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Supreme Court upholds ICWA

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

There was a collective sigh of relief across Indian Country on June 15 when the Supreme Court upheld the Indian Child Welfare Act after a series of legal challenges. Many had braced for the worst – either that key ICWA provisions would be struck down or that the 1978 law would be completely overturned.

ICWA sets up a hierarchy of placement for Native American children in foster care and adoption cases. It first prefers the child's extended family, then members of the child's tribe, then another Native American family – even if from a different tribe. The law came about in response to hundreds of thousands of Native American children that had been removed from their homes by adoption agencies and placed with white families or in group settings – often being stripped of their identities and culture.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett, who wrote for the majority in a 7-2 decision, said Congress's power to legislate with respect to Native Americans is "well established and broad," even when it impacts family law, which is an area that is primarily a state responsibility.

♦ See ICWA on page 2A

Tribe mourns passing of President Holt

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — Hundreds of Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal members and others filled the First Seminole Baptist Church in Hollywood on June 12 to pay their respects to President James Holt II. He was remembered for the love he had for his family and the tribe, and as a hard-working man who became a well-known alligator wrestler and sought elected office for many years.

Holt, 44, died June 8, just three days after being sworn in at inauguration day ceremonies. Holt took the oath and embarked on what would have been a four-year term. The position also entails serving as vice-chairman of Tribal Council.

The inauguration marked a triumphant moment for Holt, who first sought elected office in 2014. He lost races along the way but – as speakers pointed out – his determination to serve the tribe as an elected official never waned. His efforts paid off May 8 – election day – when he received 310 votes and won the seat for president.

"He never gave up," Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola said at the service. "I think he touched all of us. He was a good man."

Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall told the audience that Holt was looking forward to his leadership role.

"He was so happy to represent his people," Rep. McCall said.

"He was excited to see what he could do," Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie said.

In fact, while campaigning this year, Holt strengthened his skills to be an elected leader as he earned a certificate in leadership, power and authority from Nova Southeastern University's department

of conflict resolution studies.

The funeral service started at 10 a.m., which was ironically the same time Holt and the rest of the council had been scheduled to meet for its first business briefing of the new term in the auditorium at tribal headquarters. The meeting, and all tribal events for the day, were canceled or postponed.

An overflow crowd attended the 90-minute service. With seating inside the church occupied, some attendees sat outside in rows of chairs under a white tent and watched on two large TV screens while others stood nearby in shade under draping trees. The church is located across Stirling Road from the Council Oak Tree, where Holt and the other elected officials were sworn in just one week earlier.

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard also spoke at the funeral.

Inspiration

In a tribalwide letter sent via email June 9, Chairman Osceola wrote that Holt would "...continue to inspire us in our endeavors..."

"James' life was a testament to his unwavering dedication to the tribe, his willingness to serve, and his indomitable spirit in overcoming challenges," he wrote.



President James Holt II

"His contributions went well beyond his unique capabilities as an alligator wrestler, which had earned him recognition both nationally and internationally. He devoted himself to the betterment of the Seminole Tribe and the wellbeing of its members.

"His humble attitude, kindness, and guidance will be greatly missed by all who had the honor of knowing him. As we mourn this tremendous loss, we must remember that James' legacy and the impact he had on the hearts and lives of those around him shall

never be forgotten."

Pastors Paul Buster and Josh LeadingFox led the service. With a guitar in hand, Buster sang a gentle song titled "Alligator Man," an homage to Holt's longtime work as an alligator wrestler.

"He was a big boy. I've seen him throw gators around," Councilman Osceola said.

A dozen years ago, Holt and his brother, Clinton, founded the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition (FAWC). They are also featured in the 2020 alligator wrestling documentary "Halpate," which garnered coverage in the New Yorker magazine.

Often tangling with alligators in front of non-Native audiences, Holt used the opportunity not only as a form of entertainment and entrepreneurship, but also

education. In a description about FAWC on the organization's website, Holt noted how the events provide an opportunity to tell part of the historic aspect of Seminoles survival and how they captured alligators and brought them back to their camps as a source of food during their wars against the U.S. government.

Church, family, cattle

LeadingFox, who has been pastor of the Immokalee First Seminole Baptist Church for the past 12 years, said he had a special friendship with Holt because they grew up in the same town – Pawnee, Oklahoma – and played the same sports for the local high school – football and wrestling.

LeadingFox talked about the importance of church, family and cattle in Holt's life.

He emphasized Holt's dedication to his family and tribe, noting that he worked several years in his grandfather Jack Henry Motlow's cattle business on the Big Cypress Reservation.

Working in family cattle and under the tutelage of his uncle David "Bob" Motlow helped Holt learn the importance of hard work, LeadingFox said.

Cattle wasn't the only area that Holt learned from his elders. More than 50 years ago, Jack Motlow established the Trail Indian Independent Baptist Church. He and "Gramma Mary Motlow" were among the church members who brought Sunday services, meals and fellowship to Seminole and Miccosukee tribal members who lived along Tamami Trail, LeadingFox said. In 2006, Holt was ordained as a deacon at the church. In the same year, he was hired as youth development coordinator for the tribe's newly-chartered Boys & Girls Clubs.

♦ See PRESIDENT HOLT on page 5A

Donna Frank makes sure tribe's sweetgrass culture won't fade away

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Donna Frank is on a mission to save a part of Seminole culture that is dear to her; gathering sweetgrass and making baskets.

At 64, Frank has the stamina to find and pick sweetgrass among fields of saw palmetto and scrub in the heat of the Florida summer sun. Dressed in a large straw hat and patchwork skirt with protective leggings underneath, Frank seeks out and quickly assembles bundles of the sweetgrass.

"I don't want this knowledge to be buried with me," she said. "I'm the only one gathering sweetgrass right now and I want to make sure others learn how to do it."

Sweetgrass is the fiber that creates iconic Seminole baskets and Frank hopes to revitalize the art form.

Frank recently led picking expeditions



Beverly Bidney

Donna Frank holds freshly picked sweetgrass in an Immokalee field May 25.

in Immokalee and in an area north of Okeechobee. She also taught basket-making classes in Immokalee and Tampa with plans to do more during the rainy season this summer.

Due to development and trespass issues, Frank said sweetgrass is getting harder to find and the tribe is losing locations where they used to pick.

On May 25, she brought a group to some shrub land adjacent to the Immokalee Reservation and taught the participants how to find and pick the sweetgrass.

"You brush it with your hand, like hair, and then pull," she said. "The brown part will stay in the ground and the green part comes out easily."

New generation learns

Lauren Posada, 21, hadn't picked sweetgrass for about six years. The last time she picked she went with her grandmother Linda Beletso, mother Lorraine Posada and sister Lindsey into the woods on the Immokalee Reservation. Her grandmother and mother are both basket makers.

"I was excited to come out here today," Posada said. "I don't know how to make baskets yet, but I have to start learning now so when I am older I can teach it to younger kids. If I'm going to make baskets, I want to know where the sweetgrass came from and how to pick it."

During the dry winter months, good sweetgrass is difficult to get; it is harder and more brittle. Rainy weather makes for lush and pliable sweetgrass.

But a picking trip isn't just for picking; there is also a sense of history and camaraderie among the participants in the fields.

Reina Micco, of the Brighton Reservation, brought her children Giselle and Kobe to the expedition north of Okeechobee on June 13. Although Micco has made baskets, it was the first time any of them picked sweetgrass.

"I never picked before today, so my kids are doing it earlier than I did," Micco said. "When they see a basket, now they know where it starts and all the work that's put into making it."

The site was daunting; it was overgrown with shrubs and weeds as well as plenty of saw palmetto. Sweetgrass thrives under the saw palmetto, so a site with a lot of the short palmetto plants should have an abundance of sweetgrass.

"This sandy terrain with the saw palmetto is perfect for sweetgrass," Frank said. "We call it sugar sand. The sweetgrass lays down at night with the weight of the dew. In the morning it rises up with the sun."

The pickers high-stepped over the shrubs and made their way deep into the heart of the site, which is located off of narrow dirt roads in the middle of undeveloped land.

"I came here because baskets are a big part of our culture and I wanted to know how to pick the sweetgrass," said Giselle Micco, 17. "If you have the passion and want to make baskets, it isn't a problem to come out here and pick your own sweetgrass."

"It makes me feel a connection to our ancestors."

"I wanted to learn how to pick because my ancestors knew when and how to pick the sweetgrass," said Kobe Micco, 15. "They knew what they were looking for but I can't imagine it was as easy for them as it is for us. We were told where the location is, so it was easy for us to come and get some."

Tampa Culture coordinator Herbert Jim organized the Okeechobee trip for Tampa residents. After the basket class Frank taught, young adults in the class wanted to learn how to gather the grass. Tampa residents Anthony Joe, Joshua Smith and McKenna Smith met the group at the site.

After the picking trips, Frank likes to demonstrate how to wash and dry the grass. In Immokalee there was a water spigot and hose, but in Okeechobee there wasn't.

After the Immokalee group had their bundles of sweetgrass, Frank showed them how to wash the dirt off the grass with dish detergent and a bleach in a large tub. Then it



Beverly Bidney

Donna Frank teaches teenager Kobe Micco how to locate and pick sweetgrass.

is laid out to dry in the sun.

Once the sweetgrass is dry, it is ready to use. During a basket-making class in Immokalee on May 30, Frank showed eight students how to gather a small bundle together – about the width of a pinkie finger – and attach it to the palmetto fiber base with embroidery or crochet thread.

First, the thread is strengthened and preserved by pulling it over a chunk of beeswax. Then the thread is used to sew the bundle to the fiber base. Felt can also be used

as a base, but Frank chooses to use fiber.

"I don't want to use processed materials to do something my mother taught me," she said, "but you are the artist, you can do what you want."

Frank taught the class how to make the two-step stitch to attach the bundle first to the base, then once the bundle has made a complete revolution around the base, to other bundles and eventually a completed basket.

♦ See SWEETGRASS on page 5A

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Editorial

Supreme Court was sensibly conservative on tribal rights

• Noah Feldman

Justice Amy Coney Barrett’s majority opinion for the Supreme Court in *Haaland v. Brackeen* is conservative in the good, old-fashioned sense of the word. In upholding the Indian Child Welfare Act, the court reaffirmed precedent and declined an invitation to revolutionize the law with a reactionary constitutional holding. Along the way, Barrett demonstrated a style of doctrinal confidence and aphoristic clarity reminiscent of her old boss, Justice Antonin Scalia. The opinion marks a step in her bid to inherit Scalia’s role as the leading conservative voice on the court.

Meanwhile, in a separate concurrence joined by the court’s two most liberal members, Justice Neil Gorsuch continued his laudable effort to tell the truth about the history of U.S. oppression of Native Americans in the court’s official records, known as the U.S. Reports.

The conservative judicial revolution isn’t over, not by a long shot. Expect further conservative activism in the days to come. And Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote separately to suggest that the court might still in the future strike down some of ICWA’s key provisions as violating the equal protection clause.

Nonetheless, the decision in *Haaland v. Brackeen* can tell you something about what a sane conservative court could look like.

The provisions of the ICWA at stake in the case essentially require that, when a Native American child needs an adoptive placement, the state court considering the issue place the child with an Indian family member if possible, or failing that, with a fellow tribal member or at least an American Indian. A non-Indian family is the final resort.

As Gorsuch pointed out, the law, enacted in 1978, was designed as a very

partial repair to the terrible history of Native American children being forcibly taken from their families. The practice started in the 19th century with mass placement of Native kids in boarding schools designed to rob them of their culture, and continued through the 1970s with forcible legal separations — and adoptions by White parents — that were thinly justified by the excuse that children would be better off if taken from their parents.

The parties in the *Brackeen* case challenged the adoption provisions of ICWA in two ways: by claiming that the law was outside Congress’s constitutional authority to pass in the first place; and by asserting that the law is racially discriminatory in that it treats Native American children differently from White children and Native American adoptive parents differently from White adoptive parents.

Barrett firmly rejected the notion that Congress lacked the power to legislate for the welfare of Native American children. Relying on caselaw, Barrett wrote that Congress’s power in the field was “muscular,” subject only to the limitations placed by the Constitution. (In a Scaliaian touch, she quipped that “like the rest of its legislative powers,” Congress’s authority “must derive from the Constitution, not the atmosphere.”)

Responding to the suggestion that family law is always a matter for states, not the federal government, Barrett called the argument “a non-starter,” noting that “the Constitution does not erect a firewall around family law.” And as to the claim that Congress can legislate with regard to American Indians collectively but not individually? A “dead-end” — because of contrary precedent.

In a particularly sharp retort to the parties who wanted to limit Congress’s power, Barrett made short shrift of their claim that state-run family courts could not be made to obey federal law. “This argument runs headlong into the Constitution,” she

wrote, citing the supremacy clause of the Constitution. “End of story.”

When it came to the potentially most revolutionary aspect of the case, the argument that ICWA racially discriminates in violation of equal protection, Barrett declined to address the issue. Instead, the court held that the parties lacked standing to raise the issue on technical grounds.

The effect was to leave the issue for another day, provided four justices (the number required for the court to take a case) are ever prepared to take it up. Kavanaugh’s concurrence signals he would vote to consider it. But Gorsuch’s hints he would not — which means it would be up to Barrett or Chief Justice Roberts to provide the third and fourth votes alongside Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito.

That might not happen. In this opinion, Barrett, who has adopted kids of her own (as does Roberts), showed legal mastery, common sense and judicial flair — as well as respect for the basic, precedent-based structure of the relationship between the federal government, the tribes and the states.

The court’s conservative judicial revolution is ongoing, and I expect to see more radical decisions on issues like abortion, affirmative action, the environment and church and state. But the *Brackeen* case offers a glimpse of what can happen when the conservative Gorsuch is guided by his heart and the conservative Barrett is guided by traditional conservative legal values like judicial restraint.

The practical takeaway is that ICWA is safe for now, and potentially for a long time to come. That’s good news for tribes — and for the legal continuity that comes from respecting precedent.

Noah Feldman is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist and a professor of law at Harvard University.

Brackeen v. Haaland: A moment for our children, our culture, our future

• Levi Rickert

Last Thursday will be one of those memorable days for many Native Americans, myself included. It was similar to those days when you remember exactly where you were the moment when something monumental happened — when the Challenger spacecraft exploded shortly after takeoff, for example, or, for some of us elders, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.

I will remember where I was when I heard the news of the much anticipated U.S. Supreme Court *Brackeen v. Haaland* decision. I was in Detroit on the 70th floor of the Renaissance Center with our staff reporter Neely Bardwell in the Marriot’s presidential suite, getting ready to interview U.S. Census Bureau Director Robert J. Santos. My phone flashed. It was my business partner, Brian Edwards, texting me two monumental words: “ICWA stands.”

As I took in those words and the panoramic backdrop of the Motor City, I knew that this morning would be one I would always remember. It was one of those incredible moments we experience in life.

I wasn’t alone. My phone rang and buzzed as the significance of the momentous decision reverberated across Indian Country. This was, in the eyes of many tribal leaders, a lawsuit that was the biggest threat to tribal sovereignty in a generation.

Over the next 45 minutes or so, I conducted my interview with Census Director Santos, who is a remarkable story in his own right. After we wrapped up, I opened my email: It was filled with statements from tribal leaders and emails from everyday ordinary Native folks. The overwhelming emotions in virtually all of the messages were gratitude and relief.

A week before at the National Congress of American Indians mid-year convention at the Mystic Lake Casino Resort — on the homelands of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community — I had felt the apprehension and fear in the atmosphere. Tribal leaders discussed the threat an unfavorable ruling would be to tribal sovereignty.

Late last year, the Native American Rights Fund Executive John Echohawk (Pawnee) reacted to the oral argument hearing made in November at the Supreme Court in an interview with me: “We’re all really very concerned, because their basic argument is that Congress did not have authority to pass the Indian Child Welfare Act. And if somehow that limits the authority of Congress to enact legislation relating to tribes, then we’re concerned that it could impact other laws that Congress has passed to help tribes as well. It could really jeopardize all of federal Indian law and tribal sovereignty.”

So, the threat was real. Funded in part by Goldwater Institute, a right-wing think tank that believes it knows better than tribes about what is good for Native American children, *Brackeen v. Haaland* attempted to dismantle the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978. ICWA was enacted by Congress and signed into law by President Jimmy Carter to prevent the unwarranted removal of Indian children from their families and tribal communities in welfare and adoption court proceedings.

Brackeen v. Haaland was full of complexities as demonstrated throughout the 133-page decision released on Thursday. In addition to the question of whether Congress had the authority to enact the ICWA, threaded throughout the case was the question of whether American Indians and Alaska Natives are considered a race or a political entity because tribes are sovereign nations.

The threat to taking the right of Native American families or tribes to decide what is best for their children was real.

Justice Neil Gorsuch, who has proven to be a defender of Indian law and sovereignty since joining the court, did not disappoint on Thursday. He joined with other justices in the 7-2 decision, and wrote a concurring opinion that defended ICWA strongly.

“The Indian Child Welfare Act did not emerge from a vacuum,” Gorsuch wrote. “It came as a direct response to the mass removal of Indian children from their families during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s by state officials and private parties. That

practice, in turn, was only the latest iteration of a much older policy of removing Indian children from their families—one initially spearheaded by federal officials with the aid of their state counterparts nearly 150 years ago. In all its many forms, the dissolution of the Indian family has had devastating effects on children and parents alike. It has also presented an existential threat to the continued vitality of Tribes—something many federal and state officials over the years saw as a feature, not as a flaw. This is the story of ICWA. And with this story, it pays to start at the beginning.”

Gorsuch puts into perspective that most Americans never ponder about Native Americans. Our children have been the fodder of a system that sought to destroy the fabric of families for the better part of two centuries. That system has left a lasting legacy of historical trauma.

The *Brackeen v. Haaland* ruling was a huge and significant victory for those 500 plus tribes, 60 Native American organizations, and our allies that defended our right to raise our children. More than that, it was a victory for our children, our culture and our future.

Some two hours after SCOTUS issued its opinion on Thursday, my business partner texted me again. It was a statement from President Joe Biden that said: “Our Nation’s painful history looms large over today’s decision. In the not-so-distant past, Native children were stolen from the arms of the people who loved them. They were sent to boarding schools or to be raised by non-Indian families—all with the aim of erasing who they are as Native people and tribal citizens. These were acts of unspeakable cruelty that affected generations of Native children and threatened the very survival of Tribal Nations. The Indian Child Welfare Act was our Nation’s promise: never again.”

I teared up. It was another moment in a day full of them. I will remember them all for a very long time.

Thayék gde nwéndëmen - We are all related.

Levi Rickert is publisher and editor of nativenewsonline.net, which is where this editorial appeared.

Grant to provide better internet, new technology

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

The Seminole Tribe has been awarded a \$500,000 federal grant to assist with an ongoing goal to expand high-speed internet access and improve technology across the reservations. The multiyear initiative is being led by the tribe’s Information Technology Department.

The tribe was one of 10 tribes that benefitted from the Department of Commerce’s latest round of \$5 million in grants (announced in May) as part of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s tribal broadband connectivity program. The grant round is included in nearly \$2 billion that has been awarded to 157 tribes through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law so far.

Laurie Gagner, the tribe’s IT director, said the \$500,000 awarded to the tribe will first provide equipment and training for the Education Department.

“While this particular grant will primarily help the Education Department, it will also provide training services and equipment for the seniors and community at large,” she said. “The schools have a more immediate need to get set up for the new school year, so there is an urgency there, however this grant was awarded to benefit the whole tribe.”

Thommy Doud, the tribalwide preschool director, was involved in the grant application process to acquire classroom smart boards, computers and training. A smart board is an interactive tool for teachers and students that

allows users to edit and annotate directly on a screen using a stylus or a finger.

“Participation in this grant will afford the Seminole Tribe of Florida an opportunity to link tradition and culture with technology as we continue our mission to provide our youngest tribal students with the knowledge and tools needed to achieve their life goals,” Doud said in an email to the Tribune.

Meanwhile, Gagner said the tribe has also applied for two other major grants to help pay for monopole towers, which are designed to improve cellular and wireless connectivity across the reservations.

“The tribe is in the first phase of building tribally owned monopole towers,” Gagner said. “Construction is planned to begin this year, and then work will follow to install an intra-reservation high-speed fiber network that will provide connectivity to tribal buildings and member homes.”

The tribal broadband connectivity program is a nearly \$3 billion grant program that is part of the Biden administration’s “Internet for All Initiative,” through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (\$2 billion) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (\$980 million). The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law designates \$65 billion in funding for connectivity projects across the country.

“There is a lot of federal funding available for these types of projects, so we are trying for them all, as every bit helps,” Gagner said. “The Tribal Council has been very supportive of [these projects] and we are all looking forward to better services on the reservations.”

Tribes make historic co-management agreements with Oregon

FROM OREGON PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Two tribes in Oregon made historic agreements with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on June 16 that affirm the rights of their members to hunt, fish, trap and gather under tribal, rather than state licenses. The agreements apply to subsistence and ceremonial activities, not commercial enterprises.

“There will be a shift where tribal members already participating under a state framework will instead participate under a tribal framework,” Davia Palmeri, acting deputy director for fish and wildlife programs

at ODFW, said.

Four tribes now operate under such agreements — The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (CLUSI), Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians and the Coquille Indian Tribe.

Siletz Chairman Delores Pigsley compared the moment to one in 1977, when Siletz regained federal recognition of its sovereignty, over two decades after termination.

“This agreement is probably as meaningful as restoration itself,” Chairman Pigsley told the commissioners.

NCAI convention to be held in New Orleans

PRESS RELEASE

The National Congress of American Indians will hold its 80th annual convention and marketplace Nov. 12-17 in New Orleans. The event is scheduled to include tribal leaders, NCAI members, Native youth and partners from across Indian Country with

opportunities to focus on critical issues and develop strategy. Also, attendees and the general public can browse the marketplace that will feature a variety of booths.

The convention will be held at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

For more information visit ncai.org.

◆ ICWA From page 1A

Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, considered the court’s most consistent supporter of Native American rights, used a separate concurring opinion to emphasize the law’s value.

“The dissolution of the Indian family has had devastating effects on children and parents alike. It has also presented an existential threat to the continued vitality of Tribes — something many federal and state officials over the years saw as a feature, not as a flaw,” wrote Gorsuch, who was joined in part by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

“I would like to applaud the justices of the Supreme Court for recognizing the unique relationship that exists between the United States government and the Native nations that have always called this land home,” Stan Wolfe (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians), the Seminole Tribe’s Tribal Court director, said in a statement to the Tribune. “Strong cultural and family connections is what has kept our people alive and well throughout all the attempts by the U.S. government to assimilate us into their society.”

Wolfe said, however, that Indian Country should remain cautious, as more challenges to the law would undoubtedly come.

“Until that time, the Seminole Tribal Court will continue to strengthen our already strong relationship with the Florida dependency courts, helping to educate the system on ICWA and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.”

For several years, Tribal Court has maintained a relationship with family court judge Jose Izquierdo, who serves in the 17th Judicial Circuit Court of Florida, to conduct dependency hearings at tribal headquarters.

‘Massive victory’

Three non-Indian couples and three states, led by Texas, in an aggregated case that became known as *Haaland v. Brackeen*, had challenged ICWA. The plaintiffs contended

the law was unconstitutional based on race. The case came to the Supreme Court from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, where part of the law was upheld and part was held unconstitutional. The complex ruling was 325 pages long with opinions from six judges.

Tribes and their supporters argued that the law is based on political distinctions, not racial ones.

“Today’s decision is a massive victory for Native children, Native families, and the future of Native peoples,” the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), said in a June 15 statement. “The court’s decision affirmed that ICWA is constitutional, puts the best interests of Native kids first, and is grounded in tribal sovereignty. This ruling respects the work that tribal nations have done for millennia to ensure Native kids stay connected to their families, communities and cultures whenever possible.”

Upholding ICWA’s provisions has been a cornerstone of NICWA’s advocacy work for many years.

“Not only will this ruling allow Indian Country to continue to advocate for the best interests of Native children, but it also reaffirms what we have said and known all along: tribal nations are sovereign nations,” the NICWA statement said. “For too long, ICWA’s opponents have used cases like *Haaland v. Brackeen* to try to undermine tribal sovereignty. The justices have sent a clear message that these biased, ahistorical attacks have no legal foundation and will not be tolerated. We hope this decision will lay to rest the political attacks, but let this case show that Indian Country and its many bipartisan allies are united in defense of Native children and of tribal sovereignty.”

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel A. Alito Jr. dissented, with Alito writing that the majority “decides one question after another in a way that disserves the rights and interests of these children and their parents, as well as our Constitution’s division of federal and state authority.” Thomas and Alito wrote that ICWA is unconstitutional.

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The tribe's elected officials gather at the Council Oak Tree following their inauguration June 5. From left to right are Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., President James Holt II, Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers, Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge and Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall.

Tribe’s leadership celebrated on inauguration day

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe celebrated its 2023 class of tribal leaders at inauguration day ceremonies June 5 under a large enclosed tent near the Council Oak Tree at the Seminole Classic Casino on the Hollywood Reservation. The tribe’s election day for its Tribal Council and Seminole Tribe

of Florida Inc. (STOFI) board members was held May 8.

The celebratory mood would be brief, however, as newly sworn-in STOFI president and Tribal Council vice-chair, James Holt II, died unexpectedly on June 8. He was 44. (See story 1A) Holt and seven others were formally recognized at inauguration day festivities.

LaVonne Rose, tribal secretary, served

as master of ceremonies. Bureau of Indian Affairs Superintendent Kara John (Seneca Nation of Indians) led the swearing in ceremony. The event was also live streamed on Facebook Live and on Zoom for those who weren’t in attendance.

“What a beautiful day it is to exercise our sovereignty and certify our election results,” Rose said as the event began.

Incumbents returning for additional

terms are Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Hollywood Councilman Christopher Osceola, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall and Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers.

President Holt joined Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge as the tribe’s new leaders, replacing President Mitchell Cypress and Brighton Board Rep. Helene Buster.

Sallie Tommie read a letter to the audience that she said Cypress wrote for the occasion. She said Cypress, who has served the tribe in various capacities since 1979, wasn’t able to be at the ceremony because of a prior commitment to attend his 1973 Chilocco Indian School class reunion in Newkirk, Oklahoma.

“It has been a great privilege for me to have been given the opportunity to serve the Seminole Tribe of Florida,” the letter read. “We are changing. We are expanding into the 21st century at a fast and furious rate.”

In the letter, Cypress said that the Tribal Council and STOFI board were moving forward with a “collaborative spirit to benefit the needs of tribal members no matter where they live.”

“In the face of crisis situations, together we have shown that whenever there is unity of purpose and the willingness to strive for consensus, we have the capacity to act and address any situation,” the letter read.

Buster was the Brighton board representative for four years. She’s also served in other capacities at the tribe.

“Congratulations to everyone up here. We all have to work hard and do what we need to do to serve our people,” Buster said. “That’s always been one of the biggest things in my life – to be of service to our tribal members.”

In their own words

After Tommie and Buster spoke, the new council and board were sworn-in and Rose called each elected official to the stage to speak. The following are excerpts from each, in the order that they spoke.

Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie: “I want to thank the tribal members who voted in the election. Whether you were a first-time voter or you’ve been voting for a lifetime for the betterment of our tribe, I want to say thank you. Over the last few years I’ve witnessed a more active civil engagement of our people. We are more informed, we are more vocal, from the youngest to the eldest.”

Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers: “Let us take a moment. Close your eyes if you will. And remember that we are in the exact place where it all began for us as the unconquered Seminole Tribe of Florida. It is acknowledgment of the gratitude that comes to my heart when I think of the magnitude of this moment [and] of the position we have each been honored to accept today.”

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard: “The common goal of what we do is to do what’s best for the tribe and for each and every one within the tribe. We try to make things better, so tomorrow is better than today. When you speak of the Seminole Tribe throughout Indian Country – you best believe everyone in the nation knows who we are.”

Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge: “There are no words that can express how proud and thankful I am for where I come from. I’d like to thank the Brighton and Tampa community for coming out on May 8 and electing me and putting their trust in me. I’m going to make sure I give my best going forward, because the community I came from gave me so much.”

♦ See INAUGURATION on page 5A



The Tribal Council, from left to right, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, President James Holt II, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. The president serves as vice chairman of the council.



With the council to his right and the board to his left, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. speaks to the audience.

◆ **PRESIDENT HOLT**
From page 1A

“He was a humble Seminole man who worked hard all his life,” LeadingFox said. “From working cattle alongside his grandfather, Rev. Jack Henry Motlow, as a young child, to getting sworn in as president of the Seminole Tribe of Florida Inc. as a man of his people. He inspired us to be the best version of ourselves as a tribe.”

The Poore family said they are working on establishing a leadership scholarship in memory of President James Lester Holt II and working with the superintendent of

the Pawnee High School. His friends of 30 years, including Oklahoma State Rep. Ty Burns (House District 35), attended the service. Burns said he would like to name a bridge or highway in his memory.

Holt leaves behind his parents Leoma and Dana Poore of the Big Cypress Reservation and a brother Clinton Holt of the Hollywood Reservation, and his sons: Dana James Holt of Hollywood Reservation and Ty Holt of Labelle, and daughters: Mackenzie Holt, Alyssa and Stephanie and his partner and family for 16 years Sylvia Baker of her daughters and sons and grand babies and many cousins, nephews, nieces and friends.

◆ **INAUGURATION**
From page 4A

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola: “We didn’t get here by accident. We got here through a lot of hard work, dedication and determination. There are a lot of great people that sat up here before we probably were even around, and made this tribe what it is today, and the sacrifices that they made got us where we are today. Part of our responsibility is building relationships with one another to work in the best interests of the Seminole Tribe.”

Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall: “Today is a great day for STOFI and its shareholders. With over 30 tribal members seeking elected positions, our people not only showed up to represent, but they showed up to have their voice heard. I am proud to stand before you all, not only as a board member of our company, but as a tribal member fulfilling her mission to come back and work for her people.”

President James Holt II: “I am truly honored for this opportunity to serve our people. To the ladies and gentlemen on the board and council: I’m very excited to work with all of you. We have a fantastic opportunity here before us – to work together as a team to find a positive impact for our tribal members. The decisions we make as a leadership body, collectively, will affect us for the next seven generations.”

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr.: “Thank you for your continued support and sacrifice. I humbly take this position serving other people. Our tribe has changed, our tribe has evolved, because of what my grandfather, his family, his friends did back then. They didn’t let us be terminated. They wouldn’t allow it. They didn’t accept it. We remain unconquered for one reason: because of the sacrifice of our people, our ancestors. So the best thing we can do is to honor them and keep pushing forward for the betterment of the tribe.”



BIA Superintendent Kara Johns, at right, swears in STOFI board representatives (from left to right) Christine McCall (Hollywood), Bryan Arledge (Brighton), Nadine Bowers (Big Cypress) and President James Holt II.



President James Holt II speaks to the audience at the ceremony.



The Seminole Tribe of Florida Inc.'s board of directors gathers at the Council Oak Tree. From left to right are Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers, President James Holt II, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall and Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge. The chairman serves as vice president of the board.

◆ **SWEETGRASS**
From page 1A

Most of the participants had no experience making baskets, but Rhonda Nunez made one when she was about 11 or 12 years old. She said it was difficult to pick it up again.

“It’s been a long time since I even attempted to make one of these,” she said. “Donna used to be our culture teacher back in the day.”

“I think it’s really cool,” said Ava Nunez, Rhonda’s daughter. “I just want to learn about our culture and how we used to do things.”

Sally Osceola, who came to the class from Trail, made a couple of baskets years ago.

“It’s coming back to me,” she said. “Getting it started is the hardest part and

then manipulating it into the shape you want is also hard.”

Amy Yzaguirre is an accomplished seamstress and makes patchwork. She learned how to make baskets as a child, but has always preferred sewing.

“I didn’t think I had the patience for it as a child,” Yzaguirre said. “I’m more patient now, but my hands hurt. It’s a beautiful art and I love it. I’m trying to better my understanding of it, I’m already in awe of it.”

Frank said she is always proud of the people who come out to pick sweetgrass and sweat alongside her.

“I hope they take away some pride and a little bit of the past that’s been lost,” Frank said. “By doing activities like this, we are teaching and preserving our culture.”



Donna Frank demonstrates how to attach a bundle of sweetgrass to a palm fiber base during a class in Immokalee.



During a harvesting outing in Immokalee, Donna Frank, center, shows Lauren Posada how to tie a bundle of sweetgrass with a strip of fabric while Lorraine Posada gathers her bundle of sweetgrass.



Donna Frank holds up a fiber base of what will become a basket as she shows participants in a basket-making class May 30 in Immokalee how to attach sweetgrass to get a basket started. Watching, from left to right, are Marissa Sanchez, Amy Yzaguirre, Cecilia Pequeno, Amy Garza and Demi Garza.



Herbert Jim, Tampa culture and language coordinator, left, and Kobe Micco find plenty of sweetgrass in a field north of Okeechobee.



Baskets on display in Immokalee along with tied up bundles of sweetgrass in the background.



America Martinez picks sweetgrass in a welcome bit of shade in an Immokalee field.

Native Learning Center turns 15

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe’s Native Learning Center (NLC) in Hollywood marked 15 years in operation this year. It’s known as an established organization that’s unique in Indian Country.

The NLC develops curriculum and provides free seminars, trainings and technical assistance, both in-person and online, to Native Americans and those working with tribes. It features courses about financial wellness, grant education, how to establish a nonprofit, entrepreneurship, and an extensive amount of housing-related content.

The NLC functions under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA), with an Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Office of Native American Programs (ONAP).

Prior to its launch in April 2008, the tribe was receiving funds from HUD to help build homes for tribal members on the reservations. But as the tribe’s wealth grew, its members became ineligible for the money because income levels exceeded HUD’s threshold.

Then-Chairman Mitchell Cypress and Holly Tiger, who was a liaison to then-President Richard Bowers and also the tribe’s housing director, conceived a way for the tribe to continue to receive HUD money – not for home building – but as a way to provide an ongoing service to its own tribal members and to those across Indian Country.

Cypress and Tiger worked with HUD to designate the NLC as a “model activity program” under NAHASDA with a recurring \$1 million annual grant. The same year, the tribe purchased the NLC building at 6363 Taft Street, and HUD funds would later be awarded for its renovation. Today, the NLC occupies the first two floors of the building, while other tribal departments are located on the third floor.

Two years after the NLC was green



Damon Scott
Kyle Doney, left, and Georgette Palmer Smith are the NLC’s deputy executive director and executive director, respectively.

lighted, in 2010, NLC executive director Georgette Palmer Smith (Kiowa/Choctaw) was hired, and in 2011, NLC deputy executive director and tribal member Kyle Doney joined her. The two are the longest running employees among the NLC’s staff of six.

15 years of growth

Smith said the NLC continues to evolve and expand its reach. She said her staff maintains a database of about 7,000 contacts across Indian Country and counting.

“The growth of what we offer has been incredible,” she said. “In 2010, we offered three webinars and now we do close to 80 a year.”

The NLC launched its e-learning webinar platform system “Kerretv,” the Creek word for learning, in 2013, where it has since hosted hundreds of webinars. Smith said in-person trainings have increased over time as well.

In 2018, the NLC hosted its first “Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference,” attracting tribal officials, tribal housing departments, utility staff, tribal code officers, construction staff and others to Hollywood to share up-to-date information and best practices on sustainability, energy security and energy sovereignty issues.

In 2017, tribal energy independence efforts received extra attention by Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. soon after Hurricane Irma caused significant power outages on the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations. Chairman Osceola subsequently launched an energy committee to take a broad look at renewable energy and sustainability projects that the tribe could embark on, which included the annual conference.

The fifth such conference in February drew 110 in-person attendees and presenters, with another 60 participating virtually. The sixth is scheduled for February 2024.

In addition, the NLC launched its “Hoporenkv” podcast, the Creek word for wisdom, in 2020, just as the Covid-19 pandemic was first setting in.

“Our podcast has become very popular,” Smith said. “If you Google ‘Native American podcasts,’ we come up in the top 10 or 15 [in the search results].”

The podcasts are generally about 10 to 20 minutes long and cover topics that are designed to be interesting and different, but that also relate to housing issues.

Model for others

Smith said tribal officials have reached out to the NLC over the years for advice on how to establish similar initiatives of their own. Indian Country’s second HUD-approved “model activity program,” albeit a smaller version, was recently established in California by the Pala Band of Mission Indians.

In 2019, Pala leaders and officials had visited the NLC to get technical, compliance and marketing assistance to jumpstart its group.

“They’re kind of our sister learning center,” Smith said. “They had the same situation as the Seminole Tribe’s – income levels began to surpass the HUD threshold.”

For more information and to access NLC webinars and podcasts, go to nativelearningcenter.com.



Courtesy photo

From left to right are NLC staff members Kyle Doney, Louis Porter Jr., Ouista Atkins, Gaylene Jacobs, Brooke Warrington and Georgette Palmer Smith outside of the NLC building June 22.



File photo

Attendees from across Indian Country have taken NLC trainings since 2008. This group completed a grant writing training in 2018.

BC community gathers for Father’s Day



Damon Scott

Jacob Osceola Jr. and Cherelee Hall prepare to play bingo at the Big Cypress Father’s Day event June 15 at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.



Damon Scott

Quenton and Maria Cypress enjoy the Big Cypress Father’s Day event June 15 at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.



Damon Scott

Thomas Billie, right, and his granddaughter Tahnia Billie, get into the swing of bingo at the Big Cypress Father’s Day event

Exhibition to feature Everglades art, photos

FROM PRESS RELEASE

FORT LAUDERDALE — History Fort Lauderdale will present “Florida Everglades: River of Grass Reflections” from July 2 through Sept. 10. The summer exhibit will include Tim Forman’s colorful impressionist fine art works with environmental photographs from the venue’s archived collection. The exhibition can be viewed in the art space on the first level of the New River Inn at 231 SW 2nd Ave. in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

“We invite visitors of all ages to experience the majesty of this unique

landscape through the eyes of master oil painting artist Tim Forman and from never-before exhibited photographs,” Patricia Zeiler, executive director of History Fort Lauderdale, said in a statement.

Primarily a self-taught artist, Forman uses field sketches, plein air paintings, and photographs to compose his pieces that are painted in layers with both knife and brush.

History Fort Lauderdale is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with docent guided tours at 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.

For more information call (954) 463-4431 or visit historyfortlauderdale.org



History Fort Lauderdale

“Roseate Pink,” oil on canvas, by Tim Forman.

Poarch Creek Indians’ CFO, wife, die in crash

WAKA (MONTGOMERY, ALA.)

The chief financial officer of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians and his wife were among the four people killed in a three-vehicle crash on the Baldwin Beach Express in Alabama.

Robertsdale police say 64-year-old Tim Speegle and 66-year-old Jeanna Speegle, of Trussville, died of injuries following the crash June 18 in Baldwin County.

Police say one of the drivers, David Colburn, has been charged with multiple counts of manslaughter and DUI with more charges pending.

Police say Colburn was driving an SUV

that hit the back of a pickup truck as they both were heading south on the Baldwin Beach Express. The pickup lost control and crossed the median where it hit the Speegles’ SUV, which was heading north.

Stephanie Bryan, the Tribal Chair and CEO of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, released this statement on the deaths of the Speegles:

“Although it’s hard to find comfort in such a tragic event, I take solace in knowing that Tim and Jeanna are now in their heavenly home, rejoicing together. Their legacy will live on for generations to come, as they both lived life to the fullest and worked hard to help others.”

Charitable works from Hard Rock

Here's a look at recent community involvement from a variety of Hard Rock properties.



Hard Rock

Several Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana team members volunteered for Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Indiana's Women's Build Initiative. "It's a great way to show the strides women can make together to raise funds, build and empower each other under a common cause," the organization posted about the program on Facebook.



Hard Rock

Donations from Bristol Casino: Future Home of Hard Rock team members totaled nearly \$16,000 for local veteran organizations. Checks in the amount of \$7,939 each were presented to the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 39 and VFW Post 6975 at the Virginia casino.



Hard Rock

Plans to build the International Women's Baseball Center in Rockford, Illinois, received a boost from Hard Rock Rockford in June. Aleksandra Micevic, Hard Rock's human resources manager, right, presented a \$2,000 check to the center's board member Rosemary Collins. Micevic told WIFR-TV that the donations came from the casino donation box where players put unused vouchers. Rockford was home of the Rockford Peaches, a professional women's baseball team in the 1940s and 50s. The 1992 movie "A League of Their Own" was based on the Peaches.



Hard Rock

Hard Rock Cafe Miami team members participated in a clean up event at the Julia Tuttle Causeway shoreline in May.



Hard Rock

As part of the Hard Rock Founder's Day celebration in mid-June, Hard Rock Hotel Bali collaborated with the nonprofit Bali Sea Turtle Society for the release of more than 100 turtles into the Indian Ocean following their hatchlings. The event took place on Kuta Beach, where the hotel is located.

Hard Rock Ottawa breaks ground

STAFF REPORT

The Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Ottawa in Ontario broke ground June 6. It is Hard Rock's first hotel-casino in Canada. The Hard Rock Casino Vancouver (in British Columbia) opened in 2013.

Construction of the \$350 million Hard Rock Ottawa is expected to be completed in spring of 2025. The site is located at the existing Rideau Carleton Casino, which is expected to remain open during construction.

Hard Rock Ottawa is expected to feature a 150-room hotel with 22 suites, and a casino with 1,500 slot machines, 40 table games, a sportsbook and a baccarat room. Plans call for 10 restaurants, bars and lounges — including a Council Oak Steakhouse and Hard Rock Cafe. Other amenities include a Hard Rock Live entertainment venue with 1,800 seats and a standing area for 2,200.

"We are excited to be one step closer to bringing our iconic brand and rich music history to the people of Ottawa and the

surrounding region," Jon Lucas, Hard Rock International COO, said in a news release.

Hard Rock officials said the casino-resort would create nearly 1,900 temporary construction jobs and permanent casino-hotel positions.

"The new Hard Rock Hotel & Casino represents a significant investment in the south end of our city," Mark Sutcliffe, Ottawa's mayor, said in the release. "It will create new jobs and build on the existing attraction at Rideau Carleton Casino. It will also be another great tourist attraction in Ottawa."

Rideau Carleton Casino also includes a horse racing track. Helen MacMillan, the casino's general manager, told CTV News Ottawa that racing will continue.

At the groundbreaking event, Hard Rock donated \$20,000 (\$15,000 USD) to the Minwaashin Lodge, a nearby Indigenous women and children's support center.

The Seminole Tribe is the parent entity of Hard Rock International.



Hard Rock

An aerial rendering of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Ottawa.



Hard Rock

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Ottawa donated to the Minwaashin Lodge at the groundbreaking ceremony. The facility in Ottawa provides a range of programs and services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and children who are survivors of domestic and other forms of violence.

Jerry Seinfeld to play Tampa

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Jerry Seinfeld will bring his live standup comedy show to Hard Rock Event Center at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa on Sept. 28 at 8 p.m.

For ticket information visit seminolehardrocktampa.com and Ticketmaster.

Seinfeld's comedy career took off after his first appearance on The Tonight Show

with Johnny Carson in 1981. Eight years later, he teamed up with fellow comedian Larry David to create what was to become the most successful comedy series in the history of television: Seinfeld.

His latest Emmy nominated Netflix projects include Jerry Before Seinfeld and 23 Hours to Kill along with the web series, Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee.

Mummies in Immokalee

PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — Funk-rock band Here Come the Mummies with special guest Perpetual Groove, as part of "The Harmonic Gravity Tour," will perform at Seminole Hotel Immokalee on Nov. 4 at 8 p.m. Tickets for this outdoor concert are available at Ticketmaster.com or at www.moreinparadise.com.

Hospitality veteran named GM at Hard Rock Hotel NY

STAFF REPORT

David Salcfas, who has nearly 40 years of experience in the hospitality industry, has been named general manager of Hard Rock Hotel New York. The 446-room hotel is located in the heart of Midtown Manhattan.

Salcfas previously held several leadership positions at Marriott International, including as an executive committee member. He has worked in catering, events, marketing, operations and sales during his career.

Salcfas's experience in New York includes hotel manager positions at the Ritz-Carlton in the Central Park neighborhood and Marriott Marquis in Times Square.

"We look forward to seeing David further the invaluable contributions made by the hotel in their first year of opening and strengthening our profound commitment to create a positive impact in the communities where we do business," Jon Lucas, chief operating officer for Hard Rock International, said in a June 21 press release.



Hard Rock

David Salcfas

Hard Rock Hollywood wins music award

STAFF REPORT

The Academy of Country Music has recognized the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, which operates the Hard Rock Live entertainment venue, with an industry award in the casino of the year-theater category. The award is presented to an "outstanding theater or showroom within a casino."

It's the first such award for the Hard Rock Hollywood. The Academy of Country Music made the announcement in a news release June 26. The industry awards recognize venues that have "promoted a predetermined number of country music concerts and helped promote country music sales," the release said.

Hard Rock Hollywood's \$100 million, 7,000 seat, Hard Rock Live opened in 2019 as part of a \$1.5 billion property expansion that includes the 450-foot Guitar Hotel. The venue has since hosted many acts, including those in country music, such as Brantley Gilbert, The Judds, Jason Aldean, Kane Brown, Old Dominion, Randy Houser, Elle King and Dustin Lynch.

"This prestigious recognition by the Academy of Country Music is an honor and testament to the incredible work by our team members to provide the most incredible experience to all visitors, artists and fans alike," Jim Allen, chairman of Hard Rock International and CEO of Seminole Gaming, said in a statement June 27.

Those competing with Hard Rock Hollywood for the honor were the Deadwood Mountain Grand (South Dakota), Golden Nugget (Louisiana), Resorts World Theater (Las Vegas) and the Soaring Eagle (Michigan).

The industry award winners are scheduled to be celebrated during the 16th Academy of Country Music Honors event Aug. 23 at the historic Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee.

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SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA

AH-TAH-THI-KI

MUSEUM

A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

Museum working on transfer of oral histories from UF

BY ALEX BANKS
Oral History Coordinator

BIG CYPRESS — For the last several decades, the University of Florida has been preserving and safekeeping hundreds of oral history files, transcripts, and other related documents – many of which pertain to Seminole Tribe history.

Over the last two years, our Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum collections team has been meeting with the university library leadership as well as members of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program team. In these

meetings we’ve been discussing the rights and permissions paperwork of these oral histories, the location and conditions of original master copies, and the logistics of a potential transfer of any and all of these recordings back to the Seminole Tribe.

We are excited to announce that the university has agreed to return the vast majority of these oral histories to our museum – a transfer that will nearly double the size of our oral history collection, as well as add many interviews from the 1960s and 1970s – two decades for which we have very little recorded content. The transfer of digital



The University of Florida.

Courtesy photo

Museum offers teachers free admission in July

FROM PRESS RELEASE

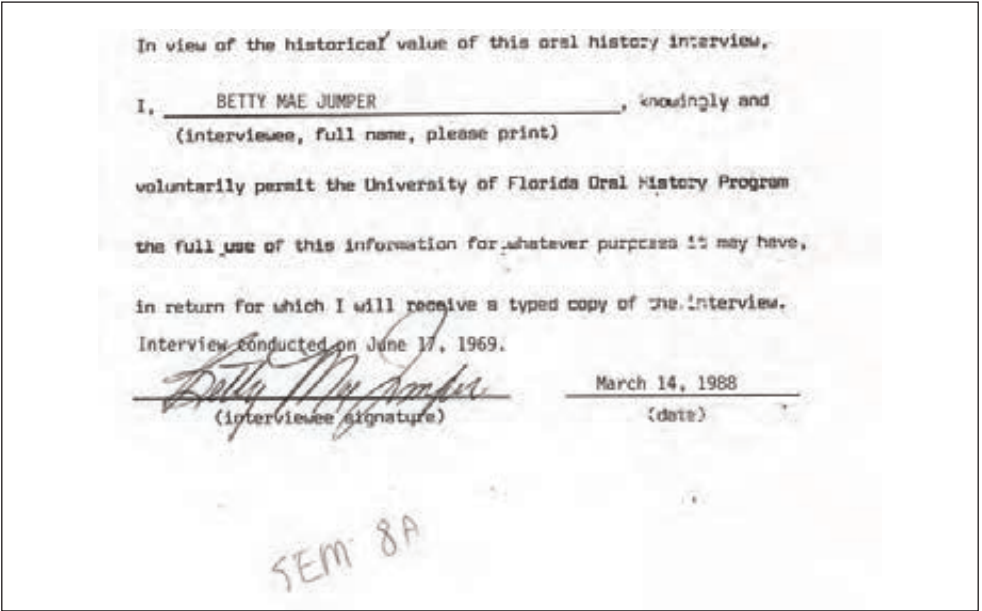
BIG CYPRESS — The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, on the Big Cypress Reservation, will host teachers throughout July for free. “Teacher Appreciation Month” is an opportunity for educators to get familiar with the museum’s galleries and boardwalk at no cost. Up to four guests will receive 50 percent discounted admission.

Learning opportunities on the Big Cypress Reservation range from the history and culture of the Native Americans to the diverse eco-systems of Florida.

“We welcome teachers to come learn about the Seminole Tribe and the Florida Everglades at our accredited museum, and take their excitement back to the classroom. Seminole history is Florida history. We are an incredible resource for teachers and the perfect place for an immersive field trip,” Abena Robinson, the museum’s education coordinator, said in a press release.

Educators can sign up in advance at ahtathiki.com/teachers and bring their school-issued identification the day of the visit. The museum will be closed July 4, but is otherwise open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information about the museum visit ahtathiki.com.



Courtesy photo

An example of an outdated and insufficient consent form in the University of Florida's oral history program.

Youth learn about food prep, safety

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The Integrative Health Department and Hollywood Community Culture Center presented a food preparation and safety class for tribal youth June 15 at Culture’s kitchen in the Howard Tiger Recreation Center. Nicholas Persaud, Environmental Health supervisor, showed the students in the Seminole youth chef summer program the importance of food safety which focused heavily on proper temperatures to cook different foods. He also talked about the importance of preventing cross contamination while preparing different foods.

The program, for ages 6 to 17, features four sessions at the Hollywood kitchen; the final two are scheduled for July 13 and July 27.



Calvin Tiger

Kids chop vegetables after the learning how to use kitchen cutlery properly in the youth chef program June 15 in Hollywood.



Calvin Tiger

Lorraine Posada, Health head cook, at right, shows youth participants how to properly prepare and chop cauliflower for the cauliflower rice stir fry that they prepared.

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

JULY 2023

This month the Collections team is highlighting another piece of pottery we don’t often see in the lab space. Fort Drum Incised or Ticked Rim pottery originates from South Florida (Florida Museum). Found on the Big Cypress Reservation, like our previously highlighted pottery piece from March, the Fort Drum series can also be made from sand, causing it to be very fragile. This particular series of pottery decoration can vary as well. The tick marks can also appear horizontally or parallel to the rim of the vessel. Surprisingly, in this case, the archaeology team found not one but four pieces of this pottery (right). We’ve highlighted the largest piece below.



THPO

The Fort Drum ticked rim style is part of the Glades series of pottery. It dates back to AD 500-700. With the same temper (sand) and paste characteristics as all Glades series pottery, these pieces, collected in 2011, are all gritty with a sand-paper like texture. This Glades series type falls within the initial development of the pottery types called Glades I. The decoration consists of rows of vertical or diagonal short incised lines on the outside edge or just below the rim of the vessel. Unfortunately, the pieces in this sample are very fragile and have lost all of their rims.



THPO



Florida Museum

To learn more about Fort Drum Incised Ticked Rim pottery, or any pottery types found in the Southeast region (Alabama, Florida, Georgia), check out the Florida Museum Ceramic Technology lab. <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/ceramiclab/>
Be sure to look out for our final rare pottery piece in this series later this year!



SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - JULY 2023

TRIBAL REGISTER: THE RED BARN

The Red Barn stands in the heart of the Brighton Reservation, a symbol of the Seminole Tribal cattle program's beginnings, and of the change that came with it. Built around 1941, the Red Barn is one of the oldest standing structures on any STOF reservation. Originally the construction included not only the Red Barn itself, but a water tower, a pole barn, and two concrete water troughs as well. Today only the Red Barn itself remains.

The Red Barn was the center of the Brighton cattle operation at its start, housing the horses needed for the cattlekeepers and importantly serving as the central meeting place for the cattlekeepers. Charlie Micco, the first cattle foreman of the Tribe, kept his camp directly north of the Red Barn so he could be on hand at all times if needed. Just to the east could be found the camp of John Josh, a learned cattle worker who helped start the program. He was elected one of the first three Seminole cattle trustees for the Tribe, alongside Charlie Micco and Willie Gopher. It was in meetings at the Red Barn that the structure of the Seminole Cattle Program was created, a structure that became the foundation for the modern democratic government of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

By the 1960s changes in technology and ranching methods had made the barn obsolete, and the cattle program had moved to its own offices. But while it was no longer needed for its original purpose, the Red Barn quickly became a central meeting ground for the Brighton community. Now open for both formal and informal use, the barn soon hosted tribal meetings, family reunions, birthday parties, and many other functions, continuing its role in Brighton life. It was one of the first sites listed on the Tribal Register of Historic Places, and in 2008 was named to the National Register of Historic Places for its place in Seminole History.



TO LEARN MORE

Visit the Tribal Historic Preservation Office website at stofthpo.com or use the QR code
For more Seminole history resources.
If you want to learn more about the Seminole Cattle Program and it’s history, look for Cowkeeper’s Legacy: A Seminole Story coming soon from the THPO.



Health

HHS roundup: overdose prevention; health exams

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe’s Health and Human Services Department (HHS) enters the summer months with an ongoing concern about opioid overdoses and with advice for tribal members to stay up-to-date with health exams.

HHS executive director Dr. Vandhana Kiswani-Barley said her department continues to educate the tribal community on the dangers of opioid overdose and to be aware of how Narcan can help in emergency situations.

“We’re trying to figure out ways to increase Narcan accessibility so that people can be saved,” she said. “The overall goal is to achieve sobriety and maintain it, but sometimes we’re not as successful as we hope.”

Eligible tribal members can get free Narcan nasal spray kits, which are used to treat a known or suspected opioid overdose emergency. Common types of opioids include fentanyl, oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), morphine and methadone.

Kiswani-Barley said the Seminole Police Department and the tribe’s emergency medical services (EMS) personnel keep Narcan kits on hand. One idea that’s being discussed, she said, is to place Narcan distribution boxes at different points on the reservations, similar to the way college campuses have emergency telephone boxes available for students to call for help.

“We would put them somewhere in the community so people know where they are,”

Kiswani-Barley said. “Sometimes overdoses don’t happen in a home; it could be in a parking lot, for example.”

She said another idea is to distribute Narcan to households where known opioid users reside, but who aren’t actively seeking help.

HHS saw an increase in opioid overdoses during the Covid-19 pandemic and it has continued post-pandemic. Kiswani-Barley said June 21 that out of a handful of overdoses in the previous couple months, three cases had individuals who ended up in an intensive care unit for treatment.

“All of [the overdoses] have been from illicit substances – cocaine, fentanyl. I don’t know if they knew they were taking fentanyl, because it is now being mixed with cocaine,” she said.

Health checkups, new staff

Kiswani-Barley said HHS is also encouraging tribal members to stay connected with their health clinics for annual exams and basic checkups. She said many people skipped such visits during the pandemic.

“It’s not unique to the tribe,” she said. “Everywhere nationwide during the pandemic people didn’t take as much care of themselves or didn’t take medicines as prescribed.”

The result, she said, is that cardiac, kidney, liver, hypertension, obesity and diabetes-related issues worsened. She said post-pandemic, however, there has been a slight uptick in traffic at the tribe’s medical facilities.

Kiswani-Barley also hopes the tribe’s

youth will consider annual exams or basic health checkups.

“People usually come in when they’re older or have an ailment or a disease process that is already in a later stage,” Kiswani-Barley said. “If we could have the younger folks come in routinely as part of the norm, we can find things early on. I can’t stress enough the need for early intervention. Prevention and intervention will increase life expectancy.”

Meanwhile, HHS had added some new staff members to its roster. Kiswani-Barley said the Big Cypress health clinic and the Brighton health clinic both welcomed new nurse practitioners June 26. In addition, the Immokalee health clinic has a new nurse case manager who started June 26. The clinic will also welcome a new nurse practitioner sometime in July.

The new nurse practitioner in Brighton will replace Melanie Mello, who is set to retire in September after 20 years at the tribe, Kiswani-Barley said.

For more information, call the HHS hotline at (833) 786-3458.



Via Facebook

Narcan is used to treat known or suspected opioid overdoses.

Simple steps for a water-wise garden

BY SERGIO GONZALEZ
Environmental Resources Management Dept.

There are so many benefits to starting a home garden. Growing your own fruits and vegetables allows you to save money at the grocery store while you produce your own organic foods that would cost even more at the store to begin with. Spending time outdoors and working in the earth is beneficial to your mood and health. There’s almost a universal draw to being exposed to nature – referred to as biophilia – that can be satisfied by working in your home garden. The entire process of starting garden beds, sowing seeds, and finally harvesting food can be very rewarding. It’s a great way to get the whole family involved and teach children about how plants grow and where food comes from. Growing your own food also reduces your carbon footprint by cutting out all the energy used in getting crops from a far-away farm to a store and then your table.

The many benefits being stated, there are often many challenges associated with having your own food garden. While as Floridians we enjoy a nearly endless growing season, when it comes to individual garden crops, that’s not exactly the case. The summers can be brutally hot, which will wilt many vegetables if they don’t have any shade. Summers are incredibly wet, which can produce problems with mold and fungus. A heavy rain event as fruits are beginning to ripen can cause them to swell up and burst, leaving you with a ruined crop. During the winter and spring, on the other hand, we regularly endure serious droughts.

This is where being “water wise” can help you keep your garden thriving while reducing your impact on the environment. Irrigation is almost always necessary, and any time we water whether it’s from a well or city water, we have an impact on the water table. While one home garden isn’t going to turn Florida into a desert, the combination of thousands of households watering their gardens and yards pulling from the same aquifer can have a massive effect. Here are a few ways to help you use water more efficiently for a happier garden and a healthier environment.

Use a rain gauge. Simple enough. It’s a small tube that collects water, and you read how much water has collected inside it in inches. This helps us prevent overwatering in the summertime. However, because summer rains are “showery” – often fast moving and localized – we can also use our rain gauge to make sure our garden did receive a good soaking. While summer is our wet season, we can get short dry-spells that, combined with 95-degree temperatures and an extreme UV index, can toast your plants like if you were in the desert.

In the winter, or our dry season, we likely need to water more frequently due to the lack of rainfall. During this time of year, irrigation demand can have more pronounced impacts on the water table, which can be very visible in the ponds and wetlands around our communities and in natural areas regionally. Being able to skip watering days, only watering as much as necessary during this time of year is of greater importance for the environment. Also consider that in cooler months when the sun is less intense, you might be able to stretch the time between watering events a little farther apart.

Deploying a rain gauge is easy. Stake one in or near your beds so that you can see how much water the garden has received. Be careful not to put it under cover of a tree or some other obstruction. Check it at least daily and dump out the water that’s collected in it each time so that you know how much water is falling between checks.

Another important factor of being water wise is watering efficiently. While a drip irrigation system (hoses with little holes dripping water directly into the soil) is the most efficient way of watering a garden, many households have sprinkler systems. Deploying a rain gauge or several rain gauges can also be useful to see how well our irrigation system works. You might notice, for example, that the garden receives more water than necessary during a sprinkler cycle and decide to reduce the length of time your system runs. Several rain gauges can be used

to see how evenly your garden is being watered. Some areas may be receiving less water than others. Adjusting your sprinkler heads to distribute water more evenly can also help you reduce how long the sprinklers have to be running to keep the plants happy.

Why else would we want to water efficiently?

Because watering less means we need to fertilize less. Our sandy Florida soils don’t hold water very well, and they also don’t hold nutrients very well. As water percolates through our loose sand, it takes with it the very nutrients that the plants need. This is called nutrient “leeching”. Excessive watering leads to leeching, which leads to having to apply more fertilizer. All the excess fertilizer ends up in our waterways and wetlands, leading to the water quality issues we see all over the news.

Adding compost into garden beds saves water, too. Incorporating compost not only adds nutrients to the soil, it also increases the organic content of the soil. The organic material helps the soil retain water and also binds to inorganic nutrients, preventing them from leeching out of the soil and keeping them in the root zone where plants can absorb them.

Another great strategy for being water wise is to use rain barrels. We can all agree that we receive excess water in the summertime. We can catch some of that excess water and use it to water the garden when it’s not raining instead of drawing from the well or using city water. Setting up a rain barrel system can be as simple or complex as you’d like. The simplest way is to just set out an open container, letting it fill with rainwater, and using a watering can to get the water to your plants. Always remember to cover this open-top rain vat with bug screen to keep mosquitos from breeding in it (frogs and dragonflies will also happily breed in them).

The more typical setup is to collect water from a gutter downspout. This maximizes the amount of water being collected during each rain event, so you can collect a lot more water more quickly. In this case, you can daisy chain two or more drums together and store 100 gallons or more to use during the dry season. When rains are less frequent, this setup allows your drums to recharge more quickly in just a couple of rains. The barrel is often elevated and a spigot inserted near the bottom for conveniently filling watering cans (or washing hands, or rinsing tools). An elevated barrel also allows you to attach a hose to the spigot and let gravity provide the water pressure. If you want to get really fancy, you can hook up that hose to a drip irrigation system!

While you can design your own setup with a quick trip to the hardware store, there are many rain barrel kits on the market that come with everything you need and get rid of the guesswork. The simplest kits include a spigot, a drain fitting, and gaskets. Expanded kits can also include hole saws, downspout diverters, and fittings and hoses for connecting multiple drums.

Want to see water wise gardening in action? The Big Cypress Community Garden uses compost, raised beds, a drip irrigation system, rain gauges, and soon, will be incorporating rain barrels into the irrigation plan. Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD) had the pleasure of hosting the June Garden Talk in the Big Cypress Community Garden and will be hosting again in September. If you are interested in helping with the “Let’s be Trees” Community Garden in Big Cypress, please reach out. For more water wise strategies or questions, please contact to ERMD through any of the field offices or send an email to ERMDwildlife@semtribe.com.



Q&A: ‘Being an Ally in Indian Country’ training comes to BC

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

A two-day training on the Big Cypress Reservation in July will explore the subject of “Being an Ally in Indian Country.” The training is hosted by staff from the Center for Behavioral Health Department (CBH) and the Native Connections program. It will be facilitated by the nonprofit Native Wellness Institute.

The Tribune asked Erin Kashem, a community programs administrator at CBH, and Shamecca Dean, the Native Connections program manager, about the training and what to expect. Answers have been edited for length and clarity.

Tribune: For those who don’t know, what does Native Connections do?

Dean: Native Connections is a grant program under CBH. The goal is to create and provide a variety of services and support that work together to reduce the impact of mental and substance use disorders and trauma, and to prevent suicide among Native American youth and young adults.

Kashem: Our Native Connections staff work together with an advisory board in Big Cypress consisting of community members interested in promoting healing and resiliency in their community. Earlier on in the life of the Native Connections grant, the advisory board developed vision and mission statements* that guide the work we do.

Tribune: How did the idea for the

training come about?

Kashem: The training was recommended by the advisory board, as several board members noted that many staff have not had previous work experience within tribal communities. Advisory board members noted the importance of staff understanding historical and intergenerational trauma and the ways that can show up in interactions with tribal members, as well as the importance of tribal services being delivered from a trauma-informed perspective.

We first offered the training virtually in March 2021 and had participation from several departments tribalwide. We had approximately 150 individuals attend. We received a lot of good feedback related to the training, and some who participated expressed interest in having the training again when it could be done in-person.

Tribune: Who should consider attending?

Dean: The training is designed to help non-tribal employees become effective allies to the Indigenous community they serve. The training aims to increase understanding and awareness of Indigenous history, culture, and issues faced by Indigenous communities. We also encourage tribal members to attend the training to understand how non-tribal employees can support and work collaboratively within their community.

Tribune: What do you hope will be accomplished?

Dean: The ultimate goal of the training

is to empower non-tribal employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster respectful and collaborative relationships with the tribal community, ultimately becoming healing advocates.

Tribune: What will a typical training day look like?

Kashem: The Native Wellness Institute provides a mix of informational and educational activities as well as engaging, thoughtful discussions and interactive activities. There will be some large group activities as well as small group discussions. The training will include conversations around allyship (What is an ally? Who determines if you are an ally?), racism, bias, privilege, historical and contemporary trauma, healing and moving forward, and how to be a decolonized ally.

“Being an Ally in Indian Country” is scheduled to take place at the Big Cypress gymnasium July 25-26 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. An RSVP is required by July 14. To register, contact Dean at (954) 263-9937 or shameccadean@semtiibe.com.

**Native Connections mission statement: “Our mission is to increase awareness of historical and personal trauma and the ways it shows up today (mental health challenges, suicide, substance use), develop and implement programs for tribal youth and families to promote healing and resiliency, and develop and implement trauma-informed policies and services for agencies serving the tribal community (behavioral health, emergency services, crisis response).”*



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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.

SEMINOLE SCENES



WALKING FOR A CAUSE: The Seminole Tribe had a big presence at the Arthritis Foundation's Walk to Cure Arthritis on May 20 at Tree Tops Park in Davie. Team Seminole was among the top five teams in funds raised. Edna McDuffie was the captain of Team Seminole, whose roster had 16 members. Overall, the walk featured 27 teams and 268 participants who raised nearly \$33,000, surpassing its goal of \$30,000. At left, from left to right, Team Seminole's Dana Buster, Mary Lou Alvarado and McDuffie hold the team's banner prior to the start of the walk. At center, members of Team Seminole, along with a Star Wars stormtrooper, gather at the walk in Davie. At right, Dana Buster (red hat) and her daughter start their walk at the Arthritis Foundation's Walk to Cure Arthritis.



HELLO SUMMER: The completion of the 2022-23 school year meant celebrations for students at each reservation in May and June. The end of school year bash was hosted by the Education Department. Hollywood's celebration was held June 8 at the Classic Gym. See page C2 for more photos. Above, from left to right, Brian Billie Jr. has food served to him by the Education Department's Leila Patterson, Raysa DeLaPaz and Melissa Forges. At right, Education's Kai Harriot leads a group of students in a dance. At lower right, Harriot joins students, Kai Tommie, left, and Troy Stubbs, center, for a photo. At lower left, Boys & Girls Club counselor Chris Paul-Etienne demonstrates to Kapone Solano how to play cornhole.



PROUD MOMENT: Jake Osceola, center, who graduated from South Broward High School, attended graduation ceremonies at Nova Southeastern University on June 8. Joining him, from left to right, are his cousin Amari Torres, aunt Doreen Torres (executive assistant in the treasurer's office) and uncle Christopher Torres. Osceola's father was the late Jarred Osceola and his great grandmother was the late Judy Bill Osceola. Irma Barrios-Torres is his grandmother on the Puerto Rican side of his family who raised him.

20 years ago: Hard Rock casino opens in Tampa



On June 17, 2003, the Hard Rock Casino in Tampa held its grand opening. From left to right are Brighton Board Rep. Johnny Jones, Big Cypress Board Rep. Paul Bowers Sr., Brighton Council Rep. Roger Smith, Chairman Mitchell Cypress, Big Cypress Council Rep. David Cypress and Seminole Princess Racheal Billie. The property's hotel was scheduled to open the following year.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Tribal artists, leaders want update to law to protect Native arts, crafts

WASHINGTON — Native American artists say they continue to struggle with the theft of their work, and tribal leaders are urging Congress to strengthen the Indian Arts and Crafts Act.

IACA was passed in 1990 to prohibit any advertisement and all sales of counterfeit Indian arts and crafts. Choctaw Nation artist D.G. Smalling says the act must adapt to the new ways of buying and selling art through online sales.

“We have just a very different kind of engagement with intellectual property now,” Smalling said. “This is why my principal attorney is an expert in intellectual property. It is to defend what I create and to defend what is mine.”

Cherokee Nation Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. urged Congress to strengthen the IACA during the Cherokee Days in Washington, D.C., this spring. He is working with members of Congress on a proposed the Amendments to Respect Traditional Indigenous Skill and Talent – or ARTIST – Act of 2023.

“We haven’t engaged the delegation just yet,” Hoskin said. “We will be setting up some opportunities to visit with them. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs is where this matter sits at the moment. The chair of that committee is Chairman (Brian) Schatz of Hawaii and he and ranking member Sen. (Lisa) Murkowski have asked for input on the ARTIST Act, so that is the particular forum through which we are channeling our advocacy.”

The proposed legislation would increase and expand protections on Indian arts and crafts, as well as enforce stricter punishments for those who are selling or making counterfeit goods which could lead to being arrested for the crimes. These counterfeit items are often recreated by non-Indian artists or printed off and seen on portraits, shirts, mugs, online shops and many other places throughout the world.

“The law must be changed in order to protect actual Cherokee artists, artisans, and craftspeople – those who are citizens of one of the three federally-recognized Cherokee tribes – and ensure their arts and crafts are the only works permitted to be presented as Cherokee,” Hoskin wrote in a March 29 letter to the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

Smalling is supportive of Hoskin and other tribal leaders as they push for change.

“They are asking that the law and the act can be adapted for our time and we need to cover all things that are digital, all things that are traditional and analog and we need to have a much more robust set of laws that can then be used to act against those who are chronic violators who profit off of theft,” Smalling said.

“I stand 100% with Chief Hoskin and the other tribal leaders who are seeking to defend our right to our own identity on our own terms.”

- Gaylord News (Univ. of Oklahoma)

Judge orders Enbridge to remove oil pipeline from Wisconsin tribal land within 3 years, pay \$5M

A federal judge ordered Canadian energy company Enbridge on June 16 to remove parts of an oil pipeline on tribal lands in Wisconsin and to pay the tribe more than \$5 million for trespassing.

The ruling came after the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa sued Enbridge in 2019, claiming the around 12 miles pipeline is in danger of rupturing on their land and that land agreements allowing it to run on the reservation expired in 2013.

U.S. District Judge William Conley ruled in Madison, Wisconsin, that along with the \$5.15 million, Enbridge must pay the tribe a portion of the profits as long as the pipeline remains on the land.

Conley, however, ruled the pipeline wasn’t in imminent danger of bursting and said an immediate shutdown would “spark at least temporary shortages and increased prices for refined gas, propane and butane in the Upper Midwest and Eastern Canada, creating hardships, specially for the poor and other economically challenged households.”

The tribe had argued that an emergency exists because erosion leaves the Line 5 pipeline at risk of being exposed, which experts have warned in court could weaken the pipeline until it ruptures, causing an oil spill.

Conley said, “given the environmental risks, the court will order Enbridge to adopt a more conservative shutdown and purge plan,” ordering it to “cease operation of Line 5 on any parcel within the Band’s tribal territory on which defendants lack a valid right of way and to arrange reasonable remediation at those sites.”

- Fox Business

Senecas disappointed new gaming compact not OK’d by session end

SALAMANCA, N.Y. — Seneca Nation officials are disappointed a new gaming compact was not agreed upon before the New York State Assembly adjourned June 21.

The Assembly concluded its session business without addressing the proposed compact the Senate approved earlier this month, meaning a special session will be required before the end of this year to pass a new 20-year agreement.

Seneca Nation President Rickey Armstrong, Sr. said the Nation worked with the state’s negotiating team while the Assembly was still in session to come to an agreement on new compact terms. If the Assembly was willing to take up the

legislation, Armstrong said the Nation was willing to make significant concessions from their previous agreement in principle.

“Unfortunately, we were not able to arrive at a revised agreement that met the needs of the Seneca people while also addressing the concerns of the Assembly and (Gov. Kathy Hochul’s office),” he said.

Opposition in the Assembly came from three sides — Rochester officials who were only learning about a proposed Seneca casino in their city; del Lago Resort and Casino, a private casino in Waterloo along the Thruway that is just outside the Seneca’s exclusivity zone; and unions at Finger Lakes Raceway and Casino in Farmington.

However, Armstrong said Assembly leadership has indicated a willingness to return to Albany once the Nation and the state are able to finalize fair terms for a new compact, which remains the Nation’s goal.

“An agreement is vital to the economies of the Seneca Nation and Western New York, and can ensure local communities continue to receive important funding,” the President said.

Armstrong said continuing under the terms of the outdated current compact beyond its expiration on Dec. 9 is neither a reasonable nor acceptable solution. He said they will continue to fight for economic justice for the Seneca people.

“We now intend to work until we have final terms that reflect the realities of today’s gaming market, meet the requirements of federal law and adequately and appropriately defend our economy, our sovereign rights and our economic future,” he said, “as well as the substantial economic benefits we have delivered to Western New York over the past two decades.”

Since signing the current compact in 2002, the Seneca Nation has invested nearly \$2 billion in its three full casinos — Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino in Niagara Falls (opened 2002), Seneca Allegany Resort & Casino in Salamanca (opened 2004) and Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino in downtown Buffalo (opened 2007).

The new agreement with the state, announced earlier this month with no details, comes after a protracted period of contention between the state and the Senecas.

The Nation notified New York in March 2017 that it had made its final payment under the gaming compact finalized in 2002, in large part because of the Senecas’ opposition to the state approving non-Native gaming facilities.

An arbitration panel later sided with the state and directed the Senecas to remit \$225 million to New York. The Senecas challenged the decision in federal court and asked for a review by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

On March 29, 2022, the Seneca Nation Tribal Council agreed to transfer more than \$564.8 million from a restricted escrow account in which compact-related funds had been held throughout the five-year dispute. The Salamanca school district, the city and Cattaraugus County receive payments from the state through the gaming compact.

- Salamanca (N.Y.) Press

‘Canada has a lot of unpaid bills’: \$10B settlement reached in landmark First Nation treaty case

It took more than a decade of litigation, but 21 Anishinaabe communities along the north shore of Lake Huron in Ontario will finally access a fair share of the wealth generated on their lands over the past 173 years.

The Robinson-Huron Treaty signed in 1850 promised its Indigenous beneficiaries annual payments in exchange for the right to use their lands.

A clause in the treaty explicitly tied the value of the annual payments to resource revenues.

Northeastern Ontario mining, lumber and fishing industries generated billions of dollars in profits over the past two centuries, but annual payments to First Nations were capped at \$4 per person in 1874 and haven’t increased since.

In 2018, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that the Crown had a duty to increase annual payments to the beneficiaries of the Robinson-Huron Treaty.

Canada, Ontario and these First Nations communities have been negotiating outside the courts since January.

The three parties announced a proposed \$10-billion settlement to compensate for unpaid past annuities during a press conference in Sudbury, Ont., on June 17.

The federal government will pay half of that amount, while the other half will be shouldered by the provincial government.

Batchewana First Nation Chief Dean Sayers said the proposed settlement means the Crown and the Indigenous communities of Robinson-Huron treaty territory are moving together on the path of reconciliation. “This is only a first step,” he said. “The proposed agreement only deals with past annuities.”

Negotiations to review the terms of annual payments going forward are ongoing, but Sayers said the proposed settlement brings hope for the future of the treaty relationship.

“It’s a symbol of the commitment to respect and uphold treaty rights,” he said.

- CBC News

Tribes in North Carolina receive historical site highway markers

Seven of North Carolina’s eight state-recognized American Indian tribes are receiving historical markers to create more awareness of their existence. Last month, the North Carolina Highway Marker

Commission approved applications from those tribes to put nine historical markers on highways.

“So, it kind of creates that connection between the contemporary existence of the tribe and the historical existence of that tribe,” said Kerry Bird, the director of the North Carolina American Indian Heritage Commission. “So it’s kind of tying the two together.”

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians was the only tribe that did not apply for a historical marker. Bird said they can still submit their application later in the year for the next round of approvals.

“Some tribes, like the Lumbee, or the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe, or the Coharie, [will have] their signage in front of their tribal headquarters,” Bird said. “But for people like the Sappony Tribe, the Occaneechi Tribe of the Saponi Nation or the Meherrin Tribe, ... their markers will give locations to where their tribal headquarters are.”

In addition to the seven tribes, East Carolina Indian School (ECI) — an American Indian school in Sampson County — and an Indian burial mound in Robeson County were also approved for highway historical markers.

The markers will be ordered in October and installation ceremonies for several of the markers will take place throughout November, which is Native American Heritage month.

- WUNC (Chapel Hill, N.C.)

North Carolina governor signs ‘American Indians Graduating with Honors Act’ into law

ROBESON COUNTY, N.C. — North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper signed the American Indians Graduating with Honors Act into law June 14, according to a news release.

The legislation was introduced by Republican Rep. Jarrod Lowery of Robeson County, a member of the Lumbee Tribe, according to the release.

The law allows for “a student that is, or is eligible to be, enrolled as a member of a state or federally recognized Indian tribe shall be allowed to wear objects of culture significance as part of the student’s regalia at any graduation ceremony,” the release reads.

“With this new law, American Indian students will be able to have the honor of wearing a feather at the very important life event that is high school graduation,” Lowery said in the release. “This law now brings clarity to all school boards across the state that they can no longer deny American Indian students the ability to wear a bird feather at graduations.”

According to the release, 1,000 American Indian students graduate from North Carolina schools each year, giving the state one of the largest student populations in the country.

- WBTW (Myrtle Beach, S.C.)

California tribe gives Sundance \$4M to support Indigenous filmmakers

PARK CITY, Utah — The nonprofit behind the Sundance Film Festival is receiving a \$4 million donation to its Indigenous Program from the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria.

The California tribe’s donation is the largest endowment gift in the history of the Sundance Institute. The money will go to support Indigenous artists from both federally and non-federally recognized tribes in California.

“So much of cinema’s history and the establishment of the American film industry has been created within California, but very rarely has it ever included the people on whose very land sustained it. That’s why it’s so heartening to think of all the artists that will benefit from this generous gift,” said Adam Piron, director of Sundance Institute’s Indigenous Program, in a statement Wednesday.

The institute said the funds will allow it to expand its Indigenous Program, which has supported Indigenous filmmakers and storytellers for almost two decades. Fellows in the program develop their work through roundtable discussions, one-on-one feedback sessions with advisors and exploring ways of indigenizing their creative practices.

In the immediate future, the endowment will create a new fellowship for emerging and midcareer Indigenous artists. Fellows will receive a \$25,000 grant, yearlong mentorship, professional development opportunities and support to attend the Sundance Film Festival. Applications are open from now until Aug. 28.

Greg Sarris, tribal chairman of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, participated in Sundance Institute’s 1992 Screenwriters Lab.

“I witnessed firsthand the incredible support that the Institute provides to all artists, but Indigenous talent specifically,” Sarris said. “We are excited to see the creative breakthroughs from future fellows and scholarship recipients. Supporting and nurturing these artists will open up pathways to success for the entire California Indigenous creative community and enable us to tell our stories.”

- KSL-TV (Salt Lake City, Utah)

Mohegan Tribe wins auction for CT school as part of Norwich diocese bankruptcy

The Mohegan Tribe has won an auction for the 113-acre campus of St. Bernard

School in Montville, which went up for approval by a federal bankruptcy court judge on June 21.

The winning bid was \$6.55 million, according to Mohegan spokeswoman Cathy Soper. The minimum bid was \$6.5 million.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Norwich held the auction as part of its Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings following 142 claims of sexual abuse against the diocese. The first lawsuits were brought by families of students at Mount St. John’s Academy in Deep River. The diocese filed for bankruptcy in July 2021.

“The Mohegan Tribe is very excited to have submitted a successful bid in today’s auction,” said tribal chairman James Gessner Jr. in a statement issued June 5. “We also understand that this process is still subject to approval by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, and out of deference to that process we will avoid commenting in detail at this time.”

Gessner’s statement continued, “For now, what we can say is that our bid today was centered on ensuring uninterrupted educational opportunities for Saint Bernard students while also preserving land that has extremely important cultural and historical significance to the Mohegan Tribe. The plan we have put forward will safeguard both the future of the school and our ancestral homelands, and we are hopeful and optimistic about moving forward toward those goals.”

St. Bernard’s is in the Uncasville section of Montville, where the Mohegan Tribe has its headquarters and where the Mohegan Sun casino is located.

Patrick Birney, an attorney with Robinson & Cole who represents the diocese, had said earlier that there were at least three bidders for the property, but the tribe was not one of them at the time.

On June 1, the Mohegans announced they were submitting a bid for the property.

“Our bid is competitive, our interest is genuine, and we believe that we are the ideal choice given our longstanding partnerships with the State of Connecticut and this local community,” Gessner said in a statement issued with the announcement.

In a release, the Mohegans said, “The Tribe foresees cultural and educational events on the Property in a manner that does not disrupt or conflict with School uses. This approach aligns with the Tribe’s long-standing values of responsible land management and respect for the environment.”

The diocese and the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors, which includes the sexual abuse survivors and other creditors, each have submitted plans for reorganization to the bankruptcy court. A compromise plan will be presented to the court for approval, possibly this month.

Under the diocese’s plan, a \$29 million trust would be set up to compensate the victims of sexual abuse. The committee’s plan proposes a fund of \$30.8 million plus unknown amounts from “causes of action” and “insurance interests.”

Diocesan spokesman Wayne Gignac could not immediately be reached for comment. The Diocese of Norwich includes 51 parishes in Middlesex, New London, Windham and Tolland counties and Fishers Island, New York.

- Hartford (Conn.) Courant

California tribe receives grant for hydrogen production facility

REDDING, Calif. — Redding Rancheria Hydrogen 2 Energy Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Redding Rancheria Tribe in California, has received a \$500,000 grant from the state. According to a June 15 news release, the grant from the state’s Department of Conservation will assist the tribe with developing a new hydrogen production facility in Red Bluff.

The hydrogen will be produced utilizing forest biomass – such as dead, down and diseased trees and underbrush – from the Sierra Nevada mountains, a process that officials say can help prevent catastrophic forest fires.

“As tribal members we’ve learned to be responsible for the next seven generations,” Jeremy Howard, tribal member and president of the corporation, said in the release. “We’re very motivated to finish this project. Producing hydrogen from excess forest biomass is a win/win for the environment, addressing climate change and destructive forest fires at the same time. We have to do our part to make this world a better place for our kids. The tribe is grateful for the state Department of Conservation’s assistance, and the support of the city of Red Bluff.”

According to the release, more than 10,000 kg of hydrogen will be produced at the facility per day from renewable sources with one of its goals to help truck manufacturers meet the state’s zero emissions vehicle policy. The mandate, adopted in 2022, gradually will requires new vehicles sold in California to have zero emissions by 2035.

The tribe is licensing technology from H2 Energy Group, a hydrogen producer.

- Staff report

Michigan legislation aims to help Native American families

LANSING, Mich. — Legislation is making its way through (the Michigan state legislature) that a northern Michigan lawmaker said levels the playing field for Native American families.

Republican Senator John Damoose, of Harbor Springs, and Democratic Senator Jeff Irwin have teamed up to introduce two senate bills.

If signed into law, they would ensure

that children removed from a home in tribal court would be provided the same financial assistance as those removed in non-tribal courts.

“In a state of Michigan court and official state court, you are eligible for certain funding, if you find yourself in that situation,” Sen. Damoose said.

“If a tribal court does it, it awards guardianship, you’re not eligible for that funding, and this is just to bring equity to that,” Sen. Damoose said. “I think it was an oversight. But this is just to say that the tribal courts decision has the same validity and same standing in the law as the Michigan court decision.”

Sen. Damoose said this proposed legislation is a matter of cleaning up outdated and unfair current laws which will allow more Native American children to stay with family members.

The legislation has received bipartisan support as it’s made it’s way through the legislature.

- WPNB/WGTU (Michigan)

Supreme court rules against Navajo nation in Colorado River water dispute

The U.S. Supreme Court on June 22 ruled against the Navajo Nation in a dispute involving water from the drought-stricken Colorado River.

Some of the main states that draw water from the river – Arizona, Nevada and Colorado – and water districts in California that are also involved in the case, had urged the court to decide for them, which the justices did in a 5-4 ruling.

Colorado had argued that siding with the Navajo nation would undermine existing agreements over the share of dwindling water supplies and disrupt the management of the river.

The Biden administration had said that if the court were to come down in favor of the Navajo nation, the federal government could face lawsuits from many other tribes.

Lawyers for the Navajo Nation, located in the Southwest with a resident population of about 175,000 and the largest area of U.S. land held by a Native American tribe, had characterized the tribe’s request as modest, saying they simply were seeking an assessment of the tribe’s water needs and a plan to meet them.

The facts of the case go back to treaties that the tribe and the federal government signed in 1849 and 1868. The second treaty established the reservation as the tribe’s “permanent home” – a promise the Navajo nation says includes a sufficient supply of water. In 2003 the tribe sued the federal government, arguing it had failed to consider or protect the Navajo nation’s water rights to the lower portion of the Colorado River.

A federal trial court initially dismissed the lawsuit, then an appeals court allowed it to go forward.

During arguments in the case in March this year, Justice Samuel Alito, on the bench’s right wing and currently embroiled in a scandal over gifts and his pushback via the media, pointed out that the Navajo nation’s original reservation was hundreds of miles away from the section of the Colorado River it now seeks water from.

Today, the Colorado River flows along what is now the north-western border of the tribe’s reservation, which extends into New Mexico, Utah and Arizona. Two of the river’s tributaries, the San Juan River and the Little Colorado River, also pass alongside and through the reservation. Still, one-third of the approximately 175,000 people who live on the reservation do not have running water in their homes.

The government said it has helped the tribe secure water from the Colorado River’s tributaries and provided money for infrastructure, including pipelines, pumping plants and water treatment facilities. But it said no law or treaty required the government to deal with general water needs.

The states argued that the Navajo nation was attempting to make an end run around a supreme court decree that divvied up water in the river’s lower basin.

It was a 5-4 ruling, written by Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

Justice Neil Gorsuch, typically an ultra-conservative but also a strong champion of Native American rights and tribal sovereignty, dissented alongside liberal-leaning Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

He wrote, in part: “In the Navajos’ view, the federal government’s efforts to assist the Navajos with their water needs did not fully satisfy the trust obligations of the United States under the 1868 treaty.

“The Navajos filed suit seeking to compel the United States to take affirmative steps to secure needed water for the tribe – including by assessing the tribe’s water needs, developing a plan to secure the needed water, and potentially building pipelines, pumps, wells, or other water infrastructure.

“The states of Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado intervened against the tribe to protect those states’ interests in water from the Colorado River.”

- The Guardian

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RILEY GREEN



JULY 9
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LOUIS TOMLINSON



JULY 14
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Education



Aubee Billie helps raise awareness about MMIW

BY MICHAEL LEUNG
Elon News Network

Elon University sophomore Aubee Billie is a member of the Seminole Tribe in Florida. She said crimes toward Indigenous women are often overlooked, and this issue affects how they can live their lives.

Billie doesn't wear her traditional clothes in fear that someone may harm her in some way, shape or form. This, however, is a norm for many Native women, Billie said.

"It is sad that we cannot live our lives the way we want to," Billie said. "It is sad and frustrating that this is our reality as Native women."

The Native American Student Association hosted a fundraising event to spread awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women May 4.

Crystal Cavalier-Keck from the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation recognized that Elon University is built on Occaneechi Tribe land during the event.

Billie shared her own experiences as an Indigenous woman. She told the story of Ashlynne Mike, an 11 year old girl from the Navajo Nation who was killed in 2016. She was tricked into going into a man's car saying he would take her home. He took her past her house and off onto a dirt road south of Shiprock, New Mexico. Her father contacted the police when he discovered she

was missing. However, he was put on hold for eight hours before an Amber Alert was sent out. By the time they found her, she was killed.

Billie said this was one of the many examples of how American society has turned a blind eye to this issue. She reported that in 2016, 5,712 cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls were reported. However, only 116 of these cases were logged into the Department of Justice database.

Cavalier-Keck discussed how American Indians are often placed last by law enforcement. She discussed a case where it took a decade to find the killer of an Indigenous woman while it only took two years to find the killer of a white woman. She said this is because of a common stereotype that Native people are disposable and are treated like they don't exist anymore, which makes many cases of missing or murdered Indigenous women swept under the rug.

According to Cavalier-Keck, the FBI reported 5,203 cases of missing girls and Indigenous women in 2021. She also said Indigenous women are more likely to be victims of rape, sexual violence and abuse from intimate partners. One example she talked about was Kayla Hammonds and how she was a case of domestic abuse. Kayla was brutally murdered by her ex-boyfriend following physical abuse from him.

"He would beat her and she would go file a restraining order against him and he would get arrested," Cavalier-Keck said. "48 hours later, he would bond out of jail and intimidate her all over again."

Editor's note: This article is from the Elon News Network, Elon University's student-run news organization in Elon, North Carolina.



Joseph Navin/Elon News Network

Elon University sophomore Aubee Billie prays at the start of a fundraiser for missing and murdered Indigenous women on Elon's Medallion Plaza on May 4.

PECS' send-off party gets summer rolling

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Pemayetv Emahaky Charter School celebrated the end of the school year with a "Super Summer Send-off" party in its gym May 23. Parents were invited to the bash, which featured 78 students walking the gym's "runway" in a fashion show of traditional patchwork, summer fashion and anything else the students felt was appropriate for the party.

During the fashion show, they were encouraged to be creative with skirts, moves and waves to the rest of the student body gathered in the bleachers.

Although the bash appeared to be all fun, games and raffles for door prizes, it was also an opportunity for school administration to give parents information for next year.



Beverly Bidney

Emery Spencer, left, and Sarah Randolph modeled patchwork fashion during the PECS summer send-off May 23.

Information shared through videotaped skits and slides on the big screen included the school's code of conduct, dress code and safe school information about the state's suspicious activity reporting tool, FortifyFL. The app allows users to easily relay information to law enforcement agencies and school officials in real time.

Door prizes included gift cards, annual school athletic game passes, picnic baskets filled with summer treats and a beach wagon overflowing with fun summer items including beach chairs, towels and an oversized beach ball.



Beverly Bidney

Students were encouraged to show their personalities during the fashion show and Jeremy Smith, in yellow, and Sam Van Camp did so gleefully.



Beverly Bidney

Mattie Platt, left, and Grace Osceola entertained and delighted the crowd with their dance moves during the summer send-off fashion show.

Big Cypress preschoolers earn diplomas

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The largest Big Cypress Preschool graduating class since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic walked, ran and skipped down the aisle at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium on May 17 to collect their diplomas. The 13 students are scheduled to attend kindergarten at the Ahfachkee School next year.

"This class is special," said Big Cypress Preschool Center manager Andrea Jumper. "There are a lot of smart kids, fast learners, and I have a lot of hope for their futures. All of our kids are meeting expectations that they will do well in kindergarten."

Big Cypress Culture instructor Tammy Billie taught the students songs in Elaponke, which they performed for the crowd. They also sang a couple of songs in English and then departed the stage to put on their caps and gowns for the big moment.

"A round of applause for all you parents and teachers," said Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. "Every day is a learning experience, so let's continue to guide them. These are the most important years of their lives, so let's keep loving and nurturing them so when they grow up they will be loving and nurturing adults."

"Learning how to share and work together; preschool is really good at that," said Lee Zepeda, executive director of Administration. "Thank you to the teachers and staff for all their work and dedication. Parents, thank you for entrusting us with your children."

Preschool director Thommy Doud noted that the graduates were 1 to 2 years old when the pandemic started.

"The most important part of an education is done in the first 1,000 days of life," Doud said. "They were all at home during that time. The school doesn't take all the credit today because it was the parents who were there and spent additional time with them to make sure they would graduate today. When they came back to us, they were ready. Thank you, we appreciate everything you did."

Dressed in bright yellow caps and gowns, the graduates collected their diplomas and handshakes and sang one more song for the crowd of family and friends.

The 2023 graduates are: Atreyu Billie-Cypress, Austin Grasshopper, Braylen Carter, Briella Hall, Ebaline Vazquez, Jaryn Cypress-Johnson, Justice Trujillo, Kapone Solano, La'Shawn Pascal, Lucas Bear, Reumi Cypress, Thomas Koenes II and Zih'Nellie Osceola-Burney.



Beverly Bidney

The Big Cypress Preschool class of 2023 sings one last song before receiving diplomas.



Beverly Bidney

Beverly Bidney (3)

The joy of getting ready to receive a diploma is shown by Lucas Bear, left, Reumi Cypress, center, and Jaryn Cypress-Johnson.

From left to right, Big Cypress Board Rep. assistant Brian Billie, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Big Cypress Preschool Center manager Andrea Jumper look on as Thomas Koenes II smiles after receiving his diploma and shaking their hands.

Class of 2023



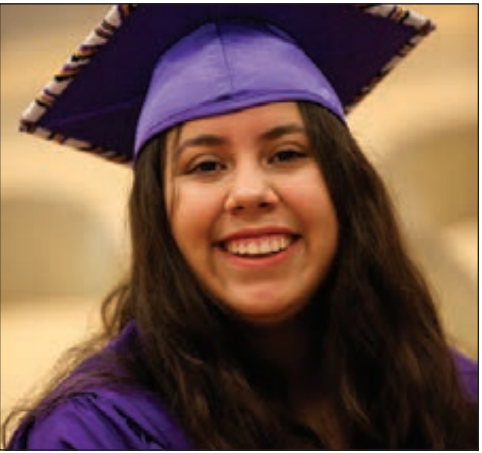
Liyah Alvarado
Riverdale High School (Fort Myers)
Liyah plans to attend The Art Institute of Miami and study photography. She would like to pursue a photography-related career.



Brandon Posada
Immokalee High School
Brandon will be working in the Education Department's SWEP program in the Immokalee Recreation Department this summer. In the fall, he plans to join the Tribal Career Development program and work at the Immokalee casino.



Cyiah Avila
Ahfachkee School
Cyiah plans to become a professional barrel racing rodeo athlete and look into real estate as a career.



Winnie Gopher
Eckerd Connects Academy
Winnie is already attending Indian River State College where she is studying mathematics. She would like to get her Ph. D. and become a university professor.



Kassim Stockton Jr.
Ahfachkee School
Kassim plans to attend Florida Gulf Coast University where he will study software engineering. He is interested in game design and programming.



Miguel Garcia
St. James Academy
Miguel plans to become a commercial truck driver and is currently studying to get his commercial driver's license.



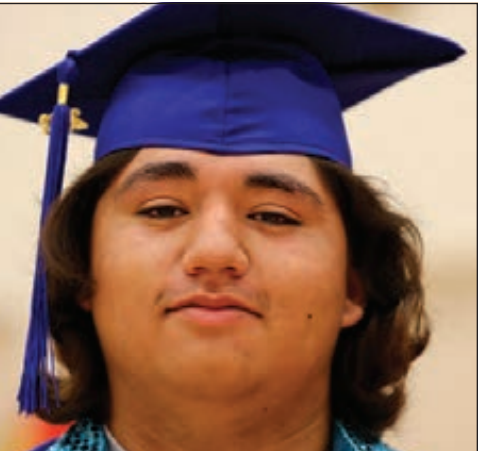
Jake Osceola
South Broward High School (Hollywood)
Jake plans to go to college to study business. He's going to take the summer off and decide which school he will attend in the fall.



Leviticus Berry
Okeechobee High School
Leviticus will attend Full Sail University in Winter Park, where he will study music. He plans to become a record producer.



Billie Cypress
Ahfachkee School
Billie would like to work at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, travel and help take care of her siblings.



Chayton Billie
Penn Foster
Chayton plans to become a welder and will go to trade school to learn welding.



Aniya Cypress
American Heritage School (Plantation)
Aniya is attending Louisiana State University in New Orleans to study business.



Kiowa Garcia
Moore Haven High School
Kiowa wants to become a mechanic.



Karlyne Urbina
Okeechobee High School
Karlyne would like to work for the tribe and attend night school for cosmetology.



Xavier Hill
Real Life Christian Academy (Clermont)
Xavier will attend Lake Sumter State College in Clermont and study sports and exercise science. From there, he plans to transfer to a four-year university and possibly play basketball. He wants to become a professional athletic trainer.



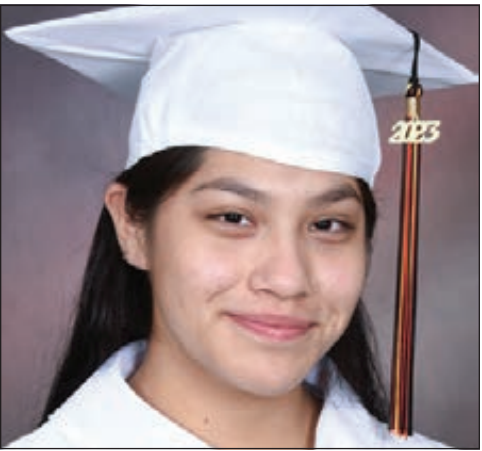
Nikko Doctor
American Heritage School (Plantation)
Nikko is attending Nova Southeastern University in Davie to study political science.



Logan Walden
Seacrest Country Day School (Naples)
Logan will be attending Louisiana State University.



Bella Garcia
Swain County High School (Bryson City, N.C.)
Bella will attend University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she will major in dramatic art and double-minor in musical theatre and Native American studies. Bella wants to become an actress and open a studio to teach kids how to cheer, dance and sing, and build confidence.



Rosalinda Jimmie
Ahfachkee School
Rosalinda plans to take a gap year for travel before going to college. She has been accepted to the Art Institute of Chicago and plans to study photography and other art forms to expand her knowledge and skills.



Avery Bowers
American Heritage School (Plantation)
At this time, Avery is undecided on his future plans.



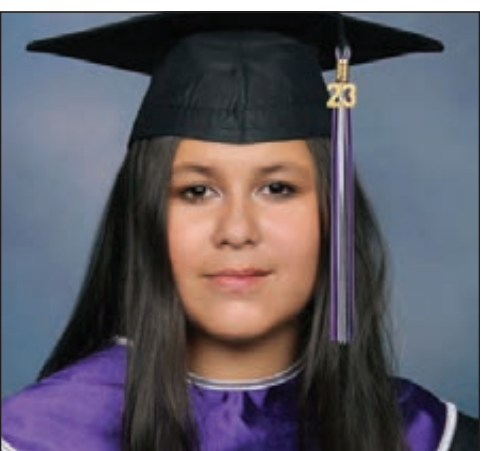
Javale Anderson
Riverside Indian School (Anadarko, Okla.)
Javale will attend East Central Community College in Decatur, Mississippi and plans to become a veterinarian.



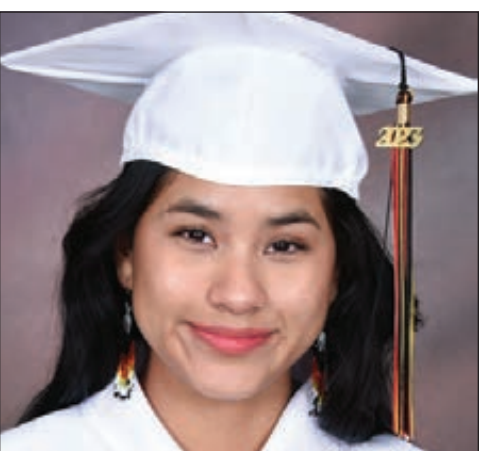
Akira Cabral
Ahfachkee School
Akira is interested in the medical or engineering fields and plans to get a job.



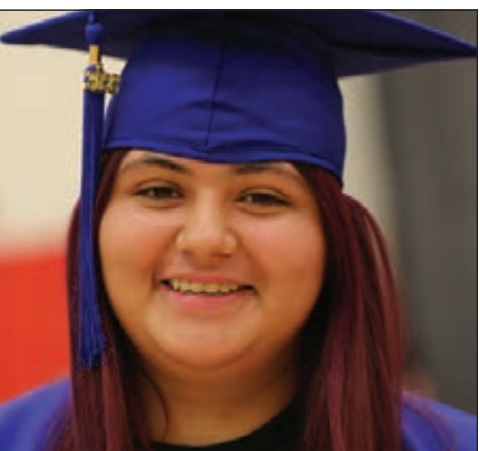
Bailey Osceola Latchford
NSU University School
Bailey is attending Florida State University in Tallahassee to study criminology and psychology.



Julia Grasshopper
Timber Creek High School (Orlando)
Julia will be attending F.I.R.S.T. Institute (The Florida Institute of Recording, Sound, and Technology) in Orlando with a focus on digital photography. She will also be attending color guard technique camps at UCF and FSU and preparing to audition for Pegasus Winter Guard team in Orlando. She wants to be a color guard instructor and performing arts photographer.



Maggie May Jimmie
Ahfachkee School
Maggie May will take a gap year to focus on mental health and continue creating shock art. She has been accepted at the Savannah College of Art and Design and the Ringling College of Art and Design, but hasn't yet decided which school she will attend.

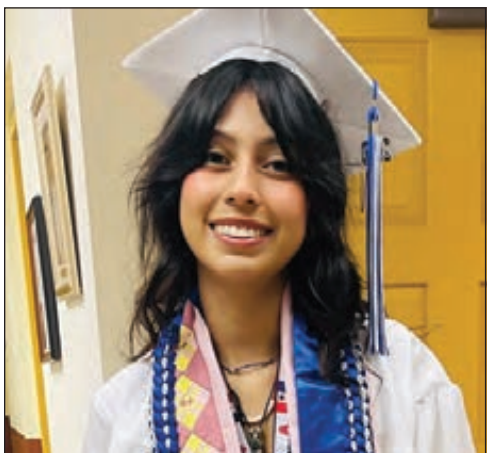


Juanita Billie
Penn Foster
Juanita hasn't decided what she will do post high school, but will likely go to college.

Class of 2023



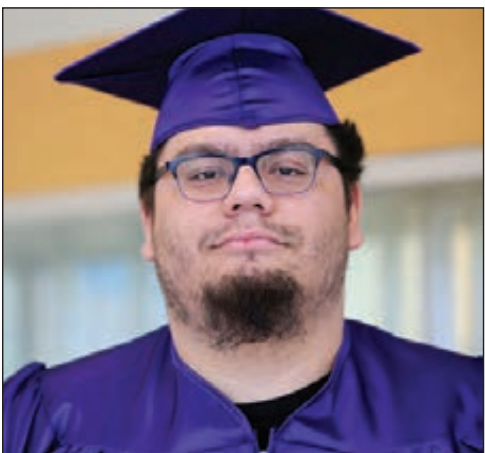
Katie Smith
Lakeland Christian School
Katie would like to enter the tribal management program this summer. She is not sure what field the Lord will guide her, but is excited about the journey.



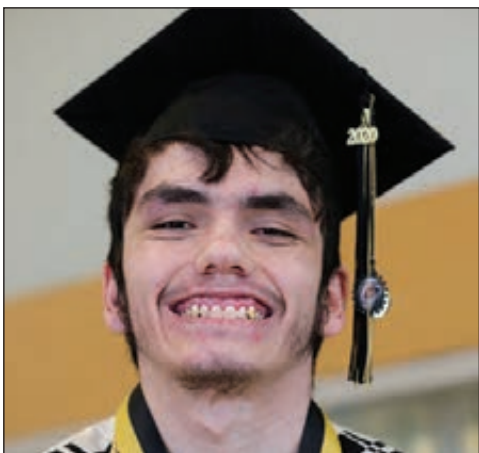
Maya Cifuentes
St. Michael's High School (Santa Fe, N.M.)
Maya will be attending Arizona State University's Barrett Honors College. She plans to major in psychology and has aspirations to become a lawyer.



Amara Martinez
Bishop Verot High School (Fort Myers)
Amara is currently attending Florida State University. Her major is psychology. She plans to own her own practice and would love to work with kids and teens.



Spawn Loudermilk
Okeechobee High School
Spawn wants to learn to program computers, but hasn't decided what college he will attend to do so.



Sheldon Garcia
Moore Haven High School
Sheldon will continue in the school's special education program.



Anthony Wells
Ahfachkee School
Anthony is still weighing his options and has no immediate plans.



Javaris Johnson
Okeechobee High School
Javaris plans to start a hunting guide business.



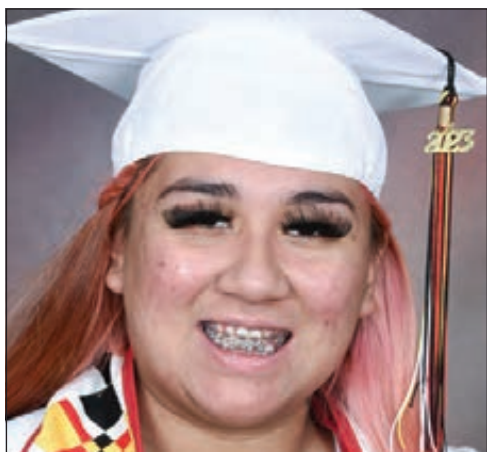
Aspen Tommie
Okeechobee High School
Aspen will be attending Full Sail University to study film. She would like to pursue a career in cinematography.



Jahdee Arnold
St. James Academy
Jahdee hasn't yet decided what he plans to do post graduation.



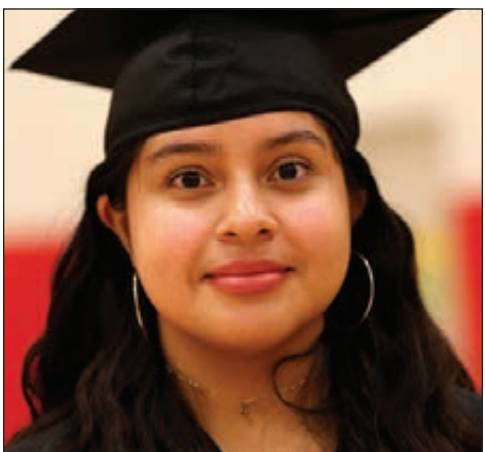
Giselle Micco
Home school
Giselle is studying physical therapy at Indian River State College and plans to become a traveling physical therapist.



Maria Villarreal
Ahfachkee School
Maria plans to go to cosmetology school and become a nail technician.



Ysla Gopher
Okeechobee High School
Ysla plans to go to welding school.



Mariana Mora-Lara
Moore Haven High School
Mariana will attend Valencia College in Orlando where she plans to concentrate in global studies.



Jana Johnson
Okeechobee High School
Jana wants to pursue a career as an esthetician.



Janaya French
Penn Foster
Janaya plans to attend an online college where she will study business. She ultimately would like to start her own business.



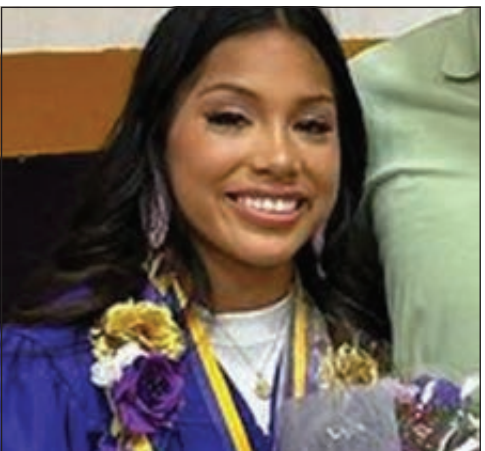
Talena Smith-Holata
Penn Foster
Talena would like to study cosmetology.



Guadalupe Mora-Lara
Moore Haven High School
Guadalupe plans to go to iTech in Moore Haven to study culinary arts.



Estelle Billie
Salamanca High School (Salamanca, N.Y.)



Suzzi Osceola-Redbone
Anadarko High School (Anadarko, Okla.)
Suzzi will be attending the University of Hawaii.



Genesis Pagan
American Heritage School (Plantation)



Lillian Tiger
Know-It-All-Preparatory School (Davie)



Nigel Osceola
Brandon Academy



Shyla Holata
Shyla earned her GED and is now going to take some time off to work on her digital art. She currently designs clothing for Society 6.



Vincenzo Osceola
Know-It-All-Preparatory School (Davie)



Theron Osceola
NSU University School



Damon Scott

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola introduces Paulina Alexis, left, a Native actor who plays Willie Jack on the popular TV series Reservation Dogs.

Hollywood graduates recognized at Hard Rock dinner

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Hollywood’s high school and higher education graduates were recognized for their accomplishments June 2 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The office of Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola organized the event.

“The tribe is behind you 100%. The councilman and myself will do what we can to make sure that you’re successful, but it’s up to you to take advantage of that chance before you,” Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., said to begin the night. “Whatever you do, make sure you love what you do and you won’t work a day in your life.”

The graduates and their families were treated to dinner and two guest speakers. The first was tribal member and Florida State University graduate Kyle Doney, who has also worked for the tribe for 25 years. He’s currently the deputy director of the Native Learning Center in Hollywood.

“The tribe has offered me a lot of opportunities. I want to encourage you to step outside of your comfort zone, because I know we get comfortable doing the same routine over and over,” Doney said. “I want to say congratulations to each one of you. There’s a lot of potential in here.”

The second guest speaker was Paulina Alexis (Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation) a Native actor who plays Willie Jack on the popular TV series Reservation Dogs, which features Native Americans in front of and behind the camera.

“I just want to say to you guys, always enjoy the moment. You worked so hard for this and you’re never going to get this time back,” Alexis said. “Whatever you decide to do now, follow your heart. Surround yourself with good people who love you, because people who want the best for you want you to be your best, and you owe it to yourself.”

Councilman Osceola read the names of 29 graduates, who were each called to the stage to receive congratulations and gifts



Damon Scott

Jay Holata, a higher education graduate.

from the Hollywood Council Office and the Education Department.

“The graduate rate is going up every year for the tribe – that’s something to be proud of,” Osceola said. “One of the worst things I think a kid can do is drop out of school.”

The high school graduates in attendance were Estelle Billie, Aniya Cypress, Nikko Doctor, Shyla Holata, Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford, Theron Osceola and Genesis Pagan. The higher education graduates in attendance were Mariah Bowers, Jay Holata and Rochelle Osceola. Everett Osceola took to the stage to represent his daughter, Xiora Osceola, who was not in attendance.

“If you’re a tribal member, you’re probably one of the luckiest people in the world. You might not think that today, because you’re still a young person and you haven’t seen enough in your life,” Councilman Osceola said. “The tribe has come a long way and we’re able to provide the resources for tribal members to pursue their education anywhere in the world, whatever your passion is, whatever your desire is – everything is up to you.”

Additional high school students from class of 2023

(The Tribune did not have additional information about these students who were scheduled to graduate in 2023).

Student	School
A'nyiah Baker	American High School Academy (Miami)
Kindred Baker	Glenpool High School (Glenpool, Okla.)
Jarrett Beecham	Moore Haven High School
Ohitika Billie	Hiawatha Collegiate High School (Minneapolis, Minn.)
Alisa Brooks	Xceed Prep Anywhere (Broward County)
Evol Buck	The Sagemont School (Weston)
Alyss Cypress	The Ahfackee School
Brandon Cypress	NSU University School (Davie)
Javian Cypress	Penn Foster
Jaylee Cypress	American Heritage School (Plantation)
Lillian Garcia	Okeechobee High School
Mary Cypress	Westlake Prep School (Cooper City)
Terald Garner	Okeechobee High School
Creek Gopher	Okeechobee Achievement Academy
Justin Gopher Jr.	Penn Foster
Elias Jimmie	GED
Isabella Josh	Calvary Christian Academy (Hollywood)
Corey Jumper	Penn Foster
Dalmon King	Cherokee Central High School (Cherokee, N.C.)
Isabella Motlow	NSU University School (Davie)
Amelia Osceola	McArthur High School (Hollywood)
Arianna Osceola	South Broward High School (Hollywood)
Byron Osceola	NSU University School (Davie)
Mordekai Osceola	Miccosukee Indian School
Nicki Osceola	Miccosukee Indian School
Noah Osceola	The Sagemont School
Taryn Osceola	Penn Foster
Layla Petrillo	American Heritage School (Plantation)
Jose Puente	Penn Foster
A'mya Ricker	GED
Illiana Robbins	Zuni High School (Zuni, N.M.)
Kassiah Robbins	GED
Sharyn Robbins	Miccosukee Indian School
Talena Ollie Smith-Holata	Penn Foster
Derrick Smith	Okeechobee High School
McKenna Smith	South County Career Acceleration Academy (Ruskin)
Analys Stockton	FLVS Flex
Martavious Tommie	Fort Pierce Central High School
Aujua Williams	The Sagemont School (Weston)

Brighton celebrates graduates

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Graduates from Pemayetv Emahkv Charter School (eighth graders), high schools, trade schools, colleges and universities were honored for their achievements at the Brighton Reservation’s grad night June 1.

The PECS gym was transformed into an event venue so the community could celebrate and congratulate its graduates. The wood floor was covered, the lights were dimmed and balloons decorated tables which each held a cake for the grads and their families.

“Each and every one of you got up every day to go to school and look at you today,” said Brighton Councilman Larry Howard. “This is a great day for our graduates. Parents are reaping the fruits of their labor; they also did an excellent job. I feel good to be here and share the moment.”

Michael Giacchino, the tribe’s Education director, spoke to the graduates and introduced the Education staff.

“There is opportunity out there for everybody,” Giacchino said. “We are all here for you. Our success is your success.”

“You are at a crossroads in your life,” said PECS principal Tracy Downing. “You are here because of your hard work, dedication and perseverance. You can



Beverly Bidney

Trina Hipp, who earned an emergency medical technician certificate from South Florida State College, receives congratulations from Brighton Councilman Larry Howard at the reservation’s graduation night June 1.

accomplish anything you put your mind to.”

After the speeches, a slide show of the students at various stages through their educational journey was shown to cheers and applause.



Beverly Bidney

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard congratulates Tatiana Torres, who graduated from Salon Professional Academy.



Beverly Bidney

Layton Thomas, who earned a master's degree from Stetson University, and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard are all smiles at the grad event.

ABA to honor attorney John E. Echohawk

STAFF REPORT

Longtime Native American attorney John E. Echohawk (Pawnee) has been named the recipient of the American Bar Association’s Thurgood Marshall Award. In a news release June 6, the ABA described Echohawk as a “Native American rights trailblazer.” Echohawk is executive director of the Native American Rights Fund, a position he has held since 1977.

The award is scheduled to be presented Aug. 5 at the ABA’s annual meeting in Denver.

“John Echohawk is a pioneer,” Juan Thomas, chair of the ABA section of civil rights and social justice, said in the release.

“John has been a beacon of light for the cause of advancing civil rights for Native Americans in the United States. For over 50 years, John fought, advocated and litigated for full equity, inclusion and self-determination for our Native American brothers and sisters. You cannot call the roll of the 20th century civil rights icons akin to Thurgood Marshall, John Lewis, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sherrilyn Ifill without saying the name John Echohawk.”

Echohawk was the first graduate of the University of New Mexico’s special program to train Indian lawyers. While in school, he cofounded the American Indian Law Students Association.

The award honors former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, who

“epitomized individual commitment, in word and action, to the cause of civil rights in this country,” according to the ABA. The award recognizes those in the legal profession for similar long-term contributions to the advancement of civil rights, social justice and human rights in the U.S.



NARF

John E. Echohawk

Higher education graduates 2022-23

Student	Institute	Degree	Major
Tarra Gamez	Keiser University	Bachelor of Arts	Business Admin. Management
Jordan Baker	GED	GED	GED
Layne Thomas	University of Central Florida	Bachelor of Arts	Psychology
Aaron Tommie	Cornell University	Certificate	Diversity and Inclusion
Marquis Fudge	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Martina Tubbie	GED	GED	GED
Robert Fudge	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Carol Doctor	Altierus Career College	Certificate	Massage Therapy
Tatiana Torres	Salon Professional Academy	Certificate	Skincare
Farrah Peak	Indian River State College	Certificate	General Studies
Marcie Osceola	Aveda Institute	Certificate	Cosmetology
Mariah Bowers	Florida International University	Bach. of Business.	Admin. Business Management
Priscilla Alvarado	Celebrity School of Beauty	Certificate	Skincare
Kaylene Osceola	Academy of Art University	Bachelor of Fine Arts	Photography
Roberta Osceola	Indian River State College	Certificate	Admin. Support/Medical Office Tech.
Jay Holata	Florida International University	Bachelor of Arts	Psychology
Maverick Osceola	GED	GED	GED
Erik Wilson	Seminole State College	Associate of Arts	Liberal studies
Alexis Gopher	Indian River State College	Certificate	Pharmacy tech
Keith Jumper	Penn Foster	GED	GED
Anazette Billie-Santiago	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Trina Hipp	South Florida State College	Certificate	Emergency Medical Technician
Rochelle Osceola	Everglades University	Bachelor of Science	Alternative Medicine
Peter Billie Jr.	Florida Gulf Coast University	Bachelor of Science	Business Finance (Analysis)
Cody Tiger	GED	GED	GED
Kassiah Robbins	Broward College	Certificate	Veterinary Assistant
Audrey Osceola	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Joyce Jumper	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Diamond Shore	GED	GED	GED
Layton Thomas	Stetson University	Master of Accountancy	Master of Accountancy
Miguel Garcia	St. James Academy High School	High school diploma	High school diploma
Xiora Osceola	Broward College	Associate of Arts	General Art
Starz Sanchez	University of Colorado-Denver	Bachelor of Arts	English Literature/Film Studies
Serena Zepeda	University of Vermont	Bachelor of Science	Elem. Education (minor: Education Cultural/Linguistic Diversity 2)
Calvin Tiger	University of Phoenix	Bachelor of Science	Business Management
Kamani Youngblood Smith	Louisiana State University	Bachelor of Arts	Mass Communication (minor: Business Administration)
Jenessa Smith	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Mary Stivers	Iowa State University	Bachelor of Science	Management (minor: marketing)
Alicia Nunez	Wake Forest University	Master’s	Counseling
Deagen Osceola	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Reuben Billie Jr.	Immokalee Technical College	Certification	Automotive Technology
Jessi Osceola	Penn Foster Career School	Certificate	Administrative Assistant
Jessi Harmon	Northern Arizona University	Bachelor of Science	Biology
Jillian Rodriguez	Barry University	Bachelor of Science	Education (Specialization in Early Childhood Education)
Aaliyah Phillips	Penn Foster	High school diploma	High school diploma
Alyssa Osceola	Ringling College of Art & Design	Bachelor of Fine Arts	Illustration



Calvin Tiger

Class of 2023 students perform during the Brighton Preschool graduation May 25.

Preschoolers celebrate graduation in Brighton

STAFF REPORT

BRIGHTON — The Brighton Preschool graduation was held May 25 at the Florida Seminole Veterans Building. Twenty three students received their diplomas from Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard.

The program featured group and individual performances, including Jayson Smith, who cited the “Pledge of Allegiance;” the song “Wheels on the Bus” was conducted by Irena Bradley; and Kalayla Moore

performed the “Ten Little Indians” song. A slide show featured the students’ families.

The graduates from the class of 2023 are Haizley Baker, Jhennie Baker, Jessica Billie, Irena Bradley, Isaiiah Bradley, Kalijah Buck, Ollie Buck, Remy Fahad Jr., Aliyas Fludd, Juan’yaе Ford Jr., Eretria Gill, Nayonie Gopher, Amiah Henderson, Kayli Jackson, Kalaylanita Moore, Amelia Avalos-Motlow, Deliah Nelson, Draco Osceola, Nia Peak, Jayson Smith, Skylar Smith, Elias Tiger and Sonny Trujillo.



Calvin Tiger

Jhennie Baker receives congratulations from Brighton Councilman Larry Howard at the Brighton Preschool graduation.



Calvin Tiger

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. presents a diploma to Eretria Gill.



Calvin Tiger

With diploma in hand, Aliyas Fludd smiles while receiving congratulations from Brighton Councilman Larry Howard.

Elvis tribute coming to Immokalee

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — Chris MacDonald’s Memories of Elvis in Concert, a tribute to Elvis Presley, will return to Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee on Aug. 19 at 8 p.m. For tickets, go to ticketmaster.com or

moreinparadise.com. MacDonald is the star and creator of the tribute, which is a national touring full-production, multi-media production, complete with a band and singers. MacDonald has performed in Vegas and Branson, and with Legends in Concert stage productions.

Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford heads to FSU

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

The fourth member of the Osceola-Latchford family – Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford – is headed to Florida State University in Tallahassee to take the next steps in her formal education. Latchford is following in the footsteps of her three older brothers who also went to FSU. Two of the brothers (Brady and Bradley) have already earned their undergraduate degrees and one (Brenden) is still enrolled at the school.

Latchford graduated from the NSU University School in May. She intends to pursue a degree in criminology with a minor in psychology at FSU.

“Growing up, I thought I’d go into criminology, or music and criminology. In high school I took psychology as a filler class and I surprisingly really enjoyed it,” Latchford said. “I like seeing how the brain works and applying it in real life. That’s how the two mix. I find the mind a very interesting thing, especially when it comes to crime-related things.”

Latchford said she’s been a singer for as long as she can remember – and doesn’t plan to give it up at FSU. Beginning as a youngster, she sang in many pageants and concerts.

“Moving on to middle and high school I took it more seriously,” she said. “My junior and senior years were probably the most I’ve ever done music-wise.”

Latchford was part of the Florida Vocal Association’s All-State Choruses, which are considered a select group of choral students from middle/junior high and senior high schools who come together to rehearse and perform with guest conductors. She said she’s been involved in music collectives and music honor societies throughout her tenure at NSU University School.

“I can’t live without it,” Latchford said. “I’ve made a few friends at FSU through group chats and we’re planning on getting



Courtesy photo

Bailey Latchford (front row, holding baby) is joined by members of her family after high school graduation ceremonies on the campus of Nova Southeastern University in Davie.

together and writing songs or jamming out.”

Her favorite musical genres are R&B and alternative. Recently, she’s been listening to Cleo Sol, Jhené Aiko and Sade. Some of her standby favorites are the Foo Fighters and Rhianna.

“Bailey’s journey has been one of boundless joy and discovery; embracing life with a compassionate heart and a voice that brings indescribable warmth to all who hear it,” her father, Will Latchford, said.

While she’ll join the growing list of family members choosing FSU, Latchford said at first she thought she’d go to a school outside of the Sunshine State.

“I wanted to go out of state or possibly even abroad. I don’t know what it was exactly, but when the acceptance letters were coming

(from other schools) I couldn’t decide,” she said. “When I got my FSU acceptance, I knew I’d go there. I felt nervous in my heart when I opened it. I didn’t feel like that when I opened the other ones. My parents got what they wanted and we’re all happy in the end.”

Latchford, 18, was scheduled to start orientation on June 17 and begin classes June 22.

“Our family is so proud of Bailey and all her hard work and accomplishments,” her mother, Amy Osceola Latchford, said. “Whether it was watching her sing and perform at school or other events, or watching her put her heart into her schoolwork and school projects – we can’t wait to see what challenges she takes head on to achieve her goals.”

Trevor Thomas earns master’s degree from Warner



Courtesy photo, left; Warner, right

Trevor Thomas, from the Brighton Reservation, graduated from Warner University in Lake Wales on April 29. Thomas earned a master’s degree in business administration. At left, Thomas holds his diploma accompanied by proud family members. At right, Thomas receives his diploma during the graduation ceremony. In 2021, Thomas earned a degree in agribusiness from Warner. He also played on the school’s baseball team for five seasons.

Memorial Day draws big turnout at Huff Camp

STAFF REPORT

Memorial Day was a busy one at the Huff Camp in Brighton. About 150 people came by the camp May 29 to enjoy food and music, but most of all to honor tribal veterans.

“I’m not a veteran, but I grew up around veterans,” said Richard Osceola, who helped organize the event. “My uncles Jacob Osceola, Russell Osceola and my grandfather John Wayne Huff served in Vietnam and were highly decorated.”

The Huff Camp was listed on the tribal register of historic places in 2016. A plaque on the site states the camp was the home of Frank Huff (Panther Clan) and Mary Osceola Huff (Bird Clan). It was established in the 1940s and became a center of social and recreational activity for the Brighton community.

In addition to its 10 chickees, there was a cement-floored chickee known as “Frank’s Pool Hall” where people gathered to play pool or watch movies. Mary Osceola Huff opened the first craft chickee on the reservation and Billy Osceola, the first chief of the modern Seminole Tribe of Florida, established an open-air chapel under an oak tree by the roadside which was the first Brighton church.

“The Huff Camp is one of the original camps before modern houses went up,” Osceola said. “They used to get together there to make decisions for the tribe.”

Osceola said he would like to continue the tradition and have another Memorial Day event every year.

“It was about getting the family together to honor our veterans,” Osceola said.



Courtesy photo

At right, Richard Osceola and Ryz-N, of the band Ryz-N-Soulz, stand by the Huff Camp historic plaque in Brighton on May 29. The band played during the Memorial Day event.



Courtesy photos (2)

At left, totem poles at the Huff Camp in Brighton; at right, the Huff Camp’s historic marker.

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Sports



Freshman season in the books for Ava Nunez

STAFF REPORT

The Thomas University softball team, which includes the Seminole Tribe's Ava Nunez, wrapped up its season in early May. Thomas went 0-2 at the Sun Conference Tournament in Clearwater and finished the season with a 23-23 record. The Night Hawks finished six in their conference with an 11-13 record.

Nunez, a freshman pitcher and infielder, put up solid numbers in her first collegiate season. She batted .241 which included 19 hits in 78 at-bats. She hit one home run, which came Feb. 25 against Middle Georgia State. She also scored 14 runs, which was sixth highest on the team, and drove in 13 runs, which tied her for fifth on the team. She drew 12 walks, third highest on the squad.

Among Nunez's four multiple hit games was a 2-for-4 game against Haskell Indian Nations University on March 14.

Nunez saw limited innings in the circle. She made six appearances, which included two starts. She finished with eight strikeouts and a 10.26 ERA.

Thomas is located in Thomasville, Georgia.



Thomas University

Ava Nunez takes a swing for Thomas University in the 2023 season.

Robbins sisters shine for Zuni

STAFF REPORT

In May, the Seminole Tribe's Illiana Robbins finished her senior year on the Zuni High School softball team in Zuni, New Mexico.

Zuni had an 11-8 record.

In stats on MaxPreps.com., which do not include the entire season, she had a .417 batting average with 10 hits in 24 at-bats in 12 games. Early in the season, she had two hits and three RBIs in a 25-10 win against Navajo Pine. In a 20-3 win against Newcomb on April 26, she belted two doubles and had one RBI and scored one run.

Robbins's sister, Ina, is a freshman on the team. She was among the team's three main pitchers this season.

Native nutrition conference to be held in Minnesota

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The 6th annual Conference on Native American Nutrition will be held Sept. 10-12 at Mystic Lake Center in Prior Lake, Minnesota. The conference can be attended virtually or in person. Sessions will be about Indigenous perspectives on the role of food in health and wellbeing, model tribal programs, the state of Indigenous science, and food policy. Scheduled presentations will be from Valarie Blue Bird Jernigan (Choctaw), Melissa Walls (Bois Forte and Couchiching First Nations Anishinaabe), Alike Maunakea (Native Hawaiian) and others.

For more information go to nativenutrition.umn.edu/2023-conference



PECS' undefeated softbal team is honored at the school's athletic awards banquet May 16 at the Veterans Building. From left to right are Hannah Platt, Kiera Snell, Jalene Smith, Daliyah Nunez, Charisma Micco, Melaine Bonilla, Ila Trueblood, Joleyne Nunez, Amalia Estrada, Cherrish Micco, Dyani Kayda, Kulipa Julian, Azariah Washington, Tehya Nunez and Serenity Billie. Coach Mary Huff is in the back row.

PECS student-athletes recognized for academic, athletic success

STAFF REPORT

Excellence in the classroom and on the field and court was celebrated by the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School at its athletic banquet May 16.

There were plenty of reasons to celebrate.

First, the academic year marked the return of sports to the school after a two-year, pandemic-related absence.

Also, a dozen student-athletes in attendance were recognized for earning scholar athlete honors; each had grade point averages of 3.5 and above. The highest GPA honors were earned by Timothy Urbina on the boys side and Eleanor Osceola on the girls side.

The classroom wasn't the only place where PECS' student-athletes thrived. It didn't matter what season – fall, winter, spring – the girls varsity teams dominated their opponents.

Despite not playing for the previous two years, the volleyball, basketball and softball teams combined for a 33-1 record. Volleyball and basketball won Around the Lake tournament championships (softball did not have a tournament).

Awards were presented to each of the school's sports and the coaches were recognized.

♦ See PECS AWARDS on page 4C



PECS

Boys basketball award winners, from left to right, Gregory James (defensive player of the year), Walt Fortner (MVP and offensive player of the year), Logan French (Seminole Award), Landon French (most improved) and Jace Johns (rookie of the year).



PECS

Timothy Urbina holds his award for having the highest GPA among PECS' male student-athletes.



PECS

Girls basketball award winners with coach Jovanny Torres, far left, are, from left to right: Ila Trueblood (offensive player of the year), Cherrish Micco (Seminole Award), Azariah Washington (rookie of the year), Kulipa Julian (most improved) and Charisma Micco (MVP).

FSU Seminoles fall short in title bid

STAFF REPORT

The Florida State University softball team reached the Women's College World Series, but were swept in two games by the

powerful University of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma won, 5-0 and 3-1, on June 7 and June 8, respectively, in Oklahoma City. The Sooners finished the season with a 61-1 record that included 53 straight wins to capture their third straight national

championship.

While the Seminoles didn't put up those type of dominating numbers, they did compile a 58-11 record that included Atlantic Coast Conference regular season and tournament championships.

This season marked the third time in the past five years FSU has reached the World Series. The Seminoles won the title in 2018 and lost to the Sooners in 2021.



Brighton students have a blast feeling their stomachs drop on a thrill ride May 26 during the Education Department's end of school year bash. The department hosted bashes at all reservations in May and June.

Kids have a blast at Education Department end of year bashes



From left to right, Allie Billie, Aubrilee Billie and Anna Tigertail show their delight with the end of school and summertime fun at the Immokalee end of the school year bash June 28.

A festive-looking sign announces the end of the academic year.



Immokalee students and K-12 advisor Magdalie Dumorne, left, are given a tour of a Seminole Fire Rescue ambulance by battalion commander Steven Zitnick.



Amalia Estrada enjoys a ride on an inflatable zip line in Brighton.



Caliegh Fuller, right, appears ready to best Zoey Garcia in their leg of a relay race at the Immokalee bash.

Cassius Billie, right, receives a raffle gift at the Tampa Education's end of the school year bash May 25.



Brandon Academy honors Nigel Osceola



The Seminole Tribe's Nigel Osceola, third from right, played on the boys volleyball team at Brandon Academy this spring. Osceola was honored on senior night April 25 against Palm Grove Christian. He was the only senior on the team, which posted a 5-8 record. He also played football at Brandon.



Nigel Osceola gets ready to serve during a Brandon Academy boys volleyball match.

Dolphins home schedule at Hard Rock Stadium kicks off Sept. 24

MIAMI GARDENS — The home schedule for the Miami Dolphins 2023 season at Hard Rock Stadium starts Sept. 24 when they host the Denver Broncos. Other home games include Oct. 8 vs the New York Giants, Oct. 15 vs the Carolina Panthers, Oct. 29 vs the New England Patriots, Nov. 19 vs the Las Vegas Raiders, Dec. 11 vs the Tennessee Titans, Dec. 17 vs the New York Jets, Dec. 24 vs the Dallas Cowboys and a game against the Buffalo Bills whose date has yet to be announced.

The Dolphins will host one preseason game, Aug. 11 vs the Atlanta Falcons.



In April, the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI) Founder's Golf Classic at Whirlwind Golf Course in Chandler, Arizona, was held on two courses and featured nearly 300 golfers. The Seminole Tribe has been a longtime major sponsor of NABI and was a tee sponsor for the golf tournament.

NABI set to start July 18

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

More than 140 teams and 1,400 players are expected to descend on the Phoenix area for the 20th edition of the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI).

The annual tournament, which brings together some of the top high school boys and girls players in Indian Country, will be held July 18-23.

Three boys teams from Florida are registered. They are Florida Warriors (STOF, Miccosukee), Misfits (STOF, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians), Native Soldiers

(STOF) and Unconquered (STOF).

On the girls side, Florida has representation with 4Nations (STOF, Miccosukee, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and Omaha) and Native Soldiers (STOF).

MarJon Beauchamp (Mission Indians and La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians), who was drafted by the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks in 2022, is scheduled to attend the championships and participate in handing out trophies to the winning teams. He will also be conducting a private discussion and photo opportunity for all NABI teams.

The championship games are slated to be held July 23 at Footprint Center, home of the NBA's Phoenix Suns and WNBA's

Phoenix Mercury.

NABI's educational youth summit, which includes a college and career fair on July 17, will be held during the week at the Phoenix Indian Center (PIC).

As part of a new partnership, NABI donated \$50,000 to PIC in addition to naming PIC the beneficiary of the 2023 NABI Founders Golf Classic, which was held April 10 at Whirlwind Golf Course in Chandler, Arizona.

The Seminole Tribe has been a longtime major sponsor of NABI. It is also a sponsor of the golf tournament, which was held on two courses and attracted nearly 300 golfers.

Fight night takes place July 20 in Tampa

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TAMPA — A pair of Cage Fury Fighting Championships title fights are slated for July 20th's featured bouts at the Hard Rock Event Center in Tampa. Reigning lightweight champion Cedric "The Gunman" Gunnison will be seeking the first defense

of his title when he takes on Rob "Contact" Watley, while top prospects Shamel Findley and Badmatsyren "Immortal Lotus" Dorzhiev meet with a vacant flyweight title up for grabs.

For tickets, go to ticketmaster.com or seminolehardrocktampa.com.

The event will stream live on UFC fight pass.

"The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa has been absolutely electric each and every time our athletes have set foot in the venue, and this card will be no different," CFFC CEO Rob Haydak said in a statement.

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◆ PECS AWARDS
From page 1C



PECS’ scholar athletes are recognized at the school’s athletic awards banquet May 16. In alphabetical order, with their grade point average, the scholars are Amalia Estrada (3.5), Elainna Fonseca (3.5), Kulipa Julian (4.0), Dyani Kayda (3.6), Daliyah Nunez (3.7), Joleyne Nunez (3.9), Tehya Nunez (3.7), Eleanor Osceola (4.0), Caysie Platt (3.7), Ciani Smith (3.5), Ila Trueblood (3.9) and Timothy Urbina (3.6).



JV volleyball award winners are, from left to right, Mattie Platt (defensive player of the year), Ciani Smith (MVP, offensive player of the year) and Caysie Platt (Seminole Award, rookie of the year). Not pictured: Bailey Bowers (most improved).



The baseball team’s award winners are, from left to right, Jeremy Urbina (MVP), Brody Riley (offensive player of the year), Logan French (defensive player of the year), Jace Johns (most improved) and Landon French (Seminole Award). Not pictured: Karter Puente (rookie of the year). At far right is coach Harry Tewksbury.



The softball award winners are, from left to right, Charisma Micco (Seminole Award), Melaine Bonilla (MVP), Ila Trueblood (defensive player of the year), Joleyne Nunez (offensive player of the year), Amalia Estrada (rookie of the year), Cherrish Micco (most improved) and coach Mary Huff.



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Guitar Hotel welcomes Messi to South Florida

STAFF REPORT

Soccer superstar Lionel Messi is expected to make his debut with the Inter Miami team July 21 at DRV PNK Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, according to media reports. InterMiami will host Liga MX’s Cruz Azul at 8 p.m.

Messi, one of the most popular athletes in the world, sent shock waves through the sports world when he said June 7 that he intends to sign with Miami, which plays in Major League Soccer. That night, the Guitar Hotel in Hollywood spelled out his name in lights with a scrolling display.

There was a Messi-Hard Rock

connection even before his name went up in lights. In June 2021, Hard Rock International announced Messi would serve as a brand ambassador for the company for the next five years. The announcement came during Hard Rock’s 50th anniversary celebration as Messi became the first athlete to partner with HRI.

Nine months later the “Messi Burger” was born at Hard Rock Cafes worldwide.

Messi, who turned 36 on June 24, had been playing with a team in France since 2021. As his two-year contract was nearing an end, he announced his intention to sign with Miami, whose temporary stadium is only 13 miles from the Seminole Hard Rock property.



The tribe’s Guitar Hotel in Hollywood spelled “Messi” in lights June 7 after the superstar said he intended to sign with Inter Miami.



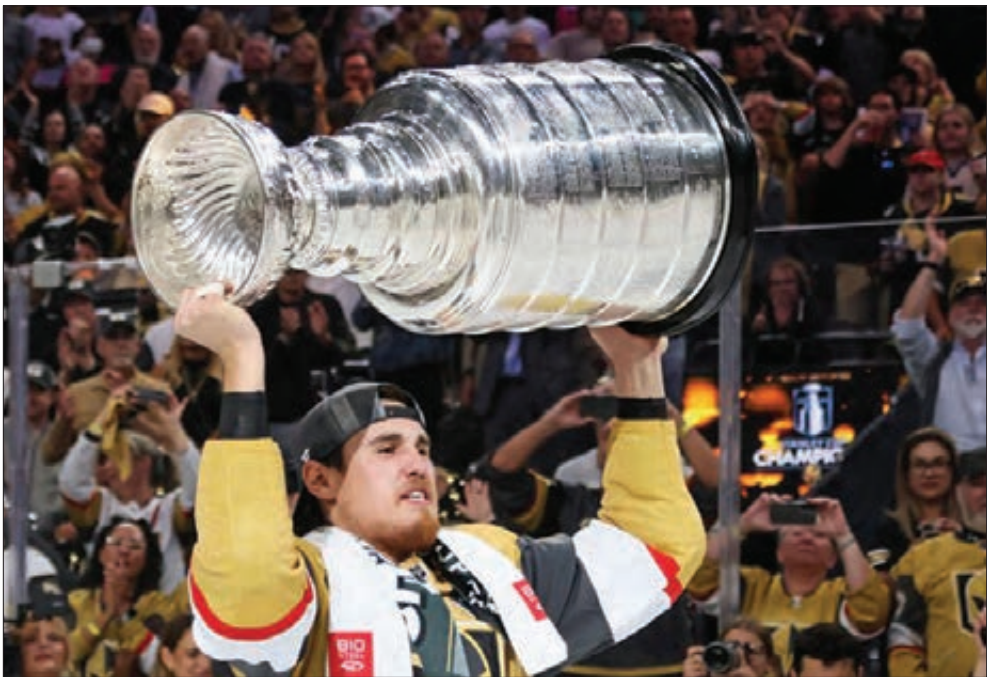
Lionel Messi with Hard Rock Cafe’s “Messi Burger.”



Lionel Messi and his family at the Guitar Hotel in 2021.



A Hard Rock/Messi sweatshirt on sale at Hard Rock’s Rock Shop in Hollywood.



NHL.com
Vegas Golden Knights defenseman Zach Whitecloud raises the Stanley Cup following the team's series-clinching victory against the Florida Panthers on June 13.

Proud moment for First Nation as Zach Whitecloud hoists Stanley Cup

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

The celebration of the Vegas Golden Knights' Stanley Cup championship victory stretched far beyond the Las Vegas Strip. The Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, a First Nation in Manitoba, Canada, celebrated, too, as one of its own – Vegas defenseman Zach Whitecloud – raised the Cup after the Knights beat the Florida Panthers, 4 games to 1, in June.

"This extraordinary achievement not only marks a significant milestone in Zach's career, but also brings immense honor to our community and the Dakota Nation as a whole," the Dakota Nation's government said in a news release. "We are profoundly proud of Zach and his accomplishments. His journey, deeply rooted in our cultural teachings and values, is a testament to what can be achieved with commitment, resilience, and unwavering dedication."

"Zach Whitecloud has brought our cultural values to the forefront

of the international stage through his sportsmanship, discipline, and respect for the game. His victory is not just a win in the world of hockey, but also a triumph for the values that we hold dear in our community. His success is a beacon of hope and an inspiration for our young ones, who can now see that they too can reach for the stars and achieve their dreams."

Whitecloud, 26, played two seasons with Bemidji State University in Minnesota before signing with Vegas in 2018. He had eight points in 22 games in the postseason run to the Cup.

"I'm proud of my heritage, proud of my culture, and proud of where I come from," Whitecloud told SportsNet shortly after winning the Cup.

Whitecloud wasn't the only Indigenous player in the final. Florida defenseman Brandon Montour, 29, is Mohawk and grew up in the Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario. He wrapped up by far his most productive season as a pro. He had 73 points in 80 games during the regular season and 13 points in 21 playoff games.



Rod Mar/Seattle Seahawks

Seattle Seahawks rookies team up with the Muckleshoot Tribe for canoe rides on Lake Washington on June 13.

Seahawks rookies, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe take to Lake Washington on tribal canoes

JOHN BOYLE
Seahawks.com Senior Reporter

As Donny Stevenson, the vice chairman of the Muckleshoot Tribal Council, explained to Seahawks rookies the adventure they were about to undertake, he offered a bit of wisdom.

"We always try to do this with one heart, one mind," Stevenson told the rookies before they joined members of the Muckleshoot Tribe on canoes in Lake Washington.

Based off the shouts of both joy and fear, as well as the rocking of the canoes on a breezy day, the rookies may not quite have hit that goal of one heart, one mind, but overall the afternoon was a big success anyway based on the smiles on everyone's faces, and the fact that everyone stayed dry... Well, everyone except undrafted rookie nose tackle Jonah Tavai, who, apparently out of respect for Muckleshoot customs, jumped off the dock and into the lake after referring to a canoe as a boat.

"We had a great experience," Seahawks coach Pete Carroll said after joining his players on a canoe. "It was tremendous to have the Muckleshoot Tribe out here to take

care of us and make this a really fun event for us. It was a little more difficult than we thought—we thought it would just be fun and games, but we had to work at it. Fortunately, we had a great skipper out there and she took care of us. It's really good though to be connected with them and to recognize how crucial this area has been to their history."

With representatives of the Tribal Council in attendance and with members of the Muckleshoot Tribe on each canoe, a group of more than 30 Seahawks rookies took to Lake Washington in three Muckleshoot canoes, including one that was on its maiden voyage after being completed only a day earlier.

And though Seahawks rookies and their coach didn't become experts in one afternoon, there was some valuable team building going on even if they didn't quite function in perfect harmony on the water.

"It is really important that we do spend time and we focus on the opportunities for guys to get to know each other and all of that, because that's going to be the connection that makes the difference down the road," Carroll said. "We're off and running. This is just one of the events—they've done a lot of

stuff to get this point—this might be one of the more memorable ones, because that fear factor came in a little bit. This was great."

Said Jaxon Smith-Njigba, one of Seattle's two first-round picks, "It was tough. I didn't trust anyone at first, but you kind of have to with all those guys (on the canoe). You don't want to, but you've got to. It was cool."

In addition to a little bit of team bonding and a fun afternoon, Seahawks rookies also learned some important history about their new hometown and the original inhabitants of the Puget Sound region.

"The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe is a water people," Stevenson said. "A core piece of our identity comes from the waterways here in this region, whether that's the fresh water or the salt water. Primarily, substance was pulled from those resources, whether that's fisheries within the rivers or the fisheries within the salt water, the salmon, just the bounty that the Salish Sea provides. Bottom line is, the Salish Sea doesn't exist without our people; we don't exist without the Salish Sea. It's a core part of who we are, and we're a core part of what this region represents."

Car show finds a home at Seminole Hard Rock

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The Supercar Saturdays car show has found its new home at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The show, which started its run at Hard Rock on May 13, is held the second Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. to noon in a parking lot on the property.

The show has a vast display of cars, including super, exotic, hyper, muscle, luxury and classic.

Supercar Saturdays was created by

Floyd Rag. It is recognized throughout South Florida as a signature automotive event.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity for our guests to enjoy Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood as a central location with many options for entertainment, dining, retail and casino playing," Rag said in a story in Miami's communitynewspapers.com.

For more information call (305) 725-3096, email supercarsaturdaysflorida@gmail.com or go to facebook.com/supercarsaturdaysflorida/.



Calvin Tiger

Various Lamborghinis are on display for all to see at Supercar Saturdays at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.



Calvin Tiger
A McLaren 570S on display at the Supercar Saturdays event.



Calvin Tiger
An Aston Martin Vantage rolls through the Supercar Saturdays event.

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After 53 years, Lolita might leave Miami Seaquarium

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

The 57-year-old orca known as Lolita has spent 53 years in captivity at the Miami Seaquarium under questionable conditions and repeated calls for her release by the public, activists and Native communities. There now appears to be a potential path for the 6,300-pound killer whale (also called Tokitae, Toki and Sk'aliCh'elhtenaut by the Lummi Nation) to be relocated to an ocean sanctuary in her native Salish Sea in the Pacific Northwest for the remainder of her life. She was captured in Puget Sound and transported to Miami when she was approximately four-years-old.

Seaquarium officials first announced their intentions March 30 in a news release by new owner The Dolphin Company. The release said it had entered into a “formal and binding agreement” with the nonprofit Friends of Toki, formally Friends of Lolita, and other entities to move her to her home waters.

Friends of Toki was cofounded by Pritam Singh, an environmentalist and real estate developer in Key West. The organization consists of marine mammal scientists, Lummi Nation elder Raynell Morris, Charles Vinick of the Whale Sanctuary Project and others. Philanthropist Jim Irsay, the owner and CEO of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts, is also helping to fund Lolita's relocation.

“Finding a better future for Lolita is one of the reasons that motivated us to acquire the Miami Seaquarium,” Eduardo Albor, CEO of The Dolphin Company, said in the



Until Lolita is Home/Facebook
Lolita has been at the Miami Seaquarium for 53 years.

March 30 release.

Specifics are thin, but officials said the hope was that the relocation would be possible in the next 18-to-24 months, although any timeline would depend on Lolita's health. Recent independent health and welfare assessments have said her energy, appetite and engagement were “becoming reasonably stable.”

The transportation method is expected to be similar to the one used to move her to Miami in 1970. Officials said she is being trained to swim into a custom-made stretcher that would be lifted by crane into a container filled with ice water. The container would be transported on a plane to Bellingham, Washington, where it would then be loaded onto a barge to transport her to a sea pen at a private location where Lolita would receive regular medical care, security and feedings.

“Returning Lolita to her home waters does not mean releasing her into the open ocean,” an updated May 1 news release from the Seaquarium, said. “She is expected to remain under human care in a protected habitat for the rest of her life. Lolita will continue to

receive enrichment, high-quality nutrition, medical care and love, all according to the approved plans by federal authorities.”

The development is welcome news by those who have long advocated for Lolita's release, including the nonprofit People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

“If Lolita is finally returned to her home waters, there will be cheers from around the world, including from PETA, which has pursued several lawsuits on Lolita's behalf and battered the Seaquarium with protests demanding her freedom for years,”

PETA Foundation vice president and general counsel for animal law Jared Goodman, said in a statement. “[Her release will] offer her long-awaited relief after five miserable decades in a cramped tank and send a clear signal to other parks that the days of confining highly intelligent, far-ranging marine mammals to dismal prisons are done and dusted.”

Native, public pressure

Lolita is one of the few remaining orcas in captivity. The Seaquarium discontinued its shows that featured her in 2022, the year it was acquired by The Dolphin Company. PETA, which is against the use of animals for entertainment, said awareness and activism has grown around orcas in captivity at marine parks.

The public's appetite for such entertainment — made most famous at SeaWorld locations in the U.S. — has waned in recent years. Pressure to free orcas in captivity was ramped up significantly in the wake of the 2013 documentary “Blackfish,” which told the story of the orca Tilikum, who performed at SeaWorld Orlando. The documentary argued that keeping orcas in captivity is damaging and inhumane.

Tilikum, who died in 2017, was involved in the deaths of two trainers and a trespasser at SeaWorld Orlando. SeaWorld decided in 2016 to end its



File photo

Members of the Lummi Nation have traveled from Washington state to Miami several times with a totem pole representing Lolita in order to pressure the Seaquarium to release her.

orca breeding programs and phase out live shows. It is thought that the decision was made at least in part because of the fallout from the documentary and continued public pressure from animal rights groups and activists within Native tribes.

Members of the Lummi Nation, located just west of Bellingham, consider Lolita to be a family member. They have advocated for her release for decades, calling it a “sacred obligation.” The Lummi, with support from the Seminole Tribe and the Miccosukee Tribe, have held ceremonies and protests on several totem pole journeys.

Lummi artist Jewell James created and donated a 16-foot totem pole that depicts

Lolita. Over the years, the totem pole has traveled from Bellingham to Miami — making several stops along the way — including at the Big Cypress and Hollywood reservations.

The Seaquarium, located at 4400 Rickenbacker Causeway on Virginia Key east of downtown Miami, first opened in 1955. It features a variety of sea creatures, including dolphins, sea lions, manatees, reef fish and sharks. It was the location for the filming of 88 episodes of the “Flipper” TV series.

More information on Lolita's impending release can be found at friendsoftoki.org.

‘Killers of the Flower Moon’ film to be released in October

STAFF REPORT

A new film set in the Osage Nation of northeastern Oklahoma — “Killers of the Flower Moon” — is set to be released in October. The film is based on the best-selling 2017 nonfiction book by the same name.

The film, by Academy Award winning director Martin Scorsese, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May to rave reviews. The film stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, Lily Gladstone (Blackfeet and Nimíipuu), Jesse Plemons, Brendan Fraser and John Lithgow.

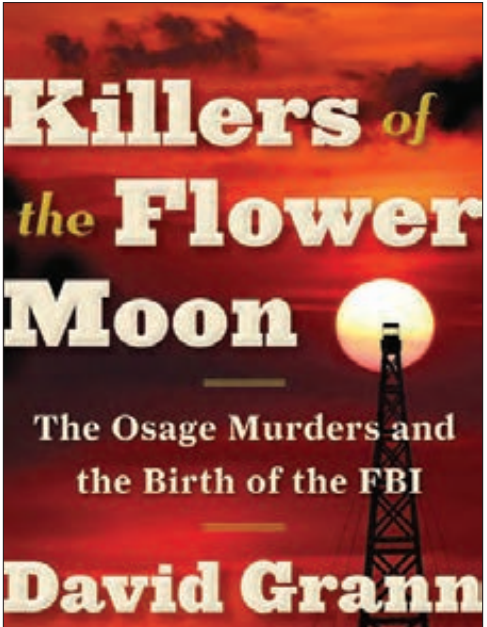
The book, by author and journalist David Grann, investigates a series of murders of wealthy Osage people that took place in Osage County in the early 1920s after big oil deposits were discovered. The Osage people are awarded the rights in court to the profits made from the oil deposits, and prepare to receive their entitled wealth. But a complex plot is hatched to murder the inheritors. The official murder count would reach 20, but Grann suspects that hundreds more may have been killed because of their ties to the oil.

The book also details the newly formed FBI's investigation of the murders, as well as the eventual trial and conviction of cattleman William Hale as the mastermind behind the plot.

In a January interview in Variety, Gladstone said that the input of the Osage Nation “greatly changed the film from what Scorsese had originally envisioned,” and that the collaboration “had positively affected the film.”

“Killers of the Flower Moon” is scheduled to be released in select theaters Oct. 6, before a wider U.S. release Oct. 20 by Paramount Pictures. It is also set for an eventual streaming release on Apple TV+.

The film's trailer is available on YouTube.



David Grann/Facebook

“Killers of the Flower Moon” is based on the book by David Grann.

BY ELGIN JUMPER

Author's note: “With this story I wanted to try something different, that is, to create a story with a strong female main character, but with a character flaw that she begins to overcome by the conclusion. Now, character names just seem to grab my attention in everyday life. “Misty Dawn,” as a character name, to me, evokes such poetic feelings and imagery. “Roger Wilco,” was commandeered from the military slang for a recipient's receiving of a message, and indicating they “will comply” with the orders. Shortened, of course. And as for Bill Changer, the narrator, I remembered seeing a sign at the self-car wash establishment I frequent, that said, “Bill Changer In Back” where one can change dollar bills into coins, for the vacuums, etc. And so everytime I see something like that, I rejoice, take note, and tuck them away for future stories.”

It was Summertime, just started. There were three of us back then, three young, aspiring Seminole writers and artists, in our early-twenties, eager to find our places in the sun.

There was Misty Dawn, confident, intelligent, striking, charismatic, black belt, she was an amazing writer and illustrator, a computer and smart device whisperer to boot, and certainly a driving force of creativity within our ranks. We had Roger Wilco, fit, trim, writer/artist, able to leap tribal buildings in a single bound, should he ever have the notion to, and then, there was me, “Good Ol’ Bill Changer,” twig-shouldered, in between short and tall, commodity food-raised, and yet, always “down” for helping my friends out with whatever came our way. I wrote and illustrated, too, of course.

We were at the art studio on the rez one day. “Okay, so check this out,” Misty said to Roger and me, “As you know, I sometimes over-think things, which, needless to say, is “my bad,” but I want to try something new now, see what happens. Listen, I want us to make a graphic novel. An independent piece. That’s the goal, anyways. We’ll haveta think in terms of goals and objectives. And I’d so love it if my two great friends would join me in order to achieve it. We’ll reconvene as much as we can. I mean, would that be something you’d even be up for? For the good of humankind?”

“Wwhhaaattt?” We cried out at once, in jest.

Roger said, “I’ve never heard of you “over-thinking,” did you say?”

“Yeah, all right,” she said, pushing ahead. She set her writing materials down on a table. “So I have a vision for this operation. And I’ve been working on an outline and script which I call, “Rez Girl, a recent creation of mine”—She smiled and winked—“She’s tough, smart, she knows who she is and where she’s heading to. She’s able to handle any situation. She’s young, a hardcharging skateboarder and adventurer and a huge fan of the X Games and The X-Files. She always has the right words for any occasion. Imagine it, if we do this, we could theoretically win The National Medal of Arts, The Pulitzer, and Noble Prizes, all three, just so you know. I’m almost sure of it.”

“Isn’t that like a comic book?” Roger asked, curiously.

“What’s the difference between em?” I wondered aloud.

She looked up to the heavens. “There, see what I haveta deal with down here?”—then she turned back to us—“O Ye of Little

Faith.” She pointed fingers, and raised her eyebrows, shrugged her shoulders.

“No, no, no,” Roger insisted. “I’m in, I’m in. Just sayin.”

“You know you can count on me, Mist?” I chimed in. “I just wanna know how they differ. O Ye of Hasty Judgements, heh-heh.”

“Well,” she said, “because I love you, Graphic Novels have full storylines, stand alone narratives. Even if they’re part of a series. In essence, a Graphic Novel is a novel, obviously, utilizing the comic book format. And Comic Books, well, they have parts of serialized storylines, that kind of thing, so it helps immensely if you’ve already read the issue prior to the current issue. If that makes any sense at all.”

“Ahh,” Roger acknowledged, nodding. “Okay.”

“Ohh, okay,” I added for good measure. “That’s fine with me. Heck, I’ll get back to my stuff later. Let’s do this. By all means.”

“Yeah, let’s do it.” Roger urged. “You’re lucky I’m in between projects. I mean, if this would’ve happened while I was in the midst - Oh-ho-ho!”

Misty rubbed her palms together. “Ooh, yeah!” she exclaimed. “High five, high five.” We chuckled over that one, an all around chuckle, too.

“Now we’re cookin with Crisco!” Roger cried out. “We is set, my friends, we is set. Brilliant!”

It was a Summer like no other. Oh, it was on-the-job training, yes, it is true, but we couldn’t have pulled a better team together for the task at hand. Well-led, too. Well-motivated. We would find a way to do what we had to do, no matter what. We worked at each other’s homes, and at the art studio we all shared.

Simply put, we pitched in on everything that needed to be done. Misty took the lead, or took command, I should say, and as a commander, she moved us forward, trying her best to keep our morale elevated. We averaged 10 - 15 good pages a day, pages that could later be tweaked. We never looked back.

In the initial stages of the project, we were grabbing a quick bite at Misty’s place, before getting back to writing and illustrating, when her aunt, with silver hair, and much wisdom, stopped by to drop off Seminole patchwork for Misty’s mother.

“Hi, kids!” her aunt, who was also an artist, exclaimed. “Misty, what are you up to these days? I know you and your friends are constantly doing something well. How’s Life been treating you?”

Misty laughed. “Well, all things considered, the wars, threats of nuclear annihilation, global warming, sea-levels rising, and so on, you know, with the way things are in the cruel world . . . Ah, let me not get started. Doing something creative seems to help, though, big time. Something we can truly put our hearts into. Once in a long while, granted, I’ll tend to over-think stuff. But we’re bombarded with it everyday! I don’t know. I haveta find a better way, end of discussion.”

Misty’s aunt responded with, “You know certain problems just can’t be controlled. Others do that. But we have to Hope. Focus on the things we can control. And as long as we’re doing that, in my book, we’re doing good. Eat smart, and healthy as much as we can. Strive for good rest, good sleep. Make the effort, my beloved niece. You’ll see the difference. And you already know to pray, and to express sincerest gratitude so.” Roger and I concurred. Misty’s aunt was an exceptional teacher.

Making Art. Let’s say you’re putting a

‘Rez Girl’

Seminole chickee hut together. You’d gather what you’d require, that is, fresh cypress wood, various lengths and sizes, fresh palmetto fronds, deploying nails and hammers and saws and suchlike. In the modern-day, don’t you see. Then, with help, with patience, you’d assemble everything you’ve gathered. Well, that’s what we did, in a sense. Taking care and taking pride in our work.

We followed Misty’s vision, her outline, and script, her example. Our goals and objectives were being met. We agreed on the looks and anatomy of the main characters, in every situation, stance, and emotion. Occasionally some disparager would seek to infiltrate our organization, but we quickly by-passed them, and keep ploughing ahead. We quickly studied panels and experimented with them before making final decisions.

Gradually, artfully, we chipped away at the formless marble, so to speak, to reveal in time the wonderful sculpture within. We worked hard on creating clearly defined, believable characters, as well, I’m happy to say, who inhabited this heightened world we were building for them. They had to be able to take care of others and themselves, if it ever came down to it.

We were dealing with a Good vs Evil kind of world, so we had to consider the Villains of the piece, with the same diligence. They had to convey a true power and strength, formidable, irredeemable, in some instances, building conflict, drama, and suspense, so that when our heroes confronted them, and prevailed, at long last, it would be the villain’s darkness vanquished by the hero’s light. We absolutely loved what we were doing.

“This is visual-storytelling, too,” Misty declared at one juncture. “If the words were removed from our panels, could the story still be understood? Just the imagery, mind you. Every report I get from the field tells me we must take this into consideration: Would the story still be clear?” We thought long and hard about that one.

Thank heavens, everyday we did something to move the project along. And it just kept developing. Good things happened. We worked on the pacing of the story. We fine tuned our visuals, a red, black, and white style throughout, then deciding on the media, and executing the artwork, and carefully revised and tightened our dialogue. Among numerous other pertinent tasks.

Then we researched comic book and graphic novel printers, and alas, sent our labor of love out for finalized printing! All the while, Time had been flying by. Summer was almost over. We had accomplished much. There was even early discussions of a “Rez Girl” Launch Party! At the Hard Rock!



Elgin Jumper

Elgin Jumper's early concept painting “Rez Girl”

Yes, by some good magic and sprinkles of miracles, we had created a graphic novel with 200 pages! With all the art and words that that entailed! It was a worthwhile endeavor.

Soon we received the book! Misty’s Vision. We tried not to act too amazed, though in our hearts, we were thrilled and elated! Misty Dawn turned misty-eyed, in a good way, I’m delighted to report. She reminded us of her aunt’s words that fine day.

She smiled. “I’m going to take more care of myself,” she said with resolve. “More exercise and time to unwind from the world. I haveta. I want to reconvene with you more. Try an do better. We’ve come a long ways. And I am so grateful for everything. I’ve learned so many good things from this operation. I thank you. So I’m easin up on stressin out. It’s a new day.”

She flipped through the book. She seemed to have forgotten all her worries. There was a fresh, reborn radiance in her eyes. A true happiness. She giggled and nodded to Roger and me. She was savoring the moment. Our Rez Girl.

Seminole artist and writer Elgin Jumper is a contributor to the Seminole Tribune.