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# The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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## BC learns about python presence

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Burmese pythons have been the scourge of the Everglades for more than 20 years and have now made their way onto the Big Cypress Reservation.

The Seminole Tribe's Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) teamed up on Feb. 1 in Big Cypress to train the tribal community about the invasive species. The training, held at the community center in the Boys & Girls Club building, included information about how to find the elusive creatures and humanely kill them.

Burmese pythons are good swimmers and can remain underwater for up to 30 minutes.

"Canals are like a roadway for pythons," said Mandy D'Andrea, ERMD biological technician. "With the influx of more pythons, we have a real need to do this training."

Burmese pythons are native to Southeast Asia, but they thrive in the Everglades ecosystem, which is similar to their native habitat. According to FWC, the snakes are one of the largest species in the world. They grow to an average length of 6 to 9 feet and have been found as long as 18 feet. Despite their size, the snakes are hard to find.

♦ See PYTHON on page 2A

## Washington trip provides learning experience for Seminole students

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — After a pandemic-imposed three-year hiatus, 10 Seminole students attended the Close Up Washington/USET Impact Week Youth Summit held Feb. 3 to Feb. 9 in Washington, D.C.

The Seminole students were Liyah Alvarado, Hady Billie, Felicia Buck, Izaiah Billie, Lavin Billie, Leviticus Berry, Leighton Jim, Jaylee Jimmie, Ty Martinez and Cece Thomas. Along with about 80 other students from 12 tribes, they toured the Washington sights and explored the governmental process in the U.S. and in tribes.

Throughout the week, students worked on drafting tribal action initiatives they believed are important for their tribes and presented them to the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) board and members at its Feb. 6 meeting.

The mission of Close Up is to inform, inspire and empower young people to exercise the rights and accept the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. The week included workshops on federal Indian policy, federal government structure, current issues in Indian Country, creating a sovereignty statement and a tribal action initiative.

During the program's first full day Kitcki Carroll, USET executive director, gave an overview of U.S. and tribal relations. He told the students that the story of those relations are often told from the perspective of the oppressor.

♦ See CLOSE UP on page 5A



Seminole students gather at the U.S. Capitol. Back row, from left to right, are Cece Thomas, Izaiah Billie, Hady Billie, Leighton Jim, Leviticus Berry, Lavin Billie and Liyah Alvarado. Front row, from left to right, are Ty Martinez, Felicia Buck and Jaylee Jimmie.



"Seminole Girl" sits along the New River in Fort Lauderdale. The Riverside Hotel is in the background.

Damon Scott

## 'Seminole Girl' returns to Fort Lauderdale site

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

**FORT LAUDERDALE** — The popular sculpture "Florida: A Seminole Girl" in Fort Lauderdale was recently returned to its home along the New River after undergoing rehabilitation work.

The eight-foot tall bronze sculpture features a playful-looking, five-year-old Seminole girl clutching palmetto leaves. She is accompanied by a dancing crane and a baby alligator.

"It's become an icon in Fort Lauderdale," Nilda Comas, the artist who created the sculpture, said.

Comas oversaw its rehabilitation, which consisted of making the palmetto fronds sturdier. She said it's the second time the sculpture has had work done to it since it was installed in 2015. The first involved repairing damage to the alligator tail.

The Miami-based bronze foundry Comas originally worked with on the sculpture — Art & Sculpture Unlimited — performed the latest rehabilitation work.

"It took months. I wanted them to be the one; they use the same bronze, the same alloy. They did the original cast and love the piece," Comas said.

The city of Fort Lauderdale owns the sculpture and paid for the rehabilitation work. Its care falls under the auspices of the city's Parks & Recreation Department.

### Seminole story

Comas said she first developed the idea for the sculpture while the state of Florida was making plans to celebrate its 500-year anniversary in 2013. She'd done research on the original Indigenous occupants of Florida and ended up at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Reservation, where she

said she spent considerable time with the staff. Comas learned about Seminole life in the 1900s — clothes that were worn, which animals roamed the area — and that palm fronds were used to thatch roofs on chickees.

In the midst of her research, she had something of a chance encounter with the late Jimmy Osceola at her art studio in Fort Lauderdale.

"Jimmy knocked on my door one day and inquired about painting classes," Comas said. "He said he'd seen my work around town."

Months later she also met Elgin Jumper, who became one of her art students. Osceola and Jumper would help Comas learn more about the tribe and assist with securing tribal support for the sculpture. The tribe agreed to pay for half of the cost.

♦ See 'GIRL' on page 6A

## Seminole art to be featured at Ringling Museum

March 18 opening day program to include artists

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

"Reclaiming Home: Contemporary Seminole Art" will open at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota on March 18 and run through Sept. 4. The exhibit marks the first time the museum has presented contemporary art by Native American artists.

The exhibit will feature the art of Seminole artists Noah Billie, Wilson Bowers, Alyssa Osceola, Jessica Osceola, Brian Zepeda, Corinne Zepeda and Pedro Zepeda. Other artists in the show include Houston Cypress (Miccosukee) and Elisa Harkins (Cherokee/Muscogee [Creek]), C. Maxx Stevens (Seminole/Muscogee [Creek]), Tony Tiger (Sac and Fox/Seminole/Muscogee [Creek]), and Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie (Taskigi/Diné [Navajo]/Seminole).

"It is the first of its kind at the Ringling and one of only five that have been featured in the state of Florida," Corinne Zepeda said. "In 2023 we are finally getting recognized for being on this land. I think it's important for people to learn that we are still here and still create art. We've adapted to make contemporary pieces using traditional techniques."

Zepeda makes beadwork, digital art,

sewn items, pins and mixed media pieces. She will have nine or 10 small pieces in the show including a mixed media jean jacket. She learned how to bead from her father Brian Zepeda, a master artist who makes intricately beaded bandolier bags which are also featured in the show. Other members of Zepeda's family are in the exhibit including cousin Jessica Osceola and uncle Pedro Zepeda.

"It's a family affair," she said. "I think it's wonderful that we are all in this exhibit together and we just happened to be selected."

"Reclaiming Home" is the first collaboration between the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and the Ringling. Some of the pieces on display are on loan from Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki.

The opening day program on March 18 is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. with an outdoor welcome celebration, a land acknowledgement and remarks from museum leadership and special guests. A panel discussion with the artists and informal tours of the gallery space will continue throughout the day. Admission is free on opening day.

The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art is located at 5401 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota. For more information visit ringling.org.



The Ringling  
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota.

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# Editorial

## Farm Bill efforts critical to Indian Country agriculture producers

• Chuck Hoskin Jr.

We all depend on farmers, ranchers and those who support them to bring food and other essential agricultural products to our tables and homes. At the Cherokee Nation, we are especially mindful that without food sovereignty, all other aspects of our sovereignty will be at risk. That is why we focus on strengthening the agriculture industry on our reservation and giving Cherokees plenty of opportunities to thrive as food producers.

The Farm Bill is the most significant legislation supporting agriculture and food systems in the United States, and it must be renewed every five years. Each renewal creates an opportunity to improve the USDA's extensive programming for Indian Country. The 2018 Farm Bill, which dedicated \$428 billion for farm and food program support, was a historic milestone for Indian Country. It brought greater investment in Native agricultural production, rural infrastructure, economic development and conservation. It also safeguarded vitally important nutrition assistance programs on which many Native Americans depend.

Now the time for the next renewal is here. I was recently in Washington, D.C., as part of the Native Farm Bill Coalition, which is a nationwide initiative to advance policies that benefit all tribal citizens. As the largest federally recognized Indian tribe in the United States with more than 450,000 citizens and a 7,000-square-mile reservation, Cherokee Nation is a key part of this coalition.

Native people are the original stewards of the land and water on this continent. From time immemorial, we carefully built agriculture and food systems to sustain our

people and our environment. Our traditional food practices were carefully cultivated to nourish Native families and communities. When these are damaged or destroyed, our health and our communities suffer as well.

That is why we are working so hard to expand opportunities in the 2023 Farm Bill renewal. There are so many farming and food programs this bill supports that could change the livelihood of Native people. Nationwide, we are making progress to restore tribal and Native food systems. However, many tribal governments still rely on federal food programs for their people.

In fall 2022, Cherokee Nation and the Native Farm Bill Coalition hosted a roundtable discussion with Cherokee Nation tribal leadership and local farmers and ranchers to discuss priorities we would like to see changed or added to the 2023 Farm Bill.

Additionally, last year Cherokee Nation proudly launched the 1839 Cherokee Meat Co., the first meat processing plant operated by Cherokee Nation within the 14-county reservation. This facility provides access to a nutritious protein source for Cherokee families. It also gives livestock producers in the Cherokee Nation a much-needed service to prepare their animals for the market. The Cherokee Nation has also continued to grow its cattle and bison herds, with the eventual plan to process some of the animals so that we can put fresh meat into the tribal programs our citizens use.

We have advocated for the new Farm Bill to include investing more in the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program, which has been critical to bring projects like the 1839 Meat Co. from idea to reality.

In working with ranchers in the Cherokee Nation, we are intimately familiar with their struggles in times of drought. Northeast Oklahoma has experienced record

heat waves and brutal weather conditions in recent years, stressing livestock and pasture lands on the reservation. We set up and operated USDA drought assistance efforts and a hay assistance program for local farmers and ranchers last year. We know these programs helped keep Cherokee agriculture producers from losing everything in the drought.

One of the priorities Cherokee Nation would like to see is changes to the Livestock Forage Program that gives tribes flexibility to use their own drought monitor and shorten the wait time from eight weeks to two weeks. The U.S. Drought Monitor is insufficient by itself, and Cherokee Nation is uniquely situated to evaluate the needs of Cherokee producers.

We also support expanding tribal self-determination in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Food distribution is critical to our people, even more so during the pandemic. In fiscal year 2022, Cherokee Nation food distribution served 68,313 individuals within 36,949 households. Recently, the tribe opened the doors of its eighth center for food distribution on the reservation. The Vinita location allows us to bring even more fresh and healthy food into Cherokee homes. We know that when tribes have the funding and authority to fully operate these programs, they are more efficient and effective at helping our citizens.

The unique needs of Indian Country and Native agriculture producers cannot be overlooked when the Farm Bill is renewed. We remain vigilant in advocating for strong Native-related provisions in the bill. Along with our partners from the Native Farm Bill Coalition, Cherokee Nation is a powerful voice for the agriculture needs of our people.

*Chuck Hoskin Jr. is the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation.*

## Lee Tiger was musician, champion of Native culture

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

Those who knew the Miccosukee Tribe's Lee Tiger remember him as a prolific musician who also worked for many years to promote Native tourism and culture on behalf of the Miccosukee and Seminole tribes. Tiger died Jan. 5 in Davie after a lengthy illness, according to his son and Seminole tribal member Calvin Tiger. He was 72 years old.

Tiger was the son of the Miccosukee Tribe's first chief, Buffalo Tiger, who played a significant role in the development of the Miccosukee's tribal status. Federal recognition came in 1962 and Tiger was the tribe's chairman from that year until 1985. He died in 2015 at age 94.

As teenagers in the 1960s, Lee Tiger and his brother Stephen Tiger formed the rock band Sun Country, which later became Tiger Tiger. Lee Tiger had previously played in the band Seven of Us, later known as NRBQ, while living in Los Angeles. He sang and played several instruments.

The brothers, and Tiger Tiger, are credited for helping to break the stereotypes of Native musicians. They were "musicians who just happened to be Native Americans," Lee Tiger told the New Times Broward-Palm Beach in 2015.

Their last commercially produced album was "Southern Exposure" in 2000, which received a Grammy nomination. The brothers were also recognized with a lifetime achievement award in 2006 from the Native American Music Association. Stephen Tiger died from a fall later the same year at age 57.

"Lee is sorely missed by his family and friends but we will always have his music to remind [us] of his message of unity..." Curtis E. Osceola, chief of staff for the Miccosukee Tribe, said in a statement Jan. 9.

### Tourism, advocacy

In the 1970s, the brothers returned to the Miccosukee Tribe to help their father launch the Miccosukee Arts Festival and establish the Miccosukee Village in the Everglades as an entertainment and ecotourism destination. It marked the beginning of Tiger's many years of work in tribal tourism and promotion of Native culture.

Tiger did marketing and tourism for the Miccosukee and Seminole tribes and helped develop the Seminole Tribe's Billie Swamp Safari on the Big Cypress Reservation in the

1990s. "There are photos of him traveling all over the world promoting the tribes," Calvin Tiger said. "He also owned his own consulting business and consulted for other tribes around the county."



Lee Tiger/Facebook  
Lee Tiger in 2021.

Tiger served on several public commissions and organizations, Florida tourism committees, and national tribal organizations. He consulted with universities and other organizations as well as with tribal officials on a variety of Native issues.

Osceola said Tiger was an advocate and ambassador for the Miccosukee people.

"He was a beautiful soul who advocated for unity between cultures through respect for one another and envisioned a world where we could all come together through peace, love, and caring for our Mother Earth," Osceola said in the statement. "Lee carried with him the identity of Miccosukee, to care for the world around you like family and always shared his culture and identity with anyone who was interested. Lee was a Miccosukee patriot, and his love of country, culture, and identity is one that we should all aspire to have."

In recent years, Tiger was a proponent of Native rights and environmental conservation.

"Our hearts are with the family and friends of Lee Tiger as we acknowledge his passing by honoring his legacy of arts, advocacy, international diplomacy, peace and unity, and Indigenous pride," the Miccosukee Tribe's Houston Cypress, of the Love the Everglades Movement, posted on Facebook shortly after his death. "We thank Lee Tiger for standing up for the Greater Everglades for so many years and we will remember him fondly."

Lee is survived by his children, Calvin Tiger and Summer Tiger, along with several grandchildren. A graveside service took place Jan. 10 at Woodlawn Park Cemetery South in Miami.

*Editor's note: Calvin Tiger is a reporter/intern for the Seminole Tribune. He has worked for the Seminole Tribe since 2013.*

### ◆ PYTHON From page 1A

"You could be right next to one and not see it," D'Andrea said. "They are everywhere; in pastures, canals, the community. We found some very close to here."

When ERMD kills a Burmese python they cut it open to count the eggs and see what is in the stomach. D'Andrea has found empty nests while conducting home site surveys. Female Burmese pythons can lay from 40 to 100 eggs in a clutch. There are no natural predators for adult snakes in the Everglades, but smaller young snakes are eaten by birds, alligators and other predators. By the time the snake is four-feet long, it perceives those predators as prey.

Burmese pythons hunt at night when the days are too hot. In colder weather, they can be found basking in the sun on canal banks. They are known to have eaten mammals as large as a white tailed deer.

"They will eat anything that comes in front of them," said Sarah Funck, FWC biologist. "The Everglades is their buffet, but they can survive up to a year without eating."

The pythons feast on native species in the Everglades, many of which are already threatened and endangered. FWC does necropsies on captured snakes and knows what they consume.

Funck said the snakes are an established population and cannot be eradicated, but FWC can try to control them by conducting training sessions and holding an annual Burmese python hunt. Since 2000, FWC has removed more than 17,000 Burmese pythons from South Florida, but they don't know how many more are in the ecosystem. FWC believes it has detected less than 5% of the probable population.

The snake's black, tan and brown coloring makes them difficult to find in the environment, but Taylor Apter, FWC biologist, described what differentiates the Burmese pythons from other snakes. The distinctive pattern on the body is like a puzzle, Apter said, with random shapes that make up the non-uniform pattern. Each puzzle piece has a brown center, black edge and tan surrounding area. The head features an arrowhead pattern with a dark wedge that goes behind the eyes.

The best places to find pythons are on levees near canal banks, in vegetation between the canal and the road and on road shoulders. Part of the snake skin will shine in the sunlight, which is a good way to find a hidden snake in the brush.

"Only a small piece of the snake will be visible," Apter said. "Look for small shiny

coils, they are difficult to find."

Apter advised prospective Burmese python hunters never to go alone.

"It's safer to have someone with you if you get constricted," Apter said. "Your partner can unwrap the snake from you."

Apter demonstrated on a toy snake how to pin a Burmese python with a snake hook and explained that it is best to use the straight side to incapacitate the animal and use the hook to pull the snake out of its hiding place.

"Catching a snake is about technique, not strength," Apter said. "Always pull the snake onto open land. You don't have to be strong but you have to know where to hold the hook. Hold it behind the jawbone, you can feel the bone in your hand."

As hardy reptiles, Burmese pythons can be difficult to kill. FWC recommends treating the animals as humanely as possible when attempting to kill them. FWC's suggestion is to first render it unconscious by using an air gun or hitting it with an object between the eye and the jawbone. FWC also suggests destroying the snake's brain by inserting a small rod or spike into the cranial cavity and moving it around the brain.

The Miccosukee Tribe uses trained detection dogs to find Burmese pythons. Dog handler Marcel Bozas demonstrated how his dog Shatow, a red Labrador retriever, can find a hidden ball scented like a python in dense brush.

"The dog is not hunting snakes; he is trained to play," Bozas said. "We have a 30% higher catch rate using the dog and even more during nesting season."

"I think there is a potential on the reservation for someone to dedicate a dog to this," D'Andrea said. "The Miccosukee Tribe is most successful with the dogs."

After the indoor training and the dog demonstration, the group of budding snake hunters went outside to implement what they learned on real Burmese pythons. FWC staff biologists demonstrated how to pin a live python and helped volunteers try it themselves.

"It was weird and I was nervous," said Mahala Billie, who pinned a snake for the first time. "When I got a hand on him, he moved. You could feel it in your hand, he was tensing up. It was crazy; even when I handed him back I felt everything he did."

"It was big and strong and I couldn't hold him tightly," said Richard Hendricks, special events coordinator in the President's office. "It was an adrenaline rush."

Environmental Health animal control and wildlife officer Albert Rivera is no stranger to pythons.

"He gave me a workout," Rivera said. "I've handled pythons before but this one was very feisty."



The Miccosukee Tribe's dog handler Marcel Bozas holds Shatow as he explains to the crowd at the python training Feb. 1 how the dog is trained to find pythons and their nests.



FWC staff member Michelle Bassis attempts to get a python out of the snake bag for a demonstration during the python patrol training in Big Cypress.

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# Community



## Community garden opens in Big Cypress

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Marty Bowers never gardened a day in his life, but he had an idea for a community garden in Big Cypress which he shared with the Native Connections advisory board, a division of the Seminole Tribe's Center for Behavioral Health.

"I've had this vision since 2018 of a thriving garden and community members with their hands in the dirt," said Bowers, a Big Cypress resident who serves on the board. "We have the capability to feed our tribe."

The "Let's Be Trees" community garden opened to the community Feb. 8. The organic garden consists of 40 garden beds, including



raised beds for seniors, and a three sisters area where corn, beans and squash will grow together. Monthly workshops on gardening, climate resiliency, health, nutrition and fitness are scheduled as well as weekly meetings to check on the beds.

The Native Connections board monitors the garden, encourages community involvement and provides the tools and seedlings necessary to get started. Some of the seedlings include various lettuces and greens, herbs, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, squash and edible flowers. Driplines water the beds as needed.

"We have unity and community working on something together," said Gherri Osceola, Native Connections tribal community support specialist. "Participation and involvement is our number one priority. We want to make it easy for them to be involved."

Bowers compares the community garden to a mycelium network, a fungal organism that connects individual trees and plants together through their root systems to share water, nitrogen, carbon and other minerals.

"I see the community like that; they can help each other grow and thrive," he said. "What someone lacks, I may be able to help. If they are abundant in bliss, I may be able to join in that bliss."

The practical aspects of growing fresh food could be a bonus for the community. Osceola envisions the possibility of the community gardeners having enough bounty to hold a farmers market on the site.

"It's hard out here in Big Cypress to get something fresh," Osceola said. "We have to go to Weston or Clewiston. This will save us money and time and be environmentally friendly."

As of Feb. 8, 35 families had signed up for a garden bed. For more information about the garden, or to inquire about availability, contact Osceola at gherriosceola@semtribe.com.

Beverly Bidney

Gherri Osceola, left, and Billie Cypress look at some seedlings growing in garden beds at the community garden Feb. 8.



Beverly Bidney (3)

Above, from left to right, Alice Jimmie, Billie Cypress, Lena Cypress and Kiki Roberts make seed bombs out of clay, soil, wildflower seeds and nutrients. The seed bombs were thrown into an open part of the garden so wildflowers will bloom to attract pollinators to the garden. Below left, Virginia Tommie (left) and Claudia Doctor walk through the community garden's planting beds. The silver ones behind them are for seniors to use since they are higher than the standard green beds and easier to reach. Below right, a mural is located next to the three sisters area of the community garden and was made by Ahfachkee School art students, who painted it on four weather-resistant wood panels.



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**2023**

# Brighton Field Day Festival attracts thousands

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — Thousands of people attended the 84th annual Brighton Field Day Festival from Feb. 17 to Feb. 19. Native dancers, an alligator wrestling competition, a professional rodeo, concerts and plenty of culture were featured on the Brighton Reservation. It was the first in-person Field Day since 2020 due to the pandemic.

The festival showcased Seminole arts, culture and food at the Brighton culture camp adjacent to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena. Guests tasted traditional food at the cooking chickee as women prepared traditional Seminole fry bread, pumpkin fry bread and lapalle.

Seminole vendors were kept busy with customers at booths filled with colorful patchwork clothing, beadwork, baskets, wood carvings, artwork and other traditional items. Other Native American vendors from around the country also did a brisk business selling their traditional items.

Brighton resident Norman “Skeeter” Bowers served as emcee for the annual parade. The grand marshal of the parade on Feb. 18 was former Seminole Tribe Chairman James E. Billie, who, with his daughter Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, led the parade. They were followed by Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., President Mitchell Cypress, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Brighton Board Rep. Helene Buster.

The parade also featured the Florida State University marching band, which was led into the amphitheater by “Osceola” riding Renegade, the Appaloosa horse. Heavy with brass and drums, the band played a few songs, including the traditional FSU fight song.

Floats included FSU football head coach Mike Norvell, Florida Seminole Veterans, the Brighton Culture Department and Brighton’s

First Indian Baptist Church. Pemayetv Emahavk Charter School’s representation in the parade included Mr. PECS Gregory James and Miss PECS Joleyne Nunez, the safety patrol, the student council and a large float filled with students.

Members of the Wisdom Indian Dancers honor guard led the grand entry followed by the Lakota Women Warriors color guard and members of Tribal Council and Board.

Osceola’s Warrior Legacy demonstrated how Seminoles fought the U.S. Army in the Everglades during the Seminole Wars in the 1800s. Jason Melton, Alyssa Osceola, Charlie Osceola and Andrew Wallin wore traditional clothing, used weapons from the era and demonstrated how Seminoles and U.S. soldiers fought each other.

Wallin was dressed in a heavy wool uniform typical of the U.S. Army while the Seminoles wore traditional, lightweight clothing. The historical depiction ended the way the real history played out; Seminoles defeated the Army and remained unconquered.

A standing room only crowd at the amphitheater watched the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competitions. Tribal member Billy Walker and Miccosukee tribal member Joseph Osceola competed along with other non-tribal wrestlers.

The White Mountain Apache crown dancers, Roberts family hoop dancers and Aztec fire dancers also performed in the amphitheater. A fan zone near the entrance to the arena featured concerts by the Rita Youngman Band and Shannon Reed. The PRCA rodeo and Xtreme Bulls were held in the arena. A performance by country music star Gary Allan was the main event on Saturday night.

The Field Day Festival began in 1938 as a friendly competition between reservations and evolved into the popular fun-filled event it is today.



Norman Johns, left, and Andrew J. Bowers Jr. enter the amphitheater as part of the cowboy contingent in the Brighton Field Day Festival parade Feb. 18.



From left to right are Brighton Board Rep. Helene Buster, FSU head football coach Mike Norvell, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Renegade team owner Allen Durham, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola.



Parker Osceola celebrates his win in the 11-13 year old category of the kids clothing contest.



Field Day grand marshal and former Chairman James E. Billie and his daughter Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie watch the parade in an ATV.



Seminole girls show off their outfits as they compete in the kids clothing contest.



Charlie Osceola, left, demonstrates how women helped in the battle against U.S. Army soldiers, played by Andrew Wallin, during the Seminole Wars.



Martha Tommie, left, and Sandy Billie greet the crowd in the stands during the Field Day parade. At far right is parade emcee Norman “Skeeter” Bowers.



The amphitheater stands are filled to capacity as Billy Walker wrestles an alligator during the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competitions held in a large pit of water.

See more Field Day photos on 1B, 5C

**◆ CLOSE UP**  
From page 1A

“All of North America was Indigenous,” Carroll (Cheyenne and Arapahoe) said. “It belonged to all of you and your ancestors.”

He said the trust relationship between tribes and the U.S. government was based on two beliefs: that all Native Americans are incompetent to handle their own affairs and that they will disappear anyway. He described the beliefs as antiquated, paternalistic and flawed.

Carroll told the students about the “Doctrine of Discovery,” proclaimed by the Catholic Church in the 1100s with papal decrees. It established a religious, political and legal justification for colonization and seizure of lands not inhabited by Christians. The policy was validated as U.S. law by the Supreme Court in 1823 and was used to take land from Indigenous people.

“We have to understand that all policies and laws stem from this mindset,” Carroll said. “Because we were not Christians, we were heathens. Yet the U.S. is founded on religious freedom. We were an inconvenience and necessary casualty of U.S. growth. This country’s first sin was the atrocities committed on your relatives. Our very foundation is based on the dehumanization of human beings.”

Carroll hoped what the students learned from his presentation will spark their interest to learn more.

“We’d like you to do this work beside us,” he said. “You can take this knowledge and empower your family and your people. Find your voice, learn how to use it. It is the most powerful tool you have.”

Carroll said that 97% of Indian youth go to public schools with non-Natives and are getting an untruthful version of Native American history.

Students responded favorably to Carroll’s presentation and some said it was an eye-opener.

“They are not telling the full story in public school,” said 12th grader Leviticus Berry, of Brighton. “I’ve learned so much more here. I’m going to try to explain it to people at my school. I recently had conversations with friends and teachers who didn’t know most of what happened.”

“They sugarcoat stuff,” said ninth grader Ty Martinez, of Immokalee. “We need to know what really happened. I have friends that don’t think Seminoles exist today. People know a lot more about other countries than they do about their own.”

At the National Museum of the American Indian, students saw the “Americans” exhibit which displayed how images of Native Americans have been used in every aspect of American life, from advertisements to products to sports teams to military hardware.

“Our name and culture has been thrown into the mud and stepped on,” said 11th grader Jaylee Jimmie, of Big Cypress. “It tore us apart. It feels like we can’t be taken seriously unless we play the role.”

“Logos are just not okay,” added ninth grader Hadyn Billie, of Immokalee. “They make fun of Native Americans and don’t take us seriously.”

The group also toured the Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, World War II, Korean and Vietnam memorials.

On Feb. 6, students presented USET member flags at the opening ceremony of the meeting. The tribal action initiatives posters were presented at the USET meeting later in the day. Each tribe made a board outlining what they believed to be the most important issues facing their tribes.

The Seminole students listed tribal government and cultural involvement with young people as the top issues facing the tribe.

Other tribe’s issues included water pollution, drugs, loss of culture and language, crime, increasing tribal businesses and increasing youth involvement in the tribe.

The Seminole students rehearsed what they would say about their action initiative to members of USET who stopped at their presentation table.

“We need to talk about what needs to be done to change our government,” Jimmie said. “The requirements to be in office are too low. We can do better and be better. I guess it’s up to the younger generation because the older generation is stuck in their ways. If we want to survive, it should be less about blood and more about what you know about our culture.”

The students were concerned that Elders would take all their knowledge with them when they die before they had a chance to learn.

“Taking culture classes at Ahfahchkee makes me want to learn more,” Jimmie said. Eleventh grader Leighton Jim talked about the structure of Seminole government.

“There are flaws in our government,” Jim said. “It can work better in the best interest of tribal members. There is always room for improvement.”

“I think they should require more experience to be in the government,” added 11th grader CeCe Thomas. “A lot of young people don’t like to reach out and ask about culture, so we need Council to sponsor a program for activities every month.”

USET members said they were impressed by the Seminole students’ presentation and commented on how prepared, energetic and eager to share they were.

“The kids are very articulate about what they think needs to be done,” said Keith Anderson, chief of the Nansemond Indian Nation in Virginia. “It was phenomenal. They were fully engaged and informed.”

Later in the week, the students toured Capitol Hill and met with members of the Senate’s Committee on Indian Affairs.



Beverly Bidney

At the White House, from left to right, Leviticus Berry, Cece Thomas, Liyah Alvarado, Hadyn Billie, Ty Martinez, Jaylee Jimmie, Lavin Billie and Izaiah Billie.



Beverly Bidney

Cece Thomas, center, talks to Kitcki Carroll, USET executive director.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Leighton Jim, Felicia Buck, Hadyn Billie and Liyah Alvarado work on the government structure poster.



Beverly Bidney

Ty Martinez, right, talks about the Seminole Tribe. Also in the discussion are Jaylee Jimmie, second from left, and Hadyn Billie, second from right.



Beverly Bidney

From right to left, Hadyn Billie, Cece Thomas and Liyah Alvarado.



Beverly Bidney

Flagbearers Leviticus Berry, left, and Ty Martinez join other Close Up participants who held flags of the USET tribes during the opening ceremonies of its meeting.

# Spencer Battiest wins BroadwayWorld award

STAFF REPORT

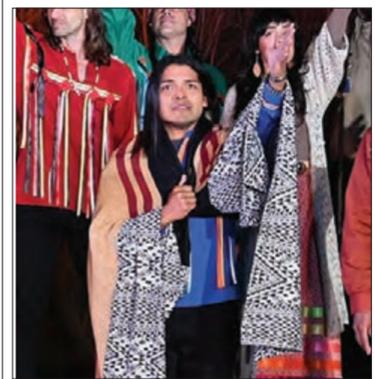
Seminole Tribe actor, singer-songwriter and producer Spencer Battiest won best supporting performer in a musical in the 2022 BroadwayWorld Oklahoma regional awards.

The awards, which were announced Jan. 27, recognize the best in regional productions and touring shows in North America and other continents.

Battiest stars in the all-Native musical “Distant Thunder.” It ran in March 2022 at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City.

Battiest’s award was among 10 regional wins for the production, including best musical, best new musical or play, best ensemble performance (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma) and best performer in a musical (Shaun Taylor-Corbett).

“Thank you to BroadwayWorld Oklahoma and to everyone who voted for Distant Thunder, a new musical!” Battiest posted on Facebook. “So amazing to see how far this show has come, and I am just honored to be a small part! Congratulations to all the cast and crew for taking home 10 awards including “Best Musical”! Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma First Americans Museum.”



Miki Galloway

Spencer Battiest in “Dark Thunder.”

# THPO to participate in Fort Myers program

STAFF REPORT

The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society will host a presentation about the Seminole Tribe’s repatriation efforts at 7 p.m. on March 15 at the IMAG History & Science Center located at 2000 Cranford Ave. in Fort Myers.

The free program is scheduled to include the Seminole Tribe’s Tina Marie Osceola, who is director of the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), and THPO staff Dominique DeBeaubien and Samantha Wade.

# Lynn Trujillo named to Interior post

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Lynn Trujillo (Sandia Pueblo/Acoma Taos Pueblos) was appointed senior counselor to the secretary in the U.S. Department of the Interior on Feb. 10. The department is led by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo).



NM Indian Affairs  
Lynn Trujillo

Trujillo previously served in New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grishman’s cabinet as secretary of the state’s Indian Affairs Department. Trujillo holds a bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and a J.D. from the University of New Mexico School of Law.

# Self-governance conference to be held in June

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TULSA, Okla. — The Tribal Self-Governance Conference will be held June 26-29 at River Spirit Resort Casino in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

For more information call (918) 370-4258, email info@tribalselfgov.org or visit tribalselfgov.org.

The casino is owned and operated by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

# Erica Deitz painting installed at Florida State

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

The Seminole Tribe of Florida's historic leaders are now part of Florida State University's new student union.

A painting by Seminole artist Erica Deitz, titled "Osceola's Vision," depicts Osceola with other great leaders in the tribe's history. Micanopy, Wildcat, Sam Jones and Billy Bowlegs are behind Osceola, looking down from the clouds over the Everglades. It was installed during the winter break.

"I named it that because Osceola wanted his people to live freely and prosper in their homeland," Deitz wrote in an email to the Tribune. "It was his ultimate vision for his people."

The acrylic painting was originally 35-by-24 inches. It was enlarged into a 24-by-16 foot piece of art. It hangs on a wall above stairs in the 300,000-square-foot student union, which opened in August 2022.

"I am excited and humbled at the same time about having my art piece on display permanently in the student union building," Deitz wrote. "I feel honored to be a part of sharing my Seminole culture and history through the lens of a Seminole woman artist."

According to the school, a dedication ceremony will be held, but a date has not yet been determined.



A painting by Seminole artist Erica Deitz is in Florida State University's new student union.

FSU Communications/Sara Kissane

# Jimmy Osceola art exhibit opens at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — The late Seminole artist Jimmy Osceola depicted Seminole life, culture and history in paintings he created over 30 years. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is honoring his body of work in a show called "Seminole Pride: Celebrating the Artwork of Jimmy Osceola."

In a video made for the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society in 2019, Osceola said painting was a refuge for him and got him through some rough stages of his life.

"I wasn't a student, but I watched what other artists did," Osceola, a self-taught artist, said in the video. "It gives you something to get you through life. It's important for us to show our culture and show the world we are still here."

Those words inspired the 30-piece exhibit at the museum, which added walls in galleries not normally used for artwork to better showcase the paintings. The show takes up two-thirds of the museum.

Many of the paintings were loaned to the museum by tribal members, who have them on display in their own homes and offices.

The opening reception at the museum

Feb. 1 consisted of an overflow crowd of Osceola's family, friends, community members and tribal leaders; many shared memories of the man and the artist.

Museum director Gordon Wareham thanked Osceola's family for trusting Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki with his legacy.

Osceola's nephew Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola owns a large collection of his paintings. He said his uncle had a deep knowledge of the tribe's culture and history and talked to him about the paintings.

"He was an amazing person," Councilman Osceola said. "What a powerful legacy he left. Seeing our culture and history through his eyes gives me the chills."

Subjects of Osceola's paintings were typically people, rituals and camp life.

"I was blessed to get a taste of camp life," said Charles Osceola, another nephew. "That's where our Elders came from. They lived like that; I just got a glimpse of it. Jimmy knew the rules of his camp and found a way through the trials and tribulations of life there."

Seminole artist Elgin Jumper often painted outdoors with Jimmy Osceola and brought a painting he made of the two artists



Jimmy Osceola's paintings are on display as guests at the Feb. 1 opening view the exhibit.

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney

The artwork of Jimmy Osceola is displayed throughout the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, including in the hallway between the permanent exhibits depicting historical Seminole camp life.

at work in some grass surrounded by trees.

"This show is an important exhibition," Jumper said. "It's relevant today and will be in the future. A lot of time, imagination outdistances technique. Jimmy had both. This exhibit will be talked about for years. I hope they bring school buses in to see it."

Visitors at the opening watched the video Osceola made in 2019 in the museum's theater. When they exited the theater they were surrounded by paintings on every wall; some permanent and some temporary.

"This was too emotional for me," said Janell Leitner, Osceola's niece. "I thought I had a favorite painting, but now I don't know."

"This is awesome, beautiful and powerful," Martha Tommie said. "He's leaving his legacy so we don't forget where we come from."

Some Ahfachkee School art students perused the paintings at the opening. As emerging artists, they knew what to look for.

"He just poured all the colors in his mind onto the canvas," said 12th grader Billie Cypress.

"This is amazing," said 11th grader Jaylee Jimmie. "See how the colors blend together and really stand out; it brings it all together. The background really brings out the colors."

Rosalinda Jimmie noticed the pops of color in Osceola's paintings and how he blended them so masterfully, but her overall take on his work was how it illustrates Seminole history.

"He painted what he wanted us to remember. It's very powerful," said 12th grader Maggie Jimmie.

Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers noted that Osceola created his art for everyone.

"He spoke to us in a way only Seminoles know," Rep. Bowers said. "He is sorely missed in the community, but we will forever hear his voice through his artwork."

"Seminole Pride: Celebrating the Artwork of Jimmy Osceola" runs during the winter and part of the spring at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress.



Beverly Bidney

Jimmy Osceola's nephew Charles Osceola speaks at the opening reception.

## ◆ 'GIRL' From page 1A

The sculpture's pedestal is comprised of 500 Seminole patchwork tiles – 100 that were purchased by project sponsors – including the Seminole Tribe – and 400 that were donated by philanthropist AJ Acker. The tiles were named for people who represent the region, including several tribal members.

Comas also tapped Ahfachkee School students to create 76 hand painted tiles for the base of the pedestal, which incorporate Native symbols like birds, fish, turtles, chickees, horses and vistas.

The city of Fort Lauderdale donated the spot where the sculpture stands – located just across the waterway from the historic Stranahan House, home to former city pioneers Frank and Ivy Stranahan. In the late 1800s and early 1900s Seminoles traded alligator hides and bird plumes with Frank Stranahan for sugar, flour, beads and other



commodities. It was considered a fitting spot to note the long history and presence of the Seminoles in the state and along Fort Lauderdale's New River.

Comas is from Puerto Rico, but has split her time between Fort Lauderdale and the town of Pietrasanta, Italy, for many years. Her other Fort Lauderdale sculptures include "Lil' Blader" at Colee Hammock Park, "Play Ball" at Holiday Park and two bronze pieces located at the Tequesta Indian sculpture in Lewis Landing Park.

Comas said she has always felt a close affinity to the "Seminole Girl" sculpture and the Seminole Tribe. She hopes one day the sculpture can acquire better lighting so residents and visitors to see it more clearly at night.

Damon Scott

Artist Nilda Comas in her Fort Lauderdale art studio Feb. 21, near a poster of her sculpture and a traditional Seminole doll.

## Alabama in Tampa

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**TAMPA** — Country music group Alabama will perform April 27 at 8 p.m. at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa, Alabama, a Country Music Hall of Fame inductee, helped bring country music to the mainstream.

The group has sold over 80 million albums and have charted 43 No. 1 singles, including 21 No. 1 singles in a row, a record that will likely never be surpassed in any genre. They have won over 178 CMA Awards, Grammy® Awards, and ACM Awards.

For more information visit [seminolehardrocktampa.com/](http://seminolehardrocktampa.com/).

## Billy Idol coming to Hollywood's Hard Rock Live

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**HOLLYWOOD** — Billy Idol will be joined by his longtime band including his collaborator and lead guitarist of more than forty years, Steve Stevens, for a performance April 18 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood's Hard Rock Live.

Last year Idol released his latest project "The Cage EP." The new music follows the release of Idol's 2021 "The Roadside EP", which included the Top 15 hit "Bitter Taste."

For more information visit [seminolehardrockhollywood.com](http://seminolehardrockhollywood.com).



Above left, spectators show their enthusiasm during the Seminole Hard Rock Gasparilla Pirate Fest parade on Jan. 28 in Tampa. Above right, WWE Hall of Fame wrestler and Tampa resident Ric Flair serves as the grand marshal. "...what an awesome day celebrating our favorite community tradition," Tampa Mayor Jane Castor posted on Facebook.

## Ahoy, matey! Seminole Hard Rock Tampa rocks Pirate Fest



(Left) Hard Rock/(Right) Miss Florida USA/Instagram  
At left, beads are thrown to spectators from Seminole Hard Rock Tampa's float during the parade. Above, members of Seminole Hard Rock Tampa's ambassadors program welcome Miss Florida USA Taylor Fulford, who is also a teacher at the Seminole Tribe's Pemaayv Emahakv Charter School.

## Gaming revenue soars; illegal market 'biggest threat'

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

The American Gaming Association (AGA) released a large amount of data in its annual state of the industry report Feb. 16, analyzing record revenues for 2022 and looking beyond at challenges and opportunities on the horizon.

Bill Miller, AGA president and CEO, said gaming has largely rebounded from the Covid-19 pandemic that shook the industry and 992 U.S. casinos to the core less than three years ago.

"We're coming off our best year ever," Miller said during a Feb. 16 webinar prior to the report's release. "We offer an exciting experience that people want. Our industry is firing on all cylinders."

Miller said that in 2022, gaming saw an expansion in demographic appeal, a younger average customer (42 years old), and increases in brick-and-mortar, online gaming and sports betting options.

Commercial gaming revenue – which includes traditional casino games, sports betting and iGaming – reached \$60.4 billion in 2022, a 13.9% increase over 2021 and a 38.5% increase over the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

The AGA said that total annual U.S. gaming revenue in 2022 would likely end up exceeding \$100 billion for the first time, after the National Indian Gaming Commission reports tribal gaming revenue later this year. For context, the number would be on par with annual U.S. beer sales, which hit \$100.2 billion in 2021.

Revenue from the Seminole Tribe of Florida's six Florida casinos is not represented in the AGA report, however Hard Rock casinos outside the state are included. The Seminole Tribe of Florida is the parent entity of Hard Rock International.

### Challenges, opportunities

Miller said gaming's biggest challenge is the illegal and unregulated market – referring to wagers placed by U.S. residents with operators that lack a U.S. gaming license.

"It's the biggest threat. Half of gambling in the U.S. happens illegally," Miller said. "[Operators] brazenly ignore the law and present as legitimate operations. We know that Americans overwhelmingly want to play with legal operations."

Miller said \$510 billion is illegally wagered in the U.S. each year, representing \$13.3 billion in lost tax revenue. He said the AGA is working with Congress, state attorney generals and U.S. attorneys, state lawmakers and private sector stakeholders to help shut it down.

In addition, Miller said the AGA continues to monitor the U.S. economy, even as 2023 begins with industry momentum.

"Travel and tourism continues to recover," he said. "Levels are almost at pre-pandemic levels, but we're keeping our eye on inflation, employment and interest rates."

The AGA report was largely positive. Each of three major categories – casino slots and table games, sports betting and iGaming – generated individual revenue records in 2022.

Nationwide sports betting revenue soared 72.9% year-over-year, from \$4.3 billion in 2021 to \$7.5 billion in 2022, as Americans bet \$93.2 billion on sports throughout the year. Sports betting accounted for 12.4% of total commercial gaming revenue and is now legal in 36 states and Washington, D.C.

Sports betting in Florida is currently at a standstill due to ongoing legal proceedings. It was paused in November 2021 shortly after the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the state signed a historic gaming compact.

Casino slots and table games generated a combined total of \$48 billion, accounting for 79.3% of total commercial gaming revenue, while iGaming totaled \$5 billion, accounting for 8.3% of the total.

◆ See GAMING on page 9A

## Hard Rock makes Forbes' best large employer list

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Hard Rock International has been recognized by Forbes as one of America's best large employers for 2023, earning a ranking among other exemplary companies in the travel & leisure industry – which encompasses hotels, resorts, restaurants, and entertainment enterprises. This is the seventh time the brand has been recognized with this honor since 2015 and has placed in the travel & leisure category, making Hard Rock International the top global casino entertainment company listed within the industry.

The 2023 list of America's best large employers highlights companies that continue to prioritize making their workplace a secure and thriving environment for their employees. This placement comes on the heels of Hard Rock International's \$100 million investment to substantially raise the salary of its U.S. workforce, with the wage increase impacting 95 job classifications.

In partnership with market research firm, Statista, Forbes compiled the 2023 list by surveying approximately 45,000

American employees working for companies that employ more than 1,000 workers in the United States. Participants in the survey were asked questions on a variety of work-related topics such as work conditions, salary, the potential for professional growth, and their views on company image regarding their current employer.

The evaluation was based on direct and indirect recommendations from respondents who were asked to rate their willingness to recommend their own employer to friends and family. The final list ranks the 500 large and 500 mid-size employers that received the most recommendations.

"As a global company, we deeply value the contributions made by our team members in the United States and around the world. Our recent \$100 million investment into the wages and salaries of our U.S. workforce is part of our ongoing efforts to honor and appreciate our team members," David Carroll, SVP of Human Resources at Hard Rock International, said in a statement. "We are honored by this recognition and will never stop working on making Hard Rock a great place to work for all."

## Mirage helps charities



The Mirage Hotel and Casino, owned and operated by Hard Rock International, donated \$25,000 each to charities in the Las Vegas area during a luncheon Jan. 24. The recipients were the Shade Tree of Las Vegas, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, Signs of Hope and the Public Education Foundation. "Together with incredible donors like the Mirage Hotel and Casino, we will help every public school student in Clark County succeed," the Public Education Foundation posted on social media. "Thank you for your support of the Public Education Foundation and your partnership as we work to meet the immediate, critical needs of our public schools." In the photo, Joe Lupo, right, president of Hard Rock Las Vegas, presents a \$25,000 check to the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth.

## Upcoming events in Immokalee

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**IMMOKALEE** — Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee will host these upcoming events:

**The Texas Tenors Return to Seminole Casino Hotel**  
Friday, March 3  
Gold Entertainment presents The Texas Tenors performing live in concert at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee on Friday, March 3 at 8 p.m., with doors opening at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$74 and are available by phone at 1-800-514-ETIX or online at [www.moreinparadise.com](http://www.moreinparadise.com). Attendees must be 21 years of age.

**KC and the Sunshine Band, Evelyn 'Champagne' King**  
Saturday, March 18  
Sunny 106.3 presents disco music royalty KC and the Sunshine Band with special guest Evelyn "Champagne" King performing live in concert at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee Saturday, March 18 at 8 p.m. with gates opening at 7 p.m. General admission tickets for this outdoor concert are \$59 and are available from Ticketmaster or

at [www.moreinparadise.com](http://www.moreinparadise.com). VIP tickets also are available for \$89 that include up-front reserved seating and two complimentary beer or wine drink tickets.

**Willy Chirino with Special Guest Tito Puente Jr.**  
Saturday, March 25  
Willy Chirino with special guest Tito Puente Jr. will perform live in concert at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee Saturday, March 25 at 9 p.m. with gates opening at 8 p.m. General admission tickets for this outdoor concert are \$39 and are available from Ticketmaster or at [www.moreinparadise.com](http://www.moreinparadise.com). VIP tickets also are available for \$69 that include up-front reserved seating and two drink tickets for beer, wine or soda; water is complimentary.

**Bluegrass lead-in to Southland Music Festival**  
Friday, March 31  
Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee's Zig Zag Lounge will host an all-Bluegrass lineup on Friday, March 31 to kick off the Southland Bluegrass Music Festival the following day. Performers

include Low Ground 1 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., Cumberland Honey 4:15 to 7 p.m., Remedy Tree 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., and Donna Ulisse 11 p.m. to 2 a.m.

**Southland Bluegrass Music Festival**  
Saturday, April 1  
LaMesaRV presents the Second-Annual Southland Bluegrass Music Festival on April 1 starting at noon. The free festival will feature seven outdoor concerts, an RV display, and a variety of food trucks.  
The entertainment lineup features free performances from Ricky Skaggs & The Kentucky Thunder, The Steeldrivers, Del McCoury Band, Sister Sadie, The Grascals, and Justin Mason & Blue Night. Abby The Spoon Lady will be a special musical guest. The festival is free and will be held outdoors. Attendees are welcome to bring chairs and all ages are welcome. A large selection of food trucks will be available.  
Coolers, backpacks and pets will not be permitted.

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# SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA AH-TAH-THI-KI MUSEUM

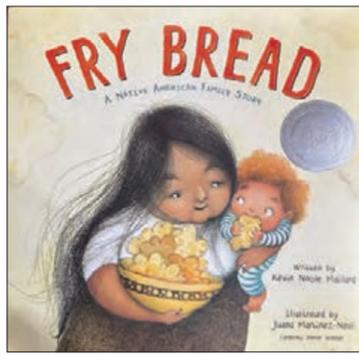
A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

## 'Fry Bread' book banned in Florida! Why the museum fights censorship

BY TARA BACKHOUSE  
Collections Manager

**BIG CYPRESS** — Recently the news was published that Duval County in Florida and other places in and outside of Florida have made the unfortunate choice to ban many books. This means the books cannot be read in classrooms or in school libraries. One of these books is "Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story," by Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole Nation member) and Juana Martinez-Neal (award-winning author native to Peru). This news was unbelievable. Why in the world would anyone want to ban a beautiful and

meaningful book about Native American culture and family? The answer is not clear. There seem to be people who want to erase the history of Indigenous communities and to ignore the wonderful differences between the multitude of cultural groups in this country. Indigenous people along with other ethnic and religious communities are currently being targeted by these new book banning campaigns. One hundred seventy-six books were reported as now banned in Duval County schools, a full list can be found at <https://pen.org/banned-books-florida/>. However, the Duval County School District later officially released a statement that no books are yet banned, they are merely under review for possible censorship. They



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum  
"Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story," written by Kevin Noble Maillard and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal.



The "Fry Bread" book is available at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum store.

have no estimate for when this decision will be made. Details can be found in an article at [firstcoastnews.com](https://www.firstcoastnews.com). Either way, these books were targeted not because of explicit content or because they communicate hatred. Instead it was done in order to erase culture and deny history. This is an outrageous situation. Some of the authors of these books have shared their indignation and the museum wants to voice the same opinion in this article. Why was the "Fry Bread" book even under review? Maybe it was because of this text in the author's note at the end of the book: "Despite colonial efforts throughout American history to weaken tribal governments, fracture Indigenous

communities, and forcibly take ancestral lands, Indian culture has proven resilient." (Maillard and Martinez-Neal, 2019)

Any book that is currently under review by the Duval County School District is being kept out the school libraries and classrooms in that campus, indefinitely. This is still a kind of censorship. If censorship is the goal of the review process, it shows that many people want to hide Indigenous and other cultural histories. The decision makers are willing to discriminate against Indigenous people in order to paint a rosy historical picture for the younger generations. But this is denial. At the museum, we are working to

expose the genocidal colonial history of this country. We need to point it out even now, because there are other forces trying to hide it. This is a terrible path to go down, and it has been mirrored throughout history's darkest hours. When books are censored, the history and experience of communities and individuals are being erased. If we are blind to the atrocities of history, we are more likely to repeat them.

We proudly sell this book in the museum store, and many other wonderful books. Come by to get a copy today.

## Students experience Pow Wow



Calvin Tiger (2)

Above, Cody Boettner, a Muscogee (Creek) world champion hoop dancer, performs at the two-day Seminole Okalee Indian Village Pow Wow in Hollywood. Boettner and other Natives, including Duane Whitehorse, Kiowa Nation of Oklahoma, below, performed for a group of Hollywood Hills High School students Feb. 8.



## Indigenous activists notch victory at Jupiter property

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

Native American activists, including Seminole tribal member Martha Tommie, Miccosukee tribal member Betty Osceola and Robert Rosa (Taino) of the American Indian Movement, notched a victory Feb. 16 when the town of Jupiter's Historical Review Board denied landowner Charles Modica a permit to dig on property which is known to contain multiple Indian mounds.

"We won this victory," Tommie said. "We have ancestors all over the state. We will work our way all through the state."

Modica purchased the property for \$16 million in 2013 with plans to develop it. The 10.4 acre property, formerly the Suni Sands trailer park, is located where the Loxahatchee River meets the Jupiter Inlet. Suni Sands is known as the first village in Jupiter, which developed after the dock for the Celestial Railroad was built in 1889. The narrow gauge train connected Jupiter Inlet to Lake Worth, about 7.5 miles to the south.

Native Americans lived in the area for hundreds of years, according to the Jupiter Inlet Foundation; artifacts found by archeologist Bob Carr, of the Archeological and Historical Conservancy, confirm it.

Rosa said he and others have been trying to get the permit denied for about a year and attended numerous board meetings to raise awareness. The Historical Review Board meets monthly and tabled, or delayed, the issue for five months.

Debi Murray, chairwoman of the board, said they delayed the decision so the town could attempt to acquire the property to preserve it. The town and Modica have discussed a potential sale.

Rosa, Tommie, Osceola and others attended the Feb. 16 board meeting and applauded loudly when the board voted unanimously to deny the permit.

"The townspeople were there with us," Rosa said. "It was very important that the decision was made that night."

There were no noticeable mounds in the Suni Sands trailer park, which was built in the 1940s.

"Everyone was aware of the mounds, so they left [them] in the ground and built on top of them," Rosa said. "Back then, that



Courtesy photo

Indigenous activists celebrate after the town of Jupiter's Historical Review Board voted unanimously Feb. 16 to deny a permit for a developer to dig at a site containing Indian mounds. From left to right are Robert Rosa of the American Indian Movement, Jupiter resident Jessica Namath, Seminole tribal member Martha Tommie, Miccosukee tribal member Betty Osceola, Garrett Stuart and Glenn Bakels.

was the norm."

Rosa said Carr, who was hired by Modica to investigate the site, wants to excavate.

"We want no digging at all, we want the site preserved as it is," Rosa said.

Days after the meeting, Rosa reflected on the victory and said it was a small win, part of a much larger battle. The group's effort in 2022 led to a similar victory in Micanopy, where their activism stopped a retail store from building on a parcel of land containing remains. The land was purchased by the county and turned into a park.

The next battle may take place across the street from the Miami Circle on Brickell Avenue in downtown Miami. Remains were found after a building was demolished and archeologists began excavating the site. A hearing about bringing construction digging to a halt is scheduled to be held in Miami on April 4.



Courtesy photo

Martha Tommie, right, receives a hug from a supportive Jupiter resident after the Historical Review Board denied the permit.



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The hiring of an attorney is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisement. Castillo worked as a Public Defender in Broward County from 1990-1996 and has been in private practice since 1996. In 1995, he was voted the Trial Attorney of the year. He graduated from Capital University in 1989 and was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1990, Federal Bar in 1992, and the Federal Trial Bar in 1994.

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FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
[WWW.CASTILLOLAWOFFICES.COM](http://WWW.CASTILLOLAWOFFICES.COM)

# Tribe's energy conference enjoys strong attendance

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — The Seminole Tribe's fifth "Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference" returned to an in-person format at the Native Learning Center (NLC) this year, and gauging by the attendance numbers, people were happy to be back in Hollywood.

NLC marketing coordinator Louis Porter Jr. said there were 110 in-person attendees, including presenters, with another 60 attendees participating virtually. Last year's conference took place in a virtual format due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The annual conference attracts attendees from across Indian Country — whether tribal members or those working for tribes — who share up-to-date information and best practices on sustainability, energy security and energy sovereignty issues.

NLC's new training and development manager, Hurvens Monestime, welcomed attendees to the two and a half-day conference Feb. 7.

"The purpose of this conference is to focus on the newly changing landscape of tribal energy development and sustainability," Monestime said. "This conference will give tribes and First Nations an opportunity to explore the range of renewable energy and sustainability opportunities that exist and how to start the process."

Thomas Jones (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma), a deployment specialist in the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs, a regular at the conference, opened the first day with a keynote presentation on "supercharging" tribal clean energy projects with the help of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. Other speakers covered topics on best practices, policy and regulatory changes, and industry trends.

About a dozen tribal employees attended and two were formally part of the conference. Emran Rahaman, the tribe's director of Public Works, participated in a panel discussion about about funding "climate proof" water infrastructure. Harvey Rambarath, the tribe's assistant director of Community Planning & Development, gave a presentation on the tribe's solar powered battery energy storage systems (BESS) on the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations.

Tribal energy independence efforts were set into motion by Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. soon after Hurricane Irma caused significant power outages on the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations in 2017. He subsequently launched an energy committee to take a broad look at renewable energy and sustainability projects the tribe could embark on, which includes the annual conference.

The energy committee's goal, and that of the conference, is not only to keep the tribe on the forefront of sustainability issues, but also to offer attendees an opportunity to learn more about the tribe.



Louis Porter Jr./Native Learning Center

In person attendance for the conference neared capacity at the Native Learning Center in Hollywood.



Louis Porter Jr./Native Learning Center

Harvey Rambarath, the Seminole Tribe's assistant director of Community Planning & Development, spoke about energy projects on the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations.



Louis Porter Jr./Native Learning Center

Native Learning Center and Seminole Taft Street Properties staff helped with the logistics of the conference. From left to right are Ouista Atkins, Omaidia Cavazos, Julie Moag, Georgette Palmer Smith (Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma/Choctaw), Gaylene Jacobs and Hurvens Monestime.

# Archaeological site in Fort Lauderdale opens as city park

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

**FORT LAUDERDALE** — An almost two-acre green space in the Sailboat Bend neighborhood of Fort Lauderdale that was recently purchased by the city to preserve it as an archeological site has opened as a passive park. Artifacts discovered there by archeologists indicate that the Seminole and Miccosukee tribe's ancestors once occupied it.

The property known as Rivermont, located at 1016 Waverly Road on the banks of the New River, is dotted with oak and palm trees and has residential lots to its east and west. A 1918 built pioneer home that sat on the site's midden, or mound, was demolished several years ago.

Middens often contain domestic waste, which may consist of animal bone, botanical material, shells, potsherds and other artifacts associated with past human occupation.

"This site represents the most intact and deepest surviving black earth midden along the New River, with at least 2,000 years of prehistoric occupation. It likely is the best-preserved prehistoric site in eastern Broward County," city archeologists said in a 2020 survey report.

The report said the site has intact archaeological deposits as deep as four feet. Ceramic dating and archival research indicates the site was used during periods roughly between 500 B.C. and 1513 A.D., as well as during the second and third Seminole Wars (1835-1858) and throughout the middle 19th century.



Damon Scott

The Rivermont site is located on the south bank of the New River.



Damon Scott

The location of the midden (mound) on the Rivermont property can be seen here, facing northeast.

Prehistoric artifacts found at the site include shell refuse and faunal bones. The most common artifact was pottery — 1,414 ceramic sherds were found. Oyster shell, animal bones (mostly fish), conch shell, and charcoal were also discovered. Bone artifacts include bone point or pin fragments, perforated shark vertebrae, and a drilled shark tooth. Sunfish, gar, and shark were identified, along with amphibians and reptiles such as soft shell turtle, box turtle and alligator. Mammals identified at the site include deer and raccoon.

During a 2006 due diligence survey, a blue Seminole glass trade bead was found at the site, and a human molar was found in one shovel test in 2014. No other human remains were identified from those shovel tests.

## 'Milestone accomplishment'

In late 2020, the Fort Lauderdale City Commission approved the purchase of the property for \$2.5 million. As part of the discussion to approve the acquisition, Commissioner Steve Glassman, who represents District 2 where the site is located, requested that an

application be initiated for local historic designation as an archeological site, and to submit a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

On Feb. 16, 2021, the City Commission adopted a resolution approving the historic designation as an archeological site and the Florida National Register Review Board made a favorable recommendation to list Rivermont in the National Register of Historic Places — which was accomplished on April 20, 2022.

"It is a milestone accomplishment that we are preserving this archeological Tequesta site and midden," Glassman said in a Feb. 20 newsletter to his constituents.

Seminole and Miccosukee ancestors are sometimes referred to as the Tequesta and Calusa Indians.

The site opened as a passive park this year — accessible from sunrise to sunset — and is managed by the city's Parks & Recreation Department. A passive park requires minimal ground disturbance and maintenance — it contains two picnic benches and two trash receptacles.

Glassman's office said future plans are to make it a permanent municipal park as funding is developed. The site, which is the city's first designated archeological site and preserve, could eventually feature interpretive signage to offer an educational opportunity for visitors.

# Health



## 'Deaths of despair' run high among Native Americans

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

A new study has found that national midlife mortality data typically focused on white communities, leaves out Native Americans who experience higher rates. The study looked specifically at so called "deaths of despair."

The analysis by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), was published in the medical journal Lancet in late January.

Princeton University economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton first coined the term "deaths of despair" in 2015. They were researching factors that accounted for a falling U.S. life expectancy among white people. Their findings showed that the fastest rising death rates among white Americans from 45 to 54 years old were from drug overdoses, suicide and alcoholic liver disease.

But the analysis by UCLA researchers Joseph Friedman, Helena Hansen and Joseph Gane, said the 2015 study didn't include data on Native Americans. If it had, they said, "deaths of despair" would not have been determined to be uniquely high among white people, but would have been shown to be uniquely high among Native Americans.

Mortality from overdose, suicide and alcoholic liver disease has collectively been higher among Native Americans than their white counterparts in every available year of data since 1999, the UCLA study said. Between 1999 and 2013 — the same timeframe of the Princeton study — the

white midlife mortality rate increased by almost 10%, whereas midlife mortality among Native Americans rose by nearly 30%, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic widened the disparity even further, the study said. Through the pandemic, Native Americans had a mortality rate 1.8 times higher than that of non-Hispanic whites, according to a CDC report looking at data from 14 states.

In the report, the UCLA researchers called for more Native American visibility in health care data. They proposed guiding principles "to protect against exclusionary data policies" for Native populations — specifically enumerating Native people instead of relying on the often used category of "other," and "centering tribal concerns in the collection, maintenance, and sharing of community data."

"Narratives that center poor outcomes among white communities must be assessed critically, as they have historically overlooked and ignored higher rates of economic, social, and health inequities among [minority] populations in the USA," the authors wrote. "This erasure of contemporary Native American presence and visibility plays a role in allowing health inequalities to go unchecked by depriving extreme disparities among Native American communities of the intense media and public attention that they deserve. Such attention — when properly contextualized through consistent reference to circumstances of Indigenous disadvantage — could play a role in galvanizing desperately needed additional health resources."

## Native youth food, AG summit to be held in July

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The 2023 Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit will be held July 18 to July 25 at the University of Arkansas. It is open to American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian youth ages 18 to 24 (including recently graduated high school seniors).

The summit is designed to foster connections, develop key skills, and learn alongside experts. All travel and lodging expenses will be covered for accepted applicants.

April 3 is the deadline for applications. For more information visit [indigenousfoodandag.com](http://indigenousfoodandag.com).

## \$24M awarded to tribes for facility upgrades

FROM PRESS RELEASE

A dozen tribes and tribal organizations have been awarded funding totaling \$24 million from the Indian Health Service's small ambulatory program. The funds are geared toward the construction, expansion and modernization of small ambulatory health care facilities.

The tribes are in Arizona, California, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon and Washington. Ten of the tribes will receive \$2

million each.

"The IHS Small Ambulatory Program supports our tribal partners by expanding access to culturally appropriate, quality health care in an environment that promotes patient safety," IHS director Roselyn Tso said in a news release. "Small ambulatory health care facilities are a critical part of the Indian health system because they meet the diverse health care needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives."

## Tribal budget consultation to be held in D.C.

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will host its 25th Annual Tribal Budget Consultation (ATBC) on April 18 and April 19 at the Hubert H. Humphrey Building at 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. The consultation is to collaborate on the fiscal year 2025 budget request.

The ATBC provides tribes and tribal

organizations an opportunity to give input on the President's budget request to Congress.

HHS will host planning calls ahead of the consultation on March 1, March 15 and March 29, all at 3 p.m.

For more information contact Tyler Scribner, National Indian Health Board's budget and appropriations counsel, at [tscribner@nihb.org](mailto:tscribner@nihb.org)

## State of Native agriculture slated for March 9

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) invites farmers, ranchers, producers, tribal leaders, and community members to its inaugural state of Native agriculture address. The address will be broadcast March 9 at 1 p.m. (ET).

NAAF said this is the first virtual event of its kind highlighting the current state of tribal agricultural economies and the leadership of the Native American producers and tribes.

"This is an essential time for elevating the priorities for tribes and Native producers, as Indian Country continues to strengthen tribal food sovereignty, food security, and agriculture infrastructure," Toni Stanger-McLaughlin, NAAF CEO, said in a statement.

Scheduled guests include:

- Secretary Tom Vilsack, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

- Senator Tina Smith, U.S. Senator for Minnesota, Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

- Administrator Zach Ducheneaux, Administrator of the USDA Farm Service Agency

- Toni Stanger-McLaughlin, CEO of the Native American Agriculture Fund, USDA Equity Commission Member

- Kari Jo Lawrence, Executive Director of the Intertribal Agriculture Council, Co-Chair of the Native Farm Bill Coalition, USDA Equity Commission Agriculture Subcommittee Member

- Cole Miller, Vice-Chairman of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and co-chair of the Native Farm Bill Coalition

The broadcast will be available on NAAF's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube pages.

## ◆ GAMING From page 7A

"In-person gaming remains the backbone of the industry," the report said.

In 2022, 17 of the 20 highest grossing casinos had gaming revenue growth compared to 2021. Notably for the Seminole

Tribe of Florida, Hard Rock Northern Indiana saw the largest gain — more than 55% — during the newly renovated property's first full year of operation.

The AGA advocates for gaming industry priorities. Jim Allen, Seminole Gaming CEO and Hard Rock International chairman, is AGA's chairman. For more, and to view the full report, go to [americangaming.org](http://americangaming.org).

# SEMINOLE SCENES



Courtesy Mercedes Osceola

**HOME SWEET HOME:** The Hollywood Council Office hosted a Valentine's Day drive-thru event at Seminole Estates on Feb. 14. Tribal members received gifts and sweet treats to mark the day. Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola (gray shorts, sunglasses), Council Office staff and volunteers assisted with the event.



Kevin Johnson

**CATTLEWOMEN LEADERSHIP:** Florida Seminole Cattlewomen President Pauletta Bowers, left, and Vice President Tiger Billie promote the organization during the William Osceola Memorial Rodeo on Feb. 7 at the Hollywood Reservation's rodeo arena.



Ralph Notaro

**BUSY BAND:** The Osceola Brothers, including drummer Sheldon Osceola, shown here playing at the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow, have tour dates in March that include: the 4th at Tough Times in Pompano Beach, the 11th at Conduit in Orlando, the 18th at Propaganda in Lake Worth and the 25th at Underbelly in Jacksonville.



Via YouTube

**BOSS IN THE HOUSE:** Bruce Springsteen, left, and E Street Band guitarist Steven Van Zandt perform at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood on Feb. 7.



Courtesy photos (2)

**SEWING SCENES:** Oliva Aquino, left, and Tammy Billie, above, work on their garments during the Immokalee Culture Department's sewing class Feb. 1. The department plans to hold more classes in the future.

Hard Rock Bristol

**HELPING HANDS:** Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol team members in Virginia helped pack backpacks for Feeding Southwest Virginia on Feb. 20. The organization provides meals for those in need in the region and is an affiliate member of Feeding America.



Beverly Bidney

**READY TO GO:** Pipes of all sizes are all stacked up and ready to become part of the infrastructure at the Groves housing development in Big Cypress.



Kevin Johnson  
**SHEPHERDING:** Blevyns Jumper guides sheep back to the pens after the mutton busting portion of the kids rodeo Feb. 11 at the William Osceola Memorial Rodeo in Hollywood.



# NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

## Legislation to formally recognize Lumbee Tribe introduced

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — On Feb. 17, representative Richard Hudson joined North Carolina representative David Rouzer, introducing legislation seeking full federal recognition for the Lumbee Tribe.

“Despite broad bipartisan support, Congress has failed to bring this legislation across the finish line,” said Rep. Hudson. “I will continue to be an advocate with my colleagues until the Lumbee Tribe receives the federal recognition it rightfully deserves.”

The Lumbee Tribe has deep cultural roots in North Carolina and began seeking full federal recognition in 1888.

“For generations, the Lumbee have fought for full federal recognition and tribal sovereignty that is long overdue,” said Rep. Rouzer. “I’m proud to champion the Lumbee Fairness Act in the 118th Congress and will continue working to help the Tribe receive the federal protections they are due, including access to the same resources as every other federally recognized tribe.”

The Lumbee Tribe is the largest American-Indian tribe in the Eastern United States.

- WPDE (Conway, S.C.)

## Two Cherokee tribes contest request for Congressional delegate seat

**TAHLEQUAH, Okla.** — Two Cherokee tribes are asking the U.S. House of Representatives to delay the seating of a non-voting Cherokee delegate until considerations can be made for the two tribes that didn’t get to testify before Congress last fall.

Last November, Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. testified before the House Rules Committee that it was time for the Federal Government to uphold its end of a treaty that initiated the Trail of Tears nearly two centuries ago. The Treaty of New Echota was an agreement between the Federal Government and the Cherokee tribe signed in 1835 that forced the relocation of the Cherokee people to Oklahoma territory in exchange for a non-voting delegate in Congress.

During the historic hearing before Congress last year, Hoskin said Cherokee Nation Delegate Kim Teehee should be seated because the tribe upheld its end of the agreement, but the Federal Government never has. Democrats and Republicans were very receptive of finally seating a Cherokee delegate even calling it long overdue.

However, two Cherokee tribes outside of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma are claiming they too are entitled to having a delegate in Congress, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina.

“If Congress is going to do something they need to do it right,” said Tori Holland, UKB Congressional Delegate.

Holland is who the UKB has selected to be their delegate in Congress should one be seated. She said the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma under Hoskin is passing itself off as the sole organization that can handle Cherokee business and has the rights established by their ancestors, but she said the organization the Federal Government negotiated with during the New Treaty of Echota no longer exists.

“The last members on the Dawes Rolls has deceased. Therefore the actual historic Cherokee Nation is no longer there,” Holland said about how the Federal Government has handled Cherokee membership in the past.

Holland said all three Cherokee tribes are equally entitled to the rights of their Cherokee ancestors as “successors and interests”.

The UKB and the Eastern Band argue that when the Cherokee Nation presented its case before the House Rules Committee, it did not represent the two other Cherokee groups also entitled to the seat. Holland said the two groups would like to make their case before Congress about the treaty obligations being upheld and the possibility of all three Cherokee tribes being treated as “siblings”. “If they seat one, then they need to seat all. All three Cherokee tribes are entitled to that delegate,” Holland said.

Unlike the UKB, the Eastern Band has not named a delegate to Congress, and requests for comment were not returned to FOX23 News in time for the story.

“We’re certainly hopeful that Congress will keep its promise and will seat all of the Cherokee delegates,” Holland said. “We were disappointed that we weren’t invited to the hearing held in November. But yes we certainly would be interested in having a hearing and education Congress about this important issue.”

The UKB and the Eastern Band have hired lobbyists to advocate on their behalf in Washington D.C. while members of Congress navigate how to proceed. For now, the question is causing the seating of a non-voting delegate to be delayed.

A non-voting delegate is similar to what Guam and Puerto Rico have in which they have a voice in Congress, but they do not have a vote and cannot effect the make up of the majority party in charge.

FOX23 spoke with Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. who said the Cherokee Nation delegate would not just advocate for the interests of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, but it would be a conduit between the Federal Government and numerous tribes across the country who need help with Federal affairs on numerous issues. He called it a historic win for all Native Americans.

“This is going to benefit every tribe in

this country,” Hoskin said. “If we pull each other down while we’re asserting a treaty right, we’re not going to collectively prosper. It’s a big of a fool’s errand on their part to be knocking down our effort. They ought to get behind it like the rest of Indian Country.”

Hoskin said historic, academic and legal research and opinions the tribe has shows it is the primary handler of Cherokee business in modern America.

“I’m going to work with those tribes, and I do, but I’m not going to sign on to a fiction that those tribes have any treaty rights under the treaties we’re talking about,” Hoskin said.

He went on to say while he understands this could delay the proceedings, he is confident in the end Teehee would be seated in the U.S. House as the delegate.

“We’ve waited a long time for this to happen, and it looks like it will take a little longer,” Hoskin said. “But in the end, we will be successful in getting the seat that is owed to us.”

- Fox23 News (Tulsa, Okla.)

## Tribes continue fight against Thacker Pass in new federal lawsuit

Three Native American tribes filed a new lawsuit [in February] against the Bureau of Land Management over Lithium Americas planned Thacker Pass lithium mine.

The lawsuit comes after federal Judge Miranda Du mostly ruled against the plaintiffs seeking to stop the project near the Nevada-Oregon border. It was filed Thursday by the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, Burns Paiute Tribe and Summit Lake Paiute Tribe in Federal District Court.

The tribes are alleging BLM withheld information from the state “and lied about the extent of tribal consultation in order to secure legally required concurrence about historic properties” at Thacker Pass. They are also alleging BLM lied and misled the tribes about other aspects of the mining project.

“The new lawsuit is also strengthened by the addition of the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe, one of the Tribes that the BLM claims to have consulted with prior to issuing the [record of decision],” they said in a press statement. “Summit Lake and both other tribes the BLM claims to have consulted (the Winnemucca Indian Colony and Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe) have disputed BLM’s assertion that any consultation took place.”

The Winnemucca Indian Colony, they said, was unable to intervene in the case for not filing soon enough.

“When the decision was made public on the previous lawsuit last week, we said we would continue to advocate for our sacred site PeeHee Mu’Huh,” said Arlan Melendez, chair of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. “It is also the very same place where our people were massacred (never laid to rest properly) by the U.S. Calvary. It’s a place where all Paiute and Shoshone people continue to pray, gather medicines and food, honor our non-human relatives, honor our water, honor our way of life, honor our ancestors.”

“The Thacker Pass permitting process was not done correctly. BLM contends they have discretion to decide who to notify or consult with,” he added. “They only contacted 3 out of the 22 tribes who had significant ties to Thacker Pass.”

Lithium Americas, the company seeking to mine lithium for electric batteries, notes on its website the project “has been designed to avoid environmentally sensitive and rugged terrain. Thacker Pass presents an opportunity to develop an American lithium supply chain that will work towards President Biden’s goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The global lithium battery market is expected to grow by a factor of 5 to 10 in the next decade, and Thacker Pass is critical for the US to secure a domestic lithium supply.”

The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection granted permits for the project.

“Approval for these permits comes after an extensive application review and revision process, as well as months of public engagement with the Orovada community and the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribes,” NDEP’s website notes. “All three permits, which are required for Lithium Nevada to start construction and operate the mine, come after NDEP determined the project can operate in a way that protects public health and the environment.”

- This is Reno (Reno, Nev.)

## U.S. court sides with Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

A U.S. District Court judge has ruled that the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe satisfies the federal definition of “Indian,” as required to qualify the tribe for trust lands.

A group of Taunton residents had tried to convince the judge otherwise.

“The Court finds no substance beneath this puffery,” wrote Judge Angel Kelley.

On Feb. 10, Kelley issued a 31-page decision affirming a December 2021 decision by the federal Secretary of the Interior to confirm the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe’s right to 321 acres of reservation land in Taunton and Mashpee.

“Our ancestors are smiling down on us today. We can rest easy knowing our land, heritage and culture will be protected for future generations,” wrote Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Chairman Brian Weeden in a letter to tribal members posted to the tribe’s website.

In 2022, a group of Taunton residents, including Michelle and David Littlefield, filed a lawsuit challenging the decision, arguing that if the tribe goes through with plans to build a \$1 billion casino in East

Taunton, it would change and dominate the neighborhood.

The group also said the tribe does not fit the federal definition of “Indian,” under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, needed to qualify it for trust lands.

The secretary’s decision to determine the tribe is eligible was reasonable, wrote Kelley.

“The historical record indicates that the Mashpee have had a robust connection to the Designated Lands for over four centuries,” she wrote.

The tribe had 2,633 members in 2021, according to the decision.

Weeden could not be reached for comment. In the letter, he wrote that the plaintiffs could appeal, but “it will also fail.”

“This is our land, and it is something that cannot be denied. We will keep moving forward to build a tribal economy with sustainable jobs and prosperity for our people and neighbors,” wrote Weeden.

In another statement sent to the Times, Weeden said that although establishment of the tribe’s reservation returned just a fraction of the tribe’s ancestral territory, “this reservation is crucial to our ability to exercise our sovereign right to self-governance, to preserve our language and culture, and to provide for our people.”

“The Tribe looks forward to continuing its friendly and productive relationships with the Town of Mashpee and the City of Taunton, and it thanks the many friends and champions who have supported the Tribe in its long fight for justice,” concludes the statement.

- Cape Cod Times

## Seneca lawsuit over state land deal for Thruway may proceed, court finds

**ALBANY, N.Y.** — A federal appellate court ruled Jan. 26 that a lawsuit filed by the Seneca Nation of Indians against New York State may proceed, dismissing a motion filed by the state seeking to throw out the case.

The lawsuit concerns the tribe’s longstanding claims that a 1954 land deal permitting the Thruway to cut through part of its Cattaraugus Reservation was illegal.

New York State has sought to have the case dismissed on a series of legal grounds, including that the 11th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution bars a state from being sued in federal court unless the state consents.

But the defendants in this case are individual state government officials, including Gov. Kathy Hochul, Attorney General Letitia James and state Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Dominguez. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit found on Thursday that the Seneca Nation can sue individual state officers in their official capacities as long as certain conditions are met, including that the lawsuit claims an ongoing violation of federal law.

While New York State contested those conditions had been met, the appellate court found the Seneca lawsuit does claim that the Thruway poses an ongoing harm by inhibiting the nation’s “free use and enjoyment of its protected land.”

“After fighting New York’s overreaching actions for decades, on the Thruway and other issues, this is an important victory,” Seneca Nation President Rickey Armstrong Sr. said. “Our arguments on behalf of our people deserve to be heard in court. The Thruway is a 300-acre scar on our Cattaraugus Territory that New York State inflicted on our people without proper authorization from the Department of Interior or in compliance with the promises made to us by treaty. We intend to make sure that state officials finally comply with federal law for this invasion of our land.”

The 1954 land easement deal between the state and tribe allowed 2.7 miles of the Thruway to be built on nearly 300 acres on the Seneca Nation’s Cattaraugus reservation.

The tribe received \$75,500 for the land deal, which included displacement of some Senecas from their homes. Tribal leaders for years have said the state pressured Senecas to take the 1954 deal. Moreover, the Seneca Nation’s chief legal argument is that the deal was invalid from the start because the state never obtained necessary federal approval.

The Senecas brought the current case in 2018. They want the Thruway Authority to seek a valid easement deal or to compensate the tribe going forward for motorists who drive on the highway’s segment that runs through reservation land. They also want the state to stop collecting tolls at Irving on Seneca land.

In 2020, U.S. District Judge Lawrence J. Vilaro first gave the green light for the legal dispute to continue on to the merits of the case.

The decision by Vilaro overturned a report and recommendation made in 2018 by U.S. Magistrate Judge Hugh B. Scott that supported the state’s move to dismiss the case.

After Vilaro’s ruling, New York State then filed the motion to dismiss in federal appellate court that was ruled Jan. 26.

- The Buffalo (N.Y.) News

## New Mexico tribal owned business partners with UNM for NIL agreements

Tamaya Ventures, a firm owned by the Pueblo of Santa Ana, announced Feb. 17 a groundbreaking partnership with three Division I Native American student-athletes, all from The University of New Mexico. The three are Ali Upshaw (Navajo), cross country; Natalia Chavez (Cochiti/Laguna), basketball; and Jaelyn Bates (San Felipe

Pueblo/Sioux/Navajo), basketball.

Each student-athlete has their own custom line of merchandise. The NIL agreement is the first of its kind between a tribal owned entity and Native American Division I student-athletes. It also marks a major milestone in the world of Native business development and marketing through NIL initiatives in college athletics.

The agreement will allow the student-athletes to use their name, image, and likeness while providing companies like Tamaya Ventures a new way of engaging sports fans and new customer sources.

The NIL collaboration was scheduled to be launched at New Mexico’s sold-out men’s basketball game against San Diego State University on Feb. 25.

- University of New Mexico athletics

## Washoe Tribe signs agreement to co-manage lands with California State Parks

**TAHOE CITY, Calif.** — Sierra State Parks Foundation has announced an agreement between the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and the Sierra District of California State Parks. Chairman of the Washoe Tribe Serrell Smokey and California State Parks Director Armando Quintero signed a memorandum of understanding between the Sierra District and the Tribe on at Donner Memorial State Park on Jan. 28.

This five-year agreement formalizes the government-to-government relationship between the two entities, establishes a protocol for open discussions, and outlines the responsibilities of state parks and the tribe to promote successful cooperation, co-management, and collaboration.

The MOU introduces traditional management practices and ecological knowledge to the management of 12 state park units in the Washoe people’s traditional homeland.

- Tahoe (Calif.) Daily Tribune

## New report reveals Indigenous language learning on the rise

Indigenous language learning is on the rise, with about 3,000 more learners than in 2018, according to a new report from the First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC).

There are “about 17,000 people learning their First Nations language here in British Columbia,” FPCC CEO Tracey Herbert said, adding that’s up about 20 per cent from the council’s last Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages in 2018.

Living on the traditional territory of the Stó:lō Nation in Chilliwack, Roxanne Dool has been working one-on-one with an elder to learn her ancestral language of Halq’eméylem, through a mentorship program with the FPCC.

“It’s emotional because we only have one fluent speaker left in our dialect,” said Dool.

With the hopes of making at-home language learning easy and accessible for other families, Dool created a YouTube channel, enlisting the help of her five-year-old son Brody Bear to share a different word of the day, in the family’s traditional language.

“Even if it’s just one or two words that you’re exchanging from English to Halq’eméylem, it’s growing the language stronger and stronger,” said Dool.

Last year, the province provided \$35-million in funding to the FPCC and the First Peoples’ Cultural Foundation, to support First Nations languages, arts, and cultural heritage revitalization programming and operations. The investment built on a \$50-million grant provided to FPCC in 2018, to address the language crisis and help revitalize Indigenous languages in British Columbia.

The 2022 Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages shows that progress is being made, Herbert said, adding multi-year government funding is needed to ensure long-term learning and revitalization.

“We’ve had some wonderful investment that’s happened both from the federal and provincial government,” said Herbert. “However, it’s not long term, so we’re not able to make a commitment to communities to say here’s your funding for five years and that’s really what’s needed.”

The report also found a significant rise in the number of semi-speakers of an Indigenous language, as well as an increase in learning opportunities for both adults and children.

In 2018, there were only two full-time Indigenous language programs in British Columbia. As of 2022, eight programs are offered in seven different languages and approximately 2,417 children are learning an Indigenous language in early childhood facilities.

There are 34 Indigenous languages spoken within the province, and about 10,355 people who are fluent speakers of these Indigenous languages, according to the FPCC report.

“We wouldn’t be anywhere without the elders, the teachers, the knowledge keepers who worked so closely with us... It’s really a collaboration and we’re just really proud of the work that the communities are doing in British Columbia,” Dool said.

- CBC

## Decade-long dispute prompts a Wisconsin tribe to block roads on reservation

Mary Possin, 65, and her husband John Disch, 68, have been using a snowmobile

or snowshoes to travel across Elsie Lake to access their vehicles after the Lac du Flambeau tribe barricaded the road to their home.

“We have a somewhat treacherous path knocked out that’s solely on private land, so we’re not trespassing on tribal land to also reach our vehicles,” Possin said. “Once the ice becomes unsafe here — which with the weather we’re getting, we don’t know when that’s gonna happen, but it’ll be soon.”

On Jan. 31, residents living along Center Sugarbush Lane, East Ross Allen Lane, Elsie Lake Lane and Annie Sunn Lane had access to and from their homes blocked by an order of the Lac du Flambeau Tribal Council. The closures were the culmination of failed negotiations over right-of-way easements for the roads, which expired in 2010.

Since then, state and federal lawmakers have weighed in on the controversy by way of formal letters and statements. On Feb. 8, Democratic U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Gov. Tony Evers expressed “serious concerns” in a joint letter to the heads of the U.S. Department of Interior and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

“It is vital that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) act immediately to facilitate negotiations between the respective parties and work towards a prompt resolution,” the letter said.

A prior statement from the Lac du Flambeau tribe blamed the communication breakdown on the BIA, title companies and the Town of Lac du Flambeau Board of Supervisors. It said inaction by those parties reflect “an utter lack of recognition of the Lac du Flambeau Tribe, as a sovereign nation.”

Evers and Baldwin’s letter pulled no punches and demanded action from the federal agency.

“This is unacceptable, and we expect immediate engagement from BIA to aid in negotiations,” the letter said. “To that end, we also request that you facilitate prompt sharing of appraisal information as part of the negotiation.”

On Feb. 9, the tribe issued a new public statement that said it was seeking \$20 million to secure 25-year easements for road access across reservation land. That figure, the statement said, accounts for all fees and expenses incurred by the tribe as it worked to secure an agreement, along with 10 years of illegal use of the roads.

“The Tribe feels for the property owners impacted by the actions of the Town and the Title Companies,” the statement said. “In fact, we share in their frustration and can relate. We’re hearing many property owners feel like the Town and the Title Companies misled them and are currently running them around in circles rather than solving the matter.”

During a Feb. 8 meeting of the Lac du Flambeau Town Board, the room was full of residents who waited along with dozens more on a video conferencing call, as members went into closed session to discuss their next step. When they returned, the board stated Board Chair Matt Gaulke would hand-deliver a letter to Tribal President John Johnson.

The letter, which was made public after the meeting, states the town was “assured that the title insurance companies were engaging in active communication and efforts to negotiate renewals of the easements for roads” and was never asked to participate in the negotiations or provide compensation related to the easements.

In a statement sent to the Green Bay Press-Gazette, Attorney Bridget Hubing of Reinhart Attorneys at Law, who is representing the title companies and landowners, said when a resolution on ownership of the roads couldn’t be reached, her clients contacted the BIA, which stated right-of-way easements for the roads would cost \$25,000 each.

The U.S. Department of Interior, which houses the Bureau of Indian Affairs, didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment Feb. 10.

- Wisconsin Public Radio

## Kahnawà:ke mourns ‘larger-than-life’ Elder Billy Two Rivers

Retired pro wrestler, activist and political leader Billy Kaintaronkwen Two Rivers died in Kahnawà:ke (Quebec, Canada) on Feb. 12 at the age of 87, his family announced on social media.

“It’s a sad day for Kahnawà:ke,” said community member Russell Diabo, who knew Two Rivers from their involvement in national First Nations politics.

The Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) wrestler spent 24 years in the wrestling ring between the 1950s and 1970s.

After making his debut in a Detroit ring in 1953, Two Rivers went on to wrestle in Charlotte, N.C., for National Wrestling Alliance and well-known promoter Jim Crockett. He spent six years in England, where he had the opportunity to travel across Europe and North Africa. In 1966, he had another opportunity to wrestle overseas in Japan.

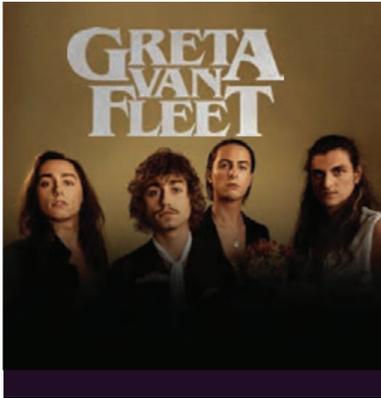
Everywhere he went, Two Rivers turned heads with his Mohawk haircut, leather jacket, beaded vest and regalia - viewing himself as an ambassador for all Indigenous people when he travelled.

He retired from wrestling in 1976, and then got into local politics, being elected as a chief at the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke in 1978.

“I wrestled for 24 years and then I wrestled for 20 years in council. That was rougher wrestling than anywhere else,” he told CBC News last June.

- CBC

# SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



**MAR 8**  
GRETA VAN FLEET



**MAR 11**  
TRAIN



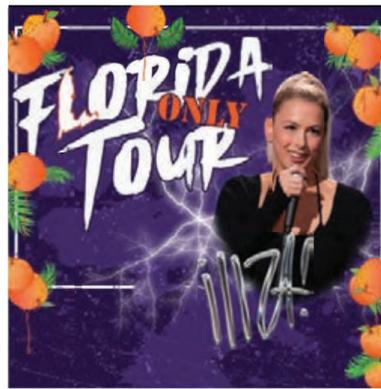
**MAR 12**  
DEF LEPPARD &  
MOTLEY CRUE



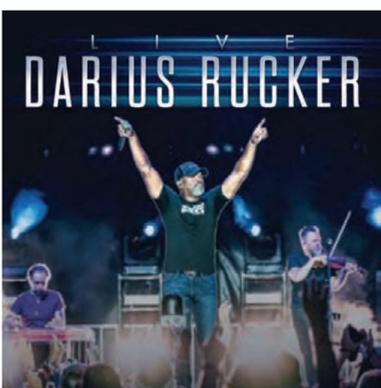
**MAR 14**  
CHEAP TRICK



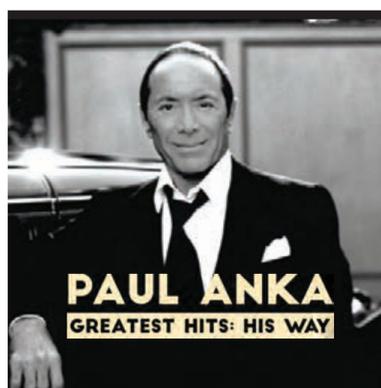
**MAR 16**  
SABRINA  
CARPENTER



**MAR 18**  
ILIZA



**MAR 19**  
DARIUS RUCKER



**MAR 25**  
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HOLLYWOOD, FL

# Education



## Padmini Dukharan wants libraries to engage tribal members

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — Padmini Dukharan said she's well aware that technology has changed libraries, including how people read books and how often they read. The Education Department's new library supervisor said the name of the game is keeping people engaged. "It's not all about books anymore, it's also about coming in and having a safe space to communicate with other people around you," Dukharan said. "That's the dynamic of a library now, the modern library; it's kind of changing."

Dukharan's first day on the job was Jan. 9. She enters the position after 23 years of work within the Miami-Dade Public Library System. She began her library career as a junior at Coral Reef Senior High School in Miami. Dukharan worked her way up from library aide to her last position as a youth services specialist, where she oversaw the children's department at a Miami-Dade branch — doing a variety of events and other tasks.

"Children are the focal point of any library, because it's generally family oriented," she said. "We had a great following."

Dukharan oversees the Seminole Tribe's libraries in Hollywood, Big Cypress, Brighton and Immokalee, which are often visited by preschool students. At the Dorothy S. Osceola Memorial Library, for example, Cecilia "Cecce" Vickers, a library assistant, leads story time and arts and crafts with students from the Hollywood Preschool. It's a similar scene with staff at the tribe's other libraries.

"But we have others that we need to target," Dukharan said. "We're coming up with ideas to get older kids to come to the library and engage, to make it a fun space for them — something different than being behind computers."

To connect with adults, Dukharan said she'd like to start book clubs or have authors do a reading or a talk. She'd like to invite Seminole authors in particular, perhaps from the recently launched Seminole Writers Group.

In addition, the Education Department has implemented a grant that offers computer workshops and Seminole history presentations to tribal members at the tribe's libraries. Five computer literacy workshops and three Seminole history presentations began in February and continue through July, mostly geared toward adults.

Dukharan, 39, was born in Guyana in South America, but has lived in Miami-Dade's Cutler Bay area since her parents immigrated there when she was two years old. She's a single parent to four children — two girls and two boys — ages 21, 18, 16 and 12. Dukharan is enrolled at Florida International University, working toward a degree in public administration.

"I'm happy to be here. I'm excited to learn more about Seminole culture," she said.

Dukharan said she also knows she has big shoes to fill in her new position. She succeeds David M. Blackard, the longtime Seminole Tribe employee and library supervisor, who died last summer from complications of cancer at age 69. Blackard had been the tribe's library supervisor since 2007.

"It breaks my heart, I've heard so many good things about him," she said.



Damon Scott

Padmini Dukharan stands in the Dorothy S. Osceola Memorial Library on the Hollywood Reservation.

## Seminole Gaming TCD shows students path to potential careers

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Ahfachkee middle and high school students learned about the business of the Seminole Tribe and how they can be part of it. Team members from Seminole Gaming's Tribal Career Development (TCD) program gave a presentation at the school Jan. 31.

In 2007, the tribe purchased Hard Rock International, which has 265 locations in more than 70 countries. The properties include hotels, casinos, performance venues and cafes.

TCD team members receive firsthand experience as they learn about hotel operations, food and beverage and gaming operations while working at Seminole Gaming.

"All tribal members are international business owners," said Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. "We have opportunities for you that you can learn about. I'd like to see all of us working together in the business and in government."

More than 80 students in grades seven through 12 heard from TCD director Jo-Lin Osceola, program manager Kyla Whitlow and six team members. They described opportunities available in the program.

TCD team members at the Ahfachkee presentation were Michael Cantu, Garrett Thomas, Kashane Tiger, Rhett Tiger and Aaron Tommie.

TCD team members begin the program



Beverly Bidney (2)

At left, TCD director Jo-Lin Osceola explains how the program works as TCD team members in the background, from left to right, Aaron Tommie, Garrett Thomas and Kashane Tiger, and Ahfachkee students observe Jan. 31. At right, Thomas talks to the students about his experience in the program.

with an introductory rotation to learn about the various departments and which ones they are interested in joining. The next step is to choose one of three tracks: "leaders of self," for those who want to work full or part time in a specific department; "leaders of people," for those who want to be team leaders in a specific department; and "leaders of leaders," for those who want to become a senior leader in the company. The program takes about a year and a half to two years to complete.

"You are the future," Whitlow said. "Whatever you want to do in life, there is an

opportunity here. Think outside of the box. If you want to be a pilot, we have some really cool planes."

In addition to hospitality and gaming, other careers in TCD include guest services, support services, security, facilities design, construction and more. For example, support services includes marketing, photography, aviation, purchasing, information technology, accounting and legal.

Osceola's career started in the Hollywood bingo hall. She left to go to college, came back and worked at every

Seminole Gaming property and was general manager at Coconut Creek before becoming director of TCD.

"We are here to support you," Osceola said. "We have people of all ages, from 16 to grannies and aunts."

After watching a video presentation featuring former and current TCD team members, the TCD team members in the room talked about their experiences in the program.

◆ See TCD on page 2B

## Pemayetv Emahakv Charter shines at Field Day



Beverly Bidney (3)

Above left, Mr. PECS Gregory James and Miss PECS Joleyne Nunez ride in the Brighton Field Day Festival parade. Above right, members of the PECS student council greet the crowd as they participate in the parade. Below, students on the PECS parade float wave to the crowd as they enter the amphitheater.



## Carol Doctor graduates from Altierus Career College

STAFF REPORT

Carol Doctor, from the Tampa Reservation, graduated in October 2022 from Altierus Career College with her diploma in massage therapy. She participated in a graduation ceremony Jan. 27. The tassels she wore were yellow (honors graduate), blue (she has successfully passed the state board exam to be licensed) and green (she is currently working in the field of massage therapy for Hard Rock).



Courtesy photo (2)

At left, Carol Doctor attends her graduation ceremony Jan. 27. Above, she gathers with family members and friends.

# Q&A: ‘Explorer’ program reboots after pandemic

BY DAMON SCOTT  
Staff Reporter

The Seminole Tribe’s “Public Safety Explorer” program recently began again after being suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic. The program seeks to engage tribal youth from 6-to-19 years old – called “Explorers” – to consider careers that fall under the tribe’s Public Safety Department umbrella – the Seminole Police Department, Seminole Fire Rescue and Emergency Management.

The program was formally known as the “Police Explorers” but is transitioning to also include the other departments. The three directors of the program are SPD chief John Auer, Fire Rescue chief Michael Mackey and Emergency Management director Paul Downing (Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township).

The Tribune asked Auer about changes to the program and what’s on the horizon. Answers have been edited for length and clarity.

**Tribune:** What’s your personal involvement in the program?

**Auer:** To instill in SPD employees that we have a duty to educate the tribe’s children on how their first responders are working for them, and to recognize the effort, resources, and responsibility the tribe provides for their wellbeing. We also have a duty to be mentors, role models, and keepers of the peace. All of these things can be accomplished through the interaction provided by the Explorer program, and helps to build forever relationships.

**Tribune:** Is there a deadline for tribal members to join?

**Auer:** The program typically begins at the start of the school year in the fall, and continues until the end of the school year. There is usually a sign up date, and it coincides with the beginning of the school year. However, this year is different as

the program had been suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic. We were able to regenerate the program to coincide with the new year for this group. So it is an abbreviated program year resulting from the Covid-19 suspension.

Anyone can join during the year, but there is an attendance requirement to qualify for any trips or special events. We have the attendance requirement so that when there is an educational trip, the Explorers are able to substitute the trip for their school attendance and maintain credit for their school grades. The attendance requirement also sets rules and guidelines to provide structure and self-discipline, which is part of the goal of the program.

**Tribune:** What topics are covered?

**Auer:** For the police involvement, the basics are for self-discipline – instilled by drills such as marching, inspection, and tasks assigned for different events. The other topics run the gamut of police training

and activities, which provides a platform to explain why police do certain things that might be observed in the community. We also cover personal safety, life saving, and other experiences and training that the Explorer can use outside of the program. Beyond the basics, we cover uniforms, equipment, vehicles, and demonstrations, including simulated training exercises just like police cadets endure, modified for the age of the Explorer.

**Tribune:** Can an Explorer participate even if they aren’t sure about pursuing a career?

**Auer:** Yes, absolutely. We have had Explorers who expressed an interest, and some have signed up for courses in the public safety field in college after they graduate from the Explorers, so there is an impact. Some do take jobs in public safety even if not with the tribe, as we have now been doing the program long enough that our initial Explorers are responsible adults.

We have had Explorers do internships and other activities with the tribe’s Public Safety programs as well.

**Tribune:** How has the program been so far this year?

**Auer:** We have had a great response from the communities. The turnout is good, but the transition back at the middle of the school year is a different challenge than beginning when school starts. For example, students join activities at school in the late summer and fall, and some who would otherwise be Explorers are already participating in activities, and we understand that there is only so much parents can do to accommodate all of the activities. Next year we will be back on track and participation should be better than ever.

To contact Auer about the program, email johnauer@semtribe.com or call (954) 967-8900.

## Ahfachkee students honor principal Philip Baer

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Ahfachkee School students honored their new principal, Philip Baer, with posters, cheers and high fives after a student awards ceremony Feb. 2.

Baer was recently named principal after serving as assistant principal for six years. Ahfachkee’s parent, teacher and student organization (PTSO) organized the surprise celebration and presented him with a large gift basket before each grade – kindergarten through 12 – presented their handmade signs.

PTSO members Andrea Jumper, Lenora Roberts and Melissa Sherman spoke at the ceremony. Roberts compared Baer to great Native American warriors who put their people first.

“The warrior made sure his people were safe and secure,” Roberts said. “The people knew their leader cared about them. We still have leadership like this today. We have a leader who doesn’t need much praise but he knows the needs of every child. We have that

at Ahfachkee with Mr. Baer.”

The cafeteria was filled with students and a few parents, who cheered and applauded enthusiastically. Jumper commented on the high energy in the room and said it felt like a pep rally.

“Great leaders inspire other people to be leaders,” Sherman said. “I can’t think of a better leader.”

Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie congratulated Baer and encouraged parents to get involved in the school.

After the students were told they met all the benchmarks on their test scores and that every student increased their score in reading and/or math, ESE coordinator Billie McDonald announced the entire school would have an ice cream party. Cheers ensued. When the room calmed down, the principal spoke.

“I appreciate all of you,” Baer said. “If you need anything, feel free to see me. I just moved my office, so now I have more space on the walls to hang these all up.”



Beverly Bidney

During a surprise presentation Feb. 2, a class presents an oversized poster decorated with Miami Dolphins logos and footballs that says they are proud to be on Ahfachkee principal Philip Baer’s team.



Beverly Bidney (2)

Above, Ahfachkee School principal Philip Baer gives a high five to a kindergarten student during an awards ceremony at the school Feb. 2. At right, PTSO members, from left to right, Lenora Roberts, Melissa Sherman and Andrea Jumper flank Baer as they express appreciation for him and congratulate him on his appointment as principal.



## Two PECS staff members earn honors

STAFF REPORT

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School announced in January that Doni Barnhill was its teacher of the year and Terry Griffin its non-instructional employee of the year.

Barnhill, the school’s middle school exceptional student education teacher, was also a finalist for Glades County teacher of the year. Griffin, a third grade paraprofessional, also won the Glades County employee of the year at its Golden Apple Awards ceremony held Jan. 10.

Alice Barfield, Glades County superintendent of schools, presented the awards. Brian Greseth, director of administrative services for Glades County schools and former PECS principal, also participated in the ceremony.



Courtesy photo

A contingent of PECS staff, including from left, principal Tracy Downing, award winner Terry Griffin and finalist Doni Barnhill, attend the Golden Apple Awards ceremony.



Courtesy photo

Alice Barfield, left, and Brian Greseth, right, present Doni Barnhill with a plaque for being a Glades County teacher of the year finalist at the Golden Apple Awards on Jan. 10.



Courtesy photo

Terry Griffin, left, receives a congratulatory hug from PECS principal Tracy Downing at the Golden Apple Awards ceremony.

### ◆ TCD From page 1B

Kashane Tiger spent 20 years in the U.S. Air Force, where he specialized in supply management. As a TCD team member, he works in Hollywood at the Hard Rock memorabilia warehouse, which has more than 83,000 items in more than 24,000 square feet of space.

“It’s a museum-like experience,” Tiger said. “We have pop-up exhibits. We did one for Bruce Springsteen [who played at Hard Rock on Feb. 7]. When Sir Paul McCartney was here, we brought out the Magical Mystery Tour Bus for him.”

Rhett Tiger, who works at the Classic Casino in Hollywood, said joining TCD was the best decision he ever made.

“I want to use the program to get where I want to be,” he said. “I talk to [Edward

Aguilar, Classic Casino general manager] a lot. He started as a cook in Immokalee. There is an opportunity to go as high as you want to. I want to work in Las Vegas one day.”

Thomas, from the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, said he likes that he can go anywhere in the world and have an impact.

“I started in Immokalee, which has a real small, family-oriented feel,” he said. “Now I get to meet a lot of people, including celebs, and I go to openings of other properties. I wish I would have done this when I was in high school. The best thing is that you don’t have to stay in one department forever, you can move around and learn more things.”

Tommie, who works in marketing at the Classic Casino, came back to Florida after he graduated college and went to work for the tribe.

“My favorite part is being part of something so big,” he said.

Cantu, who is in the Seminole Gaming Human Resources Department, spent 16 years working in tribal government before joining TCD.

“I wish I came to the program sooner,” he said. “It’s a great learning experience. Take advantage of it. I’m 38 and it’s never too late to start. But you need a gaming license to work here, so you need a clean background. Stay out of trouble, it isn’t worth it.”

Aguilar, who joined the program in 2013, told his story in the video.

“The interaction with people set the hook for me,” he said. “What we do is to secure the future of the tribe. Give it a shot, it’s worth it. I look forward to seeing everybody working for the company one day.”

Beverly Bidney

TCD team member Michael Cantu gives Ahfachkee students in the cafeteria bags of gifts from the TCD program.





Conference attendees, including tribal members and tribal employees, meet outside the Red Barn in Brighton.

Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

With Milo Osceola, left, and James Holt, right, Milo Osceola Jr. holds open the mouth of an alligator during the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program's visit.

# Tribe welcomes FRTEP agents

**SUBMITTED BY SHERI TRENT**  
Seminole Tribe's UF/IFAS Agriculture/4-H Youth Development Extension Agent

Nearly 40 Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP) agents from across Indian Country visited the Seminole Tribe of Florida for the 2023 Professional Development Conference from Feb. 5 to Feb. 8. While visiting Florida, agents engaged in educational sessions, toured the Brighton and Big Cypress reservations and visited the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

Alex Johns, executive director of Agriculture, gave a superb welcome and history of the Seminole Tribe, taking the history of extension back to the days of Fred Montsdeoca before the tribe was chartered.

Travel day began with a tour through Brighton led by Brighton Board Rep. Helene Buster and Natural Resources Director Aaron Stam. Agents learned about the history and deep roots of agriculture. Lunch was catered with a delicious traditional meal prepared by the Brighton Culture Department.



Courtesy photo

Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie gets a close up view of Milo Osceola Jr. and a gator.

Arriving in Big Cypress, they experienced the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum to witness the rich stories and history of the unconquered Seminole. The tour ended at the To-Pee-Kee-Ke-Yak-Ne community center with great discussions from University of Florida leaders Scott Angle and Andra Johnson, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and tribal members Joe Frank and Pauletta Bowers. The tour finished with an amazing steak dinner served by the Hendry County Cattleman's Association.

The most memorable experience was the alligator wrestling demonstration by one of our Seminole Tribe 4-H members, Milo Osceola Jr., a 12-year-old fourth generation alligator wrestler. He worked the alligator and showed how to safely mount and secure it. After the show, agents were allowed to take pictures with the alligator. This amazing adventure will be forever remembered by all who attended.



Courtesy photo

From left to right are Milo Osceola, Kimberly Clement, Anita Neal, Scott Angle, Sheri Trent (holding alligator), Andra Johnson, Kevin Thompson, Storm Osceola and Milo Osceola Jr.

# Valentine's Day in Immokalee



Beverly Bidney (3)

The Immokalee community gathered in its gym for bingo and a corn hole tournament on Valentine's Day Feb. 14. At far left, Deidra Hall and Gary Frank practice for the corn hole tournament before it gets underway. Above left, Council Liaison Raymond Garza spins the bingo balls before he chooses one to call out during the bingo game. Above right, a group of bingo aficionados dab their bingo cards in hopes of winning the game.

## ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

March 2023



Peach State Archaeological Society



© Florida Museum of Natural History

The level of preservation of artifacts throughout the United States is dependent on several factors. Soil makeup and the intrusion of water are two factors that can deeply effect the stability of artifacts within the soil and when it comes out. Unfortunately, Florida is one of the worst states for preservation so it's not often artifacts such as pottery survive thousands of years within its sandy matrix. And if the sand is acidic and rough, is it any wonder that the pottery (which is often made from the sand) would be any better at maintaining its shape and structure without constant mending (Florida Department of Environmental Protection)?

Finding larger pieces of pottery out in the Everglades and swampy areas of the reservations is truly a feat for the archaeologists. Right now the Collections team is working through a backlog of older projects, one of which is a field school that took place in 2011 on the Big Cypress Reservation. A multitude of small sand-tempered pottery fragments were recovered and within that some of the more rare pottery types (for the THPO) were identified. Fort Walton Ticked Rim, Opa Locka Incised, and Hare Hammock Surface Indented pottery are all now part of the collection. Throughout this year, the Collections team will highlight these pieces but this month, the focus is on Opa Locka Incised.

Found mostly within South Florida, this pottery piece made of sand is designated as part of the Glades pottery series. Glades culture, which is mostly identified by its lack of decoration, ranges in dates from 500 BP (before present)-AD 1542 (Florida Museum) (bottom). Opa Locka Incised is more specifically dated to AD 700-900. It is characterized by the downward-opening semicircles along the rim of the vessel (Griffin, 2002). The number of loops within each stack can vary, but once that number is set, it is repeated on the vessel without variation (Peach State Archaeological Society) (middle). Unfortunately as stated above, the Opa Locka Incised piece is fairly small, measuring 1.24 (L) x 0.3 (W) x 0.97 (H) in inches and weighing 5.7 grams (top).

The Ceramic Technology Lab at the Florida Museum is an excellent source of information regarding the pottery types throughout the southeast including Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. For more information click on this link: <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/ceramiclab/galleries/aboriginal/> or search for the lab's webpage on your web browser. The addition of this Opa Locka Incised piece brings the total in the THPO collection to four.



SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - MARCH 2023

## THE MANY FIRSTS OF BETTY MAE TIGER JUMPER

In 1967 Betty Mae Tiger Jumper (Snake Clan) became the first woman elected to be the chairperson of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. However this was only one of the many firsts that she accomplished throughout her long life.

Betty Mae was the first Florida Seminole to graduate high school, but she had to fight to attend it at all. At that time, in segregated Florida, education was denied to Indigenous people. Not giving up, she would leave the state in order to attend a school. Betty Mae later became the first Seminole to complete her higher education, as well as the first Seminole Nurse as she received her degree, following a lifelong passion to help her Tribe.

When the federal policy of Indian Termination threatened Tribal sovereignty, she served on the Seminole constitutional committee, helping to gain federal recognition for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. While serving as Chairwoman of the Tribe, she founded the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET), and was appointed to the National Congress on Indian Opportunity by the American President.

After leaving office she founded the *Alligator News*, a newspaper that would later become the *Seminole Tribune*. Her work there earned her the very first Lifetime Achievement Award given by the Native American Journalists Association. She would go on to publish three books, narrate Seminole stories for posterity, and be awarded an honorary Doctorate from Florida State University. Throughout her life, against every obstacle, Betty Mae stood strong and persisted.



Above: Betty Mae (Right) and Mary Parker (left) before leaving for school in North Carolina, 1939.



Right: Betty Mae earned her Nursing credentials at Kiowa Indian Hospital in Oklahoma, 1946

Below: Joe Dan Osceola and Betty Mae hold up a prototype of the Seminole Tribe of Florida flag, 1957.



For more on the life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper, check out her memoirs - *A Seminole Legend*. If you want to learn more about Seminole History, visit the STOF Tribal Historic Preservation Office website at: [www.stofthpo.com](http://www.stofthpo.com)



# Tribal Fair & Pow Wow turns 50

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**HOLLYWOOD** — There were plenty of reasons to celebrate the Seminole Tribe's Tribal Fair & Pow, but two in particular stood out. The event — held Feb. 10 to Feb. 12 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood — served as a welcome back celebration as it marked a return after a three-year absence due to the pandemic. It was also the 50th anniversary of an event that highlights the culture of the Seminoles and other tribes.

"It's good to hear the drums beat again. We're back together," said President Mitchell Cypress.

Indeed, the thundering sound provided by drum groups from throughout Indian Country provided the heartbeat not only for competition but also for the grand entries. The Seminole Tribe's elected officials and its princesses were joined in the grand entries by officials and royalty from other tribes as well as dancers, veterans and actors as hundreds of Natives filled the floor of the spacious Seminole Ballroom.

The venue for the Tribal Fair & Pow Wow wasn't always so glamorous; it used to be held on the dirt at the Hollywood Reservation's Laura Mae Osceola Stadium, a rodeo facility with no roof and it has since been torn down.

"As a kid I remember back in the day this used to be all outside; now we are inside," said Brighton Councilman Larry Howard. "Just having all the people walking around — you see all the Indian clothes, you see all the fancy dancers walking around, the different cultures of other Native Americans; to me that's what it is and what it should be."

The tribe's royalty was represented by Miss Florida Seminole Durante Blais-Billie and Jr. Miss Seminole Aubee Billie, winners of the Princess Pageant in 2019, the last time it was held. (The pageant returns July 29). They were joined in the grand entries by princesses from other tribes, including Delaware Nation, Poarch Creek, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and Red Lake Nation.

Dozens of vendors — some from the tribe and several from out of state — filled the hallways with their goods.

Visitors were treated to alligator demonstrations by the tribe's Billy Walker and Everett Osceola. The Native Reel Cinema Festival brought in some of Indian Country's biggest names in the film industry,

such as Graham Greene, Martin Sensmeier and Billy Wirth (see page 5B). Tribal members donned their finest in the Seminole clothing contest. Winning art work from the Tribal Fair's art contest was displayed in a ballroom alongside runner-ups and third place finishes. (See the March 31 Tribune for photos and results).

The Tribal Fair & Pow Wow has been held at the Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood since 2006 when it turned 35.

As it gets older it hasn't shown signs of slowing down.

"It's the 50th anniversary; that's a lot," President Cypress said.



Billy Walker, front, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Bryan Zepeda lead the way during the 50th annual Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood.

Everett Osceola has a firm grasp of an alligator during a demonstration program.



The Seminole Tribe's Tribal Council participates in a grand entry. From left to right in the front are Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., President Mitchell Cypress and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola. In the back is Seminole Nation of Oklahoma Chief Lewis J. Johnson.



At the grand entry, from left to right are Seminole Color Guard and veterans Coleman Josh (U.S. Army), Curtis Motlow (U.S. Navy), Gary McInturff (U.S. Army) and Sallie Josh (U.S. Navy).



Wilson Bowers, left, and his father, Paul Bowers, were among the dozens of vendors who showcased their work.



Wanda Bowers, from the Tribal Fair & Pow Wow committee, gives money to a young dancer after the youth dancing segment.



Drummers from the Wabanaki Confederacy in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, Canada, and Maine, perform.



Muscoogie (Creek) veterans Roley Johnson, far left, and Clarence Johnson, far right, join Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Aubee Billie, second from left, and Miss Florida Seminole Durante Blais-Billie.



Above, Navajo artist Jeremy Salazar, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, works while surrounded by his art. At left, John Bird (Blackfeet), from Montana competes in the men's golden age fancy grass dance.



Paul "Cowbone" Buster performs for the lunchtime crowd in an outdoor food area.



Cheyenne Kippenberger, a former Miss Florida Seminole and former Miss Indian World, participates in the Seminole clothing program.



The Osceola Brothers band, including Tyson, left, and Cameron, perform for the Tribal Fair crowd.

# 'Poet's Story'

BY ELGIN JUMPER

*Editor's note: This is part I of "Poet's Story." Part II will be in the March 31 Seminole Tribune.*

*Author's note: The mixed media collage corresponds with the short story that it accompanies. The piece has gesso, acrylic and oil paint, gouache, sharpie marker, macron pens, magazine clippings, gloss medium, and canvas paper on canvas, with lines by famous poets. It's the most text in a piece that I've ever used before.*

*And I initially wrote, "Poet's Story" around a year and a half ago, as a short script under a different title. Since then I've wanted to adapt it to the short story format. Thank goodness, that task has worked out! The story is some of my own story, I should say, which actually took place in 2006, and after that. And yet I've updated it to the time period we now live in, among other changes.*

*I have no regrets whatsoever of taking up art and poetry on a full-time basis. Thank you.*

white Nissan Sentra. They went inside for conversation and coffee. "... And Johanna, if I don't find a way to overcome this stage fright mumbo-jumbo," Byron said, now at the table in the dining-room. "I'll have to pack up my whole vaudeville show, and call it a day. What do you think?"

"Come come now," Johanna calmed, stirring a mug of coffee, "getting up there in front of an audience is what it's all about. You know what I mean? The sooner you realize that, the sooner you can let it go, move forward. There's simply no other way around it, B. In other words: You acknowledge it. You get over it. You get on with it. Ta-da!" She set her mug down, rose, walked over to a Van Gogh print, "Cafe Terrace at Night" which Byron had on the wall near a bookshelf filled with poetry books. A blue sky at night with Van Gogh stars. A cafe terrace in pale yellows and greens. Thirteen figures. She leaned in, studied the print closely, counted all the figures. She nodded, and then, walked back to her seat. She remarked, "Yep, he walked among us, that Van Gogh."

Byron sipped coffee, peered up at the print. "They say it's a shout out to da Vinci's, 'The Last Supper.'"

"I see that," Johanna said. She took a quick photo with her cellphone.

Byron was thinking: Okay, so I'll need to memorize my pieces. Ah, so much I'll have to learn. But to seize the initiative - and to really do this - that's going to the hard part.

He digs into his backpack, takes out his notebook. He opens to a particular piece. "Check this one out," he said. "Ahem... I want to spread my wings and fly, I mean, is that too much to ask? Even in a poem? Poetry gives me life, you see, picks me up from the lowest depths, even though Time marches on like a battalion of soldiers."

Johanna, having paid close attention to the impromptu reading, is genuinely moved. She placed a hand on Byron's shoulder. Then she scanned the walls, the posters of poets and painters, all the greys.

"Did you hear the Ukraine thing is coming up on a year now?" She asked.

"Yes, I saw that on the news this morning," Byron answered. "Tragic. And how does that affect a Native American? There's a poem in there somewhere."

"Yes."

The aroma of the coffee was pleasing. Byron's words kept coming. The spoken word faucet was on, and the healing waters were flowing. And yet, no thirsty audiences to quench the drought!

He explained, "My problem is, I can read my poems to the posters here, and that's no problem. They're there whenever I need them. Truthfully, I don't know what I'd have done without 'em. I'm sorry, I've really got to get passed this. I know it might not be a struggle for everyone, that much I know, but to me, it's a big deal! What we're dealing with here then is a complete discombobulation of poise, I kid you not. Don't you see? Somehow, with your help, and with the help of others, I actually make it through the long days and nights. But sometimes it feels like it'll never end."

"It's going to be okay, I promise," Johanna said, rubbing his shoulder. "Listen, I was discussing poetry with the head of the department I work in, and the lady asked if I could recommend someone who might help launch a new open mic project - Yeah! - so I gave her your contact info. Fingers crossed. I hope you don't mind. The Storyteller knows, too. My uncle. This'll be perfect for you. Can you believe it?" Johanna's words were so uplifting!

After she took her leave, back to work, Byron sat down at his writing desk, and began to process this new turn of events. An open mic! He thought: Is this for real? And if so, how do I proceed? Johanna wouldn't joke about a thing like this. Never. He was envisioning new poems now. He contemplated, he gazed upwards, poetry was his unmitigated obsession. He ate, lived, and breathed poetry. That's how far he'd gotten. So he wasn't surprised to see where his thoughts were turning to.

Just then, his cell rang out! He didn't recognize the number, but he could tell the call was coming via the tribal offices. He took it.

"Hello," he said.

A female voice said, "Hi, this call's for Byron Pinetree. I'm calling for Director Sparrow, in Tribal Education Department. Is Byron available?"

"Yes, this is Byron."

"Byron, great, hi, would you be available to speak with The Director, regarding an impending open mic project? Better in-person, if possible. She'll be in office for the rest of the week."

"Yes, I think so. Tomorrow morning okay? 10AM?" Byron wanted to shout it from the rooftops! "Perfect. We'll see you then."

"Definitely. See you then."

Byron couldn't say no. Something inside just wouldn't let him. He couldn't call it, didn't even try to. There was something mystical about it. He sensed he had come to the threshold of something big, an utterly life-defining moment, which promised to show in this urgency what he was made of.



Calvin Tiger

Native Americans involved in the film industry hold a panel discussion during the Native Reel Cinema Festival on Feb. 11 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. From left to right are Shaadiin Tome, Justin Deegan, Graham Greene and Stevie Salas.

# Festival highlights Native Americans in film industry

BY CALVIN TIGER  
Reporter/Intern

**HOLLYWOOD** — The Native Reel Cinema Festival rocked the big screen during the annual Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood from Feb. 10 to Feb. 12.

The festival featured different Native American actors and filmmakers, such as Graham Greene, Shaadiin Tome, Stevie Salas, Justin Deegan, Martin Sensmeier, Billy Wirth and others. In the grand ballroom, a meet and greet took place after the festival for the public to ask any questions about Native Americans in the film industry.

Not only did the event provide opportunities for audiences to meet Native Americans from the film industry and view their works, but it also served as a way for those in the industry to connect and share ideas.

"These types of film festivals are always the best way to meet other filmmakers and also just see how incredible other filmmakers and actors and creators are doing in their work," said Tome, a New Mexico-based Diné filmmaker. "I think it's so meaningful to be able to gather with other people and share that space."

"Long Line of Ladies," directed by Tome and Rayka Zehtabchi, was among a handful of short films shown on a large screen in a ballroom. The film focuses on a girl from the Karuk Tribe of Northern California. She goes through her "Ihuk," or flower dance, which is a coming of age ceremony for Karuk girls. The film also covers darker times, including during the California Gold Rush when many Native American girls and women became victims of sexual violence which led to the ceremony becoming dormant for more than 120 years. The film shows the importance of preserving the Karuk's culture and keeping traditions alive.

"I wanted to create a story for a younger version of me to feel empowered," Tome told the audience after the film.

"Long Line of Ladies" has won many awards, including a Golden Gate Short Award and from the South by Southwest Film Festival, the Indy Short Film Festival and the San Francisco International Film Festival.

Other Native American short films that were presented included "The Water Walker" and "Concrete 49."

"The Water Walker," directed by James Burns, is about Native American activism. It features Autumn Peltier, who is an Anishinaabe Indigenous rights advocate from the Wikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada. The film highlights ongoing efforts in water conservation and also sheds light on current



Ralph Notaro

Patrick Doctor, right, meets actor Martin Sensmeier during the cinema festival.



Kevin Johnson

Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall shakes hands with actor Graham Greene, who starred in "Dances with Wolves."

water contamination situations in North America.

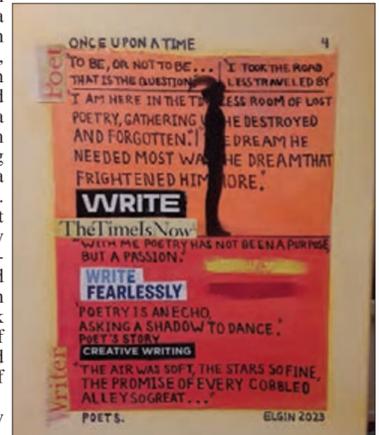
Deegan, a citizen of the Three Affiliated Tribes from the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, directed "Concrete 49." It is about a Native American man living in New York City and the different street performers - who are also Native American - that

he encounters on his way to an audition. "Concrete 49" mentions there are 30,000 Native Americans living in New York City. Deegan said he wanted to emphasize the Indigenous experiences of Native Americans living in the city.



Ralph Notaro

From left to right, special guests at the cinema festival include Jeremiah Bitsui, Steven Paul Judd, Eugene Brave Rock, Justin Deegan, Graham Greene, Martin Sensmeier, Billy Wirth and Shaadiin Tome.



Elgin Jumper

Writings from famous writers are featured on this piece from Elgin Jumper.

Yet somehow he persevered and managed to stay his course. Someday, he dreamed, someday. He had been a magnificent idler, it was said, and he hadn't really made his mark in the life. This would be the year. The realization of his inaction was excruciating and so he was becoming exceedingly sensitized to the urgency to follow his poetry dreams, bringing them to fruition, and perhaps even wearing livelier colors. "I-I wear black for Johnny Cash," he would say to anyone who would listen.

He had saved up for a cruiser bike and it served him well, he had ridden it to attend classes at the local community college, an endeavor that eventually fell off by the wayside. (But he had learned so much while there.) So as he was cruising the rez near an undeveloped area, he noticed a large chickee hut with picnic tables underneath and got the idea to practice up on spoken word. The morning sun was sending vivid streaks of orange-yellow through the trees, onto the grass. Yonder, two sociable reservation dogs, avoiding the catchers and sojourning nearby, came up to greet him with tails a-waggin. He patted them gently.

Next, Byron shuffled through his backpack and liberated a notebook and pen, flipping the pages to find the right one to begin with. He cleared his throat. "Ahem," he muttered. The two dogs relaxed. One stretched out, yawned, and got comfortable. The other one scratched out a spot on the ground and crumbled down to loiter.

Byron read, "Will I ever share my poetry with others? The audience is unbeknownst to me, I'll never be able to reach them. And that will hold me back like a chain of unsung bling. O, I am the very picture of Consternation.

"Life is wonderful, don't get me wrong. But I want to read my poems to the world. They say, There's a lovely fragrance in that flower, Poetry. And yet, all the world's not a stage, when one is alone in need of an audience. For my heart leaps at the dream! which must, at the end of the day, go unrealized. For now.

"And yet, someday I'll wear my hearts flower upon my sleeve, multi-colored, with the sweetest poetry encircling a misty dawn. Fearless poetry, that's what I seek - To write. To perform upon a stage. Unhindered by the fearful storm.

"I pray my fears may be taken from me. And new courage granted. One in fellowship with those who've gone before, yes, and to long for poetry even more. O, I wish to share my poetry with the world."

He smiled, glanced up momentarily from his notebook. Around him the City of Hollywood, Florida, was springing back to life with sound and fury, as cities are want to do. Both dogs with eyes glazed panted, wagged tails, and looked at one another as if mystified. Byron read a few more like pieces, buoyed as he was by efforts thus far. And, of course, by the endorsements from the dogs. Having had enough he tucked the notebook and pen back into his pack, bid the dogs a fond farewell, and took his leave.

People were on their way to work now, Byron observed. Cars were on the move. Morning birds were engaging in a losing battle with the noise of the early traffic flow, construction sites, and overflying airplanes. Suddenly he received a text on his cellphone. It was Johanna Jewel, one of his few and far between friends. She intimated she'd stop by his apartment on the rez soon. Byron stopped, and returned a text to her: He'd be happy to receive her.

Back at home, on the old rez, Byron welcomed Johanna, who had pulled up in her

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# Sports



Kevin Johnson

IMG Academy's Chanon Frye makes a strong move to the basket during his team's win against Calvary Christian Academy on Jan. 31 in Fort Lauderdale.

## Chanon Frye finds a good fit at IMG

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**FORT LAUDERDALE** — This basketball season is the first time Elliot Washington has coached Chanon Frye. It didn't take long for the coach of IMG Academy's varsity white team to become a fan of the 6-foot-6, 190-pound Seminole.

"He's a well-rounded, complete basketball player," Washington said after IMG cruised past host Calvary Christian Academy on Jan. 31 in Fort Lauderdale.

Frye scored 11 points, which was in line with his season average of about 12 points and seven rebounds per game.

Washington said Frye is a smooth player who checks all the boxes as a high school senior who aspires to play at a four-year college.

"He's done really well," Washington said. "He's one of our most versatile players. He can guard multiple positions, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. He's very valuable on the offensive end and defensive end. He always brings a lot of energy. He's usually a match-up problem. With him being 6-6 he can guard the smallest guy on the court and he can guard the biggest guy on the court; that's a big luxury for us this year."

Frye said he's grown about four inches since he was a freshman and hopes he hasn't stopped growing. Certainly, being at IMG is helping him grow in several aspects of academics and basketball.

IMG's campus in Bradenton is renowned for what it offers student-athletes from around the world, several of which have gone on to prominence in college and professional sports.

"There's no other facility like it in the world," Washington said. "The facilities are unmatched. They have all the resources at their fingertips."

Frye, the son of Danielle Jumper-Frye and Charles Frye, is in his first year at IMG. He said he's become acclimated with the college-style regiment that the school offers for academics and athletics and that he enjoys being part of the IMG environment. Having early afternoon practices, for example, is different than the late nights he was accustomed to at other schools.

At IMG, practices are only part of the development process. There's strength conditioning and classes in mental conditioning, leadership and nutrition, to name a few.

"All to keep us fresh," Frye said.

There's also the unique aspect that Frye's teammates are not from places like Fort Lauderdale or Orlando or Tampa. In fact, he's the only player on the roster from Florida. His teammates are from all points of the globe, including Australia, China and Israel.

"It's a lot different. You get to hear about where they came from and how they grew up," Frye said.

It's a two-way culture street, too. Not only has Frye learned about life outside the U.S. from the international players, but they have asked him about his Native American background.

"Great education, great melting pot," Washington said.

Although the varsity white team plays FHSAA schools in the regular season, it is considered independent and is not allowed to compete in the state tournament, which recently wrapped up in Lakeland.

Ultimately, Frye wants to play college ball; whether that comes next season or if he returns to IMG for a post graduate year hasn't been determined, but Washington said interest from colleges will be there.

"We're trying to find the best situation for him," he said.



Kevin Johnson

Chanon Frye, in the middle, wins a battle for a loose ball against two Calvary Christian players.

## Anna Harmon gears up for national indoor championships

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

The Seminole Tribe's Anna Harmon and the Mesa (Arizona) Community College women's indoor track team will head to Topeka, Kansas, to compete in the National Junior College Athletic Association championships March 3 and March 4.

Last year Harmon earned All-American honors at the championships in the 4x800 meter relay and distance medley relay.

This year Harmon has produced another impressive indoor season in a variety of events.

She finished first in the 1000 meters and

the mile in the Pima Aztec Invitational on Jan. 21.

She won the mile again in the team's next meet, the Paradise Valley Community College indoor meet on Jan. 28 with a personal record of 5:16.96.

Also at the meet, she turned in a PR of 2:21.14 on her way to second place in the 800 meters.

Harmon has made her mark for Mesa both indoors and outdoors. Last fall, she finished her cross country career at MESA by earning runner-up honors at the NJCAA Division II championship in Tallahassee.



Kevin Johnson

Anna Harmon

## Ava Nunez has strong start for Thomas University softball

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

The Seminole Tribe's Ava Nunez had a memorable debut for the Thomas University softball team.

Nunez, a former four-year player at Immokalee High School, scored four runs and had two hits, two walks and one RBI in Thomas's 13-3 win against Trinity Baptist College on Feb. 4 in Jacksonville. She played third base and also pitched two perfect innings of relief with two strikeouts.

It was the second game of a season opening doubleheader. Thomas won game one, 9-2. Nunez played second base and went 0-for-2.

Nunez continued her hot start through the first 10 games. She had a sizzling .391 batting average with nine hits — including one home run — eight RBIs and eight runs scored.

Her first collegiate home run was a two-run dinger that came in a 12-2 win against Middle Georgia State on Feb. 25 in Cochran, Georgia.

Thomas had a 5-5 record as of the end



Thomas University

Ava Nunez

of February.

Nunez is a freshman at Thomas, which is in Thomasville, Georgia, about 35 miles north of Tallahassee.

## Sizzling start at the plate for IRSC's Elle Thomas

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

It didn't take Elle Thomas long to make her mark for the Indian River State College softball team.

Three days into the season, the freshman infielder from the Brighton Reservation produced a big game at the plate. Thomas went 3-for-3 with one double, one RBI and two runs scored in a 10-1 win against Georgia Highlands College on Jan. 29.

She followed up her strong performance in the next game with one hit in her only at-bat in a 10-0 win against Ave Maria University. She also scored a run.

As of the end of February, Thomas led the squad with a blistering .700 batting average that included seven hits in 10 at-bats.

Overall, IRSC generated a solid start to



IRSC

Elle Thomas

its season with a 16-6 record.

## Allie Williams named to all-tournament team

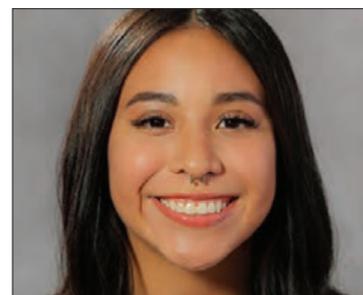
BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

The Seminole Tribe's Allie Williams was named to the all-tournament first team at the inaugural Avila Invitational bowling tournament in Belton, Missouri.

Williams, a freshman, rolled a 941 for Ottawa University. It was the fourth best score in the tournament.

Avila University hosted the tournament Jan. 28-29. The women's field featured 11 teams. Ottawa finished in second place.

Williams, from Pearl River, Mississippi, is a former standout at Neshoba High School, where she helped the girls team win five state championships.



Ottawa University

Allie Williams

## Mascot mania at Guitar Hotel



Hard Rock

Mascots from National Hockey League teams basked in the sun at the Guitar Hotel in Hollywood during the league's All-Star festivities. The All-Star Game was held Feb. 4 at FLA Arena in Sunrise.



Women's Champions - Lady Ballers

Hollywood Recreation



Men's Champions - Plainzmen

Hollywood Recreation

# Tribal Fair tournament draws 30 teams

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**HOLLYWOOD** — After a hiatus due to the pandemic, the Seminole Tribal Fair Basketball Tournament was held for the first time since 2019.

Players were eager to return to the early February tournament; proof came in the number of teams. Thirty teams in the youth, adult and legends categories vied for championships at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center in Hollywood.

"Everyone was excited to come back here," said Courtney Osceola, tournament director. "We had way more teams that I anticipated."

Some players and teams came to the winter warmth of Hollywood from frigid states such as Wisconsin where temperatures sank below zero; one player came from Alaska.

The tournament also featured Angel Goodrich, a former WNBA player.

Seminoles shined in the tournament, too. Kristen Billie and Ariah Osceola played for the women's champion Lady Ballers. Xavier Osceola was named a tournament all-star on the men's side. Phalyn Osceola and Jerome Davis were captains for their championship teams in the legends division. In the youth portion, Ivan Billie, Gary McInturf, Grant



Legends Women's Champions - Unit 6

Hollywood Recreation



Legends Men's Champions - Showtime

Hollywood Recreation

Osceola and Ashley Wilcox coached their teams to championship victories. Championship teams received tournament hoodies while runner ups received long sleeve tournament shirts, all designed by Courtney Osceola.



17U Girls Champions - 4Nations

Hollywood Recreation



Kevin Johnson

Grant Osceola lines up a 3-point shot in a men's division game.



17U Boys Champions - V Squad

Hollywood Recreation



14U Champions - Mixed Bloods

Hollywood Recreation



12U Champions - Baby Unconquered

Hollywood Recreation



Kevin Johnson

The two finalists in the men's division, Big Town and Plainzmen, fight for a loose ball.



Kevin Johnson

Jerome Davis makes a powerful and athletic move to the basket against two Plainzmen defenders.



Kevin Johnson

The opening tip in a men's division game.



Women's Runner Ups - Burning Feathers

Hollywood Recreation



Men's Runner Ups - Big Town

Hollywood Recreation



Legends Women's Runner Ups - Rezilient

Hollywood Recreation



Legends Men's Runner Ups - B-Team

Hollywood Recreation



17U Girls Runner Ups - YDWI

Hollywood Recreation



17U Boys Runner Ups - Koolaid Jammers

Hollywood Recreation



Action from an early game between Ohana and Burning Feathers in the women's division.

Kevin Johnson



14U Runner Ups - Seminoles

Hollywood Recreation



DeForest Carter battles his way toward the hoop in a men's division game.

Kevin Johnson



12U Runner Ups - Kid Stuff

Hollywood Recreation

# Bill Osceola Memorial Rodeo features full day of competition

**STAFF REPORT**

The Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow wasn't the only big event that took place on the Hollywood Reservation on Feb. 11. Nearby, the annual Bill Osceola Memorial Rodeo drew cowboys and cowgirls from the Seminole Tribe and throughout Indian Country as the event served as a qualifier for the Indian National Finals Rodeo.

Eastern Indian Rodeo Association members who generated impressive rides included Josh Jumper, who finished first in team roping with Dakota Louis, and Kalgary Johns Motlow, who finished first in ladies

barrel racing.

The evening featured the adult rodeo while the afternoon was filled with youngsters learning and competing in the kids rodeo.

Bill Osceola was a leader in the Seminole Tribe. He served as its first president and was instrumental in helping the tribe earn federal recognition in the late 1950s. With the tribe lacking money to fund trips to Washington, D.C., Osceola helped the tribe's financial situation by starting rodeos in Hollywood and opening them and the rodeo arena to the public.

**Bill Osceola Memorial INFR qualifier winners**

- Bareback:** Steven Dewolfe 76
- Saddle Bronc:** Jay Joaquin 76
- Steer Wrestling:** Preston Louis 4.10
- Tie Down Roping:** Rontrey Burkhalter 9.06
- Ladies Breakaway:** Faith Holyan 2.97
- Jr. Breakaway:** Cowboy Down Fund
- Sr. Breakaway:** Leon Monroe 2.91
- Team Roping Header:** Josh Jumper 5.66
- Team Roping Heeler:** Dakota Louis 5.66
- Ladies Barrel Racing:** Kalgary Johns Motlow 16.23
- Jr. Barrel Racing:** Jennie Roper 16.42
- Sr. Team Roping Header:** Larry Willie 7.60
- Sr. Team Roping Heeler:** Casey Green 7.60
- Bull Riding:** Dakota Lewis 80



Justin Billie hits his target in dummy roping during the kids rodeo at the Bill Osceola Memorial Rodeo on Feb. 11 at the Hollywood Rodeo Arena.

Madisyn Osceola competes in the adult portion of the Bill Osceola Memorial Rodeo.

Kevin Johnson



Kevin Johnson

Billy Osceola receives a helping hand off of a sheep from his uncle, Dane Johns, in the mutton busting competition.



Kevin Johnson

A photo of Bill Osceola and his wife, Charlotte, is shown on a large screen overlooking the rodeo arena.



Kevin Johnson

The team roping duo of Naha Jumper, left, and Jobe Johns compete in the adult portion of the rodeo.



Kevin Johnson

Josh Jumper helps Natalia Lang during one of the youth rodeo events.

If you are age 45 years or older, it may be time to talk with a health care professional about colorectal (colon) cancer screening.



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Mike Norvell/Twitter

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Kyle Doney join Florida State University head football coach Mike Norvell and the FSU marching band at the Brighton Field Festival on Feb. 18. "Thank you to the Seminole Tribe of Florida for the incredible hospitality today at the 84th Brighton Field Day Festival. Grateful for Kyle Doney and the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful event," Norvell posted on Twitter.



Beverly Bidney

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard sits on his horse next to FSU's "Osceola and Renegade" team.

## FSU football, band represented at Brighton Field Day



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, FSU head football coach Mike Norvell, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Kyle Doney participate in the "war chant."



Beverly Bidney

The FSU marching band performs for the audience at the Field Day Festival.



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