've spoken at some of 'em, attended meetings and maintained memberships in all these organizations. And all these organizations, either for lack of funding or commitment to it, they eventually died out.

So we continued on, as far as Seminole Recreation and Sports.

I got the chance to get out there and see what Indian Country had as far as Recreation.

Matter of fact, back in 1985, I was one of the instigators of putting together what we call Southeastern Tribes Recreation (later to be called NASA — Native American Sports Association) and the Native American Youth Organization (NAYO).

Myself and a couple of Cherokees and Choctaws and the Senecas, you know, we got together and we put this out and now it includes the Poarch Band of Creeks.

We've had some teams up from New York. We've had the Iroquois as part of that. We got the Coshattas from Louisiana that are part of it, and we even got the Pequots.

It made up all the Southeastern Tribes and today is the strongest Native Sports organization in the United States.

**Tribune:** This all came right out of the Seminole Tribe.

**Moses:** Thanks to the Councilmen and all the Tribal officials. They were always supportive of it. They always saw the importance of Recreation for the Tribe. I've always been proud of that.

Look at all the pressures on youth today: the violence, the drugs, broken families. It seems like Sports and Recreation is one of the only surefire tools to deal with all that. That was one of the things I've always said.

You can put the money into Sports and Recreation and help us to get that kid involved in something. We might keep him...we might keep him off drugs. I don't know. It depends on how much interest he has.

For me, I would have been the same way. I'm not going to lie to you. I know

many people that were like me, but because we were involved in sports — you look at all the guys my age, Max and Mike Tiger and all these guys — it was the sports that kept us involved in positive activities and kept us out of trouble. And sports has made up a big part of our lives.

**Tribune:** What would have happened if the Tribe did not have an organized Recreation program?

**Moses:** If you don't have an organized program, you can put money in there buying more rehabs, pay for more doctor bills, lawyers, all these different things.

As I have always said, Sports and Recreation is not the answer to everything, but it is a part of the answer that we can help in coming together as a Tribe and working through all the programs to help our community members.

If we shortcut the Recreation program, we are only hurting ourselves. And I think that is the issue they are dealing with right now.

To save money, Tribal leaders are trying to limit the things we are able to do with Recreation. With me, our program was so diversified; we did everything. If a kid wanted to learn how to play karate or martial arts or boxing or he wanted to do paint ball or ride horses or rodeo, we tried to support that kid and keep him involved.

In my days in Recreation, my doors were always open at the gym. I've had a lot of young people that came in those doors and sat down and talked to me. Counseling is another important part of Sports and Recreation: just sitting down and talking with the kids.

**Tribune:** I know the community supported the youth Sports and Recreation events, especially years ago when there was little else going on.

**Moses:** That's how it is in the Sports. Everybody always supported the teams that we had. Even when we were kids growing up playing football over there in Dania.

We had 11-12 Indian boys playing. We had good athletes, you see, so these coaches from outside would approach us and ask us to play for their ball clubs. It could be baseball, football.

They would pick us up and take us down to Dania. 'Course that is where Max, Mike Moke, Joe and all these guys we grew up with played sports together.

**Tribune:** I heard they even had special "Indian nights."

**Moses:** Oh that was big. These people would schedule actual games and call it "Indian Night" or "Seminole Night," and they would start off the night and all the players would be Seminole. And all the families would come out and the stands would be filled with Seminole people.

All the way to Dania back in the '60s. In fact, it was 1959 to 1962 when we were all 9-12 years old. A lot of people didn't have cars, but they would get together and somehow all make it to the game.

And at halftime they would honor our people. They would say, "You have some great kids playing here. We want to honor you. This night is dedicated to the Seminole Tribe."

That was a great time. Six of us went and played at MacArthur High School and made All County and All State status. I remember looking up in the stands and you would see all brown people cheering for us.

I know they were that way in Brighton and Big Cypress, too. People in Brighton really supported their teams, especially the kids who went to Moore Haven and Okeechobee.

I don't know, today, we got some good kids out there playing but not the same amount of support from Tribal members to go out and watch the games.

In Recreation, you compete with a lot of things nowadays. Back then, it wasn't like that. We were the only show in town. That was what everyone did. Go out and watch the kids from the reservation play ball.

**Tribune:** Any incident in particular you look back on, any individual you think, "Man I wish we could have done something"?

**Moses:** You can go to the cemetery and look at some of those kids' names on the tombstones.

I think, "Wow, he was interested in sports at one time. What could we have done more to keep him interested and stay with it? What could we have done to save this life?"

"Course, you know, everyone has choices, but you can't help but think, "What else could I have done?" Especially when I remember that kid growing up and start thinking about the potential he had.

"Course, all kids have potential, but that kid might have been extraordinary in athletics or something special in any area, and you get the sad feeling: What a wasted life that he had; he threw it all away for drugs or alcohol or getting in a wreck.

**Tribune:** What's the most important thing that can keep a kid from going down that path?

**Moses:** I think for us, in the time period we grew up, one of the major points that we were all involved in was the Church.

Our parents, most of them were Christian people. They lived by the Bible. They made sure that we were disciplined that way, trained up as a child the way it should go in every department.

So all the guys that grew up in my generation had some kind of spiritual



Seminole Media Productions archive photo

**Moses Jumper Jr. could do it all: player, coach, referee, mentor.**

background. We were always made to go to Church, so we were all in there. That made a strong influence on our lives.

And that goes all the way up to the Chief. He was there. We were all like that. Look at the early government leaders we had. They were all either preachers or men who were involved with the Church.

That is not to say they all were perfect people, but that was what influenced us, and I think we are losing a lot of those spiritual important aspects of our childhood.

**Tribune:** As a kid, were you a talkative, extroverted kid or were you shy?

**Moses:** As far as speaking in front of a crowd, my first year in college, they asked me to get up and do a little two- or three-minute talk in speech class.

They were going right down the rows. Each student would get up. I was sitting right by the back door. They kept coming down and getting closer and the more they got closer to me, I kept getting more nervous and nervous.

A row or two before they got to me, I slipped out of that desk, went out that back door and never went back to that class. That's how I was back then.

**Tribune:** Moses, I don't think a lot of people are going to believe that!

**Moses:** I remember that experience every time I get up to talk in front of people. Man, that was terrifying.

The place I actually did begin to speak, I was working with the football coach at Hollywood Christian School, and they asked me if I would get up and kind of give my testimony. And I thought, well, it is just for a few athletes.

Well, I didn't know until I got there to the school building, but I had to talk before the whole assembly. I thought, "Wow, that terrifies me."

But I got up and I spoke about my life, the things that I've done, you know, and my relationship with the Lord and things like that. That probably was the main thing that started me off, because from then, on I enjoyed doing it.

"Course funerals, I do a lot of funerals, and those are especially hard for me, especially when they are young people. I've had to talk at a lot of young people's funerals. That's one of the worst things. It is a real downside to what I do.

Parents ask me to talk at their children's funerals and, man, it's not that I don't want to do it. I want to do it. It's an honor for me to do that. They think enough of me to say, "You knew my child. He grew up around you and I'd like you to either conduct the funeral or say something."

And, a lot of times, it is a poem. I got a whole bunch of them. I probably got a whole book of memorial poems.



Seminole Media Productions archive photo

**Jumper, bottom right, poses with the Sterling Grove National Bank softball team.**

**Tribune:** Do you think kids learn when they see their friends go down?

**Moses:** When they see it, I think they do. For a while, I think the shock, the initial shock of it, is there. But I believe, over time, they lose perspective on what it really is.

**Tribune:** What about those Scared Straight programs where they bring kids into the jails and the hardened criminals are yelling at 'em from behind the bars. Does that work? Does that keep kids out of jail?

**Moses:** Some of it works; some of the kids learn from it.

I know of kids that have seen their buddies or relatives laying there dead in that coffin, and it has a real serious effect on 'em.

Some of 'em do change around a little bit. A lot of 'em don't. Sometimes, they are the next ones to go.

**Tribune:** You are very passionate. Everyone respects you for that.

**Moses:** I can't be any other way, Pete. To me, Recreation has not always been about a job and a paycheck. It has been my passion. It's been my life. It's been my calling. I feel like God gave me a ministry.

After the first four or five years, I was ready to quit. It was too much hard work, too many complaints and things like that.

Yes, I was ready to quit there in 1978, but I talked to a couple of people in our Tribe. I talked to Joel Frank, James Billie, of course, and a couple others and told them I was thinking about quitting.

I don't know, it wasn't just because of them, but some things happened in my life and I realized that Recreation was my ministry; it was my calling — what God called me to do.

Working with young people has always been my life. You think about it: 38 years. I have been working more than half my life for the Tribe in Recreation.

It's not just about money. Nobody works that long just to get a paycheck. You have to have a love.

And, I guess, just like the old saying, "I'm the luckiest man in the world." I feel like I had a job that I loved.

I worked around the people that I loved the most and that was young people. That really motivated me to continue to work in Recreation. Especially to see young people rise up and be successful in their lives as adults. And the good thing is, I might have played a small part in the success of that person.

I don't know what the future holds, but I know God holds the future. That's another wisdom that came from my mother. It kept her together and guided her through the hard times she went through.

# Councilman Tases Police Chief at SPD demonstration, fundraiser



Naji Tobias

From left: Big Cypress Tribal Member and SPD Officer David Billy, SPD Chief William Latchford and Big Cypress Tribal Councilman Mondo Tiger prepare for the Taser demonstration on March 6 at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.



Naji Tobias

SPD Officers David Billy, left, and David Lee, right, hold up SPD Chief William Latchford as he gets Tased by Councilman Mondo Tiger.



Brett Daly

Tribal member Sunshine Frank and son, Phillip, receive the keys to their new home in Hollywood from project manager Shane Ruiz.

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

## BIG CYPRESS — Just 5 seconds.

That's all it took for Big Cypress Council Rep. Mondo Tiger to Tase Seminole Police Chief William Latchford on March 6.

Chief Latchford offered Councilman Tiger the opportunity to Tase him to help raise funds to send the Tribe's 60 Explorers to Washington, D.C. for National Police Week from May 13-17. The event also demonstrated the effects of a Taser.

"Anything you can donate is greatly appreciated," Chief Latchford said to attendees. "It will allow our kids to enjoy a good education trip and come back to your community with more knowledge on what law enforcement is about."

Tribal citizens and community members came out to witness the well-promoted occasion, held at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium during the Big Cypress Community Meeting. Many were curious to see their police chief get Tased by their Tribal leader.

"Take a good look at our police chief now," Councilman Tiger said to the crowd. "He's up right now, but he'll be going down soon."

Prior to the Taser demonstration, Seminole Police Department (SPD) Capt. Jim Polan hosted a 30-minute presentation on the responses to resistance that SPD officers often experience.

"We're allowed to respond to an individual that's trying to flee, resist arrest, harm someone else or harm an officer," Capt. Polan said. "We're allowed to do several things in order to protect ourselves and others."

Capt. Polan described the varying degrees of fear that officers find themselves in when people resist them. Sometimes an officer's presence or a verbal warning can de-escalate a scene, but other times police require more force to quell resistance.

"Depending on the level of the situation, we can use a reasonable level of force," Capt. Polan said.

In addition to a Taser, officers can use pepper spray, a baton, a night stick and a less lethal gun, depending on the level of resistance they receive.

"Of all the tools we have, a Taser is one of the best we have available by far," Capt. Polan said. "It is proven that it saves the lives of the offender and the officer."

Officers typically are required to undergo extensive training and get Tased themselves in order to get certified to use

the device.

Tasers transmit up to 50,000 volts of electricity into the body through a pair of wires that penetrates the skin. The jolt immobilizes the target, causing involuntary muscle contractions that often drop them to the floor.

"Once an individual is down to the ground, there's a 5-second delivery," Capt. Polan said. "If for some reason the individual tries to resist, then the officer will pull the trigger again for another 5-second delivery. Usually, after one application, the individual will surrender."

Shortly after the presentation, SPD officers set up the Taser demo featuring the Police Chief and the Councilman.

Councilman Tiger's use of the Taser on Chief Latchford sent the Chief into a brief state of shock, as SPD Officers David Billy and David Lee stood by his side to keep him from falling.

"A lot of tingling goes through your body," Chief Latchford said. "It's like taking a 9-volt battery and putting it on your tongue. But after 5 seconds, once it's done, it's done."

Tribal citizens and community members gave a thunderous round of applause for the exciting demonstration.

# Seminole Tribe is No. 1 donor at this year's March for Babies



Rodney Riser

This year, 39 Tribal members and 16 employees came out to support the annual March for Babies on March 10.



Rodney Riser

Elbert Snow accepts an award on behalf of the Seminole Tribe for their participation.

BY KATHRYN STOLARZ  
Copy Editor

Tribal members and employees put on their walking shoes, packed their strollers and headed to Okeechobee for a special, early morning walk on March 10.

The annual, 4-mile March for Babies supports local programs that help moms have healthy, full-term pregnancies, as well as funds research to help babies' health.

For several years, the Tribe's team has been a top sponsor and top participant in the event. This year, 39 Tribal members and 16 employees came out to support the event. The Tribe's team donated the most money — \$5,000 — and had the second most participants of any team at the walk.

The Tribe has donated close to \$100,000 to the March of Dimes in the almost 15 years they've participated in the Okeechobee walk, said Edna McDuffie, the Tribe's walking coordinator. The Tribe's involvement started as a community project but is now more health-driven, she said.

Participants met at 7:30 a.m. to check in, take a group photo in their matching T-shirts and stretch. At 8:30 a.m., the walk began. Walkers strode through neighborhood neighborhoods and visited several spirit stations along the way, where Okeechobee

businesses give away candy and goodies.

For some Tribal families, the March for Babies is an annual event that brings them together to support a good cause.

For the past few years, Jessica Billie, a Brighton Tribal member who lives in Okeechobee, has attended with her family of 11.

"Even though I have had all full-term babies, I come out and walk to promote prematurity awareness campaign," she said. But for others, it hits close to home.

More than half a million babies are born too soon each year, and the Tribe is no exception to premature births.

Brighton Tribal member Elbert Snow has attended the walk for the past four years. His family has experienced several premature births, including his nephew's daughter and four of his grandchildren.

"We hope that with the money that's raised, they might be able to help a lot more," Snow said.

Most recently, his granddaughter Patricia Entry was born two months early at 3 pounds, 6 ounces. Patricia had two open heart surgeries in her first two weeks of life.

"It was stressful," said Patricia's mother, Patty Entry, who is from Okeechobee. Entry's three older children were also born prematurely, but none were

as early as Patricia.

Entry has attended the March for Babies for more than 10 years, but last year's event was particularly memorable.

Last year, Entry attended with all her children, including 5-month-old Patricia. To celebrate Patricia's improving health, a mile marker was put up in her honor.

"It kind of really hit home because I knew how small she was, but it really put it in perspective putting her picture on [the mile marker] of her now and when she was [born]," Entry said.

Entry values the March of Dimes for all they've done for her.

"They're there to support you and give you more resources," said Entry, who called March of Dimes' Cindy Hernandez in her time of need.

Hernandez, the Treasure Coast Division community director, helped Entry find specific information on Patricia's cardiac issues and answered other questions that Entry couldn't find on the Internet.

Entry attended the walk this year with her parents, children and several other family members, including a healthy 1-year-old Patricia.

The family wore T-shirts in honor of Patricia, and the shirt was voted favorite T-shirt at the event.

## How to get the Blockbuster body

• Paula Bowers-Sanchez

Hello everyone! Just a few words about my recent trip to New York to attend the East Coast Alliance (ECA) World Fitness Conference.

I enjoy this conference because I love to try new workouts and new equipment. The lineup this year was really exciting. I participated in workshops all weekend.

I particularly enjoyed the Blockbuster Body. This class is a collage of different exercises that help A-listers get red carpet ready! Let me tell you, it was very demanding. We did sprint drills, coordination and agility drills, strength drills. It was jam-packed with fat-burning, muscle-building components. Awesome!

Anyway, I just want to applaud those who are currently following a program. You are doing a great service to your heart, mind and soul.

I would like to encourage those who are contemplating whether or not they need to exercise or those who just don't want to exercise. Just try walking for about 30 minutes. Think of it this way: you can spend 30 minutes watching mindless TV. Swap that activity for an exercise that's actually beneficial for your heart and mind!



## Native American Recovery Convention offers support, strength, hope

BY TRAVIS R. BILLIE  
Contributing Writer

People from around the country attended a non-exclusive gathering to share their experiences, strength and hope.

Hosted by Seminoles in Recovery, the fourth annual Native American Recovery Convention was held at the John B. Boy Auditorium in Clewiston from March 1-4.

With speakers from different reservations, as well as from different states, attendees gained a lot from the personal stories shared throughout the convention.

"I could relate to the guy," said attendee Rocky C., of Okeechobee, after listening to Greg S. speak on Friday morning. "We all have a common bond."

Listening to the speakers offers a source of inspiration for participants.

"It's an enhancement to my recovery," said Rocky, who has attended countless conventions religiously since 1986.

Rocky enjoys meeting new people, as well as reconnecting with his old friends. His best advice to others who struggle is to attend conventions and meetings for support.

The recent recovery convention was highly attended, and program coordinators couldn't have been more pleased.

"I'm very happy with the way (the convention) is going," said Helene Buster, the Tribe's Family Services director and an officer of Seminoles in Recovery. "Last night we had 63 people here, which is

fantastic for a Thursday night."

The convention started as an idea among the Tribe's Family Services. Since then, it was picked up by Seminoles in Recovery and has become an annual gathering open to people within and outside the Tribe.

Angie T., who attended the convention for the second year, said, "[Seminoles in Recovery] is a big help. [The convention] gives me a place to go and see other people that are in recovery."

These events strive to do just that — to show that no one has to travel the road alone.

"Whether it's alcohol, drugs or gambling, any addiction that an individual comes across and has a problem with, the Tribe is ready, able and willing to assist," said Danny T., a member of Seminoles in Recovery. "Anybody that's wanting to recover, we're here to help."

Many agree that it's rough returning to functioning society, especially with finding employment. Employers aren't extremely excited about hiring someone with a criminal background, but a program formed by the Seminole Tribe helps Tribal members reach their full potential.

The We Do Recover program, based in Hollywood, employs Tribal members in recovery while allowing them to attend recovery meetings and events. The Tribe's adult educational administrator Marie Dufour said the program would like to expand to other reservations.

# Annual Chalo Nitka festival brings communities together

BY RACHEL BUXTON  
Freelance Writer

**MOORE HAVEN** — One of Florida's oldest continuous festivals kicked off on March 2-3 in Moore Haven.

Chalo Nitka, Creek for "Big Bass," is sponsored in part by the Seminole Tribe of Florida and gives the Tribe an opportunity to showcase their culture and traditions to the outside community.

The festival originated in 1948 to celebrate the paving of Main Street in Moore Haven.

On March 3, residents and visitors lined the streets downtown to watch the parade before heading into the park.

In the parade, Moses Jumper Jr. rode on horseback, while Brighton Council Rep. Andrew J. Bowers Jr. and Seminole royalty followed. Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students also waved to the crowd from their float.

"We want to become nationally known," Miss Florida Seminole Princess Jewel Buck said. "Our Tribe is dying out, and we want to get our Seminole history

and tradition and everything about the Seminole Tribe out there so we may one day become nationally well known."

Under chickees in the park, Glades County residents and visitors watched Tribal members demonstrate how to sew patchwork and do beadwork.

"That shows the people that see our beadwork and that see our clothing that we do it all by hand, that we have a tradition, that we make our own beads and the things you see now from the glittery shirts and dresses, that we make them, and there's a lot of hard work that goes into the Seminoles and the Seminole Tribe," Buck said.

Guests also checked out several Seminole Tribal vendors who sold traditional dolls, jewelry, clothes and food.

"Eat our amazing food," Junior Miss Florida Seminole Princess Jaryaca Baker told the crowd. "We have pumpkin bread and Indian tacos, so go and fill yourself up and have a good time."

Later in the day, attendees listened to Tribal storyteller Gordon "Ollie" Wareham tell stories and legends. Afterward, professional venomous snake

handler David Weathers performed his thrilling snake show and got a 13-foot cobra to stare him straight in the eyes. Audience members were on the edge of their seats for the Tribe's main event, alligator wrestling.

Two generations showed off alligator wrestling techniques side by side. James Holt performed several handling tricks, including sticking his hand in the mouth of a 10-foot alligator. Alongside, Tribal youth Eecho Billie performed similar tricks, such as bulldogging. Billie's gator was smaller and had its mouth taped for safety.

To wrap up the Seminole portion of the festival, the Tribe put on a fashion show featuring traditional Seminole clothing dating back to the 1800s.

In appreciation for the Tribe's involvement in the festival, the event offered anyone wearing a traditional Tribal shirt free admission.

"I love to see people wearing our clothes," said Tribal member Daniel Nunez.

"It's beautiful to look at the colors and designs. Someone's mom or grandma made that. Every outfit you see out here is one of a kind; there's not a double made."

Nunez enjoyed the variety of guests at the festival as well.

"Come one, come all," Nunez said. "We are a family today. That's how I feel."

Tom Boyd, who grew up in Moore Haven, remembers the festival's beginnings as a fishing tournament.

At the end of the day, the fishermen would line up their catches, and the Seminole Indians would help the judges determine the largest fish.

"Well, ever since I was a little boy, that's what Chalo Nitka was when the Seminole Indians came to town," Boyd said.

"We white men were rednecks, and, for the Indians to come to town, we were impressed. It was very interesting to watch them."

Today, Chalo Nitka is Glades County's biggest festival, having expanded far beyond a fishing tournament.

"I think they offer a tremendous amount of heritage that was lacking," Boyd said. "I would say the Seminoles are making an impact. They are great contributors to the economy, and I really admire them."



Rachel Buxton

Junior Miss Florida Seminole Jaryaca Baker, left, and Miss Florida Seminole Jewel Buck represent the Seminole Tribe with the help of Wanda Bowers.



Rachel Buxton

The Seminole Tribe's next generation alligator wrestler Eecho Billie performs the famous bulldogging trick at Chalo Nitka.



Rachel Buxton

Tribal members show off traditional Seminole attire from the 1800s during a fashion show.



Rachel Buxton

Clarissa Randolph, left, and Dionne Smedley demonstrate how to do traditional Seminole arts and crafts.



Rachel Buxton

From left: Moses Jumper Jr., Jaryaca Baker and Jewel Buck, Chalo Nitka Queen Haley Stephens, Little Miss Florida Seminole Jordan Osceola and Council Rep. Andrew J. Bowers Jr. pose for a photo.



Rachel Buxton

Debbie Osceola from Miccosukee purchases a traditional handmade doll.

## BUSINESS

From page 1A



Brett Daly

The Brighton Reservation has transformed its citrus groves into healthy, fruit producing trees for Seminole Pride juice.

The Tribe's ambitions went beyond borders this fall.

In November, the Tribe shipped Seminole Pride to Santiago, Chile, taking its product international. Since then, they have shipped around 8,000 gallons of orange juice to Latin America. Tillman has further desires to expand citrus operations to other Tribes across the country.

The Tribe also hopes to qualify for lucrative government set-aside contracts with the Department of Defense and the Bureau of Indians. Government agencies must contract 20 percent of all food services to minority businesses, and the Tribe wants those contracts. Tillman is working to have Seminole Pride certified as a minority supplier to make it happen.

Confident in their product, Tillman believes this

is only the beginning for Seminole Pride.

"We're second to none," Tillman said. "We'll beat anyone in a taste test."

### Sugarcane

James Tommie has had a hand in Brighton's sugarcane operations since day one — almost 16 years ago.

Although the sugarcane fields hit a low point during the last several years, Tommie took the fields from desolate to flourishing since Rep. Howard pushed to make them operational again.

"The way sugar prices are these days, it's a venture that never should have went under," Tommie said. "Prices are going up."

Tommie and his two-man crew planted 712 acres of sugarcane in October. They planted three varieties of cane because of the fact that soil changes across the farm require different types of plants.

Prior to planting, Tommie cleared the land of brush and trees and prepared the soil in order for the sugarcane to do well, he said.

If they keep the sugarcane in good condition, the Board stands to make a large profit, Tommie said.

When Tommie began preparing the land for the new crop, he and his crew harvested 203 acres of sugarcane that remained from a previous planting. With the old crop, they pulled in \$138,000.

When they harvest the remaining 712 acres of sugarcane, Tommie projects a net profit of about \$1 million dollars.

The Tribe sells its sugarcane to U.S. Sugar, an agricultural and food manufacturing company with a 300,000-square-foot facility that processes, packages and warehouses the crop, taking it from the sugarcane to the crystallized sugar available in stores.

Tommie will harvest the first of the sugarcane in December.

"I've never seen the plants look this good on the farm," Tommie said. "If you do the cane right, it will do right by you. We're in the neighborhood of doing real good."

### Shell Pit

Like the citrus and sugarcane operations, Rep. Howard saw revenue-generating potential in Brighton's shell pit. The purpose of the operation is to produce material from the earth for the pavement of both reservation and federal roads.

Marvin Bowers oversees the operation, which employs seven people and utilizes six machines. Bowers worked for the shell pit for 12 years before it became non-operational. Since his return, he has worked to make the process more efficient.

Bowers and his crew have 250 acres of land at

their disposal.

They already stripped the overburden (trees, brush, etc.) off of 10 acres to get down to the dirt material needed for their product. At that point, they run the material through machines that sift out large rocks and sand, Bowers said.

About 300-400 tons of earth move through the machines each day; once separated, it is ready for purchase. Their ultimate goal is to have the material — and the pit itself — certified by the Department of Transportation for use on federal projects.

"This could be one of the most profitable (ventures) for the Tribe," Bowers said. "Everything that comes out of the ground gets used."

The shell pit serves multiple purposes. They not only sell the finished product to clients, but they also use the top soil removed by the machines through sifting for house pads on the reservation.

Bowers said the next step is securing more clients to purchase their material, such as the Department of Transportation, the Army Corps of Engineers and local governments.

"We're on pace," Bowers said. "It's a little challenging, but I am up for the challenge."

### Cattle

Ranching is a way of life for Alex Johns, who oversees Brighton's cattle operations. He and his team of cowboys wake up at 4 a.m. to take care of the reservation's 5,000 cows.

They're currently working to make the operation more lucrative for the Tribe.

About four years ago, the cattle department made the decision to produce all-natural beef; they no longer use hormones or antibiotics, and they raise their cattle on an open range.

The result, Johns said, is better quality meat that will sell for more money on the market. They can pull in \$50 more a head and \$2 a pound for all-natural beef compared to only \$1.00-\$1.10 a pound for beef pumped with hormones.

For several years, the Tribe has been shipping its beef to Texas and Kansas as well as the European Union, Korea and Japan. They are ambitious to continue reaching new markets.

"Our cattle is ready to go anywhere in the world right now," Johns said. "These calves will bring in more money than they ever have."

Johns commends the Tribe's Choice quality-grade USDA beef and said they hope to advance to the highest grade, Prime.

In addition, they are seeking to become a verified

green ranch for the way they treat the land and are looking into using solar energy to pump water for cattle, Johns said.

"This is part of our heritage," Johns said. "It's a way of life we get accustomed to. We're just trying to raise the best-quality beef we can because we believe



Brett Daly

Brighton Cattle Operations tag and immunize cattle to prepare them for sale across the country and the world.

in it."

Rep. Howard said he will continue working closely with the Board to expand operations and pursue new ventures. The additional business will only help the Tribe and its members by supplementing its gaming revenue.

"This is going to make everything better for the shareholders of our Tribe," he said.



Brett Daly

The Board of Directors re-opened Brighton's Shell Pit to produce DOT-certified material to sell for pavement of both reservation and federal roads.



Brett Daly

Workers transformed 712 acres of barren land to produce healthy sugarcane.

# Immokalee community and SPD find missing children

BY RACHEL BUXTON  
Freelance Writer

**IMMOKALEE** — What began as a practical joke on March 7 quickly turned into a serious, unfortunate series of events that brought the entire Immokalee community together.

The Immokalee Seminole Police Department (SPD) received a call at 6:45 p.m. advising them that four children between the ages of 8 and 12 went missing near the Immokalee youth ranch.

“The first thing that we did is evaluate the situation and determine what kind of risk there was,” SPD Lt. Douglas Van Orman said. “The children were said to be hiding, so they didn’t appear to be in any immediate danger.”

The children had been at the youth ranch for an after-school activity and thought it would be funny to hide from the person in charge. When an aunt showed up to take them home, they took off into the woods in fear of getting into trouble.

Immediately, Immokalee SPD was given descriptions of the children as they began searching where the youth were last seen. At that time, community members were already out looking for the children themselves.

“Just by word of mouth on their own, the community started searching,” Lt. Van Orman said. “We never approached them for assistance; it is something they did on their own. They used four wheelers and searched all the trails.”

According to Lt. Van Orman, 90 percent of children hiding return home on their own, so after an estimated 30 minutes of searching the ranch and inside barns, SPD

went to the houses of the children and began searching there. With community members still searching the back trails, SPD went door to door looking and asking questions.

After exhausting their resources and still not finding the children, SPD knew they needed further assistance.

“We knew the next step was a helicopter to search the woods,” Lt. Van Orman said. “It sends out flare devices that register body heat.”

With a good working relationship with Collier County, SPD made the call for help around 7:20 p.m.

While waiting for the helicopter to arrive, SPD rounded up anyone searching the woods to eliminate excess heat sources.

“We wanted to get them organized and establish a command post,” Lt. Van Orman said. “They supported us and they helped us out.”

Roughly between 8:30 and 9 p.m., the helicopter was in the air above the woods. Lt. Van Orman said they think the helicopter must have scared the children because within 10 to 15 minutes of the air search, the children walked out on their own.

The children had been hiding in hay bales deep in the woods.

The children returned home safely, and Lt. Van Orman said he’s happy the kids were not hurt.

Lt. Van Orman said he feels SPD performed and responded well, but it was the community and their efforts that truly impressed him.

“The outpouring of the community was outstanding,” he said. “I was really glad to see the community come together the way that it did. It is part of our (SPD’s) job, but the community went over and beyond.”



Rachel Buxton

Everett Osceola shares how an alligator bit the sleeve off of his shirt while wrestling it.



Rachel Buxton

Immokalee Tribal member Geraldine Osceola, right, takes notes during a Seminole Moments on alligator wrestling.

# Immokalee hosts Seminole Moments

BY RACHEL BUXTON  
Freelance Writer

**IMMOKALEE** — Alligator wrestling is well known within the Seminole Tribe and beyond. However, the Tribe’s alligator wrestling beginnings aren’t. Immokalee Tribal members and employees got a chance to learn the history behind Seminole alligator wrestling through a co-hosted Seminole Moments held on March 7 in the Immokalee Senior Center.

The event was put on by the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Van Samuels took Immokalee guests through the history of alligator wrestling in the Tribe, and Everett Osceola gave a personal account of his life as an alligator wrestler.

“Southeastern Indians hunted alligators, and it began long before Westerners even called it wrestling,” Samuels said. “It was called hunting, and a lot of the information comes from alligator wrestlers themselves who have seen it.”

He explained how alligator wrestling started off as an attraction and evolved into a sport.

Seminole Indians used to capture alligators out in the Everglades, bring them back to their camp for food and sell the hide. In order to preserve the meat for food, Seminoles would tether the alligators to poles until they were ready to kill them, Samuels said.

“Tourists would drive by, see the alligators tethered and viewed it as a form of entertainment and would throw money out there,” he said.

It eventually turned into a source of revenue for Tribal members, he said.

After Samuels spoke, Osceola explained different alligator handling techniques. Although he grew up watching his uncles Richard Bowers and Chairman James E. Billie wrestle alligators, his mother thought it was dangerous for him to do as a child, he said.

Osceola said a wrestler needed permission from the then Gator Clan before handling the animal, so he got the OK from the late Mary Bowers as a teenager. Now wrestlers must get permission from the Snake Clan, he said.

“It is not just a way of protection, but it is also out of respect,” he said.

During his lecture, he described the differences between the three styles of alligator wrestling: traditional, modern and extreme. He also discussed tricks and moves, including the Florida smile, frontal capture, head inside, face off and hand inside the mouth.

“Clinton Holt is very extreme,” Osceola said. “He puts his head inside. When he does it, I cringe.”

Osceola also talked about the difference between deep water, land and traditional alligator wrestling. He is learning all three and has hopes of bringing back the deep-water alligator wrestling as an event, he said.

In his talk, he made sure to include the famous line, “It’s not if you get bit, it’s when you get bit.”

He also cleared up the misconception that the largest alligators are the most dangerous.

“A lot think it is the big ones that are the most dangerous, but really it’s not,” Osceola said. “It is the 5- and 6-foot

alligators because they can jump and are quick.”

Geraldine Osceola, who works for the Immokalee Culture Department, was quick to ask what parts of the alligator the Indians used for food. She discovered that mainly the tail was used as food, but alligator eggs and ribs have also been consumed.

“I came for the history part,” Geraldine said. “It’s always been for tourist, but there is so much more to it. I take this information back to my students.”

Geraldine said that the Seminole Moments speakers help her teach the youth during cultural events and activities.

Beverly Rose of Immokalee Family Services said she is a regular to Seminole Moments as well.

“I always come,” Rose said. “It is interesting. I saw alligator wrestling at one of the events a long time ago. I wanted to know how they prepare and make the alligator ready for wrestling.”

Osceola explained that before doing shows with the alligators, the wrestlers will work with the animals to get a feeling for their temperament.

He concluded his part of the lecture by adding that Tribal members are raised not to kill unless they are going to eat it. He also said he, along with many other wrestlers including James Holt, Billy Walker and Austin Billie, put on exhibitions at the Native Village in Hollywood to help keep alligator wrestling popular and part of the culture.

“When they do their shows, I just feel like a little kid again,” he said. “Like I’m 7 or 8 years old watching my uncles.”

# Tribe receives mobile surveillance platform

BY WILLIAM LATCHFORD  
Police Chief

In early February, the Seminole Police Department took possession of a TerraHawk mobile surveillance platform for use on all Seminole Reservations. Last year, we applied for federal grant funding to increase the number of SkyWatch towers for use Tribalwide without having to tow the primary vehicle around the state for each event. Towing the SkyWatch had resulted in extra maintenance costs to the Tribe, but this grant application would enable Seminole Police Department to deliver a higher level of service at a lower cost.

The TerraHawk is important because it is an elevated surveillance unit hidden inside a four-wheel drive Ford van. It has built in outriggers, a roof that automatically opens, air conditioning thermal imaging and digital zoom cameras. This, along with other technologies, will allow your police department to conduct surveillance over parking lots and during gatherings, as well as to provide a deterrent for crimes at Tribal events when the public attends.

This equipment allows our department to drive the tower and set it up quickly for any event or emergency where security and crime prevention may be necessary. Most recently, we drove the tower to the Brighton Reservation for use during the Bluegrass



Photo courtesy of Seminole Police Department

The TerraHawk mobile platform will allow SPD to conduct surveillance over parking lots and during Tribal gatherings.

Festival. This was a trial run providing a sky view of the property during the event.

Please come and see our new equipment at the next event, and we will tell you more about it and, if possible, give you a demonstration.

I thank you for allowing me to be the Police Chief of Seminole Police Department in this noble profession, protecting and serving those within the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

# Board of Directors, Tribal Council convene

BY CAMELLIA OSCEOLA  
Editor in Chief

The Board of Directors convened on Feb. 17 at the Tribal Hollywood Office Auditorium and passed two items on the regular agenda and three items on the special agenda.

**Resolution:** approval of Frankie’s LLC as cigarette retailer at Big Cypress Reservation

**Resolution:** approval of Seminole Cigar Landing as cigarette retailer at Coconut Creek Casino

**Resolution:** approval of Michael Henry as member of Big Cypress Cattle Program

**Resolution:** approval of Norma Tommie as member of Big Cypress Cattle Program

**Resolution:** approval of Joshua Abe Jumper and Esther Buster Pasture Separation

The Tribal Council convened on March 9 at the Hollywood Tribal Office Auditorium and passed 33 items on the

agenda and tabled one, including:

**Resolution:** issuance of a homesite lease to David Ingraham Billy – Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** issuance of a homesite lease to James Edward Billie – Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** release of interest in a homesite from Anthony Hank Johns – Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** issuance of a homesite lease to Willie Gene Tommie – Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** release of interest in a homesite from Mary Gay Osceola – Hollywood Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** release of interest in a homesite from Christian Tyrone Osceola – Hollywood Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** issuance of a homesite lease to Mary Gay Osceola – Hollywood Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** time extension for homesite lease HI 3125 for Mercedes Osceola – Hollywood Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** approval of agreement

between Seminole Tribe of Florida and Redman Builders Inc. for the renovations of the Hollywood Senior Center on the Hollywood Seminole Indian Reservation

**Resolution:** standard form of agreement between owner and contractor where the basis of payment is a fixed price contract sum between the Seminole Tribe of Florida and W. H. Drawdy Concrete & Masonry Inc. for the renovation of the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium

**Resolution:** approval of service agreement between the Seminole Tribe of Florida and Zyscovich Inc. for design of 20 classroom additions at Pemayetv Emahaky Charter School; ratification – Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Blowers Jr. stated these 20 classrooms already exist and were created back in 2009 and 2010. This was just the paper work being completed.

**Resolution:** Seminole Police Department’s Policy and Procedures Manual: passed

**Ordinance:** Seminole Tribal Code Adoption: tabled

# Hollywood community comes together for Family Fun Day

BY TRAVIS R. BILLIE  
Contributing Writer

Family Fun Day was held on March 10 at the ball field on the Hollywood Reservation. The event was sponsored by Hollywood Council Rep. Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Hollywood Board Rep. Chris Osceola.

The day was hot but beautiful, with excited participants joining in games of kickball and volleyball. Away from the field, water slides and a bounce house kept the young children entertained, while games of bingo were held for the seniors. A 3-point basketball shootout was held for anybody not interested in orange stains from the ball field.

Friends and family gathered under a tent for hotdogs, hamburgers and to listen to popular tunes produced by a live DJ.

By the end of the day, everyone went home with a complimentary shirt, hat and smile on their face.



# Seminole Fire Rescue inducts new recruits



Kathryn Stolarz

The Seminole Fire Department's six new recruits say their oath during their graduation ceremony on March 9.

Blepp, whose wife, Kristen, and 2-month-old, Teagan, came to support him, said the ceremony and photo slideshow brought back memories of his initial training. But the training doesn't end there, he said. The officers have continual drills to keep them sharp on the job.

"I feel comfortable in what I'm doing," he said.

Also, Tribal employees Bruce Britton, Robert Brown, Daniel Rivers and Jorge Valdes received recognition for promotions.

Rivers, who was promoted to lieutenant, has worked for the department for five years as a firefighter/paramedic.

"I love working with the Tribe," Rivers said. "They're great people."

The evening began with a welcome from Chief DiPetrillo and a presentation of colors by Seminole Police Honor Guard. Then, Chief Public Safety Officer Gerald A.

Wheeler addressed the crowd. "Welcome to the family," Wheeler said. "We selected you based on your character, because it's your character that's most important to us."

President Sanchez also offered his congratulations and appreciation for their commitment to serve.

"The sacrifices that you have to make, the support you have to give, it's not easy, but it's necessary," President Sanchez said.

The new recruits received badges and certificates, and the formal portion of the ceremony ended with a photo slideshow of the graduates and promoted employees. Following the ceremony, the honorees posed for photos and enjoyed sandwiches and cake in the lobby.

"I hope [Tribal members] have full confidence in the skills that we provide – fire and EMS," Fire Division Chief Joseph Sorrentino said.

There are currently 137 members of the Fire Rescue Department, including administrative and support staff.

The Department serves all Florida Seminole reservations via three full-service stations and two wild land stations in Hollywood, Big Cypress and Brighton, Chief DiPetrillo said.

The recruits completed most of their training at the Broward Fire Academy, but they hope to change that soon.

Last year, the department started construction on their own multi-million-dollar training facility on the Big Cypress Reservation. They currently have a two-story burn building, and the next phase will be installing vehicles to practice extractions.

BY KATHRYN STOLARZ  
Copy Editor

**HOLLYWOOD** — Six new Fire Rescue recruits stood tall in uniform with their right hands raised.

"Repeat after me," President Tony Sanchez Jr. said.

The men said their oaths and walked into the start of an exciting new career.

The Department of Fire Rescue held their Graduation, Badge and Promotional Ceremony on March 9 at the Hollywood Tribal Headquarters.

The new inductees were: Zachary Bashir, Brandon Bechler, Edgar MacWilliam, Christopher Keefe, Steven Pagan and Jorge Pastore.

They were chosen out of about 300 applicants.

"They're a very energetic group," Fire Chief and Director Donald DiPetrillo said. "They're very hard working."

The men endured 240-plus hours of hands-on training and physical activity – including climbing flights of stairs in full bunker gear, chopping wood, pulling hoses and dragging 180-pound dummies in mid-day heat – during more than six weeks of training.

Although it was challenging, Bashir said it was worth every minute.

"I've always wanted to do it since I was a kid," Bashir said. "It's such an adrenaline rush, and I love to help people."

In addition, the department honored the graduating class of 2010 at the ceremony: Steven Betancourt, Joshua Blepp, Tony Egues, Mark LaMadeleine, Vasile Mircea, Kevin Sayles and Heather Tower.



Kathryn Stolarz

Andy Buster and his band perform at the Bird Clan gathering on March 10. Buster also spoke about his clan's history.

# Bird Clan reunites after 50 years

BY KATHRYN STOLARZ  
Copy Editor

**MIAMI** — More than 50 Bird Clan members gathered at the Miccosukee Village on March 10 for a family reunion.

The group of Seminole and Miccosukee Indians hadn't gathered together in more than 50 years and decided to reunite the clan once again.

"The whole theme is getting to know our clan," said Virginia Osceola, who organized the event with sister Theresa C. Osceola. The day included Tribal speakers, live music, raffles and food.

The Bird Clan used to meet all the time, but modern day jobs, cars and houses have pulled them apart, said Virginia's husband, Joe Dan Osceola.

"The meeting of clan gatherings were put on the back burner all this time," said Joe Dan, the former President of the Tribe and a member of the Panther Clan. But his wife and her sister decided to make the gathering a priority. They spread the word, and Bird Clan members came from across the state for the reunion.

Linda Bowers drove in from her home in Big Cypress to attend.

"It's something to be proud of to show who you are and where you've come from and meet your unknown relatives," said Bowers, who was born at the Miccosukee Village and moved away at about 4.

Four of her grandchildren attended the reunion, as well as her daughter Clarissa. Her other children had to work, she said.

Bowers said events like this are critical reminders

of the need to teach youth about their clan's roots and family heritage.

"We're not upholding that," Bowers said. "We're slackin'."

Virginia Mitchell also came into town from Big Cypress to "hang out and see how everyone's doing."

"I'm close to my clan family," said Mitchell, who was born in Hollywood and lived in Miccosukee Village until she was about 30. "I miss my clan family."

Several elders addressed attendees in Mikasuki about their clan and its history, including Paul Bowers Sr., Pete Osceola Sr. and Andy Buster.

"The door is open for anyone to talk from the Bird Clan," Pete said in Mikasuki. "I encourage people to talk."

Sharing memories and stories of the past by word-of-mouth is critical to preserving the clan's past, he said.

Before Buster spoke, he performed a mix of contemporary and traditional songs with his band, including the song *Seminole Wind*.

Meanwhile, several clan women cooked chicken and dumplings, boiled plantains, pumpkin bread and potatoes under the chickee hut for dinner.

Raven Osceola helped her mom, Jolene Osceola-Tabares, and other family cook the meal.

"It's nice knowing who your family is," she said of the event.

Clan members said they feel hopeful that this event could become an annual tradition, and maybe other clans will follow suit.

"This one might inspire others," Joe Dan said. "We don't give up."

## 2nd Annual Seminole Okalee Indian Village

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### NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)  
ACTION: Notice of Availability (NOA)

**SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for approving the construction and leases of homes on trust property for Christopher Osceola and Christine Nevaquaya. The two individual 1.25-acre parcels are located off East Cowbone Island Road at Township 48 South, Range 33 East, Section 10, Hendry County, Florida, which is located on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Big Cypress Reservation. The BIA has approved and adopted the Environmental Assessment (EA), dated October 2011, prepared by the Seminole Tribe of Florida Environmental Resource Management Department and entitled "Christopher Osceola and Christine Nevaquaya Proposed Leases". This EA has been adopted and a FONSI issued for the approval of the home construction and lease of trust lands in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

**NOTICE:** This is a Notice of Availability (NOA), that the EA and FONSI for the Federal action of approving the proposed home construction and lease of trust property are available for public review. The BIA has approved and adopted the above referenced EA which addressed this proposal. The FONSI determination was based on review and analysis of the information in the EA. Based on the EA, it has been determined that the action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. You may obtain a copy of the EA and FONSI from the BIA Eastern Regional Office or the Environmental Resources Management Department of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, 6365 Taft Street, Suite 3008, Hollywood, FL 33024, telephone (954) 965-4380.

**APPEALS:** "Any person who may be adversely affected by this decision may appeal the decision to: Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Eastern Region, 545 Marriott Drive, Suite 700, Nashville TN 37214 in accordance with the regulations set forth at 25 CFR Part 2. The notice of appeal must be signed and mailed within thirty days of the date of this decision. The notice should clearly identify the decision being appealed, and a copy of the decision should be attached to the notice of appeal. Copies of the notice must be sent to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, MS 4140-MIB, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20240, as well as to my office and to all other interested parties known to the person appealing the decision. The notice of appeal to the Regional Director must also certify that the appealing party sent copies to each of these parties. The Regional Director will notify an appealing party of further appeal procedures. If no appeal is timely filed, this decision will become final for the Department of the Interior."

For further information please contact Chet McGehee, Environmental Protection Specialist, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Eastern Regional Office, 545 Marriott Drive, Suite 700, Nashville, TN 37214, telephone (615) 564-6830.

*Chet McGehee*  
Acting Superintendent, Seminole Agency  
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Date: 11/09/2011

# Hard Rock Live!

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# Announcements

## In Memory

The family of the late Howard Micco would like to say "M.V.T.O." (thank you) for all the kind words spoken and love shown to us in our time of loss.



Howard Micco and his great-granddaughter.

## Howard Micco

Born July 23, 1933, on the Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation, Howard Micco died on Sunday, Feb. 26, 2012, in Okeechobee, Fla. His lifetime was spent doing God's work. Always answering God's call, he once served as pastor to the First Indian Baptist Church of Brighton, the Trail Baptist Church and the Big Cypress Baptist Church. More recently he was a member of the Oakview Baptist Church in Okeechobee. He enjoyed singing hymns and giving the message in his own Native tongue, often sprinkled with his own dose of humor. Active and social, he could be seen riding his tractor, motorcycle and scooter all over the community. He would also frequent the local Tribal offices, stopping in to say hello and visit. He was preceded in death by his wife, Lois Johns Micco. Survivors include his daughter, Leta Micco (James) Choquette of Okeechobee; step-daughter, Leah Minnick of the Brighton Reservation; numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren and a host of nieces and nephews. Howard was 78.

## "I'm Free"

By Unknown

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free  
 I'm following the path God has laid, you see  
 I took His hand when I heard His call  
 I turned my back and left it all  
 I could not stay another day  
 To laugh, to love, to work or play  
 Tasks left undone must stay that way  
 I found the peace at the close of day  
 If my parting has left a void  
 Then fill it with remembered joys  
 A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss  
 Ah yes, these things I too will miss  
 Be not burdened with times of sorrow  
 I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow  
 My life's been full, I savored much  
 Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch  
 Perhaps my time seemed all too brief  
 Don't lengthen it now with undue grief  
 Lift up your hearts, and peace to thee  
 God wanted me now, he set me free

## Congratulations



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 All Tribal seniors welcome.  
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 call 863-902-3200 ext. 13125

## Poems

### "Pieces"

Moments continue to pass although it appears  
 time has somehow stood still  
 To focus his touch he first had to define the  
 craft not to feel  
 Unprepared for the journey he was quick to  
 learn  
 For the roads of life often produce a foolish  
 twist and an unforeseen turn  
 Great are those voids that can never be filled  
 Its discovery embraces the tears his heart has  
 spilled  
 Now he can welcome the pain despite its  
 unwanted intrusion  
 Has it not been said... "Life is but an illusion"  
 To create with words his pen has become  
 quite clever  
 And many pieces can be found amongst one's  
 life letter

Leslie J. Gopher  
*"Too many of us often choose to take apart  
 what can be so hard to piece back together."*  
 April 27, 2007

### "Pieces...Pieces..."

Pieces...pieces...with me wherever I go  
 My gift is the beautiful curse within these  
 pieces I've come to know  
 Pieces...pieces...certain to remain a perfect  
 fit  
 Some are pieces I long to remember and some  
 I dare not forget  
 Pieces...pieces...discreet yet so very bold  
 I've been a collector from birth and today  
 they are worth more than gold  
 Pieces...pieces...of every color, shape and  
 size  
 These pieces create the art this journey has  
 come to symbolize  
 Pieces...pieces...until its last beat my heart  
 will continue to seek them out  
 For life is but a mystery and great are those  
 pieces that roam about

Leslie J. Gopher  
*"Maybe we've overlooked it or simply haven't  
 come across it yet, but I'm fully convinced there  
 exists a piece to make each of us complete."*  
 May 8, 2011

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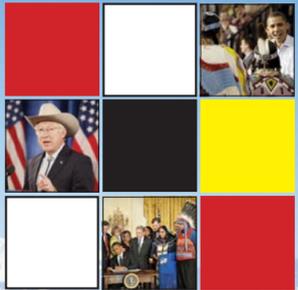
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# NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS



## Alligator found in Indiana

**ENGLISH LAKE, Iowa** — An authentic American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) was found dead in a northern Indiana logjam by a man and his father fishing recently on the Kankakee River in Starke County. The pair used a net to pull the 4-foot-7-inch gator into their boat 2 miles downstream from the English Lake public access site.

The alligator species' range stretches from the southern tip of Texas along the Southeastern Gulf Coast and up to the outer banks of North Carolina along the Atlantic. It covers the whole states of Florida and Louisiana.

Department of Natural Resources Officer Keith Wildeman said the alligator, which had its mouth taped shut, may have been a pet that was released illegally. He said alligators cannot survive Indiana's winter climate, particularly with a mouth taped shut that prevents it from feeding.

— Associated Press

## New Jersey casino delayed six months

**ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.** — New Jersey casino regulators agreed Wednesday to let Hard Rock International delay its new "boutique" casino on the Atlantic City Boardwalk by six months.

The company, owned by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, has applied to build one of two new smaller casinos under a pilot program intended to jump-start the struggling Atlantic City market.

The extra time is needed to secure environmental permits. Hard Rock attorney Nicholas Casiello told the Casino Control Commission the company is still in the midst of getting a crucial approval from the State Department of Environmental Protection for a Coastal Area Facility Review Act, governing what can and cannot be built along the shoreline.

Thomas Sykes, the project's architect, said he expects to have differences with the state worked out by the end of April.

Company CEO James Allen told the Commission last November that Hard Rock would likely display items from when the Beatles and The Rolling Stones separately played in Atlantic City. The Beatles came through in 1964 and the Stones in 1989.

Hard Rock now has until Sept. 12 to apply for a casino license and post the \$1 million deposit. It must start construction by Sept. 11, 2013 and complete the first phase by Jan. 15, 2015, Casiello said.

The first phase, which would cost \$465 million, would include 208 hotel rooms. It would expand to 858 rooms in a second phase. No other taker has materialized for the second slot in the pilot program to build new, smaller casinos.

— CBSNews.com

## Kim Kardashian reveals new Tribal fashions



Just when Indian Country figures they've heard enough already about Kim Kardashian, the boorish reality star who used the derogatory term "Indian giver" on *Good Morning America* unveiled the latest items in her fashion line. She did it by way of a blog post titled "Kardashian

Kollektion Goes Tribal!"

"You guys know I love my statement necklaces!! This new faux turquoise tier necklace from our Kardashian Collection for Sears is the perfect statement piece for spring!

"We were inspired by a lot of Tribal motifs and patterns when designing some of our new items and we've created some tribal-chic pieces I think you guys will love. Tribal can be glam! LOL"

She chose, however, not to call that faux turquoise tier necklace "Navajo," so Sears (which carries the Kardashian Collection) won't be hearing from the Navajo Nation's lawyers, as Urban Outfitters did earlier this week.

In that case, the Navajo Nation has sued Urban Outfitters (UO) for trademark infringement and violations of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. UO had been selling socks, underwear, plastic trinkets and other items branded as "Navajo."

Appropriation of Native patterns, jewelry and regalia by the fashion industry is a perennial topic of debate in Indian Country.

"The Kardashian Collection's 'Tribal' clothing and accessories are extremely generic; describing them as 'Tribal' might even be putting it too strongly," said a review in *Indian Country Today*.

What do you think?

— ICTMediaNetwork

## First Underground Railroad ran South

**ST. AUGUSTINE** — Most Americans are familiar with the Underground Railroad that helped

Southern slaves escape north before the Civil War.

But few know the first clandestine path to freedom ran for more than a century in the opposite direction.

Stories of that lesser-known "railroad" will be shared June 20-24 at the National Underground Railroad Conference in St. Augustine, Fla.

The network of sympathizers gave refuge to those fleeing their masters, including many American Indians who helped slaves escape to what was then the Spanish territory of Florida. That lasted from shortly after the founding of Carolina Colony in 1670 to after the American Revolution.

They escaped not only to the South, but to Mexico, the Caribbean and the American West. Escaped slaves got help from American Indian tribes including the Creeks, the Cherokees and the Yemassee. They also advanced deeper into Florida and found refuge with the Seminoles.

Because there are few records, it's unknown how many African slaves may have escaped along the railroad. But the dream of freedom in Florida did play a role in the 1739 Stono Rebellion outside Charleston, when a group of about 20 slaves raided a store, collecting guns and other weapons, in September 1739 — the largest slave revolt in British North America.

At least 20 whites were killed in the rebellion. The militia later caught up with the slaves, and 34 of them were killed. Some who escaped were found and executed later, although some apparently made it to safety in Florida because there are reports of more slaves arriving in St. Augustine in the ensuing days.

Unlike the Underground Railroad going north, the early network was more informal: Neither the slaves nor the indigenous tribes that helped them left written records, and there was no church structure like the Quakers organizing the effort. It's unknown exactly how many stayed among the American Indians or how many died.

— Boston.com

## Tribe: bald eagle kill permit victory for tradition

**CHEYENNE, Wyo.** — A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service March 9 decision to allow a Wyoming Tribe to kill two bald eagles for a religious ceremony is a victory for American Indian sovereignty as well as for long-suppressed religious freedoms, the Northern Arapaho Tribe said.

While no one questions the religious sincerity of Northern Arapaho Tribal members, spokesmen for some conservation and animal rights groups question why the Tribe can't meet its religious needs with already available birds from a federal repository that collects birds killed by power lines or other causes.

The Northern Arapaho share the Wind River Indian Reservation in central Wyoming with the Eastern Shoshone Tribe. The Northern Arapaho declined to say specifically what they will do with the eagles the federal permit allows them to kill.

"It has been since the beginning of time with us, and we respectfully utilize the eagle in our ceremonies," said Harvey Spoonhunter, a Tribal elder and former chairman of the Northern Arapaho Business Council. "We get to utilize the eagle, which we consider a messenger to the Creator."

Bald eagles were removed from the federal list of threatened species in 2007. The birds remain protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Several Indian Tribes have been allowed permits to kill golden eagles for religious purposes.

Suzan Shown Harjo, president of the Morning Star Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based American Indian rights group, notes that only a few Tribes still practice ceremonies that require them to kill eagles.

From the 1880s to the 1930s, the federal government enforced so-called "Civilization Regulations" that criminalized traditional ceremonies, including the Northern Arapaho's Sun Dance. Many Indian religious ceremonies were stamped out, Harjo said.

"They've done the correct thing, the proper thing," Harjo said. "It's a good step in the direction of the United States trying to make amends for things that they did all too well to suppress Native American religious freedom for so long."

— Associated Press

## Disenrollment: more Tribes, less members

**DULUTH, Minn.** — The number of federally recognized American Indian Tribes continues to increase — the Tejon people of California were readmitted to the federal ranks in early January of this year, bringing the number of federally recognized Tribes to 566.

At the same time, the population figures for federally recognized Native peoples continues to decline.

Why?

Ken Wilkins calls it "disenrollment," likening the term to "banishment" and "expulsion."

"Since the early 1990s, there has been a surge of banishments and disenrollments in Indian Country," said Wilkins, who is the McKnight Presidential Professor in American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota.

The disenrollment of ever-increasing numbers of Native citizens has, unfortunately, become a national phenomenon, with Native nations in at least seventeen states engaging in the practice.

The small nations of California, more than 30 at last count, are leading the charge in the dismemberment of their own peoples. The most disturbing case is that of the Chukchansi people, where more than half

the population — 1,000-plus individuals — have been dismembered in recent years.

California Tribal officials who spearhead such expulsions center around one of two issues: 1) a claim that Tribal rolls have errors dating back to the allotment era; and 2) the lack of sufficient blood quantum to justify ongoing membership.

By contrast, those who have been dismembered assert that the official rationales are pretenses that are concealing the real reason: Tribal officials seeking to purge their rolls of political enemies to consolidate their political power base and improve their economic status.

— Indian Country Today

## \$60 million for Native employment services



**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Taking a cue from the Obama administration's commitment to expand the availability of employment and training programs to serve Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians, the U.S. Department of Labor has announced the availability of nearly \$60 million in grants for employment and training services through the Workforce Investment Act's Section 166 — Indian and Native Programs.

The purposes of the grants are to develop the academic, occupational and literacy skills of the individuals served, making them more competitive in the workforce, as well as to promote the economic and social development of Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities in accordance with their own goals and values.

Through these grants, Tribal governments, Tribal consortia and nonprofit organizations will be able to ensure that programs currently available through the workforce investment system reach individuals in some of the most geographically challenged areas in the United States.

The Labor Department anticipates awarding 178 grants, with approximately \$47.5 million designated for adult programs and \$12.4 million for youth programs.

The solicitation and information on how to apply for a grant are available at [www.doleta.gov/grants/find\\_grants.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm).

Interested parties are encouraged to review online resources made available by the Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration for grant applicants — including "Grant Applications 101," an interactive, self-paced tutorial — at [www.workforce3one.org/page/grants\\_toolkit](http://www.workforce3one.org/page/grants_toolkit).

— U.S. Department of Labor

## Indian casino industry looking at Las Vegas

**IRVINE, Calif.** — A recent Indian Gaming Industry Report by Nathan Associates Inc. said Tribal gaming is a \$26 billion-a-year industry that may soon overtake the \$35 billion churned up at non-Tribal casinos.

Indian Country casino operations "definitely have their eye focused on Las Vegas," said Mark BIRTHA, president and chief development officer at Sol Casinos in Tucson, Ariz.

"Many casino operations in Indian Country are looking closely at what works in Las Vegas and applying those lessons to their sites," BIRTHA said. "Tribes across the U.S. are introducing Las Vegas-style resort amenities in their gaming centers."

According to the most recent figures available through Casino City's Indian Gaming Industry Report, 237 Tribes — or 42 percent of all federally recognized Tribes — had some kind of gaming operation in 2009.

While some Tribes had operations early on, it wasn't until 1988, when Congress passed and President Ronald Reagan signed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, that Tribal gaming revenues started to skyrocket, growing from \$100 million per year to \$16.7 billion 2006.

## Eco-Dogs hunt down Everglades Pythons

**FLAMINGO** — Man created a huge problem that is destroying the balance of the Everglades ecosystem. And "man's best friend" is running to the rescue.

Jake and Ivy, two Labradors from Alabama's Auburn University, were recently called to the swamps of Florida to hunt down the Burmese Python.

Brought to Florida by the exotic pet trade, and set free in the Everglades, the giant Southeast Asian snakes can reach lengths of up to 19 feet. Opportunistic

eaters, pythons have all but wiped out marsh rabbits, opossums, and raccoons in the southern region of Everglades National Park, according to a nine-year study.

Auburn University's EcoDog program was approached more than a year ago by the Army Corps of Engineers to see if dogs could be trained to track pythons as a possible control method for the species. Trainers went to Florida to pick up the odor samples of the species then came back to Auburn to imprint the dogs with the scent and teach them to find it.

So far, the canine partners have found 19 pythons, one of which had 19 viable eggs. They were found to be more accurate than humans at finding the pythons except in hot, humid weather. In a test in canals, the dogs were 92 percent and humans were only 64 percent accurate at finding the snakes.

The dogs are able to detect pythons from quite a distance, never getting within 15 feet of the creatures. They signal to humans when they have found one by stopping in their tracks and crouching. Pythons do not strike when they have been discovered; instead, they curl up and hide.

"It's their first line of defense," said Melissa Miller, a biological sciences doctoral student who handled the snakes. "People think when you catch a snake it's going to come back biting at you and stuff right away, but they see us as a predator, even though they're a large snake."

They are a threat to the ecosystem in the Everglades because they are a generalist species, meaning they adapt to their environment and whatever food sources are available, disrupting the natural cycle of life, Miller said.

— Opelika-Auburn News

## Crazy Horse Monument 65 years in the making, and counting

**CRAZY HORSE, S.D.** — The numbers are staggering. Sixty-five years in the making, the Crazy Horse Memorial will be the largest sculpture on the planet when it's completed, all though no one can say when that will be.

Slated to stand at 563 feet tall and 641 feet long, with the nose alone reaching 27 feet in length, this controversial monument has been under construction since 1947 in Crazy Horse, South Dakota.

*The New York Times* reported on the monument to the Sioux warrior this month, tracking the efforts from the beginning, when sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski boldly promised this monumental effort would be completed in 30 years.

Today, his 85-year old widow, Ruth, leads the continued push to complete her late husband's work with the help of her 10 children and grandchildren. Although far from completed, it is the No. 1 tourist attraction in the state.

The 65 years of construction has yielded the legendary Sioux warrior's face, a face that was never photographed in his lifetime and has caused consternation amongst Tribes regarding historical accuracy.

Sonny Skyhawk wrote in *Indian Country Today Media Network* this past November, "There are no photos of Crazy Horse, who died in 1877, so an image being made in the 21st century cannot be accurate. The Lakota consider the effort a folly of sorts."

The final monument will have the Sioux leader on horseback, pointing out over the plains.

While the presidential busts were being completed on Mount Rushmore, just 17-miles away, local Tribal leaders wanted Indian heroes honored. Mount Rushmore was completed in 14 years and for less than \$1 million.

The Crazy Horse Memorial has had to raise annual revenue in the millions to keep the project moving forward. *The Times* reported that in 2010 admission revenues totaled \$3.8 million thanks to a \$10 entry fee paid by most adults (Tribal members do not have to pay a fee) and raised \$19 million in the last few years in donations.

— Indian Country Today

## Mohawk to become saint in fall

**AURIESVILLE, N.Y.** — The Catholic Church is going to make an Indian a Saint.

On Feb. 18, Pope Benedict XVI officially announced at Saint Peter's Basilica that Kateri Tekakwitha will be canonized on Oct. 21.

The people, the followers of the Church's many ceremonies, prayers and observances pushed for this Mohawk woman to be made a Saint based on the miracles that took place in her name.

Some mistakenly believe that Tekakwitha was talked into changing her faith from Mohawk tradition to the worship of Jesus Christ.

But, the oral history is that she simply added a new layer to the way she lived her life, a layer that made sense to her and added to the many things she already understood from her Clan Mothers and Uncles in the Mohawk tradition.

She answered prayers and offered miracles in the form of cures for illnesses. It was her spirit's miracles that got people's attention.

We see such miracles like her's many times in Peyote meetings and sweat lodges and in the myriad ceremonies that all Nations practice, each different from the next.

The concept of Tekakwitha as Saint presents to the world the best of our characteristics; focus, commitment, love, patience, fortitude, hope and honor.

— Indian Country Today

# Editorial

## Medical situation explained



### • James E. Billie

*In an effort to set the record straight and quell the rumors regarding his recent medical predicaments, Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman James E. Billie has provided a compelling account of his activities during the past couple months.*

It all began with ca-wa-ye. Back on Dec. 30, I was riding a horse (ca-wa-ye) on the Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation. Suddenly, the horse raised up and fell totally on top of me. It possibly gave me a concussion. I went out, but a couple seconds later I came to and went to the hospital. There I had X-rays of my body, but not my head. There were no broken bones found and I immediately began to heal up.

I felt better and better as the days passed in January, the soreness seemed to almost go away and my bruises were healed. Then on Feb. 1, strange things began to happen with my body. I first noticed it when my left arm began to feel heavy. I dismissed it. I thought it was caused by G-forces from riding in the helicopter.

Then, as I was walking, suddenly my left arm dropped and my left leg buckled beneath me. I quickly recovered, but my wife noticed. She begged me to go to the hospital, but I said, "No." I had a cold at the time and I figured it must have been the cold that gave me vertigo.

Then on Friday, Feb. 3, my wife went onto the computer. She started reading me the symptoms of a stroke. That got my curiosity up. She wanted to take me to the Cleveland Clinic, and I finally agreed. Ethel Huggins, the President's assistant, arranged for the trip. She had Dr. Rodriguez to meet us there and Seminole Police Department (SPD) to escort us to the Clinic.

At that point, I began to sense that I was losing control of the left side of my body. When I arrived, they immediately started treatments. I had lost all control of my left arm, my left leg, even the left side of my face. But I did not lose any of my mental faculties. It was very important for the doctors and for me to complete a series of cognitive tests, which I passed with flying colors. In many ways, I feel like they sharpened me up a bit!

I laid there in a hospital until Feb. 8, when they took me up to a place in Vero Beach called HealthSouth. This is a rehabilitation therapy place. At first I thought they were saying Hell South! The next day, I began my therapy. I found the staff to be excellent. They didn't let me get away with anything. They made me get up and keep doing that therapy. And man did it work!

The first day of therapy, I could hardly walk. By the second day, I was walking. I couldn't lift myself up, but I was moving freely. My wife Maria and good friend Ard Turner stayed with me, one or the other, 24 hours a day to assist my every need. Well, Ard did refuse to assist one certain important need and, well, each night, my wife had to arrange her schedule so she could lie in the bed with me. This was necessary in order to keep the bad spirits from stealing my spirit while I was weak and recovering!

SPD Chief Will Latchford made sure there were officers there at my door 24 hours a day, as well. The main reason was medical, actually. It really cuts my air circulation if someone comes into a room wearing heavy duty perfume or certain types of strong colognes I don't like. SPD was trying to protect me, but frankly, I think they mainly wanted to make sure I didn't run out of the place!

But, by the 10th of February, I had regained the use of my left shoulder, my motor functions and everything kept improving daily. As I write this, I still have not regained total, complete, full use of my left arm, but the doctors assure me that will surely come in time, with therapy. I was released to come back home to Brighton on Feb. 24. Now, several days a week, I travel to Okeechobee for therapy. I feel great.

People may have been worried that with the Chairman in the hospital, the Tribe might run into some kind of trouble. But, I can assure you that all the time I was in the hospital, I had no doubt that the Tribe would continue to function like the organized, successful government it has been since this administration took over. In fact, you might say the Tribe is geared up to survive issues like this. The attorneys are in place, all the administrative assistants are working hard, the Council is ready and capable. Even if I died, the Tribe would carry on.

Some were concerned about politics getting involved. I don't worry about that. The Seminole Tribe is a governmental body. Whatever happens, it will immediately straighten itself out and stay on course. We've already straightened our course. The Council has corrected the previous financial problems and quickly got the Tribe back on a safe track. In fact, I am very confident that what happened before will never happen again.

Long before this happened, I was told I had high blood pressure and should do something about it. However, I procrastinated. Then the horse fell on me and the doctors say my high blood pressure released some sort of blood clot from the bruising on my head. They say it opened the door for a "mini stroke." People hear the word stroke and they imagine all sorts of terrible scenes. Paralysis, speaking and thinking problems. But, believe me, if my cognitive skills were affected in any way, I might have had to step down. I decided to wait for all the testing to end and get the results and analyze it all myself to decide whether I could go on.

Once I settled down, there was no doubt in my mind that my brain was intact and I was thinking straight. Many rumors had me taking leave of my job as Chairman to someone else, that I was incapacitated. Nothing could be further from the truth. I kept up with the day-to-day business of the Tribe, I counseled with the President and my staff, and I had no problem putting my signature on a lot of documents right from the hospital bed. Under the circumstances, I did not want to do too much. I needed rest, and I slept a lot. But if something important came up, I was able to give it my full attention.

I have had hundreds of phone calls. I have not answered or returned any of them. I did not mean to neglect my friends, but it's human nature that all the questions were the same. I would have been saying "I'm all right" hundreds of times.

Stubbornly, I thought I had a bad cold. But it was a lot worse than that. I have had alligators bite my fingers off, been shot at in Viet Nam, but this was a little more tricky than anything I've ever been involved with. You know I love to eat. Well can you believe it? I have lost 30 pounds since I got hurt! It wasn't so much any diet - I just didn't have an appetite. That was weird. The hospital food was very good; I just could not bring myself to eat all of it.

Doctors have told me I am not a diabetic. But, like many of my Tribal members, I do have high cholesterol and high blood pressure and I am overweight. From eating junk food. I'll see how things go over the next couple of weeks. I definitely need to be on a diet. I can't afford to keep gaining weight and putting my own life and my family's happiness at risk.

I would like to give some hard-learned advice to Seminole Tribal members: If any of you have any inkling that your bodies are giving up and your legs are buckling underneath you, don't delay like I did, go immediately to the hospital, don't wait even a minute. In many cases, there is only a three- or four-hour window, they say, to get the treatment that can heal you back 100 percent.

Tomorrow I will be attending my first meeting in four weeks. I'll be at the Hollywood headquarters for the Staff Meeting. It will make me feel good. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and medicine. And no, even though I have managed to stay in the saddle, I don't plan on riding ca-wa-ye any time soon!

Sho-naa-bish.

*James E. Billie is Chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.*

## Making tough decisions, by the book

### • Tony Sanchez Jr.

Every decision we make as leaders of today's Seminole Tribe of Florida is distinguished by a single, common characteristic: the desire of this administration to be different and conduct our business by the book. This, of course, has led us to make some very tough decisions, some involving longstanding programs and ways of doing business, others impacting valuable people who have been here a long, long time.

Hopefully, those persons who have been directly affected would understand that if this were their personal business, chances are they would find themselves making the same decision. It's important to realize these decisions are absolutely not personal. Please understand: the Tribe is very thankful for individual contributions toward the growth and success of the Seminole Tribe today. We try to show that with our benefits package. We strive to make sure everyone is treated like family. Our goal has always been to go above and beyond in the way we treat staff.

We all must consider, however, the particular circumstances we share here. This administration has really had to take a real close look at how this Tribe was operating. And we soon realized we had to make decisions beyond just tomorrow. Tomorrow can mean 10 years from now, 20 years from now...We are in a different mindset now. So if you are one of the unfortunate ones, the casualties among us who could not survive, as before, within the new system and you had to leave, please understand it is not personal.

Believe me, I have had this conversation several times. When I walk in to see someone and HR is tagging along with me, it is usually not a good sign. But if I am not willing to make these decisions, then I'm not doing the Tribe any good. These sorts of decisions, no matter how bad they make me feel emotionally, are a normal course of business in a healthy, progressive company. Knowing that doesn't make it any easier. Such personnel actions are definitely the most unpleasant tasks I have had to carry out during my time in this position. I always try, no matter what, to treat the individual with a level of respect and dignity.

I hope Seminole people can find comfort in knowing that this administration is doing what it said it would do before the election. I know I sound like a broken record, but to bring this Tribe back up to full operating capacity as a successful business for our shareholders, we have to make often unpopular, always tough decisions.

Remember, we are enjoying the fruits of the labor from those who came before us: our first leaders, the framers of the Seminole Constitution, the leaders of The Seminole Wars; because of their difficult decisions, the battles they fought and the way they overcame their casualties and hard times, we are now enjoying the benefits of their leadership and foresight. I don't know how long the man upstairs will permit me to be around. Hopefully, it will be long enough to actually see the eventual fruits of our hard labor today.

To achieve that requires us to make some uncomfortable and unpopular decisions, not just with personnel, but with programs, budgets, business relationships - everything is entwined. Just as the world is changing, we have to change along with it. If we don't, we'll be forced into making drastic changes that will create ever more turmoil within the Tribe. What we must do now is keep making subtle changes when required and keep everyone informed. We must make changes that we, the great majority of us, can live with to make sure the future remains solid for the Seminole Tribe.

Politics is not and should not have anything to do with any of these decisions. I don't think anyone in this administration - Council or Board - worries about how their decisions made today will affect their future in politics. If we allow politics to enter into the equation, we will start compromising ourselves, and that is not what the people deserve. They must demand the most honest representation this government can give them.

I believe people appreciate our honesty. I believe they understand these changes we are making;

these decisions affect us also. When our financial situation forces us to declare that there will be no assistance, that is across the board, affecting everyone. I know there are people who think, "Oh yeah, but you guys get it." No way. There will never be two sets of rules. It's not like that. Such a decision affects me, my family, all of our families just the same.

No one should be surprised. We all campaigned this way. I realize there are people who said, "Sure, he sounds good now, but wait until he gets back into office." It hasn't happened yet. It won't happen. Take a look at the world I came here from: the casino world - especially the Indian casino world - the most regulated industry anywhere. You got a thousand cameras on you every day, audits being conducted several times a year - you have the State, the Feds, the National Indian Gaming Commission - watching your every move. I worked in that world three months shy of 12 years.

Do you think that now, all of a sudden when there are no cameras on me everywhere, that I am going to change? No way. I understand what the rules are, and I am going to follow the rules. There is a right way and a wrong way to do things, and, no matter how much it hurts, we have to choose the right way. It's the best way, the only way, in the long run.

When I heard the casino bill had been withdrawn from consideration this legislative session, I thought, "Now we can take a break. The pressure is off." Then I realized we actually have to get right back at it. It's not going to go away. We won one battle, but not the war. There will be another battle tomorrow. There is a whole army of people out there burning the midnight oil, trying to find a way. We must be prepared: What are we willing to give up to protect our market?

So we will have to go to Tallahassee and break bread again with Gov. Scott and find out how we can protect our Compact from the coming attacks. He knows full well that we are committed to this Compact, and not only in concept. We have lived up to our agreement financially. And we remain current. When others come knocking on his door making promises and flashing surveys, he must look at us as a proven commodity. When he and the Legislature consider Seminole Indian gaming, they know exactly what the state is getting.

The state is getting jobs. And money to use in reducing the state budget woes. These are the two main components in Gov. Scott's platform. Yes, we'll be knocking on his door after the session is ended. We want to ask him, "Why gamble on gaming when you got a sure thing?"

Of course, I recognize that our situation could change overnight, just like that! You have to learn to be realistic. This world is full of Indian treaties that have been broken. You see them on the walls of every museum. You have to learn to be humble. You have to learn faith. I embrace it. I cherish the faith I have. It gives me confidence walking through a world that could change overnight. The guy I have been the past 53 years will be the same guy for the next 53 years, God willing.

I am not only speaking for myself, but for this whole administration. I am very confident they share my comments here. I am very confident they want to do the right thing, good things for everyone. I don't think any of us is what you might call overly religious, but believe me, at some point every day I say my little prayer for guidance and help on making these difficult, unpopular decisions we all have to make.

I wish to ask every Tribal member to take a moment each day and say a prayer for this administration; pray that we stay strong and on the right path, each and every one of us. Your faith in our decisions is what will guide us.

*Tony Sanchez Jr. is President of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc.*



## Smallwood back in business: Developers pave Mamie Street

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

**CHOKOLOSKEE** — After missing three deadlines and twice being found in contempt of court, stubborn land developers Florida Georgia Grove LLC (FGG) have decided to comply with a September 2011 court order to restore and pave Mamie Street, the only road to historic Ted Smallwood's Store and Museum for more than 70 years.

After nearly a year of legal wrangling, faced with an absolute March 24 deadline set by Collier Circuit Judge Lauren Brodie, FGG workers began re-grading and asphaltting the road March 20.

The developers had removed the southern 900 feet of the road, put up tall fences and blocked access to the waterfront Smallwood Store last April 14, after the Collier County attorney assured FGG that Mamie Street was part of FGG's property.

"I can't believe it. I'm watching them put it back, and I still don't believe it," said an astonished Lynn McMillin, executive director of the nonprofit trust that owns the iconic landmark. "I still can't believe they don't have something else up their sleeve."

The fence was removed and the road re-graded in October, following an order by Judge Hugh Hayes, who found the road met "prescriptive easement" qualifications as a County road. FGG's washed-out shell rock replacement "path," however, proved impassable to most vehicles.

"Much of our business is tour buses, and I can't tell you how many we have seen drive up and turn around and leave," said McMillin, who stood by helplessly as the 116-year-old wooden store's finances disappeared. "All the money we saved and budgeted for repairs is gone to legal fees."

Hayes had ordered the road put back "like it was" before its removal. FGG delayed the inevitable for months, pursuing several alternative schemes:

- FGG attempted to create a new access route through protected mangroves, but they were shot down by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- FGG and the County were unable to come to an agreement on a proposal that would move the road to another side of the property. Irritated

by FGG's brash move in taking out the road, County Commission Commissioner Jim Coletta made it clear that the Commission would not support any variances to enable FGG development on that site.

• FGG informally approached the Seminole Tribe, which declined any interest in purchasing the property.

It was Collier's chief legal administrator, County attorney Steve Williams, who gave FGG the original, flawed information that Mamie Street was FGG's own private road, since it transects FGG property on its way to the Smallwood Store. Williams' misinformation was not enough to supersede the actual law, Hayes said, in declaring Mamie a County road.

Williams' mistake, however, forms the backbone of FGG's appeal to the Second District Court of Appeals. If that court finds in favor of FGG and knocks down Hayes' original order, then FGG could take away the road again. FGG attorneys said it could be months before the Appeals Court decision comes down.

In one of the looney twists involved with this case, Hayes, the District's senior judge, later recused himself from the case after FGG accused the veteran jurist of "bias" toward the County since the Collier County Courthouse Annex was named after him. His replacement, Judge Cynthia Pivacek also recused herself, without reason, two days after being assigned to the case.

The FGG property is contiguous to the Smallwood Store parcel and was purchased from the family by the Seminole Tribe of Florida in the 1980s.

Chairman James E. Billie had plans to renovate the old Blue Heron motel and create a park on the parcel in honor of pioneer shopkeeper Ted Smallwood, who befriended the Florida Indians and gave them credit and shelter after the end of The Seminole Wars.

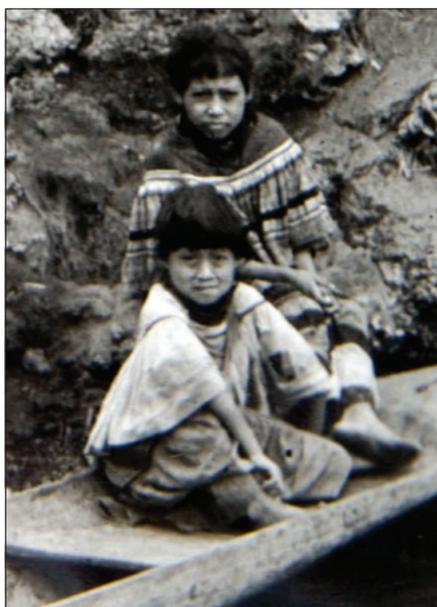
The Tribe sold the property to FGG in 2004, however, while Chairman Billie was out of office. FGG tore down the Blue Heron and began work on a marina, hoping to "flip" the property to the County through a deal with the non-profit Trust For Public Lands - an opportunity that also never materialized.



Peter B. Gallagher  
Florida Georgia Grove began repaving Mamie Street, complying with a September 2011 court order.



## Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum seeks information on campsite photograph



The top photograph appears to be a picture of a temporary Seminole campsite; the bottom photos show enlarged portions of the top photograph.

If you have additional information on this photograph, please contact the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum at 877-902-1113 to share your knowledge.

BY JAMES H. POWELL  
Associate Registrar

Again this month, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum seeks the assistance of *Tribune* readers to help us identify a photograph from the Museum's General Reference Photography Collection. Pictured above is a photograph of what appears to be a temporary Seminole campsite and enlarged details of the figures in the photograph. The photograph includes men, women and children in traditional Seminole dress gathered around a campsite with shelters, cooking utensils and other supplies, along with a long canoe in the water along a rocky canal bank.

Currently, the Museum has no information on this photograph. Do any *Tribune* readers recognize where or when this photograph may have been taken? Also, does anyone recognize the figures in the enlarged details? Some Museum staff have suggested that this may be a staged photograph. Could this campsite have been staged for this photograph, or could it possibly have been staged for a movie?

If it were staged for a movie, can anyone identify the movie? The Museum attempts to archive all, accurate and inaccurate, television episodes, documentaries and

movies that contain Seminole-related characters or themes. These materials are located in the Audiovisual Collection. This Collection contains hundreds of items from a variety of sources on a wide range of topics.

The commercially produced titles in this Collection include television shows *Gentle Ben* (a Seminole-related episode) and *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo: The Seminole Mystery*; documentary *Lady of the Glades*; and movies *Joe Panther*, *Johnny Tiger*, *Key Largo*, *Distant Drums*, plus many additional titles. These titles in the Audiovisual Collection help complete the picture of how Native Americans, and in particular the Seminole Tribe of Florida, have been portrayed in the past by popular media.

If you have any information on this photograph, please call the Museum at 877-902-1113 or contact us online at the Museum's website, [www.ahtahthiki.com](http://www.ahtahthiki.com), to share your knowledge. Or, be sure to contact us if you know of additional popular media titles that contain a reference to the Seminole Tribe.

If you would like to view this photograph, items in the General Reference Photography Collection, items in the Audiovisual Collection or any Museum materials, please contact the Museum to schedule an appointment. Thank you!

## Hah-Tung-Ke: Steve Blackwell

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

The historic Seminole war leader Osceola is the subject of numerous American folk songs. The late, great Florida folksinger Steve Blackwell, a Punta Gorda educator and musician, became enamored with Osceola during his studies of Florida history and wrote this song in 1992; it was the third song the influential songwriter ever wrote and the first composition on Florida history from a man now legendary for his Florida history and environmental tunes.

Blackwell was born in Lebanon, Ind. on April 18, 1947, where he lived until early adulthood. His grandfather, a retired vaudeville performer, gave 8-year-old Steve his first musical instrument, an old Gibson guitar, which the boy taught himself to play. At 19, he married Margie Sue Percifield and moved to Terre Haute, Iowa to pursue a degree in teaching English from Indiana State University.

In 1972, Blackwell came to Florida as English teacher and wrestling coach at Charlotte High School in Punta Gorda. Later, he acquired a degree in Library Science and became a high school media specialist.

Blackwell performed as a singer and guitarist with a number of groups in Indiana and Florida. He is best known as the leader of the classic Florida folk music band Steve Blackwell and Friends, which produced three albums of mostly Florida songs written by Blackwell between 1992 and 2006, when he died of melanoma cancer.

Blackwell maintained a large and loyal group of supporters, family and friends proudly known as

the "The Punta Gorda Guitar Army and Neo-Beatnik Revolutionary Ensemble" that followed he and the band around the state at events such as the Florida Folk Festival and Suwannee Springfest. Led by his daughter, noted singer Carrie Blackwell Hussey, the band is now known as Still Friends. They have carried on the music of Steve Blackwell, especially at an annual series of monthly concerts in Punta Gorda known collectively as SteveFest.

It was during Blackwell's efforts to expand the high school's collection of Florida history documents that he delved into the history of the Second Seminole War and Osceola. He had just written the song "Goodbye Columbus Day" as a personal rebellious statement regarding the 500-year anniversary of Columbus discovering America.

A few weeks later, he came up with Osceola. Blackwell would usually introduce the song by pointing out that Osceola (1804-1838) led a small band of Seminole fighters that accomplished historic victories against giant U.S. regiments during the Second Seminole War, as the U.S. tried to remove the Indians from their Florida home lands. "There are many American heroes we can look up to and learn from," Blackwell liked to say. "For me it was Osceola."



### "Osceola"

#### Song lyrics by Steve Blackwell

All great souls in Florida's past  
One patriot's name will always last  
Osceola fought for years  
To avoid the Trail of Tears

Born up north, a Red Stick Creek  
Came to Florida seeking peace  
Former slaves, the runaways  
Were his friends for all his days

Osceola, Osceola  
Feel the power in his name  
Osceola, Osceola  
Seminole they could not tame

General Clinch, he did his best  
To move the Seminoles all out West  
Osceola gave his life  
Stabbed the treaty with his knife

Osceola, Osceola  
Feel the power in his name

Osceola, Osceola  
Seminole they could not tame

Osceola came in peace  
White flag showed, the fighting ceased  
But Jessup, may God curse his name  
Captured the one they could not tame

Outrage and betrayal  
The treaty unsigned  
Though he came with a flag of truce  
U.S. justice was blind

Osceola, Osceola  
Feel the power in his name  
Osceola, Osceola  
Seminole they could not tame

Outrage and betrayal  
The treaty unsigned  
Though he came with a flag of truce  
U.S. justice was blind

## Hanson Family Exhibit opens in Arcadia

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

ARCADIA — A stunning display of 5,000 rare Seminole Indian photographs and documents opened an eight-week exhibit at the Martin Art Gallery in Arcadia, Fla. on March 16.

The pieces are from the famed, but rarely seen Hanson family archives.

"We invite Seminole and Miccosukee Tribal members to come view this amazing exhibit," said Gordon "Mac" Martin, the Florida culturist who convinced Woody Hanson to bring his family's prized collection to Arcadia. "It's a treasure trove of information about the historic places, people and

institutions of Southwest Florida, including unrivaled insight into the community's relationship with the neighboring Indians."

The collection, passed down through five generations of one of Fort Myers' first families, covers the years from 1884 to the mid-1900s. It includes photographs of Indians in early Fort Myers, Lee County and Southwest Florida, drawings by Seminole Indian children, personal letters between Hanson's grandfather and many of the Indians, personal accounts of Indian culture and ways of life, field notes and much more.

The Martin Art Gallery is located in the office of Florida Outdoor Properties 207 East Magnolia Street in Arcadia. For more information, call 863-494-2100.

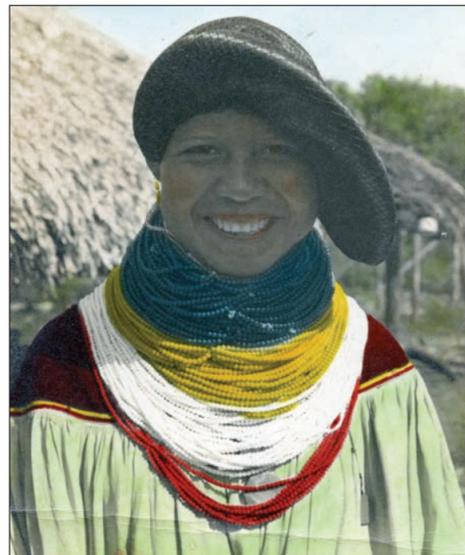


Photo courtesy of the Hanson Family

Visitors to the Hanson Family Exhibit can view 5,000 rare Seminole Indian photographs and documents like this one.

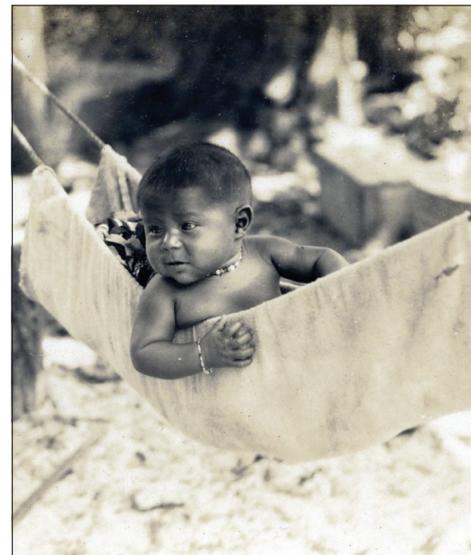


Photo courtesy of the Hanson Family

The exhibit contains documents and pictures handed down through five generations of the Hanson Family.

## Archaeological artifacts returned to the Seminole Tribe

BY KATE REDENTE  
Collections Manager

Historic Seminole beads, a ladle made from a large marine shell and more than a hundred pieces of pottery are among the artifacts recently returned to the Seminole Tribe.

In 1998, the Seminole Tribe hired an outside archaeological firm to conduct a survey of the eastern part of the Big Cypress Reservation in order to identify archaeological sites that could potentially be affected by a proposed Water Conservation Plan. In total, 45 archaeological and historic sites were identified and assessed, resulting in the recovery of hundreds of artifacts during the three-month survey.

After the completion of the survey, the artifacts were placed with the Museum of History Miami, which had been identified by the archaeological firm as a repository for these objects. However, the objects were never transferred back to the Seminole Tribe, and during the past 13 years, the exact location of those

artifacts was unknown.

This past summer, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) began the process of relocating these objects, so they could be returned to the Tribe. After several months of communication with the archaeological firm and the Museum of History Miami, the THPO finally located the artifacts. On Nov. 3, 2011, Collections staff from the THPO travelled to Miami to transfer the artifacts back to Big Cypress.

The artifacts currently are being cataloged into the Tribe's permanent archaeological collections, which are housed at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's curatorial facilities, and they will help provide greater understanding of the many important archaeological and historic sites found on Big Cypress.

To view these artifacts or any of the other archaeological collections, please contact Kate Redente, Collections Manager, at 863-983-6549 ext. 12278 or [kateredente@semtribe.com](mailto:kateredente@semtribe.com).



Photo courtesy of Kate Redente

Pictured is a shell ladle found during the 1998 archaeological survey of the Big Cypress Reservation.



Photo courtesy of Kate Redente

These Seminole beads are among the hundreds of artifacts returned to the Tribe.

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# Education

# B



Naji Tobias

From left: Deliah Carrillo, Lahna Baker, Courtney Gore and Chastity Harmon prepare Indian tacos for 600 people at the culture cooking event.

## PECS middle school students prepare traditional luncheon for student body

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — Pemaaytv Emahakv Charter School (PECS) hosted a traditional culture cooking session on March 14.

The PECS Culture Department and the Arts and Crafts Department put on the event to showcase the cooking skills students acquired during the past several months in culture classes. Staff and 11 female students took to the Charter School's culture camp and spent three hours preparing a meal for about 600 people.

"We do this every year for the whole school," Brighton Culture Director Lorene Gopher said. "We used to cater out, but since we teach the children to cook traditional foods, we asked if we could have this and get our students to help out here."

PECS principal Brian Greseth approved.

"That's a huge step for our students," Greseth said. "It just shows how far the Culture program is going. By the time the students leave our school, they should be able to know how to cook many, if not all, of the traditional foods that are in their culture."

Shortly after sunrise, the crew assembled frybread dough to fry over a cooking grill under the school's cooking

chickee. They produced about 60 pounds of frybread dough to make Indian tacos, using 125-pound bags of self-rising flour and about 15 gallons of water in the process.

"We came out here to learn about what a traditional lunch is," said PECS sixth-grader Aiyana Tommie. "It's fun to know that we could go a day without having to eat regular public food. I love making frybread and other traditional foods; it's a part of my culture and my life."

In addition, they combined six cans of diced tomatoes and kidney beans, eight bottles of tomato juice, 80 pounds of ground beef and one case of chili powder to make the chili used for the Indian tacos.

"I guess they can see we're trying to teach them about our culture," Gopher said. "They don't live like we used to when we had to cook outside. They just know what it's like to be inside and turn on a stove to cook. We're trying to show them how we grew up."

The students and staff also prepared sofkee, a drink that consists primarily of boiled corn and water.

Depending on an individual's texture preference, baking soda and/or corn starch can be added to enhance the flavor. PECS Creek teacher Jimi Huff said the additions weren't necessary for the luncheon.

"It already had the thick texture in it," Huff said. "That's why we didn't add anything else."

Students from the pre-kindergarten through eighth grades, along with staff members and parents, got to enjoy the lunch.

"This is a culmination of years of having culture camp days at our school," PECS Culture assistant director Delma Walker said. "The girls learned so much that we were confident in their ability to cook for the whole school themselves. It's really exciting to see them doing what they've been taught to do."

PECS eighth-grader Chastity Harmon, one of the girls selected to cook by Arts and Crafts teacher Janelle Robinson, talked about the enthusiasm she had for the event.

"We got picked by our teacher because she saw that we have been working hard and didn't play around," Harmon said. "Back in the old days, our ancestors always cooked over a fire and not on a stove. We like that we get to make our own stuff and keep our tradition going. We hope to pass this on to our kids one day."

The Charter School's next Culture event is tentatively scheduled for May 1-2.

♦ See more Culture photos on page 3B

## High school students confront Tribal issues at Close Up Washington, D.C.



Ryan Watson

About 30 Seminole students traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Close Up program.

BY KATHRYN STOLARZ  
Copy Editor

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — High school students deepened their understanding of their Tribe and the U.S. government on a recent Close Up trip to Washington, D.C.

About 30 Seminole students joined peers from around the country for an educational week in the Capitol city.

They attended workshops, tackled current Tribal issues, and, of course, visited famous monuments and memorials from Feb. 12-18.

"We use Washington, D.C. as a classroom to teach the students about how to become civically engaged and to become leaders in their Tribes when they return home," said Close Up program leader Laura-Katie Whitmire.

The Tribe has participated in Close Up for several years, but this trip offered something unprecedented: the participation of the newly formed Youth Council and several Tribal leaders. Youth Council President Neyom Osceola appreciated the opportunity to interact with some of the Board and Council.

"I really want them to become more involved, so I feel really excited to finally express my issues and talk to them face to face about what I have problems with," Osceola said.

Leaders in attendance included: President Tony Sanchez Jr.; Big Cypress Council Rep. Mondo Tiger; Brighton Council Rep. Andrew J. Bowers Jr.; and Hollywood Council Rep. Marcellus W. Osceola Jr.

Tribal leaders had an exclusive

breakfast with the students, offering words of support and encouragement, as well as listening to their concerns and suggestions for the Tribe.

"I know it really made the kids feel good that their leaders showed up," said Hollywood Education adviser Rob Caruso.

Students also participated in workshops on the federal government, the media, Indian policy and United South and Eastern Tribes (USET). The workshops helped prepare them to brainstorm solutions to Tribal problems, such as Indian health care, education and poverty. Students addressed tough topics like unplanned teen pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse.

They presented their ideas to USET and Tribal leaders and U.S. government officials, including senators, congressmen and staff members.

"We've seen a few different community action plans that are so significant and really hit home, and the students are speaking about it with great passion to members of other Tribes and to members of their own Tribe," said Education Director Emma Johns.

One such student presentation addressed ways to combat drug abuse among the Tribe. Students proposed conducting drug tests before Tribal members receive their dividends. If members failed the test, they would not receive their dividends and would need to perform community service or enter rehab, depending on how many offenses they had, the students suggested.

"I think that if anything comes away from it, it's their growth and their interest in making their Tribe and their people and

♦ See CLOSE UP on page 2B

## Meteorologist visits Ahfachkee for special science lesson



Naji Tobias

The Ahfachkee School's fifth-grade science students and teachers, along with meteorology guests and library staff, share a group moment with their weather props. The Feb. 29 event was located inside the Frank Billie Field Office's Learning Resource Center.



Naji Tobias

Bradin Jim, left, participates in a thunderstorm demonstration with meteorologist "Mike" Mogil during the Feb. 29 event.



Naji Tobias

During the event, Tribal youth Destiny Cypress and Thomlynn Billie look at a mock stratus cloud formation in a water bottle, as educator Barbara Levine demonstrates on how a cloud typically comes together in the sky.

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Ahfachkee School's fifth-grade students floated on cloud nine during a special meteorology presentation hosted by the Big Cypress Library on Feb. 29.

How The Weather Works meteorologist Mike Mogil showed the Tribal school's science students how clouds form on his visit to the Frank Billie Tribal Field Office's Learning Resource Center.

"We wanted them to gain a greater appreciation for what's going on in the sky," Mogil said.

With the help of How The Weather Works educational services director Barbara G. Levine, Mogil

used several props to give the students an idea of how things like the water cycle and the rain come into play.

In one demonstration, Mogil captured mock water raindrops as he sprayed water into the air and it fell into a corn starch tray.

"What happened then is that the corn starch, which was in the tray, encircled the rain drops as we were capturing them," Mogil said.

The combination created corn starch balls, representing precipitation.

Mogil also did an experiment with a wind machine. He suspended ping pong balls in the air by generating an updraft of wind with a hair dryer. The ping pong balls represented rain drops.

The Ahfachkee students also observed water

droplets at eye level on wax paper.

"We had the students do that because some of the students thought the rain drops looked like circles," Mogil said. "The rain drops are actually three-dimensional, not just two-dimensional circles."

The final experiment of the day was a stratus cloud demonstration using a soda bottle with water droplets in it. By squeezing and releasing the bottle, Mogil changed the pressure inside the bottle.

"The pressure change simulated the temperature change that happens in the atmosphere," Mogil said. "So we were able to evaporate a cloud and then have it reappear again simply by squeezing and releasing the bottle."

As a parting gift, participants received rain drop

balls, which contained several corn starch "rain drop" balls formed during the experiment.

"If the rain drop balls are not squeezed, pressed or crushed, they can last forever," Mogil said.

He said the Ahfachkee students showed great participation during the demonstration.

"The kids saw things they hadn't thought about before the experiment," he said. "They asked a lot of questions about how it all works with the weather. It really piqued their interest."

Ahfachkee fifth-grade student Mya Cypress agreed. "The rain drop experiment was a lot of fun," Cypress said. "We learned that rain drops aren't like tear drops. It was cool to see."

# Big Cypress Library hosts St. Patrick's Day readings



Photo courtesy of Gretchen DeBree

On March 6, a group of Big Cypress preschoolers visited the Big Cypress Library for a St. Patrick's Day story session. The Big Cypress Library hosted the event, featuring Rev. Arlen J. Payne of the Big Cypress New Testament Baptist Church. Rev. Payne read the book *Who Was St. Patrick?* Branch librarian Gretchen DeBree said the event was held to let children know that there really was a St. Patrick and to teach them why he was important.



Photo courtesy of Gretchen DeBree

On March 9, New Testament Baptist Church Rev. Arlen J. Payne returned to the Big Cypress Library to read a St. Patrick's Day story to a group of Tribal youth from the Big Cypress Reservation. Rev. Payne explained the four-leaf clover's significance to St. Patrick's Day.

## ◆ CLOSE UP From page 1B

their communities a better place," Johns said.

The morning following the summit, an Indian Issues Today Panel answered students' questions. Panel members Allison Binney, Robert Holden and Wilson Pipestem offered perspectives from their experiences with the Senate Indian Affairs, National Congress of American Indians and more.

Guest speakers also addressed the students throughout the trip, including USET President Brian Patterson and Carlyle Consulting President and Tribal lobbyist Tom Rodgers.

By the end of the week, plenty of positive ideas were exchanged, and the students were excited to bring their knowledge back home.

"By working with the students and seeing them grow during the week, they really gain leadership and see that they do have a voice in their federal government and they learn how they can advocate for their rights here," Whitmire said.

The students' trip was also packed with visits to several

historic buildings, including the National Museum of the American Indian, the White House and Capitol Hill. Students admired the memorials of history's greats, including Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr.

Attendees also paid homage to the war memorials of the U.S. Marine Corps, WWII, Korea and Vietnam.

A bit of entertainment was in store as well. Students laughed their way through the live show *Shear Madness* at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and danced their way through their final night at a student dance in the Arlington Ballroom.

"All the kids coming together from different reservations — that doesn't happen often," Caruso said. "Every time I come to a Close Up, I do notice the friendships and bonds that these kids make with other kids that they wouldn't have the opportunity necessarily to make if they didn't come on this trip, so it's been a great asset to the (Education) Department."

Ryan Watson contributed to this article.



Ryan Watson

Students take a break from a long day of sightseeing in Washington, D.C.



Ryan Watson

Eden Jumper looks at an exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian.



Ryan Watson

As part of the trip, Tribal youth made presentations on ways to combat Tribal problems like health care, education and poverty.



Ryan Watson

Youth pose for a picture in between visiting all the sights Washington, D.C. had to offer.

# Seminole Indian 4-H Show and Sale 2012

## Big Cypress Rodeo Complex on the Big Cypress Reservation

**4-H Show**  
Friday, March 30, 2012  
6:00 p.m.

**Buyers Dinner**  
Saturday, March 31, 2012  
From 12:00 until 2:00 p.m.

**4-H Sale**  
Saturday, March 31, 2012  
2:00 p.m.



2011 Seminole Indian 4-H Show and Sale Grand Champion Steer Ty Huff



2011 Seminole Indian 4-H Show and Sale Reserve Champion Immokalee Swine Christopher Briscali



# PECS recognizes Students of the Month ♦ More photos from Culture on page 1B



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Congratulations to Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's February Students of the Month. Pictured: Jana Johnson, Taryn Osceola, Kateri Smith, Jason Haydon, Jaime Smith, Caleb Burton, Angelie Melton, Edie Robbins, Diego Meras, Morgan Yates, Alaina Sweat, Katie Beck, Silas Madrigal, Kano Puente, Rumor Juarez and Shelton Garcia. Not pictured: Laila Bennett, Alicia Fudge, Ruby Buster and Jermaine Bennett.



Naji Tobias

PECS seventh-grade student Courtney Gore removes a piece of cooked frybread as Arts and Crafts teacher Martha Jones adds frybread dough to the frying pan.



Naji Tobias

PECS Arts and Crafts teacher Ethel Gopher mixes ground beef as Creek instructor Alicia Rider pours in a can of diced tomatoes to make Indian tacos.



Naji Tobias

PECS first-grade students walk back to their classroom after receiving a traditional Indian taco lunch special.



Naji Tobias

Culture Director Lorene Gopher mixes frybread dough at the PECS culture cooking event on March 14.



Naji Tobias

PECS sixth-grade student Aiyana Tommie cuts frybread to help prepare Indian food for about 600 people.



Naji Tobias

PECS seventh-grade student Shae Pierce stirs the chili for Indian tacos.

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# 2012 Florida Indian

## Youth Program

Starts Saturday, July 14, 2012  
 Ends Saturday, July 28, 2012

Awards Banquet, Friday, July 27, 2012  
 Tallahassee, Florida

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## Coming Soon to Seminole Tribe!

# Electronic Health Record

### WHAT is an ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD (EHR)?

An electronic record of patient information which includes both patient demographics, such as phone number, address, emergency contact, insurance information as well as health information such as medications, lab tests and x-rays.

We will be converting to the award-winning Next-Gen Digital system popular in both Tribal and non-Tribal settings across the country

### WHY is CONVERSION to an ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD IMPORTANT?

- ◆ Maintains compliance with federally mandated health care standards. We MUST be electronic by 2014
- ◆ Improves efficiency of health care delivery
- ◆ Instantly available patient health information at any STOF medical or dental clinic
- ◆ Reduces duplication of tests and treatment delay
- ◆ Reduces medical errors
- ◆ Improves safety and follow-up through capacity to bring all patient information together
- ◆ Improves privacy and security

### WHEN WILL the TRANSITION to the EHR BEGIN?

**Phase I:** Input of all patient demographics (address phone, emergency contact etc) Some input of past medical history

**Phase II:** Coming FALL 2012  
All health and dental visits will be entered into the system digitally by department staff

### WHAT to EXPECT FROM TRANSITION to ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD:

- ◆ Some delay in patient waiting time during first few weeks of each phase
- ◆ Consider calling to schedule "routine" medical visits away from EHR start dates but be sure to call immediately if you are feeling ill
- ◆ Patients will be seen more quickly by calling for an appointment than by just walking in (unless urgent care is required)
- ◆ Slight changes in patient "Check in and Check out" procedures

#### Phase I:

Hollywood Health Center: April 17–19  
Immokalee Health Center: May 8–10  
Brighton Health Center: May 30–June 1  
Tampa Health Center: May 30–Jun 1  
Big Cypress Health Center: June 19–21

#### Phase II Begins

in the fall at each Health Center

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# Sports

C

## Hollywood Christian girls' basketball team reaches Class 2A state final



Naji Tobias

Hollywood Christian's Ariah Osceola hits a floater during the fourth quarter against FAMU (Tallahassee) in the Class 2A state championship game, which was located at the Lakeland Center in Lakeland.



Naji Tobias

Hollywood Christian seventh-grade guard Skyla Osceola, right, muscles herself past the Grandview Prep defense on an offensive play in her team's 49-47 Class 2A state semifinal win on Feb. 21.

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**LAKELAND** — The Hollywood Christian girls' basketball team finished their 2012 season with an impressive overall record of 21-8.

The Hollywood Eagles might have lost the Class 2A state championship game on Feb. 22, but they put up quite a fight.

Just seconds away from the final buzzer, they were leading the game against Florida A&M University Developmental Research (FAMU) with a score of 53-52. One defensive stop was all they needed to take their second straight championship.

But FAMU Baby Rattlers' LaKaris Salter dribbled her way past halfcourt and connected on a buzzer-beating 3-pointer to stun Hollywood Christian 55-53, taking the Class 2A state title.

"It was unbelievable," said Hollywood Christian senior shooting guard Ariah Osceola, who scored 11 points in the title game. "Everything happens for a reason. God wouldn't put us through something we couldn't handle."

Hollywood Christian coach Carlos Adamson reflected on the loss.

"We definitely tried to foul," Adamson said at a press conference. "Whether he missed it or didn't want to call it or wanted to let the play go on, whatever the case may be, it's no fault of anybody."

Adamson gave credit to Salter, who scored 25 points

and made 18 rebounds, for hitting the championship-winning shot at the last second.

"The kid made a tough shot," Adamson said. "What can I say? That's a big moment for her. They deserved it."

Down 45-39 entering the fourth quarter, Hollywood Christian used a 15-0 second-half scoring run to take a 50-45 lead with less than 5 minutes left in the game.

In that game-changing stretch for Hollywood Christian, Ariah, who energized The Lakeland Center's crowd with a quick steal and layup in the fourth, scored 6 of her 11 points and recorded two assists to put her team in position to potentially win the game.

Hollywood Christian, who came back from a 10-point deficit in the third quarter, managed to have a 53-48 lead with less than 2 minutes to go. But they would not score again; FAMU closed the game on a 7-0 run that included two free throws by Salter, which cut Hollywood Christian's lead to 53-52 with less than a minute left.

FAMU ended with a 27-4 final overall record. "I think we settled for the outside shot," Adamson said of his team's struggles shooting the ball down the closing stretch. "I felt like we could get to the lane when we wanted to. Sometimes, when you're open and you're a shooter, your mindset is to shoot, whether it goes in or not."

Ariah, who played with a wrist and knee injury, said she found the strength and drive she needed to pull her through the minor setbacks.

"My dad (Marl Osceola) told me to keep my head up and keep playing," she said. "The strongest players can go through the toughest things. You just have to have your heart in it to play."

Ariah, who recently committed to play women's college basketball at Miami's St. Thomas University beginning next winter, was one of four Tribal members who played for Hollywood Christian in the state final and throughout the season.

Ariah's younger sister, seventh-grader Skyla Osceola, contributed in Hollywood Christian's state title game, scoring 5 points and grabbing four rebounds in the final. Her coach gave her credit for defending FAMU's Salter during much of the game.

"She made it tough for [Salter] to catch the ball and get to the basket," Adamson said. "I think she did a great job with a tough matchup."

Tribal member Darlah Cypress also played in the state championship game. The freshman made four rebounds and two steals in the title game. Fellow teammate and Tribal member Maleah Isaac played for Hollywood Christian as well, holding the position of junior forward.

The four Tribal players finished their title run with a team that has made it to the state Final Four for five seasons in a row, including a state championship win last season.

They played integral roles in Hollywood Christian's journey to the 2012 title game, including regular-season wins over North Broward Preparatory

School, the Community School of Naples, Palm Beach Garden's William T. Dwyer High School and Opa-Locka's Monsignor Pace High School.

In one of Hollywood Christian's wins — a 65-50 win over Dwyer on Dec. 23, 2011 — Ariah scored Most Valuable Player honors. Ariah earned 24 points, four steals and four 3-pointers in the game, leading her team past the Panthers to win the South Florida Holiday Classic championship in Hollywood.

En route to the Class 2A state Final Four, the team played against Miami's Westwood Christian School in their Class 2A Region 4 final on Feb. 18. Miccosukee Tribal citizens Haley and Saige Osceola were among the Westwood players. The game was a 73-6 home win for Hollywood Christian.

Additionally, Hollywood Christian pulled out a 49-47 win over Boca Raton's Grandview Preparatory School in the Class 2A state semifinals, which sent them to the title game.

Ariah, who played on the Hollywood Christian varsity team since sixth grade, did her best to keep things in perspective.

"It's been a good season," she said. "We've had good seasons ever since I started playing varsity basketball. I feel that God has blessed me. Hopefully I set a good example for my younger teammates. Hopefully they'll be up here (in Lakeland for states) next year as well."

◆ See more Hollywood Christian photos on page 3C

## Brighton Field Day dedicates Rodeo to Fred Smith

BY JUDY WEEKS  
Freelance Writer

**BRIGHTON** — The members of the Eastern Indian Rodeo Association (EIRA) paid tribute to the memory of Fred Smith by naming the annual Brighton Field Day Rodeo in his honor on Feb. 3-4 at the Fred Smith Memorial Arena.

This first rodeo of the 2012 EIRA season saw a record number of entries in the kids' rodeo which began Friday evening and continued into the early morning hours with 12 events.

"This kids' rodeo would certainly have put a smile on the face of Fred Smith," said EIRA President Paul Bowers Sr. "Like so many of us, Fred grew up with rodeo in his blood, and he was a strong supporter of rodeo athletes. He would be happy to see how many

youngsters are pulling on their boots and looking toward a wholesome career in rodeo."

Announcer and kids' rodeo advocate Moses Jumper Jr. said, "We have an awesome turnout, and many of the children participating here are following in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents. Rodeo has become a part of the Seminole culture, and the EIRA motto comes alive tonight as 'the legend continues.'"

The children learn responsibility, respect, athletic skills and sportsmanship from their mentors and peers. Within a few years, they become the teachers for the next generation; they assist each other, put on clinics and/or take their position in the arena as bull fighters, pickup men and directors.

Many of the stellar performances witnessed during the sanctioned events on the second night are a result of a lifelong commitment to the rodeo.



Judy Weeks

Takoda Howard grabs a handful of hair and enters the arena in the mutton busting during the annual Field Day Rodeo.



Brett Daly

From left, Harmony Cypress, Jaylee Cypress and Valholly Frank pose with their second-place team trophy.

## Tribal trio places in gymnastics competition

BY BRETT DALY  
Senior Editor

Three Tribal girls catapulted their way onto the award podium on Feb. 11, after shining in the 2012 Cruise Classic gymnastics competition.

Jaylee Cypress, Harmony Cypress and Valholly Frank competed as level 2 gymnasts, showing off their skills on the vault, bars, beam and floor. To prepare for the competition, the girls trained two days a week at Park Avenue-Weston gym.

Six-year-old Jaylee competed in the children age division. She scored a 9.3 on vault, earning her a tie for seventh place; a 9.0 on bars, earning her seventh place; a 9.7 on beam, earning her first place; and a 9.1 on floor, earning her a tie for fifth place. With an all-around score of 37.1, Jaylee placed fourth in her division.

"She's great," said Janie Valdez, Jaylee's mother. "We think she needs to stick with it because she's a natural. She loves competitions."

Harmony and Valholly also achieved success. They competed in the senior division of the competition.

Nine-year-old Valholly scored a 9.05 on vault; a 7.25 on bars; a 9.05 on beam; and an 8.9 on floor. Her all-around score of 34.25 earned her 10th place at the competition.

Teammate Harmony, who is 8, tied for sixth place on the vault with a score of 9.25; placed fifth on beam with a score of 9.175; and tied for fourth on the floor with a 9.3. She scored a 7.6 on the bars. With an all-around score of 35.325, Harmony placed ninth overall.

"They are learning and progressing," said Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank, Valholly's father. "It's important for all kids to be doing something to keep them healthy and improve their fitness."

The Cruise Classic gymnastics meet was held at Park Avenue Gymnastics in Cooper City. Six gymnastics organizations from around Florida participated. Jaylee, Harmony, Valholly and their other level 2 teammates from Park Avenue-Weston placed second in the team competition.

All three girls hope to advance to level 3 for their next competitive season.

◆ See more Gymnastics photos on page 2C

# Charter School's baseball team hosts first home game

BY RACHEL BUXTON  
Freelance Writer

**BRIGHTON** — Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's (PECS) boys' baseball team hosted their first home game Feb. 23 against the Moore Haven Terriers.

The Seminoles triumphed over the Terriers 12-2, capturing their second win of the season. The game was held at the Ollie Jones Memorial Park on the Brighton Reservation.

This is the first year that Charter School has a boys' baseball team. To commemorate the momentous occasion, Brighton Council Rep. Andrew J. Bowers Jr. and principal Brian Greseth threw the first pitches.

"Throwing out the first pitch with Mr. Bowers is a huge honor to me," principal Greseth said. "Mr. Bowers is a huge advocate for sports, for our school and further education of children."

Last year, the school attempted to form a boys' baseball team but didn't pull enough participation. With a larger middle school student population and head coach Harry Tewksbury's encouragement to try out, the PECS boys' Seminoles team successfully formed this year.

"PECS is very excited to add baseball to our athletic program," administrative assistant Michele Thomas said. "We played our first game last night, away, against Sebastian River Middle School. We won, 11-5. One young man, Elijah Finney, commented in the after-game wrap-up, 'Do you guys realize we just won the very first PECS baseball game?' They were definitely on a high."

Thirteen students make up the team, along with head coach Tewksbury and

assistant coaches Gene Thomas and Tom Finney. Coach Tewksbury said he definitely sees his team achieving success.

"It is very exciting and somewhat of a challenge being a brand new team," coach Tewksbury said. "We have quite a bit of talent to work with and haven't had too much (of a) problem laying the groundwork to be successful."

The middle school team plays with high school rules and uses high school field dimensions. The pitching mound is 60 feet, 6 inches away from home plate and the bases are 90 feet apart. Kids 12 and younger normally play on smaller fields for recreation or travel baseball and do not move to larger fields until they are 13 and older. But the larger field dimensions have not posed much of a problem for the boys, coach Tewksbury said.

"I wasn't sure how we would do in that regard, but I have found that we have five or six guys that can pitch and three that can catch," he said. "Our hitting is also a plus."

Coach Tewksbury said it's not all about winning; it's about having fun.

"We are also fostering an atmosphere of discipline and structure so that these guys might take that with them as well," he said.

To be on the team, the athletes must have teachers complete a daily effort sheet, which they turn in to the coach each day. Participation in games is decided based on positive effort sheets. Athletes must also maintain at least a 2.0 GPA to stay on the team.

"Being a part of the athletic program helps instill pride and leadership," principal Greseth said. "As part of being an athlete, it helps some students remain focused on their academics. Student athletes are



Rachel Buxton

Boyd Brown scores off a hit from Zeke Matthews.

ambassadors for not only our school but also the community."

Coach Tewksbury said one of his main goals for the season is to help the eighth-grade players prepare to compete as freshman next year in high school for a starting position on the varsity team.

"I would describe this team as talented, hard working and eager to learn," he said. "I feel very blessed to have this opportunity to be a part of this team. I think very highly of these guys and will continue to do all that I can to help them succeed on and off the baseball field."



Rachel Buxton

Trevor Thomas slides into home to score a run for the Seminoles.



Rachel Buxton

Zeke Matthews pitches for two strikeouts in the first inning.

◆ More photos from Gymnastics on page 1C



Brett Daly

Jaylee Cypress competes on the uneven bars during the 2012 Cruise Classic gymnastics competition.



Brett Daly

Valholly Frank performs her floor routine for the judges at the 2012 Cruise Classic competition.



Brett Daly

Harmony Cypress performs a handstand while warming up her floor routine.

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# Ahfachkee Warriors baseball program plays first game ever at Moore Haven

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**MOORE HAVEN** — History has been made once again at Ahfachkee.

For the first time, the Ahfachkee Warriors baseball program played a high school game sanctioned by the Florida High School Athletic Association — a March 9 road contest against the Moore Haven Terriers in Moore Haven.

Although Ahfachkee lost 11-4 to Moore Haven in four innings of play, it was still a day of celebration for the team, as many firsts were accomplished on the field.

Several of those firsts were made by Ahfachkee starting pitcher O'Shaa'ne Cypress, who was the first teammate at bat and the initial runner to reach a base for the Tribal program, thanks to a hit by pitch in the top of the first inning.

He was also the first to take the mound for Ahfachkee as pitcher in the bottom of the first inning. Although Moore Haven tagged him for seven runs in the first inning to take a 7-0 lead, he also recorded the program's first strikeout on the inning's third out.

Cypress allowed seven runs and recorded two strikeouts in just one inning pitched, gaining a considerable amount of experience in a short time.

Ahfachkee head coach Randall Cleckler said Cypress will grow as a player during the course of the season.

"Before the game, I asked



Naji Tobias

Ahfachkee senior Ryan Cypress, center, is the program's first catcher during the March 9 season-opener at Moore Haven.

O'Shaa'ne how he felt." Cleckler said. "He said he had some butterflies. We (the team) told him that it was a good thing and he's ready for competition. We were all proud of him and all the team's efforts."

Ahfachkee senior relief pitcher Stevie Billie, who filled in for Cypress after a bases-loaded walk to start the bottom of the second inning, allowed four runs in that single frame, as Moore Haven took an 11-0 lead to go into the third inning.

But Billie helped convert the school's first-ever double play to end the second inning.

In the top of the third inning, the team's leader smacked in the program's first RBI single, which allowed teammate Matthew Bluebird to score Ahfachkee's first run, cutting Moore Haven's lead to 11-1.

Billie later scored the program's second run, thanks to the first-ever RBI double hit by Ethan Balentine.

Balentine would go on to score Ahfachkee's next run, thanks to an RBI single from Dalton Koenes, making it an 11-3 Moore Haven lead.

Ahfachkee's last run of the inning — and the game — came from an RBI single from Jonah Alvarado, as Koenes found his way home to cut Moore Haven's lead to 11-4.

Billie, who recorded Ahfachkee's first hit single and steal in the first inning, got three strikeouts as a relief pitcher — all in the bottom of the third inning.

"I can't say enough about Stevie

Billie," Cleckler said. "His attitude, abilities and respect for athletics in general is to be commended. Stevie's work ethic and commitment is second to none... Sometimes, as quiet and reserved as he is, you would never know that competitive spirit he has until you're on the athletic field with him and see him play."

The game was called after Ahfachkee's batters finished up the top of the fourth inning. There was a 10-minute rain delay that held the game up, but it was still a sunny day for the team.

"Even though the first inning was a tough inning, our players understood that they had a lot of baseball to play and it was only one inning," Cleckler said. "There is still a lot of work to do and we will only get better day to day, with good practices and other opportunities to play games. I think they understand how important practice is because it's practice that makes you better."

Assistant coaches Jerry Balentine, Josh Jumper and Cicero Osceola helped prepare the boys for the history-making game and will throughout the season.

Ahfachkee's season is scheduled to continue with a March 24 two-game tournament in LaBelle; a March 27 road game at Marco Island Academy; a March 28 road game at Hialeah Educational Academy; an April 9 road game against Immokalee; and an April 20 road game against Marco Island Academy. (Game results were not available at the time of printing.)

# Tribal members play ball in Oklahoma

BY TWILA PERKINS  
Contributing Writer

**ANADARKO, Okla.** — Three Seminole Tribal members are tearing up the basketball courts in Oklahoma.

Cara Osceola, Kaitlen Osceola and Curtis Osceola Jr. play basketball for the Anadarko Warriors. Their proud parents are Curtis Osceola Sr., of Hollywood, Fla., and Tara Leonard, of Anadarko, Okla.

Cara and Kaitlen play for the Lady Warriors, who are ranked No. 2 in their division, with a record of 20-1.

The Lady Warriors defeated three competing teams, including a team ranked No. 4 in the division, to become the champions of the Heart of Oklahoma Tournament.

Currently, they are undefeated in conference play.

Curtis plays for the Anadarko Warriors' seventh-grade team. The team's record is 10-4. Curtis also excels in academics and recently made Anadarko Public School's Principal's Honor Roll.

Both the boys' and girls' teams are made up of 75 percent Native Americans.



Photo courtesy of Twila Perkins  
Kaitlen Osceola and Cara Osceola display their championship trophy.

## More photos from Hollywood Christian on page 1C



Naji Tobias

Hollywood Christian's Maleah Isaac grabs a rebound during the second half of her team's 73-6 home win over Miami's Westwood Christian in the Class 2A Region 4 title game on Feb. 18.



Naji Tobias

Darlah Cypress closes out the Class 2A Region 4 title game against Miami's Westwood Christian after scoring a layup off a steal she made.



Naji Tobias

The Osceola family came out in full force at the Lakeland Center to support siblings Aria and Skyla Osceola.



Naji Tobias

Eagles senior guard Aria Osceola, right, dribbles her way past a Grandview Prep guard.



Naji Tobias

O'Shaa'ne Cypress is the first pitcher to take the mound in his team's March 9 season-opener.

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Naji Tobias

Players and coaches on the Ahfachkee Lady Warriors basketball team receive their participation awards at the season-ending banquet on Feb. 27 at the Big Cypress Community Center.

## Ahfachkee School, BC community praise basketball stars for season

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — The Ahfachkee Warriors and Lady Warriors celebrated the end of their second basketball season with an award ceremony on Feb. 27.

Tribal citizens and community members witnessed the crowning of some of Big Cypress Reservation's best athletes at the ceremony, held at the Community Center.

The event capped off a season of growth for players and coaches.

Ahfachkee School principal Lucy Dafoe said the consistent support from the Big Cypress community played a significant role in the steady improvements made by the boys' and girls' basketball programs this season.

"It was very exciting to see our crowds grow bigger and bigger each game," Dafoe said. "We got to see our kids grow more confident in themselves."

Big Cypress Tribal Council Rep. Mondo Tiger also noticed the steady improvements in the teams.

"Last year, I wasn't too sure about our sports program, but look at the room now," Councilman Tiger said to the athletes' fans and parents. "You all have come out in full support of our kids. I'm proud of you all for that."

Shortly after Councilman Tiger's comments, the crowd watched a video presentation highlighting the best moments of the Ahfachkee Warriors' and Lady Warriors' basketball seasons.

The awards presentation followed.

### Lady Warriors

"I'm so proud of all the effort, dedication and hard work the girls displayed throughout the season," Ahfachkee Lady Warriors head coach Kristin Stoots said.

"Our final record is a direct reflection of what they all did for the program."

The Lady Warriors finished with an 11-3 record, scoring 615 total points during the course of 14 games, with an average of 43.9 points per game, she said.

The team averaged 34 rebounds, 18 steals and seven blocks per game.

Stoots said the girls developed sportsmanship, leadership and character on the court, and she looks forward to coaching them far into the future.

The following awards were given out to the Lady Warriors: Most Valuable Player – Reagan WhiteCloud; Defensive Player of the Year – Danni Jae Tommie; Most Improved Player – Michaela Cypress; Warrior Pride Award – Alyssa Osceola.

### Ahfachkee Warriors

Meanwhile, the Ahfachkee Warriors boys' basketball team was complimented by their head coach, Cicero Osceola, for their steady improvements throughout their season.

"It took us a little while, but most of our kids were young and learned the game of basketball over time," Osceola said.

"Our seniors [Stevie Billie, Taylor Pratt and Jonathan Robbins] brought different kinds of leadership to our team, and it helped the younger ones out a lot. I'm proud of all the players for what they achieved this season."

The following awards were presented: Most Valuable Player – Jonathan Robbins; Mr. Offense – Stevie Billie; Mr. Defense – Matthew Bluebird; Warrior Pride Award – Taylor Pratt.

"It was a pleasure for me to work with these young men," Osceola said.

"With the younger players, we're going to come back a better team next season. And for our seniors, good luck on the next level."



Naji Tobias

Ahfachkee Lady Warriors head coach Kristin Stoots, left, presents the Most Valuable Player award to sophomore player Reagan WhiteCloud.



Naji Tobias

Ahfachkee Warriors senior Jonathan Robbins, left, accepts the Most Valuable Player award from head coach Cicero Osceola at the Feb. 27 basketball awards ceremony.

## Brighton hosts Bert C. Jones Memorial Basketball Tournament



Naji Tobias

At the 28th annual Bert C. Jones Memorial Basketball Tournament, Still Got It's Milo Osceola, right, splits his way past Rebels defender Norman Bowers in a men's Legends game on Feb. 17.

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — The spirit of Bert C. Jones lives on.

From Feb. 17-18, the Brighton Reservation's Recreation Department hosted the 28th annual Bert C. Jones Memorial Basketball Tournament in honor of their late Tribal citizen.

The event is the Tribe's longest-running basketball tournament, along with the Herman L. Osceola Memorial Basketball Tournament in Big Cypress, also held for its 28th year this March.

As it has been for the past few years, the tournament was held in conjunction with the 74th annual Brighton Field Day celebration, said Brighton Tribal citizen Phillip Jones, grandson of the late Bert C. Jones.

Teams from Brighton, Big Cypress, Hollywood, Immokalee and Trail, as well as from Fort Lauderdale, Miami, New York, and beyond, gathered at Brighton's gymnasium to play their hearts out into the wee hours Friday and Saturday night.

"It's a tournament that anybody could play in," said Phillip, who played for the B-Town (Brighton) Bad Boyz men's basketball team. "It used to be an all-Indian tournament for many years, but we decided to open it up to everyone this year in order to get as much participation as possible. We got a lot of good competition out here."

Twenty teams participated in the tournament, including men's, women's, Legends men's and Legends women's divisions. The men's and women's games were held in a double-elimination format.

### Men: Warriors win tournament in upset

B-Town was favored to win the men's tournament, as the home squad took a 4-0 record into the title game.

B-Town, who played a late-night, first-round game against 601 on Feb. 17, outlasted teams such as I.B., Preston's and Warriors en route to the final.

However, B-Town would have to play Warriors again in the championship game.

Warriors would eliminate Dem Boyz in the loser's bracket before stunning B-Town in the final to take home this year's men's championship.

Warriors and B-Town each finished the tournament with 4-1 records.

"We were fatigued from playing all

day," Phillip said. "We had to wake up real early to play and the championship game was late at night. We beat the (Warriors) team earlier in the tournament and we had a lead on them, but we just got tired and cold in the end. It was a good and long competition with a lot of good teams out here."

The other men's teams' final records were: Dem Boyz, 3-2; VSOP, 3-2; New Breed, 1-2; Preston's, 1-2; I.B.; 1-2; War Party, 1-2; 601, 0-2; and Big Cypress New Year's Basketball Tournament champion Nothing Fancy, 0-2.

### Women: Southern Smoke takes women's title

Six teams entered into the adult women's competition. Southern Smoke defeated You Don't Want It in the final to win the women's championship.

The women's teams final records were: Southern Smoke, 4-0; You Don't Want It 3-2; Hollywood, 2-2; The Usual, 1-2; Lady Ballers, 0-2; and Ball Hawgz, 0-2.

### Legends: Still Got It and Lady Legends take championships

In Legends play, a best-of-three competition took place within the Legends men's and women's divisions.

Legends men's team Rebels played Still Got It, with Still Got It taking two of three from the Rebels after losing the first game.

"It feels good just to play competitive ball against our peers," said Brighton Tribal member Norman "Skeeter" Bowers, who played for the Rebels. "We don't like losing, but it's more about sportsmanship. Win or lose, we all come out here to have a good time."

The women's Legends title was between Lady Legends and Brighton, with Lady Legends finding a way to avenge an early game loss to Brighton to take the championship.

Brighton Tribal member Stacy Jones played for Brighton in the Legends women's division.

"In the Legends games, I enjoyed myself out there with the ladies," she said. "It was fun to watch the older men play as well. Overall, it was a wonderful experience for everyone, I think."

Stacy, the daughter of the late Bert C. Jones and mother of Phillip, said she was highly pleased with the effort and enthusiasm displayed throughout the weekend.

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Naji Tobias

The family of the late Tyler Cypress, which includes Ryan Cypress, Wendy Cypress, Caitlin Cypress and Charlie Cypress, remember their loved one at the third annual Tyler Cypress Memorial Fishing Tournament on March 10.

## Cypress family takes top honors at Tyler Cypress Memorial Fishing Tournament

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Fourteen teams took to the waters in search of the biggest catch. Amidst the friendly competition, camaraderie and family bonding surfaced.

It was the third annual Tyler Cypress Memorial Fishing Tournament on March 10 at the Big Cypress L-28 canal. Tribal citizens, community members and employees cast their poles; many participants entered with their families.

The tournament commemorated the late Tyler Cypress, who passed on in March 2010. Tyler's favorite hobbies included fishing and spending time with his family.

Ryan Cypress, the late Tyler's older brother, said the tournament was bittersweet. He enjoyed catching the tournament-high bass, which weighed in at 6 pounds, 1 ounce, but he wishes his younger brother could have been there, he said.

"I just think of all the time me and my brother used to fish out here in Big Cypress," Ryan said. "We used to always compete against each other. One day, Tyler would win and the next day, I would win. It went back and forth. I really miss those moments in my life."

Ryan teamed up with his younger sister Caitlin Cypress and his parents, Charlie Cypress and his wife, Wendy Cypress, in this year's fishing tournament. The Cypress family is from Big Cypress.

Fittingly, the Cypress family took home top honors this year; the weigh-in results revealed that they caught a total of 17 pounds, 1 ounce of fish, while tournament runners-up Jacob Cotton and Colton Irely caught 13 pounds and 6 ounces.

"It wasn't even close," Charlie said. "I think we did a good job out there."

Big Cypress Tribal senior Moses "Big Shot" Jumper Jr., who was the only solo entrant in the field, chimed in on his observations of the tournament.

"It was, more or less, a time for everyone to come out to enjoy themselves," he said. "Out of respect to those who knew Tyler, coming out here was a great thing. It was a good community project that promoted togetherness with the families who participated."

Big Cypress Tribal Council Rep. Mondo Tiger agreed.

"When Charlie lost his son, that was a sad moment for all of us," Councilman Tiger said. "I'm very privileged to have somebody like him around. He and his kids have such big hearts, and they're all well-mannered and disciplined. They are great fishermen, and they're even better people. To keep Tyler's memory going on like that is a blessing. My hat goes off to the whole family."

The father/son tandem of Big Cypress Tribal citizens Jerry and Ethan Balentine took top honors in the Garfish category, while the mother/daughter team of Big Cypress Tribal seniors Agnes and Jeannette Cypress won the Panfish category. Meanwhile, Geno Herrera and Lily Mora came out on top in the Oscar/Tilapia category. No one entered the Mudfish category.

Ryan said he was grateful to everyone who came out to participate in the tournament.

"I'm just happy they all came out to show us some support," he said. "It shows that they appreciate our family by paying their respects to us. It shows that they all care for our family and the Big Cypress community. It means a lot to us."



Omar Rodriguez

Paul Howard, left, and Chaska Osceola are all smiles as they catch a bass at the third annual Tyler Cypress Memorial Fishing Tournament on March 10.

## Nelson brothers place third at memorial fishing tournament



Naji Tobias

Siblings and longtime Tribal fishermen Sam and Ted Nelson show their jubilation after catching a big bass at the third annual Tyler Cypress Memorial Fishing Tournament on March 10.

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Siblings and longtime fishermen Sam and Ted Nelson arrived in Big Cypress shortly after 6 a.m. on March 10 for the third annual Tyler Cypress Memorial Fishing Tournament.

The tournament was held in memory of the late Tyler Cypress, who passed away in March 2010. Children and families came together in the spirit of fishing, one of Tyler's favorite hobbies.

The Nelsons, who started fishing together in the late 1950s as youngsters in Miami, were competing in the tournament for the first time. They comprised one of 14 teams entered in the competition.

They exuded happiness, confidence and gratitude as they started their boat engine at the Moses "Big Shot" Jumper Boating Dock.

Heading off into the Big Cypress L-28 canal waters at about 6:30 a.m., the Nelsons began their day toward the northernmost end of the waterway. Clouds and fog overtook the dark sky above.

The sun hadn't even risen yet.

### Nelsons get best catches early on

The water was quiet and serene, and the Tribal seniors could only hear birds and crickets chirping. The Nelson brothers tuned in to a country station on the radio as they sped up to 60 miles per hour on the canal.

"There's no breeze out here," Sam said to his brother, Ted, a few minutes before 7. "It's hard for us to fish in conditions like that."

As the Nelsons stopped just short of the canal bank's northernmost end, Sam talked about their past success in the area.

"We caught some bass out here three, four months ago," Sam said to Ted. "Let's see if we could do it again today."

After missing out on an opportunity to get the catch he wanted, Ted's second try worked out.

At 7:11 a.m., the younger Nelson snatched a bass out of the canal waters.

"Look, I got one," Ted said to Sam. "I got us a good one."

"Looks nice," Sam said to Ted. "Looks nice."

Twenty minutes later, Sam caught another bass. But this time, it was too small. He chucked it back into the water. The cloudy skies began to give way to the sun, with cool temperatures and a slight passing drizzle.

Minutes later, Sam caught a slightly bigger bass. "Ooh," Ted said to Sam. "I'm going to get a net."

Sam stayed focused. He caught an even bigger bass at 7:44 a.m., bringing the Nelson brothers' total to three bass, just two short of the limit.

"We're going to get bigger and bigger here," Ted said to Sam.

"We don't have the big one yet," Sam said.

At about 8 a.m., the Nelsons positioned their boat toward the middle of the canal, angling it to a prime position to catch more bass. The winds picked up some as well, which was welcoming news to the Nelsons.

At 8:31 a.m., Ted caught two bass within three minutes, with his brother, Sam, measuring one at 14 inches in length. They were feeling competitive.

The Nelsons caught two more small fish before grabbing a bass of their liking about 30 minutes later. At 9:27 a.m., Sam took out the fishing net and scooped the bass out of the water.

"Looks like a keeper," Ted said.

After measuring the bass, the Nelsons were happy with their catch.

"Yup. It's a keeper," Ted said.

"We got our five fish we like out here," Sam said. "Let's go chase some more."

The Nelson brothers continued on as the skies suddenly cleared and the temperature increased. By half past 9, the Nelsons decided they would move on to another location soon.

But not before they caught their biggest bass of the day at 9:51 a.m.

"We got a double hitter here," Sam said.

"Holy smokes. I think we got the big one," Ted said.

"We got what we're looking for," Sam said. "It takes an expert to net the one we got."

Shortly after 10, the Nelsons started their engine again and took off.

They traveled about 12 miles down the canal, where they continued their seven-hour mission at the canal's westernmost end – not far from the Billie Swamp Safari.

### Nelsons push hard to the finish

The ride to the west end of the canal lasted for about 25 minutes, with a couple stops in between. On their way, the Nelsons talked briefly about the family bonding that went on during the tournament.

"Fishing is something that teaches you a lot of patience," Ted said. "It's good to see our kids learning about that."

The Nelsons caught only small bass during the rest of their time out in the water. At a quarter after 11, with less than three hours before the weigh-in, Sam put his game face on.

"I'm tired of being Mr. Nice Guy," Sam said to Ted. "Time to go back to being a rattler. Fishing ain't about luck. It's how you wiggle your worm."

At five minutes to noon, a little more than two hours before the weigh-in, the Nelson brothers decided to move about 4 miles east.

They stopped at a fork point on the canal where they hoped to catch some more. After taking a short Gatorade break, they stopped about 500 feet south of the Eight Clans Bridge.

But the Nelsons, who consider Lake Okeechobee as their other fishing preference in South Florida, decided to go right back to the northernmost part of the canal, about 5 miles north of the Eight Clans Bridge.

"One more shot," Sam said.

When the Nelsons arrived to the place they started, they noticed a few competitors fishing there as well.

"Everybody's down here now," Ted said. "I think they missed the boat. The best time to catch fish on the north side of the canal is in the morning. That's when we got all our fish. They were hungry early on."

Shortly after 1, the Nelsons called it a day.

"The fish were probably feeding early by moonlight," Ted said.

"I hope we got some good ones," Sam said.

The Nelsons headed straight for the weigh-in.

"I imagine a lot of people caught something," Ted said. "Maybe they did as well as we did. Maybe they did better than us."

The Nelsons' fate was revealed shortly after the 2 p.m. cut-off time for weigh-ins.

At 12 pounds, 10 ounces, their five bass would place them third overall out of the 14 teams in competition. Tournament winners Charlie Cypress and family weighed in at 17 pounds, 1 ounce and runners-up Jacob Cotton and Colton Irely weighed in at 13 pounds, 6 ounces.

"It was a great time to relax out here," Ted said.

"We weren't overcompromised with fishermen. That's why we like to fish here, right on our land."

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# First All Heart Basketball Tournament brings out healthy competition in BC

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — To celebrate Valentine's Day and partake in the nationwide movement to increase breast cancer awareness, Big Cypress Recreation hosted the All Heart Basketball Tournament from Feb. 24-25.

The event, held at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium, provided healthy competition among participating teams while uniting them in the fight against breast cancer, said Big Cypress Recreation coordinator Kelvin Robinson.

"We're here to support the fight against breast cancer," Robinson said. "We wanted to have an event that would bring the whole community together. We just wanted everybody to have fun."

Breast cancer is the fifth leading cause of death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Players showed their support for the cause by wearing something pink.

"People should be more aware about breast cancer...because it's a big thing here in our community," Robinson said.

Tribal athletes from Big Cypress, Brighton, Hollywood, Immokalee and Trail, as well as Natives from other Tribes throughout Indian Country, made up the 17 teams that competed in the tournament.

## Outkast wins men's tournament

The men's championship game

between Outkast and Take Over was decided in the first half. Tournament MVP Ronnie Battle, of the Comanche Tribe in Oklahoma, scored 36 of his tournament-high 40 points in the first half.

Battle set the tone early in the title game when, with 13:19 left in the first half, he made a 3-pointer from the arc to put Outkast up 5-0 over Take Over.

Outkast began the game with an 8-0 run before Take Over made its own scoring run, led by a 3-pointer from Big Cypress Tribal athlete Greg Carter, who scored 13 points in the title game. The 3-pointer cut Outkast's lead to 8-3 with 12:39 left in the first frame.

After Outkast missed out on a shot opportunity, Take Over's Adrian Mata scored his only basket, a 2-pointer, on a layup, which cut Outkast's lead to 8-5 with 11:38 left.

Take Over would get no closer than that the rest of the way, as Outkast used a 15-2 run to expand their lead to 23-7 with 6:44 left in the first half.

In one of the most exciting plays of the men's title game, Outkast's Solomon HorseChief, of the Pawnee Tribe in Oklahoma, threw a long assist from halfcourt to Battle as he converted on an alley-oop layup.

But Take Over didn't give up that easily. The sibling trio of Greg Carter and his two younger brothers, Deforest Carter, who scored 6 points in the first half, and Josie Balentine, who scored 12 points in the title game, combined to cut Outkast's



Naji Tobias

Immokalee Tribal athlete Ray Yzaguirre muscles his way past three Big Cypress Men defenders in the second half of his team's elimination.

lead to 28-18 with 5:00 left in the first half.

The excitement died down from there, as Outkast finished the first half on a 22-8 run to take a 50-26 score into halftime.

"We came out here to win," said Battle, who made six 3-pointers in the title game. "When we come into championship games, we don't want to be playing around."

The 30-point mercy rule came into play as Outkast finished off Take Over at the second half's 8:59 mark. Outkast outscored Take Over 19-13 with about six minutes of playing time in the second frame.

The final score was 69-39.

"Everybody on our team contributed on defense," said HorseChief, who scored 9 points in the title game. "That's how we got it done."

Outkast avenged its only loss of the tournament, a 50-48 defeat by Take Over, in the first men's semifinal game.

With Take Over moving on to the title game, Outkast went to the loser's bracket to play VSOP in the other semifinal game.

Outkast took advantage of its second chance, outlasting VSOP 41-38 to advance to the final.

Outkast's journey to the championship began with a 58-52 win over the Immokalee Chiefs and a close 70-68 win over B-Town before their semifinal loss to Take Over.

Meanwhile, Take Over's ride to the title game started with a 60-29 win over VSOP, followed by a 54-43 win over Big Cypress Men and the semifinal win over Outkast.

Early on, however, it seemed as if B-Town would be one of the teams to make a run to the title game.



Naji Tobias

Down 9-8 with 3:54 left in the first half, VSOP's Tony Billie attempts a high-flying shot as Nothing Fancy's Sebastian Bert defends the play. VSOP faced a 14-11 halftime deficit to Nothing Fancy in a men's elimination game.

Led by Brighton Tribal athlete Trewston Pierce, B-Town defeated Fearless 52-50 before losing two consecutive games: 70-68 to Outkast and 36-32 to VSOP.

New Year's Basketball Tournament men's winner Nothing Fancy forfeited a game to Big Cypress Men and suffered a 38-19 blowout loss to VSOP.

The final records for the teams were: Outkast, 4-1; VSOP, 3-2; Take Over, 3-1; Big Cypress Men, 1-2; B-Town, 1-2; Immokalee Chiefs, 0-2; Nothing Fancy, 0-2.

## You Don't Want It takes women's championship

The women's final between You Don't Want It and Lady Ballers proved to be a one-sided affair for the majority of the game.

You Don't Want It's Pearl Kelewood, of the Navajo/Apache Tribe from New Mexico, scored 7 of her 10 points in the first half.

Kelewood's two easy layups and two early free throws gave You Don't Want It an 8-1 lead over Lady Ballers with 6:09 left in the first half.

"We decided to play man-to-man coverage and switch it up a little bit," said Kelewood, the women's tournament MVP.

Kristin Billie and Courtney Sanders scored the rest of You Don't Want It's points in the first half, giving their team a 16-6 lead into halftime. Billie scored 7 points in the first half, while Sanders scored 2 points with a short jump shot.

You Don't Want It, who suffered a 29-28 double-overtime loss to Lady Ballers in

the first women's semifinal, abandoned the zone defense and stuck to what worked for them in the first half, as they finished the title game on a 9-5 scoring run.

"We lost to them once already, so we really needed to use our speed and size advantage this time around," Kelewood said.

You Don't Want It's run to the women's championship began with a 41-11 win over Team Hollywood, splitting two games with New Year's Basketball Tournament champion Lady Ballers.

Meanwhile, Lady Ballers defeated the Hollywood Seminoles 35-31 before the split with You Don't Want It.

The teams' final records were: You Don't Want, 3-1; Lady Ballers, 2-1; Hollywood Seminoles, 1-1; Team Hollywood, 0-2.

## Legends footnotes

To participate in a Legends game, players had to be at least 35 years old.

The Rebels won the men's Legends tournament, as they defeated runner-up Still Got It in their preliminary game and in the final.

Still Got It's two wins came against third-place team Living Legends.

The men's final records were: The Rebels, 2-0; Still Got It, 2-2; Living Legends, 0-2.

The women's Legends tournament was decided on a technicality: the Big Cypress All-Stars was considered the champion since Jus Playin' didn't field enough players in time to compete.



Naji Tobias

You Don't Want It's Courtney Sanders, left, and Lady Ballers' Jewel Buck, right, jump for the ball at the start of the women's final.

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# Ahfachkee Field Day features variety of sports



Naji Tobias



Naji Tobias

Team Yellow's Jonathan Robbins spikes the volleyball in a 33-32 win over Team Orange.



Team Orange's Taylor Fulton squeezes a hit in for her team's 8-1 win over Team Grey in Round 2 of Ahfachkee's Field Day round-robin games.

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — From popular sports like basketball to less common ones like fling-a-frog and alphabet mania, this year's Ahfachkee School's Field Day had it all.

On March 8, students from sixth through 12th grade participated in basketball, softball and volleyball. Meanwhile, students from kindergarten through fifth grade took part in less mainstream sports activities: bocce ball, sock throw, fling-a-frog, cone on/cone off, potato sack, alphabet mania, foam ball passover, ring toss, ball/noodle transfer, cone toss, pizza relay, cup stacker and roamers in a multiple-team playoff.

The middle and high school students were grouped into six teams.

The teams faced off in five rounds that lasted 20 minutes each. Some students played softball at the Big Cypress softball field, while others played basketball and volleyball at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.

Kindergarten through fifth-grade students enjoyed games at the Ahfachkee School. There were 10 teams in the elementary group.

In the end, Team Yellow came out on top for both school groups.

"Dynamite comes in small packages," Team Yellow's Savannah Tiger said. "We just wanted it more than all the other teams, I guess."

Team Green's Dillon Thomas, whose squad lost an overall tiebreaker to Team Yellow (due in large part to a 6-1 loss in the Round 5 softball game), offered a brief analysis of the results.

"We tried, but they (Team Yellow) just got the better of us," Thomas said. "I thought we were going to win, but they didn't let up on us. That's how they got the tiebreaker on us."

Win or lose, Ahfachkee School science teacher Calvin Sergo said the recreation time was good for everyone involved.

"I'm glad to see the kids running around because it breaks up the daily grind of regular schoolwork, day after day," said Sergo, who served as an umpire at the Big Cypress softball field. "I'm sure the kids felt the same way, too. It's a good way for them to burn up some energy they have on the inside."

Ahfachkee School physical education teacher and student activities coordinator Randall Cleckler said the event also allows teachers and students to interact in a different capacity.

"It's a great time for us to get some stress relief," Cleckler said. "The staff gets a chance to enjoy all the events with the students."

Team Orange's Stevie Billie also noticed how the day strengthened his friendships.

"We really connect together," he said. "It brings us closer and gives us a better bond with each other."



Naji Tobias

Big Cypress Tribal senior Mitchell Cypress tries to catch a fish during the Big Cypress Seniors Fishing Tournament on March 13.



Naji Tobias

To his surprise, Big Cypress Tribal member Amos Billie, right, hooks an alligator in the Noah Jim Pond as Tribal senior Ricky Doctor looks on.

## Tribal elders gather for Big Cypress Seniors Fishing Tournament

BY NAJI TOBIAS  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Noah Jim's Pond was the place to be for nine Big Cypress Tribal seniors. On the morning of March 13, they competed in their annual fishing tournament.

Big Cypress Tribal senior Violet Jim caught the largest garfish of the day at 16 ounces.

"Violet is a fisher and everyone here knows that," said Big Cypress Senior Center activity coordinator Nadine Bowers. "That's her hobby, so we know what to expect from her."

Fellow Tribal elder Rudy Osceola was the only Big Cypress male senior to catch a garfish; he lured a 15-ounce fish out of the pond.

"We all know Rudy as a cowboy," Bowers said. "I didn't know he could fish. The seniors surprise me sometimes with their abilities."

Those were the only two fish caught in the competition. Big Cypress Tribal citizen Jerry Balentine, who was one of several Tribal member guests at the tournament, said the lack of wind may have been the reason for the low count.

"It was a good day to be fishing, with the skies being clear out here," he said. "But they (the fish) weren't baiting much."

However, fish weren't the only things reeled in that day. Tribal senior and competitor Esther Buster accidentally caught a turtle and almost pulled a 12-foot alligator out of the pond.

To Bowers' amazement, she also hooked a turtle.

"I thought it was a big fish," Bowers said. "When we pulled ours out in the pond, it wasn't what we were looking for."

Others who competed in the fishing tournament included Big Cypress Tribal seniors Mitchell Cypress, Ricky Doctor, Mable Jim, Billie Johns, Janice Osceola and Alice Tigertail.

"I like bringing the seniors out here because they really enjoy the peaceful environment," Bowers said. "It provides them an opportunity to do something together and gives them some time to talk to each other."

Big Cypress Tribal Council Rep. Mondo Tiger, who appeared at the tournament, expressed his gratitude to the seniors for coming together for the occasion.

"I'm always lucky enough to be around the seniors," Councilman Tiger said.

"I was brought up to respect the elders and learn what I can from them," he said. "That's been embedded in me since I was a kid and it will never change. The seniors are very, very important to me because they raised me and taught me a lot of things along the way."



Naji Tobias

Big Cypress Tribal senior Esther Buster tries to make a catch during the March 13 Big Cypress Seniors Fishing Tournament.



Naji Tobias

Big Cypress Tribal senior Violet Jim catches the March 13 tournament's biggest grab of the day, a 16-ounce garfish.

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\*MONEY BACK GUARANTEE BASED ON 3 DAYS/150 MILES, WHICHEVER COMES FIRST. SOME RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY. SEE STORE FOR DETAILS. YOU MUST PRESENT THIS AD AT TIME OF PURCHASE TO RECEIVE THESE SPECIAL PRICES. OFFERS GOOD ON DATE OF PUBLICATION ONLY UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED. ADVERTISED PRICES NOT APPLICABLE TO EXPORTERS. PRIOR LEASES EXCLUDED. SEE DEALER FOR DETAILS. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS. PICTURES ARE FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. "GHOSTBUSTERS" (PARKER, JR.) USED BY PERMISSION OF EMI GOLDEN TORCH MUSIC & RAYDIOLA MUSIC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ©1996-2006 AUTONATION INC.