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Spencer Battiest to be honored with diversity award

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Seminole Tribe singer, songwriter, actor and producer Spencer Battiest and two longtime stars from the entertainment industry will be honored March 9 when they are scheduled to receive Harvey Milk Medals at the 8th annual Diversity Honors program.

The program will be held at Hard Rock Seminole Casino Hotel Hollywood. It will include a cocktail reception, live music, dinner, an awards ceremony highlighted by presentations to Battiest, Belinda Carlisle and Billy Porter, and an after-party.

The awards are in memory of Harvey Milk, one of the first openly gay elected officials in the U.S. He was assassinated in 1978 after winning a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He is recognized as an icon for the LGBTQ+ community.

Battiest, who is also Choctaw, has been performing as a singer since he was a child on the Hollywood Reservation. He and his brother, Doc Native, were part of a seven-member all-Indigenous collaboration that won an MTV Video Music Award in 2017 for their song that supported opposition to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Battiest is also a multi-Native American Music Award winner. In theater, his credits include a starring role in the all-Native play “Distant Thunder.”

Carlisle gained fame in the early 1980s as lead vocalist for the all-female Go-Go’s band with hits such as “We Got the Beat” and “Vacation.” The band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2021.

♦ See DIVERSITY on page 4A



Kevin Johnson

Trina Hipp, center, becomes the first Seminole tribal member to be sworn in as a state certified firefighter with Semiole Tribe Fire Rescue on Feb. 21 in Hollywood. Joining Hipp are fellow graduates Michael Maulini, left, and Donald Youngman.

A first for Seminole Tribe as firefighter Trina Hipp is sworn in

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — Trina Hipp made Seminole Tribe of Florida history Feb. 21,

2024.

In front of dozens of colleagues and her family, Hipp was sworn in as a firefighter at the Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue’s graduation and recognition ceremony at Station 108 on

the Hollywood Reservation. Fire officials said Hipp is the first state certified firefighter from the tribe to join the department.

“It means a lot. I’ve always wanted to help support our tribe. I’ve always had a

passion to help people,” said Hipp, 37, who is from the Brighton Reservation.

♦ See HIPP on page 5A

Tribal members strive and stride for good health

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — With the theme of “Strength Within,” tribal members from every reservation gathered in Brighton to show their determination in the fight against diabetes by walking, running or jogging a 5K course on Feb. 24 at the 24th annual Rez Rally.

Participants ranged from infants to

elders in the Integrative Health Department’s annual rally, which emphasizes good health through exercise, diet and lifestyle.

Ideal running and walking conditions included a bright blue sky, low humidity and cool temperatures. Participants donned their race bibs, warmed up with exercises in the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena and tackled the 5K (3 miles) course or the 1 mile course for seniors.



Beverly Bidney

Ken Doney and Amanda Julian have plenty of reasons to smile as they help the Brighton Reservation win Rez Rally.



Beverly Bidney

Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie, far left, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahnia Billie stand with representatives from the winning Brighton Reservation team at Rez Rally on Feb. 23. From left to right are Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, team captain April Simmons, Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, team captain Patty Waldron and team captain Reina Micco.

Dr. Vandhana Kiswani, Health and Human Services Department executive director, said obesity is one of the first and highest risk factor for diabetes. Before the race, tribal leaders imparted the message of the day that good health can help fight diabetes, which is common among Native Americans nationwide.

“We are strong and we will beat diabetes if we eat right and live right,” Brighton Councilman Larry Howard said. “I’m a victim of diabetes and I have already lost 21 pounds.”

“There is a pandemic of diabetes,” Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie said. “We have to educate ourselves on healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle, starting with the youth. We need to start teaching them young because we pick up bad habits when

we are young.”

Rez Rally is usually held in January, right after months of over-eating at Thanksgiving, holiday and New Year’s celebrations, but it was postponed to February.

“Let’s get a healthy start to the year,” Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola said. “This means a lot to all of us as we fight for our health. Make sure you stay on a healthy path this year so we will see you next year.”

There’s also a competitive aspect to the rally, with individuals and reservations vying for prizes. The Brighton Reservation won the trophy for the most participants overall and the sweetgrass basket for most tribal participants based on community population.

Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge was on the winning reservation team. He

emphasized the importance of being active.

“It’s never too late, regardless of where you are in diabetes,” said Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge. “We should all utilize the exercise facilities we have.”

In addition to the health and friendly competition aspects, Rez Rally provided opportunities for tribal members to catch up with each other.

“We are all committed to making fellowship among us,” President Holly Tiger said. “We are only an hour or two from each other, but sometimes when you get busy with life, it seems like a very long distance.”

After the race, a healthy brunch was served and winners in each category were announced.

♦ See RALLY on page 4C

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Editorial

Does the federal government need a Marshall Plan for Indian Country?

• **Levi Rickert**

Kitcki Carroll (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma), executive director of the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET), compares the current condition of Indian Country to the devastated condition of Europe in the aftermath of World War II. Back then, the United States employed the European Recovery Program — most commonly known as the Marshall Plan — to invest in the rebuilding of Europe with a goal of achieving a stable economy and sustainable peace.

Carroll brought his message to the National Congress of Americans Indians (NCAI) at its 80th Convention and Marketplace in New Orleans last November. He presented the Marshall Plan for Tribal Nations: A Restorative Justice and Domestic Investment Plan to the NCAI attendees.

Carroll believes the federal government has failed to keep its promises made in treaties. The results have left many in Indian Country with the lack of infrastructure such as running water, electricity, and poor roads.

He cited the 2003 report released by the United States Commission on Civil Rights called A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country that detailed the federal government's failure to fulfill treaty obligations. In 2018, the Commission on Civil Rights reported that—due to a variety of reasons such as historical discriminatory policies, insufficient resources, and inefficient federal program delivery—American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to rank near the bottom of all Americans in terms of health, education, and employment.

Carroll says it's time the United States dealt with Indian Country in the fashion it did in Europe with the Marshall Plan.

“The Marshall Plan for Tribal Nations is not a replacement of the annual

appropriations process,” he said. “This is an infrastructure investment of significant size. The effort to secure full mandatory funding for any country appropriations exists in perpetuity, for as long as the United States holds the assets, the land and the natural resources associated, then they have that responsibility to fulfill that promise—in perpetuity. So there are two separate things even though they are related.”

To implement the Marshall Plan, the United States committed an enormous amount of money, which in historic dollars came with a \$13.3 billion price tag. Back then, it represented 13 percent of the U.S. budget expenditures, about 1% to 2% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product at the time.

The Marshall Plan proved to be mutually beneficial to both the United States and Europe. Over the course of just four years, European industrial production rose by 55%, with agricultural output increasing by nearly 37%. For the United States, its investment helped to maintain and grow its own economic stability with European trade. Additionally, the investment translated into the United States gaining more status in the eyes of the world. The Marshall Plan was viewed as highly successful.

While Carroll did not put a price tag on the Tribal Nations Marshall Plan, he thinks it's time for the United States to make the same type of investment in Indian Country.

“Like the European Marshall Plan, the parameters of the Tribal Nations Marshall Plan must be determined in close consultation with, and subject to the consent of, the funding recipients: Tribal Nations,” the plan writes. “This process would be best served by establishing a Department of Tribal Nation Relations for consultation and coordination purposes. The Department would take the lead by establishing a Commission that includes Tribal Nations, the White House Council on Native American Affairs, the Office of Management and Budget, the Government

Accountability Office, and others to make funding and allocation recommendations through a collaborative assessment of the United States’ unfunded trust and treaty obligations.

The Commission should present to Congress a reliable funding number and allocation plan. Rather than studying the problem—as so many reports have already done—the Commission should focus on actions to execute the Tribal Nations Marshall Plan.”

As the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has expressed in two reports, the federal government has failed Indian Country. While the Biden administration has been favorable to Indian Country, more needs to be done.

“Every effort worth pursuing has always started with the courage and intent to take the initial first step. I want to express gratitude to all those who played a role in leading us to where we are today. I now humbly ask that we all commit to taking the first step into this next phase of our journey together, drawing upon our collective strength and wisdom as Indigenous people.” Carroll said in his remarks.

I’m inviting the White House and Congress to read the Marshall Plan for Tribal Nations: A Restorative Justice and Domestic Investment Plan developed by the United South and Eastern Tribes. Then they should get to work. The federal government should take USET’s recommendation and establish a Marshall Plan for Indian Country.

Levi “Calm Before the Storm” Rickert (Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation) is the founder, publisher and editor of Native News Online. He serves on the advisory board of the Multicultural Media Correspondents Association. He can be reached at levi@nativenewsonline.net.

This article was published on nativenewsonline.net.

Removing Native artifacts isn’t enough

• **The Harvard Crimson Editorial Board**

After years of slow-walking, Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology has finally made a half-step toward ethical stewardship.

[In February], the Peabody removed around 40 Native American and Indigenous artifacts from its exhibits to comply with new regulations requiring consent from tribal groups for the display of some objects.

Harvard made the right decision in complying with the regulations, but legal compliance is the floor — not the ceiling. This step does not by half address the long, sordid history of Harvard’s colonial violence against Native and Indigenous peoples.

In its early years, Harvard and its affiliates perpetrated countless bloody atrocities against local tribes, christianizing them, enslaving them, and expanding onto their lands. Now, 400 years on, the University continues to hold and display many of the cherished objects expropriated in the process.

Harvard has long faced challenges over these holdings. A 2019 lawsuit challenged the University’s refusal to return daguerotypes of a slave to a woman with credible claims to being his descendant. A 2021 letter from the

nonprofit Association on American Indian Affairs accused Harvard of noncompliance with the federal statute governing Native remains and cultural objects.

In short, to redress its history of violence against Native and Indigenous peoples, Harvard has a long way to go.

That can begin with the very institutions whose display cases colonial violence has so often filled: museums.

Museums play an essential role in telling the story of cultures less known by the general public. The Peabody, for example, receives more than 250,000 visitors per year. Given this broad reach, this moment presents an opportunity for Harvard to consider how it can engage with Indigenous artifacts and their return in ways that will bolster — not hamper — education.

As it does so, Harvard must solicit and heed the perspectives of Native communities, with whom the Peabody should nurture standing, communicative relationships. On their request, the University should readily remove and repatriate Indigenous artifacts.

These relationships need not just be transactional, though — they can be generative. Collaborations with Native communities can produce new, innovative, and respectful ways of teaching Indigenous history, including through video, virtual reality, and other new media. With these techniques, museums can replace repatriated

material objects and, often, convey aspects of history they can’t easily represent, like oral traditions.

Such an approach doesn’t just respect Native autonomy — it allows for a more authentic, immersive, and dignified telling of Native history.

Still, Indigenous education ought not end at the Peabody’s doors.

University-wide, Harvard must realize its untapped potential for the study of Native American culture and history. The University should increase Indigenous representation among tenure-track faculty, which counts just a single tenured Native American professor among its number, establish an ethnic studies department, and provide greater support to the Native American Program.

It’s said that the future is history. At Peabody, we are reminded that how we teach history can be the future, too. To reckon with Harvard’s crimes against New England’s original inhabitants, the University and the Peabody still have much to do.

This staff editorial solely represents the majority view of the Harvard Crimson Editorial Board. The Harvard Crimson is a daily newspaper that covers Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

US Navy ship named in honor of Chippewa Tribe member

U.S. NAVY

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced that the future Navajo-class Towing, Salvage, and Rescue (T-ATS) ship will be named in honor of the late James D. Fairbanks, member of the Chippewa Tribe and the 13th Force Master Chief Petty Officer of the Seabees.

Del Toro made the announcement during a ship naming ceremony at the National Museum of the American Indian on Feb. 21.

The naming selection of the future USNS James. D. Fairbanks (T-ATS 13) follows the tradition of naming towing, salvage and rescue ships after prominent Native Americans or Native American tribes.

“The names of thousands of Indigenous heroes who have served with distinction in our military – and especially our Navy and Marine Corps – echo and inspire us still,” Del Toro said. “This Navajo-class ship bearing the name James D. Fairbanks will carry his legacy of service forward and symbolize his dedication to the Seabees and our nation.”

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Chairman of the White Earth Indian Reservation Michael Fairbanks joined Secretary Del Toro for the ceremony honoring Fairbanks, who was born and raised on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Northern Minnesota. Both spoke about the honor and meaning behind the naming of the Navy’s newest T-ATS.

“What the Navy knows, and what White Earth [Nation] knows, is that stories matter. That history matters. That traditions matter. Honoring warriors like FORCM Fairbanks matters,” Walz said.

“Force Master Chief James Fairbanks was in our language an Ogiichidaa, a Warrior for our People - the Anishinaabeg, and the citizens of the United States. He served

with distinction and valor with great honor,” Michael Fairbanks said. “A Warrior in Native American culture holds a great deal of respect by tribal members. James Fairbanks was a true Warrior that represented the White Earth Nation and the U.S. Navy with honor. He unknowingly became a great role model for not only White Earth youth, but for all Native youth. Due to his exemplary leadership, he has earned the right to have a ship named in his honor.”

Born Jan. 9, 1952, James D. Fairbanks served in both the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1970 and served as an ordnanceman with 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines, until he was honorably discharged in 1972. He then worked as a civilian welder until 1977 before enlisting in the Navy. Fairbanks served with an amphibious construction battalion (ACB) until his honorable discharge in 1979. In 1986, he resumed Naval service as a Seabee.

While deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Fairbanks received the Bronze Star for meritorious leadership under proximate enemy fire and threat of enemy attack. From 2005 to 2008, Fairbanks served as the 13th Force Master Chief for the Seabees, the highest-ranking enlisted Seabee and first Native American to hold this position.

Navajo-class ships will provide ocean-going tug, salvage, and rescue capabilities to support Fleet operations. The current capabilities are provided by Powhatan-class T-ATF Fleet Tugs and Safeguard-class T-ARS Rescue and Salvage vessels, which began reaching the end of their expected service lives in 2020. Navajo-class ships will be capable of towing U.S. Navy ships and will have 6,000 square feet of deck space for embarked systems.



U.S. Navy

A ceremony was held Feb. 21 for the naming of a U.S. Navy ship in honor of James Fairbanks.

NIGC chairman steps down

STAFF REPORT

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) announced the resignation of its chairman, E. Sequoyah Simermeyer, on Feb. 20.

The last day on the job for Simermeyer, who served as chairman since late 2019, was set for Feb. 24.

“I’ve witnessed firsthand how tribes across the Indian gaming industry have pursued economic sustainability through gaming by relying on - and cultivating - the robust regulatory reputation for which Indian gaming is well known, and made better when supported by effective and efficient measures by Indian gaming’s regulators,” Simermeyer said in a news release.

In the release, the NIGC highlighted Simermeyer’s work in areas such as training, outreach, cybersecurity, workforce preparedness and guiding the agency through the pandemic and post-pandemic

recovery, mentioning that Indian Gaming revenue registered a record \$40.9 billion last year.

The release said Simermeyer is transitioning to the next phase of his career, but did not provide further details.

Simermeyer graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College, a master’s degree from Vermont Law School, and a law degree from Cornell Law School.

The NIGC was created in 1988 with the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act during President Ronald Reagan’s administration. The position of chair is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.



E. Sequoyah Simermeyer

NIGC

Chickasaw governor shares tribe’s health care transformation with Harvard audience

FROM CHICKASAW NATION MEDIA RELATIONS

BOSTON — Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby spoke at Harvard Medical School Jan. 18, detailing the connection between leadership and health care in medically underserved communities.

During the Leadership and Health Care Transformation in Medically Underserved Communities forum, Governor Anoatubby shared the Chickasaw Nation’s decades-long journey toward greater health equity for Chickasaws and other First Americans it serves.

“The Chickasaw Nation’s journey in transforming health care serves as a powerful example of what can be achieved through dedicated leadership, strategic planning and an unwavering commitment to the people you serve,” he said.

Governor Anoatubby placed health care for the Chickasaw people into historical context, including Removal and treaties with the federal government which guaranteed protection, rights to self-governance, financial support and health care from the United States government.

“Our ancestors laid the foundations for our future, making sacrifices and taking steps whose benefits they knew they might never see themselves. This is the essence of true leadership and service – to love the people you serve and to envision and work toward a future that you may never witness, but one that will shape the lives of generations to come,” he said.

For many years in the Chickasaw Nation, access to basic health care was limited. Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities were hundreds of miles away in Lawton and Tahleah, Oklahoma. Governor Anoatubby

said health care disparities and the lack of access became clear when he accepted the role of the Chickasaw Nation’s first health director in 1975.

By that time, IHS had established three small clinics within the Chickasaw Nation, and staff split their time between the clinics.

“The need for adequate health care in the Chickasaw Nation was so immense – so critical – it is difficult to describe. It became increasingly clear to me that health care for First Americans was a historically and socioeconomically complicated issue that touched on nearly every aspect of our people’s lives.”

Following years of work by Chickasaw Nation leaders in collaboration with U.S. Rep. Carl Albert, the Carl Albert Indian Health Facility, named in his honor, began serving patients June 14, 1980. At that time, it was estimated it would serve between

20,000-30,000 patients annually.

“But we quickly learned that we would serve far more than that number,” Governor Anoatubby said.

“It had become apparent that we needed a multifaceted, all-encompassing set of small-scale, incremental solutions to overcome such a long history of health and economic inequality. Understanding this, we directed our efforts not only toward providing medical services but also toward mitigating the effects of these social drivers.”

To achieve these goals, an ambitious and holistic mission, “To enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people,” was developed.

“This mission became the driving force behind all of our decisions from this point on and led us to develop our own service-based solutions,” he said.

Economic enterprises and investments

in new and existing businesses were made to stimulate growth, and develop and fund new programs and services for Chickasaw citizens.

In 1987, the Chickasaw Nation had only a couple of businesses, employed approximately 250 people and had an operating budget of less than \$11 million.

Today, the Chickasaw Nation operates more than 100 businesses in a range of diverse sectors, including health care, energy, media, manufacturing, defense, technology, retail, hospitality, tourism and more.

Nearly 14,000 workers are employed by the Chickasaw Nation, and government and business activities support more than 34,000 jobs, paying \$1.8 billion in wages and benefits to Oklahoma workers.

♦ See HEALTH on page 9A

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Community



Conference focuses on climate, energy issues

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe's sixth annual Renewable Energy and Sustainability conference was held from Feb. 6 to Feb. 8 at the Native Learning Center in Hollywood.

The conference started with Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. discussing the importance of clean energy and sustainability for the tribe moving forward and for tribes around the country. He also spoke about the awareness of climate change and the dependencies on technologies and the difficulties that it poses.

"For us as Natives to embrace something that we know is not natural, something that is not accustomed to us as Natives because the way we live our lives is off the land. A lot of these minerals are being taken from the land so that we can live the life that we live now," Chairman Osceola said in his opening remarks.

During the conference different energy opportunities were presented, such as the adoption of more charging stations for electric vehicles on Seminole reservations and elsewhere in Indian Country. One of the companies that spoke about this topic at the conference was PositivEnergy, which specializes in electric vehicle charging stations. Compared to other EV charging companies such as Chargepoint, EVgo and Blink, PositivEnergy claims to have a more efficient infrastructure system for its products. PositivEnergy also uses proprietary software for its products, aimed at improved reliability.

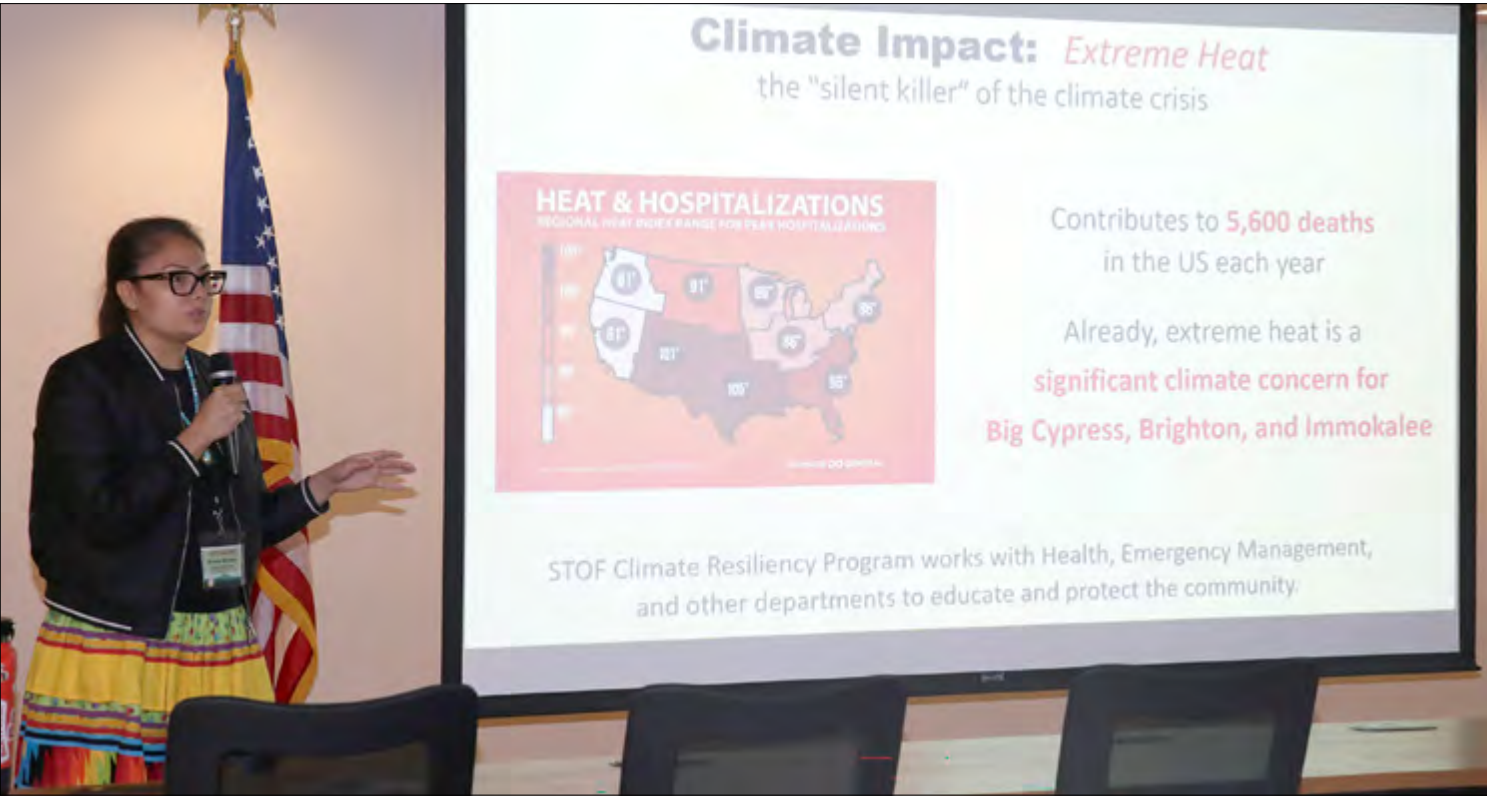
The Seminole Tribe's Climate Resiliency Program was represented by Krystle Bowers, Climate Resiliency Policy Coordinator, and Jill Horwitz, Climate Resiliency Officer. The program focuses on the risks that climate change poses to the tribe's land, property and people. Program goals include climate change education, represent

tribal interests, community engagement, participation in peer-learning, research and technical support, and communication strategies. One of the program's objectives is to integrate Indigenous values into tribalwide climate research, policy development and resiliency investments.

A current issue related to climate change facing the tribe is higher temperatures in the summer that affect the tribe's cattle and workers due to extreme heat. According to the Climate Resiliency Program, extreme heat has contributed up to 5,600 deaths in the United States each year.

"I think the most important part of our presentation is just showing how the tribe is invested in climate change planning and how central to our program is that is a community led process," Horwitz said.

Bowers said the data that is being shown is making community members realize that action is needed and solutions need to be addressed as quickly as possible while also keeping the community involved.



Calvin Tiger (2)

Above, Krystle Bowers, Climate Resiliency Policy coordinator, and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., below, speak at the sixth annual Seminole Tribe of Florida Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference at the Native Learning Center in Hollywood. The conference was held Feb. 6-8.



Calvin Tiger

Climate Resiliency Program's Krystle Bowers, left, and Jill Horwitz.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Native Learning Center Executive Director Georgette Smith, Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and conference facilitator Chance Rush gather before Chairman Osceola delivered his opening remarks at the conference.



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James Holt remembered at IAMF

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — A heartfelt video tribute to the late James Holt was shown at the second annual Indigenous Arts & Music Festival on Feb. 2. Tribal leaders, family and friends shared their memories of the former president of Seminole Tribe of Florida Inc. before the video was shown.

“He believed in all of us, loving each other, leading with compassion and just being kind,” said President Holly Tiger. “He did that and wanted us to be better.”

On June 8, 2023, Holt, 44, died just three days after he was sworn in as president. “Standing here in front of his family, it still hurts,” said Big Cypress Board Rep.

Nadine Bowers. “He always wanted to do the best for his people. Having this memorial is a blessing.”

“James was an amazing person and I am grateful to call him a friend,” said Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall. “He wasn’t just a leader, he was a friend to whoever he met. He is still with us, even though it’s still sad. We are strong people, we are very resilient and James would be proud of us.”

Holt created the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition event in 2009, in which alligator wrestlers display their skills in competition. During the IAMF, Billy Walker wrestled an alligator for the crowd.

“He would have liked to be here for the alligator wrestling, but that was only one aspect of him,” said Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge. “He was a great man and his

number one goal was to continue to make the tribe great.”

“I’m glad the family is here and put this together,” said Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. “He said to keep pushing forward and never apologize for change.”

“James was my nephew, but he was more like a brother,” Walker said. “He was a legend.”

When Holt was 14, his family moved from the Hollywood Reservation to Pawnee, Oklahoma. The family traveled back to Hollywood every summer to see family members, including Holt’s grandfather.

In Pawnee, Holt befriended Josh LeadingFox, now senior pastor at Immokalee First Seminole Baptist Church. LeadingFox said Holt had to meet a whole new group of people, which helped to expand his

boundaries.

“If anyone deserves to be honored like this, it is James Holt,” LeadingFox said. “A couple of weeks before the inauguration I sat with him for dinner. He talked about perseverance; it’s who he was. He never quit no matter how hard things got. He talked about being willing to be uncomfortable. He was an amazing man and I’ll never let his legacy die.”

Lewis Gopher met Holt on a school bus on the way to Driftwood Middle School in Hollywood.

“People of my generation, we considered him like a brother,” Gopher said. “Let’s continue to do the work he wanted to get done. He brought a lot of people together. He was a genuine good guy and the aspirations he had for the Seminole Tribe, let’s move

forward with them.”

Others who spoke in the video included Everett Osceola.

“He was always the big brother,” Osceola said. “He never gave up on freestyle alligator wrestling competition. He started it in 2009 with few attendees, now it sells out. A lot of people didn’t think he would make it, but he never gave up. To him, life was about the journey. Being persistent is his legacy.”

“He was the only son I had,” said Holt’s mother Leoma Poore. “They are going to name a bridge after him in Pawnee. I think he would want to be remembered for not giving up. If you have a passion, never give up on it.”

Indigenous talent showcased at arts and music festival

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The second annual Indigenous Arts & Music Festival (IAMF) on Feb. 2 and Feb. 3, honored the Seminole Tribe’s youth and attracted hundreds of people of all ages to the Big Cypress Reservation for a variety of Native American art, music and food.

The Junior Cypress Entertainment Complex served as the staging point for Native American bands, dance groups and vendors selling clothing, arts and crafts.

“Last year we honored the matriarchs,” Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie said. “This year we are honoring the youth; they are our future.”

On Feb. 2, a panel discussed Native Americans in today’s film and TV industry. The panel was comprised of Sterlin Harjo, creator of the award-winning TV show “Reservation Dogs;” Tazbah Chavez, writer, producer and director of “Reservation Dogs;” and actor D’pharaoh Woon-A-Tai, an actor who played one of the main characters in the series.

Other performers during the festival included the Ahfachkee School band, the band One Way Sky, rapper and fancy dancer Supaman, a fashion show by Chokey Cherry Creek and much more.

Native American dancers performed outdoors near the vendor area, under a sunny sky and with mild temperatures.

The Power of Dance featured dancers and singers from throughout Indian Country. Emcee Irene Oakes described the history of each dance before the dancers performed on the grass between two sets of bleachers.

“Most of the dances from the Plains tribes are about wars,” Oakes said as she described the men’s traditional dance. “The dances show them moving through the grass, ducking and diving and showing what they did in battle. They are often victory dances.”

Women’s dances included traditional,

jingle and fancy shawl dances. Men’s dances were the grass, prairie chicken, hoop and fancy dances.

“These are all powerful people,” Oakes said. “They work hard at everything they do.”

Chickees filled with vendors from the Seminole Tribe and other Native Americans selling art, crafts, clothing and jewelry flanked the area. Carnival rides were spread out in the open field and attracted families with children.

A large tent housed a group of Maori tattoo artists from New Zealand, who had a steady stream of tribal customers. Mae’anna Osceola-Hart, from Trail, wanted a tattoo that represented her independence and wished her family good health and good times.

“Tattoos are a form of medicine,” said Maori tattoo artist Marc Wymer. “Her tattoo has guardians to watch over the family and teeth that are part of being independent.”

Darlah Cypress also got a tattoo as her young son sat on her lap.

“It incorporates my son, who was the biggest change in my life, and my siblings and tribe,” Cypress said. “My mother, grandmother, nephew and brother who all passed away are included, and the wind clan and my man Jaylen Baker and our family.”

Meanwhile, the rodeo arena housed the main stage where the bands played, a panel discussion was held and indigenous fashions were featured.

The Ahfachkee School band was up first Feb. 2 and wowed the crowd with a rollicking rock-n-roll set.

“It felt nice and I was glad they all came out to support us,” said guitarist Shway Billie.

They were followed by the bands Testify, Chebon Tiger Band and the Sage Cornelius Band. When the bands completed their sets, the stage was set for the panel discussion about Native Americans in the film and TV industry.



Sage Cornelius, violinist of the Sage Cornelius Band, performs at the Indigenous Arts and Music Festival Feb. 2. Contrary to the classical use of a violin, Cornelius plays hard rock/metal music to an enthusiastic audience.



The audience, including musician Cameron Osceola, likes what it hears on the mainstage.



From left to right, Ahfachkee School band members Gene Jimmie, Curmya Smith and Zechariah Stockton perform at the Indigenous Arts & Music Festival.



Seminole cultural ambassador Everett Osceola presents patchwork items to, from left to right, Sterlin Harjo, Tazbah Chavez, Quannah Chasinghorse and D’pharaoh Woon-A-Tai.



A dancer performs in the men's fancy dance at the festival.

◆ DIVERSITY From page 1A

Carlisle has advocated for and filmed public service announcements for marriage equality and has been active in LGBTQ+ awareness campaigns with her openly gay human rights activist son.

Porter, whose career began in the early 1990s, is an Emmy, Grammy and Tony award-winning actor, singer, director, producer, composer, and playwright whose accomplishments spread across film, television and theater. His multiple Tony awards include best actor in a musical (“Kinky Boots”) in 2013. Six years later he

won an Emmy for outstanding lead actor in a drama series for his performance in “Pose.”

The Diversity Honors awards ceremony will also recognize entrepreneur Mark Hunter Seymour with The Pride Center at Equality Park Alan Schubert Award. Tatiana Williams, co-founder and executive director of Transinclusive Group, and the Gay Men’s Chorus of South Florida, will also receive awards.

The awards program is a collaboration between the Harvey Milk Foundation, the Pride Center at Equality Park and Seminole Hard Rock.

Tickets are \$250 per person. To reserve tickets, visit DiversityHonors.org.



Courtesy photos (3)
From left to right, Spencer Battiest, Billy Porter and Belinda Carlisle.



Seminole alligator wrestling exhibition opens at Tamiami Trail visitor center

BY JAMES PATRICK
Head of Exhibitions
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum opened a new exhibition at the Oasis Visitor Center on Tamiami Trail. This exhibition celebrates Seminole alligator wrestling by taking the visitors on a journey through the history, traditions, and the people who made these performances culturally unique, vastly entertaining, and so very interesting.

Museum Director Gordon O. Wareham challenged the museum staff to think outside of the box (and confines of the museum) to better serve the community. Last spring, when THPO Director Tina Osceola and former Assistant Museum Director Marcella Billie brought this opportunity to the Museum Exhibits Division, we saw it as a great way to provide a presence and educational opportunity.

People visiting the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on Big Cypress Reservation expect to see exhibits on the art, history, and culture of the Seminole people. Many who travel and stop at the Oasis National Park Service Visitor Center may not even realize the Seminole were there long before there was a US Highway 41.

Alligators typically swim and bask in the sun on the shores of the canal running under the elevated boardwalk there. When people enter the facility, they are surrounded by panels, photos, objects, and interactives to introduce and show a part of the Seminole Story. The visitor is provided a positive and interesting look into Seminole culture, specifically alligator wrestling.

Information is exhibited showing where and how alligator wrestling started, when it became popular, who participated, what the alligator wrestler wears, and more. Photos, enlarged historic postcards, and a real alligator skin adorn the walls and attract

visitors to learn more. In a display case there are several skulls of alligators and a crocodile with an explanation of their differences and similarities. The discovery drawers provide information on physiology and growth, with touchable teeth and scutes. Seminole alligator wrestlers of the past and present are recognized. Objects on display include a war club made out of an alligator jaw (Chandler Demayo), an alligator tooth necklace (Ricky Doctor) and an alligator wood carving (Paul Bowers Sr.). Billy Walker provided a Camp Stick that he used in many of his recent performances.

There is an interactive on the strength of alligator jaws that is a popular draw. But one of the true highlights is

a video pushbutton kiosk that allows visitors to watch one of several short films and video presentations. One of the presentations is Seminole Moments: Alligator Wrestling, where Everett Osceola explains the history, custom and culture of the Seminole people and alligator wrestling. A short independent film, Halpate, (co-produced by Everett Osceola) provides greater insight into the culture, dangers and behind the scenes. The film features alligator wrestlers James Holt, Clinton Holt, Billy Walker, Tre Burton, and Everett Osceola. In addition, you can see James Billie's classic Big Alligator video with an extended prologue, introducing traditional Seminole camp life.

Since opening in mid-October, more than 30,000 people have visited; looking, listening, and learning about Seminole people and their tradition of alligator wrestling. The Oasis Visitors Center sits on the Big Cypress National Preserve. Located about halfway between Miccosukee Indian Village and Ochopee, and a few minutes west of Clive Butcher Gallery, the National Park facility lies within the Big Cypress National Preserve.



A section of the new alligator wrestling exhibition.



The Oasis Visitor Center features photos, items, history and other material about alligator wrestling.



Trina Hipp's daughter, Ashlynn, pins a firefighter badge on her mother as Hipp's other children and Chief Michael Mackey look on during the ceremony.

◆ HIPP
From page 1A

Hipp completed firefighting training programs at South Florida State College and earned her firefighter certification from Florida State Fire College in Ocala. She is also certified as an emergency medical technician (EMT).

Hipp said training was demanding. "It was physically and mentally tough," she said. "It helped me develop skills that I did not know I had. It pulled more mental and physical abilities out of me that I did not know that I had."

She said being a firefighter appeals to her in many ways.

"The hard work, the dedication, the new firefighting family I have. Everything is great," she said.

Hipp's daughter, Ashlynn, did the pinning of the badge honors on her mother's uniform as Hipp's other children, Riley, Slate and Oaklee, stood nearby.

Hipp is following in the footsteps of several of her family members who have served the tribe in emergency services and healthcare. About 10 members of her family attended the ceremony. Her mother, Theresa Johns, was the first female officer for the Seminole Police Department. Hipp's late uncle, Victor Johns, was an EMT. Other members of the family are current or former nurses.

"I'm very proud of her. When she sets her mind to something, she gets it done," Theresa Johns said. "I hope other people see this and say 'we can do this.'"

Those sentiments were echoed by STFR Fire Chief Michael Mackey, who said Hipp could be a role model for others in the Seminole community to pursue firefighting careers.

"I think it's awesome," Mackey said. "I would love to see more of the tribal community be a part of the organization. I think people will look towards her and say, 'this is something we can do.'"

Hipp, like all rookie firefighters in the department, will rotate through stations on the reservations. She is starting the rotation at the Hollywood station.

Mackey said Hipp's next step would be to become a paramedic.

In addition to Hipp, STFR swore in recent graduates Michael Maulini and Donald Youngman. Twenty-year members



The Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue honor guard does the presentation of colors.



Trina Hipp is joined by her family at the ceremony. From left to right are Naomi Wilson, Justin Hipp, Slate Hipp, Ashlynn Collins, Elsie Bowers, Trina Hipp, Oaklee Hipp, Rylee Bowers, Gloria Wilson, Lucy Bowers, Theresa Johns and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie.

recognized included battalion commanders Joshua Eveleth, Ricardo Fong and Bryan "Keith" Yeates, Lt. Alberto Quinones, Lt. Gordon "Roppy" Sanders, firefighter Timothy Lanham, driver engineer Hans Melius and administrative manager Eva Cain.

Recently promoted personnel were

also honored. They included Mark Lyon (firefighter to fire inspector), Jeffery Radakovic (wildland firefighter to wildland supervisor), Brandon Sanza-Romero (firefighter to lieutenant) and Kirk Sparks (community service aide to fire inspector).



With Fire Chief Michael Mackey, center, are 20-year members, from left to right, Gordon "Roppy" Sanders, Bryan "Keith" Yeates, Ricardo Fong and Joshua Eveleth.

PATH TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY //

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Tribe’s culture, history displayed for thousands at Field Day Festival

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Thousands of people attended the 85th annual Brighton Field Day Festival from Feb. 16 to Feb. 18. They got a taste of Seminole culture, alligator wrestling, Native American dancers, a professional rodeo and concert with A-list country music star Dustin Lynch.

The festival was a showcase for Seminole arts and crafts, and food and culture. Women at the culture camp prepared traditional fry bread and other tribal favorites. Visitors were welcome to watch the process of cooking over an open fire and then enjoy a taste. Seminole vendors did a brisk business selling patchwork, beaded jewelry, traditional dolls and baskets.

“The amount of people that come out for field day is monumental,” said Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. “The tribe has put our history and culture on display. We make sure people know who we are and what we stand for.”

On Feb. 17, the day began with a parade led by Florida State University’s “Osceola” riding the horse Renegade, followed by the FSU Marching Chiefs band. The parade’s grand marshal was former president and vice chairman Mitchell Cypress, who was followed by members of Tribal Council and the Board. Each welcomed the crowd which filled the amphitheater bleachers.

Chairman Osceola, President Holly Tiger, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge waved from pickup trucks and an

ATV. Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola arrived on horseback.

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School was well represented by its safety patrol, a large float featuring its focus on Seminole culture, Mr. and Miss PECS, and volleyball and basketball teams. Tribal members participated in the parade in lavishly decorated ATVs, swamp buggies, floats and on horseback.

“Field Day feels like coming home,” President Tiger said. “It’s been part of my life since I was a little girl. I like how the community comes together to create such a great event for visitors. We get to come and enjoy the fellowship, relax a little and visit with family.”

The grand entry was led by members of the Wisdom Indian Dancers honor guard followed by the Seminole and Lakota Women Warriors honor guards, members of Tribal Council and Board and Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahniah Billie.

“This is something that’s been going on for a very long time, but today is a whole new era,” Councilman Howard said. “We have more visitors from all over. They talk to our people and buy our arts and crafts. By the end of the day, they have some understanding of who we are. This is a big event and I feel proud to be a part of it.”

Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition was a big draw; the amphitheater stands were full and crowds stood wherever they could to get a glimpse of the competition. The FAWC was founded by the late James Holt. The emcee opened

the event by saying “The godfather of alligator wrestling was elected president of the Seminole Tribe. Now we say goodbye to our friend James Holt.”

After a video about Holt, the competition began in earnest with four daredevils vying for first place. Each entered into a large pool of water and had six minutes to demonstrate dominance over the alligator. Each succeeded, but only one did it wearing a patchwork skirt; Sophie Morales, who wrestles gators on the Miccosukee Reservation.

Visitors, some who have attended field day many times and others who were first timers, enjoyed the festival.

“I’ve been here plenty of times and I love the Indian culture and the beadwork,” said Gage Riddle, from Venus, Florida.

“I like the food,” added his brother, Zechariah Summeralls. “It’s a long wait, but the Indian food is worth it.”

“I was here when I was 12,” said Susan Brock, from Maryland. “I’m happy to be back. They didn’t have a rodeo then, just arts and crafts and alligator wrestling. Everyone is so friendly here. I came today because I wanted to see a real-life rodeo.”



Andrew J. Bowers Jr., left, and Norman Johns enter the amphitheater on horseback during the Brighton Field Day Festival parade Feb. 17.



Bobbi Billie, left, gave each of these musicians from the FSU Marching Chiefs a garnet and gold necklace that she made.



Toddler Alakai Baker, 14 months, gets ready for his moment in the spotlight in the clothing contest.



Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. talks to FSU President Richard D. McCullough and Kyle Doney in the food area at the Brighton Field Day Festival.



Dressed in a patchwork skirt, Sophie Morales, who wrestles alligators on the Miccosukee Reservation, competes in the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition on Feb. 17.



From left to right, Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahniah Billie, Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, President Holly Tiger, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie participate in the Field Day grand entry.



FSU’s “Osceola” rides on his steed Renegade as they enter the amphitheater during the opening parade.



During the clothing contest, 14-17 year old contestants model their finest old style garb.



From left to right, Jaiden Flood, Dalayah Nunez, Hayden Nunez and Tehya Nunez enjoy the festival.



Josiah Holt smiles as he holds up an alligator.



Nahki Billie shows a small alligator to visitors.

Miccosukee Tribe opens casino at Alligator Alley service plaza

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

OCHOPEE — Motorists on Alligator Alley now have a gaming option available during their 80-mile journey between the coasts.

The Miccosukee Tribe celebrated the grand opening of its Little Trail Casino on Feb. 14.

The non-smoking 8,500 square foot casino features 150 slot machines and a bar. It is located at the Miccosukee service plaza at exit 49 (Snake Road) on Interstate 75, the same exit for the Seminole Tribe's Big Cypress Reservation.

"The monies that we make here, the funds that we make here, go to good use," Miccosukee Lawmaker Petties Osceola Jr. told an audience of about 100 during a 15-minute ceremony under a white tent.

Osceola explained that some areas where the money goes include paying teachers in the tribe's school system, nurses and doctors in the health clinic and staff in the police department.

After the speeches, Osceola, Miccosukee Chairman Talbert Cypress, Assistant Chairman Lucas Osceola and Treasurer Kenny Cypress cut the ceremonial ribbon

and welcomed customers and guests into the casino.

"It means a lot to us," Chairman Cypress said. "I'm in the third year of my administration and we've been doing a lot of progress, and we want to continue to do that."

Chairman Cypress said the area could see more expansion in the future.

"We're just doing this right now so it hopefully will fund a bigger casino at some point in the area. We're trying to expand this whole service area and to develop it even more so."

The casino is the tribe's first expansion of gaming outside of its main casino and resort in Miami-Dade County.

"This establishment is significant because it's really representative of the first, big expansion outside of the casino and resort we have on Tamiami Trail," Brad Rhines, general manager of the tribe's casino and resort who oversees the new casino, said to the audience.

The service plaza opened in July 2021, replacing the one next door that has been torn down.

The plaza includes a gasoline station, 12 Tesla charging stations, a convenience store, restrooms, Dunkin' Donuts and Glades Café.



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Miccosukee Tribe Treasurer Kenny Cypress, Lawmaker Petties Osceola Jr., Chairman Talbert Cypress and Assistant Chairman Lucas Osceola cut the ribbon to open the tribe's Little Trail Casino on Feb. 14.



Kevin Johnson

Guests and customers enter the new casino on its opening day.



Kevin Johnson

The casino features 150 slot machines.

Hard Rock partners with MFG for dining experience development

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock International announced Feb. 20 that it is partnering with Major Food Group (MFG) to develop and curate dining experiences at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino properties around the globe. MFG's support of Hard Rock will extend to proposed projects as well.

Through the strategic partnership with Hard Rock, MFG will act in an advisory role to curate new food and beverage programming at existing integrated resort locations such as Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa, and Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City. In addition, MFG will support restaurant concept creation for Hard Rock properties in development like

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Athens.

"We always strive to provide our guests with memorable dining experiences, so we could think of no better partner to take things to new levels at these properties than the team at Major Food Group," Jim Allen, Chairman of Hard Rock International and CEO of Seminole Gaming, said in a press release. "We look forward to a terrific collaboration and bringing exciting new options to our guests."

"This is a truly unique opportunity to bring MFG's deep expertise and innovation together with a hotel and casino leader to provide incredible food and beverage experiences for Hard Rock guests at locations both here and abroad," said Jeff Zalaznick, co-owner of MFG.

Hard Rock Heals donates to Pace Center for Girls

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — The Hard Rock Heals Foundation, in partnership with Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee, announced Feb. 19 a \$5,000 grant to be awarded to Pace Center for Girls Lee as part of its commitment to improving the lives and resiliency of the local communities where Hard Rock serves and operates. Pace Lee, which supports education, counseling, training and advocacy for girls and young women, is one of 50 local grant winners around the world to receive contributions totaling \$250,000 from Hard Rock International's charitable arm this year.

"Since 2016, Hard Rock Heals Foundation has proudly awarded hundreds of programs like Pace Center for Girls to provide support to people in need in the communities we serve," Jon Lucas,

President of Hard Rock Heals Foundation and Chief Operating Officer of Hard Rock International, said in a press release. "We are hopeful that these grants will bring about positive transformations in Immokalee and in all the places we serve around the globe."

"We are grateful to Hard Rock Heals Foundation for investing in Pace Lee and our community's next generation of girls and young women," Jennifer Cellitti, executive director of Pace Lee, said in the release. "When we focus on supporting our girls, they gain the power to achieve success in all areas of their lives, leading to positive outcomes for themselves, their families and our community."

For more information on Hard Rock's philanthropic efforts visit www.hardrockheals.org

Chris Janson to perform in Immokalee

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee welcomes multi-platinum songwriter and artist Chris Janson performing live in concert on Thursday, April 25 at 8 p.m., with doors opening at 7 p.m. Tickets are available from Ticketmaster or moreinparadise.com. Attendees must be 21.

Janson, proud member of the Grand Ole Opry, is part of country's new breed. In touch with the lighter side of life with self-penned No. 1s "Fix A Drink," "Good Vibes," and the quadruple platinum "Buy Me A Boat," Janson also channeled the more thoughtful truths of "Done," "Things You Can't Live Without," and the CMA Song of the Year nominee and ACM Video of the Year "Drunk Girl."



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RICHARD CASTILLO
FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY
WWW.CASTILLOLAWOFFICES.COM

Voices from the past returned to tribe

BY WILLIAM LOCASCIO
Museum Research Manager

BIG CYPRESS — Thirty-six boxes of cassettes, reel-to-reel tapes, documents, and hard drives arrived at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in October of 2023, donated by the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida. The materials contain audio recordings and transcripts of interviews with members of the Seminole Tribe conducted between 1969 and 2000 by historians from the University of Florida. The acquisition of the collection brings these important pieces of tribal history into the custody of the Tribe and ensures that they will be properly stored and made available only to members of the tribe.

The collection has more than 300 audio files, of which about 115 contain interviews with members of the tribe. Voices of these community members can be heard describing their experiences and memories, with topics ranging from important events, such as the establishment of Big Cypress Reservation, to day-to-day activities, like hunting and crafting. In one interview, dated Dec. 24, 1970, Josie Billie can be heard describing the early days of the Big Cypress Reservation and the role he had in helping to establish it. In the same interview, Abraham Lincoln Clay reminisces about hunting game with a 30-30 shotgun and the “old ways” of the Seminole, including how children learned customs. In another interview, which was recorded on June 28, 1999, Betty Mae Jumper describes how her uncle, Jimmy Gopher, would teach



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Betty Mae Jumper in 1959. Jumper was one of the two first high school graduates of the Seminole Tribe. She became a nurse and later a councilwoman and leader in the tribe.

her Seminole history when she was a young girl. She goes on to talk about the important work she did serving the Seminole community as a nurse at a time when medical assistance was not widely available to the community. These accounts of Seminole life from tribal members spanning several generations record experiences from different times in the history of the Seminole and are preserved in the recorded voices of tribal members to serve as a source of learning for current and future generations of the tribe.

Obtaining the collection is an important part of bringing primary pieces of Seminole history back to the tribe. Now that the collection of interviews is in the possession of the tribe, staff at the museum will begin organizing all the materials so that they can be made available to tribal members interested in hearing accounts of Seminole life in the past or wishing to access recordings of family members. Processing the collection has involved backing up the recordings and safely storing the materials to ensure that they are not lost or damaged. Summaries of the interviews and explanations of how to locate specific recordings will be produced and will assist the Seminole community in searching the collection.

If you’re interested in knowing more about these recently acquired oral histories, please stop by the museum or contact us by phone, email or website (863) 902-1113; museum@semtribe.com; ahtahthiki.com. You can also look for the museum’s booth at tribal events where information on the collection and how to access it will be available for tribal members.

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA AH-TAH-THI-KI MUSEUM A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Josie Billie, Panther Clan, in his village on Tamiami Trail in 1942. Josie was a prominent community member and was well-known to colonial researchers at the time.

Apple Original Films acquires global rights to 'Fancy Dance'

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Apple Original Films announced Feb. 6 that it has landed the global rights to “Fancy Dance,” the acclaimed Sundance Film Festival selection from Confluent Films that stars “Killers of the Flower Moon” award-winning and Academy Award-nominated lead actress Lily Gladstone, and marks the feature directorial debut for Erica Tremblay, who also co-wrote and produced the film.

Following its debut at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival, “Fancy Dance” is set to make its debut in theaters and on Apple TV+ this year.

“Our film ‘Fancy Dance’ has found the perfect home with Apple, and I am thrilled to share this beautiful story of two Seneca-Cayuga women with a global audience,” Tremblay said in a news release. “As a

Native American filmmaker, seeing my community included in the rich tapestry of cinema is a dream come true.”

Since her sister’s disappearance, Jax (Gladstone) has cared for her niece, Roki (Isabel Deroy-Olson), by scraping by on the Seneca-Cayuga reservation in Oklahoma. Every spare minute goes into finding her missing sister while also helping Roki prepare for an upcoming powwow. At the risk of losing custody to Jax’s father, Frank (Shea Whigham), the pair hit the road and scour the backcountry to track down Roki’s mother in time for the powwow.

What begins as a search, gradually turns into a far deeper investigation into the complexities and contradictions of Indigenous women moving through a colonized world at the mercy of a failed justice system. Gladstone stars alongside Deroy-Olson, Ryan Begay, Whigham,

Crystle Lightning and Audrey Wasilewski. “Fancy Dance” introduces director Tremblay, who also serves as screenwriter alongside Miciana Alise. Tremblay’s film offers a nuanced account of the human costs of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women epidemic, and the possibilities of healing for those left behind.

“Fancy Dance” will join Apple’s widely acclaimed and award-winning feature, “Killers of the Flower Moon,” which was recently nominated for 10 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and is now playing in theaters, as well as streaming globally on Apple TV+.

Gladstone was recently honored as Best Actress by the New York Film Critics Circle.



Courtesy photo
“Fancy Dance” is a Sundance Film Festival selection starring Academy Award nominee Lily Gladstone, and is directed, co-written and produced by Erica Tremblay.

MARCH 2024

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

When driving through the state of Florida, one is almost guaranteed to see cows grazing in a pasture on the side of the road. Florida’s abundance of cattle is to be expected, given the significance of the cattle industry. Cattle have played a crucial role in Florida history since they were introduced by the Spanish in the 1500s (Scheidecker et al., 2023). For this month’s artifact, we are highlighting this cattle prod (pictured below) that was recovered from the Red Barn site on the Brighton Reservation.



THPO

It was at the Red Barn that prominent figures such as John Josh, Charlie Micco, and Willie Gopher would gather; the first three Seminole trustees to lead the cattle program (Scheidecker et al., 2023). You can read their stories, as well as learn more about the Red Barn and the Seminole cattle ranching industry by checking out the latest Seminole Stories publication, “Cowkeeper’s Legacy: A Seminole Story”.

“Cowkeeper’s Legacy: A Seminole Story”, THPO



The Red Barn, Carrie Dilley (2007)

Cattle prods were one of the many tools used by cattle ranchers since the development of the Seminole cattle ranching industry, which formally began in the early 1900s. This cattle prod was found at the Red Barn, which was a key structure during the industry’s development, as it functioned not only as a barn for housing animals, but also as a meeting place (Florida Seminole Tourism).

To learn more about all the incredible artifacts within our collection, please visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com.

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - MARCH 2024



POLY PARKER’S GREAT ESCAPE

The one existing picture of Polly Parker (Bird Clan) comes from 1913 and was made into a Florida postcard. It notes her as “Aunt Polly Parker, the Oldest Seminole Indian in the State of Florida.” What the photographer didn’t know was, not only had she had a long and storied life, but that she had one point led one of the greatest escapes in Florida.

During the last stage of the Seminole War in 1857, Polly was captured by American forces as part of their attacks on Seminole camps. she was taken to the concentration camp at Egmont Key, along with many other women, children, and elders, to be used as hostages to convince Seminole warriors to abandon fighting.



The captured Seminole were taken on the ‘*Gray Cloud*’, a steamship, to be taken to New Orleans and then Oklahoma on what would be the final march of the Trail of Tears. On the way the ship docked at St. Marks, near Tallahassee, for fuel and supplies. During travel, a number of those onboard had come down with a fever. Polly convinced the ship’s crew to allow her and a group of Seminole women to go ashore and gather traditional medicine. They were taken under guard to a field, but on Polly’s signal, the Seminole women scattered into the trees! Polly and half a dozen other women managed to escape, and on foot they made their way through American occupied territory, crossing over 400 miles, to return to the Tribe near Lake Okeechobee.

After being nearly annihilated by disease and the Seminole wars, Polly’s heroic guidance in the escape helped the Seminole Tribe to thrive. When her photo was taken she had become the matriarch of the Bird Clan, and today many of her descendants continue the fight for tribal sovereignty.



To see more Seminole History Stories, please visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com

For more information on Egmont Key, Polly Parker, and her legacy check out: <https://stofthpo.com/egmont-key/>
For more Seminole History resources, visit the Tribal Historic Preservation Office website using the QR code on the right.





Tribal courts can't prosecute non-Native drug suspects; tribes say it's a problem

BY MARTIN KASTE
NPR

As fentanyl addiction and overdose deaths ravage Native American communities, some tribal leaders want Native law enforcement to take drug enforcement more into their own hands.

"We can't wait anymore," Jamie Azure, chairman of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, told the Senate Indian Affairs Committee in November. "We are very close to losing a generation to an opioid, to a synthetic drug."

Tribal leaders testified about an insufficient response by state and federal law enforcement to the drug traffickers who bring fentanyl onto reservations. Azure said his tribe was moving ahead with its own "tribal drug task force."

But tribal law enforcement is limited in what it can do. Because of the landmark 1978 Supreme Court ruling *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*, tribal courts are not allowed to prosecute non-American Indians for most crimes — including drug trafficking.

That distinction between Native and non-Native is an ever-present factor for tribal police on reservation land.

The Tulalip Tribes in Washington state, for instance, has a police department with a specialized team of narcotics detectives, who try to identify and interrupt the flow of fentanyl into their small reservation located between Interstate 5 and Puget Sound, north of Everett. When they detain or arrest someone on suspicion of drug crimes, a key question is "Are you tribal-enrolled?"

They asked that question recently of two men in a black Camaro in the parking lot of one of the Tulalip casinos. Visible inside the car was a hollowed-out pen, typically used to smoke fentanyl.

The men confirmed they were American Indian — enrolled in the Upper Skagit, another tribe in Washington. For purposes of tribal criminal jurisdiction, that's enough to make them subject to the Tulalip Tribes' drug laws.

"All right, so it is a crime to have drug paraphernalia, OK?" the officer says, making the arrest.

Just minutes earlier, Tulalip officers had encountered a white woman with a suspected meth pipe, and let her go. As a non-Native, she was subject to Washington state's more permissive drug paraphernalia law, and couldn't be charged.

Detective Haison Duong says the tribe's drug paraphernalia law gives Tulalip Police leverage over the two men because they're Native American.

He says they may be encouraged to opt for treatment, through the tribe's drug-diversion court system, called Wellness Court.

They might also be nudged into helping the police.

"Sometimes, let's say we get this gentleman and he wants to work off his

charge and take us to his dealer, right?" Duong says.

Finding the dealers is the priority for the tribe. It recently made drug-dealing a felony — it used to be a misdemeanor — but only if the dealer is enrolled in a tribe. If a suspected dealer turns out to be non-Native, reservation police have to take the case to state or federal prosecutors, who may not give it the priority the tribe would.

"We are bearing the brunt of criminal activity without being able to address it," says Angelique EagleWoman, director of the Native American Law and Sovereignty Institute at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minn.

"We have to reach out to state and federal partners and hope that they devote resources. Hope they hear the call. Hope they understand the crisis. And it's very frustrating," she says.

The system doesn't have to work this way. In that 1978 ruling, the Supreme Court said Congress could choose to give tribal courts the authority to prosecute non-American Indians. And for certain crimes, it has.

In the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, Congress created special tribal criminal jurisdiction, allowing tribes to prosecute non-Natives who commit domestic violence. The list of crimes was expanded in 2022 to include crimes against tribal-enrolled children, among others.

The Tulalip Tribes Court is one of the reservation courts exercising that new authority; just a few weeks ago, it prosecuted a non-Native woman and former school employee who had had sex with an underage member of the tribe. She pleaded guilty to "communications with a minor for immoral purposes," and the tribal court sentenced her to jail time.

The chief judge, Meredith Drent, a member of the Osage Nation of Oklahoma, says this kind of jurisdiction over non-Natives makes sense.

"When I go to Colorado, I may not know their laws but I know that I'm going to have to follow them, and they can prosecute me if I don't," she says. "And it's the same thing here. When you enter someone else's jurisdiction, you fall under their laws."

Further complicating matters for Tulalip authorities is the fact that most of the people living within reservation boundaries, roughly two-thirds, are not Native.

"Tribal/non-tribal" is a distinction that doesn't really make sense if you're living in a reservation," says Brian Kilgore, a prosecutor for Tulalip Tribes. "That divides families in half. It cuts people, across the middle of the street. It doesn't make any sense at all if you're trying to do justice by community standards."

That was the rationale for allowing tribal courts to prosecute non-Natives for domestic violence crimes; now, they say it's time to extend that logic to non-Natives who live on reservations and victimize other residents

with fentanyl.

At the Senate Indian Affairs Committee hearing in November, councilman Bryce Kirk of the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana asked Congress to "give us the criminal jurisdiction to be able to charge them in tribal court and to be able to hold them in our jails."

But the movement to increase tribal courts' legal powers faces powerful political headwinds. In Oklahoma, for instance, after the U.S. Supreme Court and a federal appeals court greatly expanded the state territory in which tribal courts have jurisdiction over tribal members, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt launched a pushback campaign called "One Oklahoma."

"In America, we expect that everyone follows the same set of rules, regardless of who you are or where you come from," Stitt says in a video posted to the campaign's site. "We need one, united Oklahoma. An Oklahoma where all men are created equal."

There have been moments of tension over expansions of tribal courts' jurisdiction. In December, a fight broke out between Muscogee Nation tribal police and the staff at the Okmulgee County jail. A jailer reportedly refused to book a drug crime suspect brought in by tribal police, leading to the altercation. The tribal court later charged the county jailer with battery against the tribal officer.

Some critics of expanded tribal jurisdiction don't mince words: They say they don't trust the Native courts.

"The Constitution does not apply on [the] reservation," says Lana Marcussen, the lawyer for the nonprofit arm of the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance, a group that opposes the current model of tribal sovereignty, especially in land-use cases.

Marcussen has written briefs in key federal cases involving tribal jurisdiction, and she says the tribal justice system is a potential threat to the civil rights of tribal members as well as non-Natives.

"I would say the majority of tribes try to be good to their members," Marcussen says. "But the fact is, if you cross that tribal government or you cross that police chief — boy, they know full well they don't have to give any of those rights."

CERA's opponents call the group "anti-Indian" and say this characterization of tribal courts is unfair, as they offer due process such as trial by juries selected from the community.

Ultimately, the decision to increase tribal jurisdiction over non-Indians is up to Congress, and Professor EagleWoman says congressional action usually requires a crisis. The last crisis, she says, was the public outcry over unpunished violence against indigenous women.

"That led to, 'Yes, tribes can prosecute non-Indians engaged in dating violence, engaged in domestic violence on tribal lands,'" she says. "We have the same thing happening now with the influx of fentanyl and other drugs on tribal lands."

Poster submissions sought for health conference

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The National Indian Health Board (NIHB) invites Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) grantees to submit proposals highlighting their program accomplishments at NIHB's National Tribal Health Conference, which will be held in Rapid City, South Dakota, from May 20 to May 23.

Posters and descriptions will be shared with attendees in-person during a welcome reception and poster session May 20.

The poster session is an opportunity to share success stories with a large audience of tribal leaders and tribal health professionals, as well as share program ideas with other grantees.

For more information and to submit an abstract, to [surveymonkey.com/r/SHRGZ9P](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHRGZ9P).

For questions, contact Sarah Price at sprice@nihb.org or (202) 507-4078.

National Tribal Health Conference to be held in South Dakota

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The National Indian Health Board's National Tribal Health Conference is a week-long event that serves American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes in the space of health - behavioral and public health.

The conference will be held May 19-23 at The Monument in Rapid City, South Dakota.

The conference will showcase the interconnectedness of policy, advocacy, and Indian health best practices. Programming includes tribal listening and consultation sessions, hands-on training opportunities, plenary sessions, and workshops that cover timely topics such as funding for Indian Health, the business of medicine, health equity, Indigenous determinants of health, Tribal public health, behavioral health, culture, environmental health, and climate change.

The conference also includes focus areas on Native youth, tribal veterans, and elders, a fitness event, exhibit hall and marketplace, culture night, poster sessions, and Heroes in Health Awards Gala and outstanding service awards.

For more information go to nihb.org.

NICWA conference to be held in April

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) will host the 42nd annual Protecting Our Children Conference from April 7 to April 10 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle-Airport in Seattle, Washington.

With more than 1,600 attendees, the conference is the largest national gathering on American Indian and Alaska Native child advocacy issues.

Keynote speakers range from federal officials at the highest level of government to youth with lived experience in child welfare systems.

Visit NICWA.org for more information.

Pequot Health to provide free naloxone kits for Indian Country

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Pequot Health Care, a tribally operated pharmacy health service of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation in Connecticut, has been selected to provide free naloxone nasal spray kits to all federally recognized tribal nations across the United States. The initiative is part of a comprehensive settlement against opioid manufacturers.

In a 10-year program, 20,000 kits, amounting to 40,000 doses of naloxone, will be distributed annually to tribal nations, according to a Jan. 24 news release, as an effort to mitigate the devastating impact of opioid use disorder within these communities.

Naloxone is a medicine that is used in attempts to reverse opioid overdoses.

Health conference to focus on Native Youth

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation invites health advocates, educators, practitioners and others to submit abstracts for the 2024 Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures conference which will be held at the Sandia Resort and Casino in Albuquerque, New Mexico, from June 16 to June 18.

The conference provides opportunities for participants to network with practitioners, and learn from experts. For questions contact Sacha Smith at sacha@nb3f.org or (505) 867-0775, ext. 104.

♦ HEALTH From page 2A

In 1994, the Chickasaw Nation became one of the first tribes in the U.S. to compact with IHS to assume administration of health care services, marking a turning point in health care delivery to First Americans.

"With this compact, we did more than just take responsibility of our own health care system, we took control of our tribe's

destiny, as this was a major leap forward in reasserting our sovereignty and enhancing our ability to self-govern," Governor Anoatubby explained.

A few years later, tribal funds were invested to construct a new health facility utilizing the IHS Joint Venture Funding Program.

By 2010, the 370,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Chickasaw Nation Medical Center was providing the highest quality health care to patients. Three additional

clinics were constructed in Ardmore, Purcell and Tishomingo through the joint venture program. Additionally, the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health is planning for expansion of services throughout the tribal boundaries.

Using diplomacy, forming partnerships, the resilience of the Chickasaw people and self-determination have all played vital roles in achieving initiatives, goals and milestones in the health journey, Governor Anoatubby said.

Celebrate National Nutrition Month!

Choose healthier food options for you and your loved ones.



Sometimes it can be difficult to make good food choices, but there are many resources that can help. For more information on healthy eating, please visit IHS.gov/diabetes.

As a tribal member, you can enroll in the Marketplace, Medicaid, or CHIP year-round: review your coverage options to stay healthy.

For more information, contact your local Indian health care provider, visit HealthCare.gov, or call 1-800-318-2596



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SEMINOLE SCENES



SUNSHINE FLOWERS: At left, sisters Claudia Doctor, left, and Sue Jane Cypress pick up some cheerful flowers and other goodies at the “You Are Sunshine” event Feb. 14. At right, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie delivers flowers to a Big Cypress resident. Sponsored by Big Cypress Council office, the drive thru event provided box lunches, treats and flowers to tribal members.

Beverly Bidney (2)



READY FOR RODEO: Moses Jumper Jr., left, and chute boss Marty Johns chat before the Betty Mae Jumper Memorial Rodeo on Feb. 3 at the Hollywood rodeo arena. The rodeo is held annually in memory of Moses’s mother, a longtime leader in several areas for the tribe, including cattle, health, government and journalism.

Kevin Johnson



FABULOUS FLOAT: The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School float participates in the Brighton Field Day Festival parade.

Beverly Bidney



START YOUR ENGINES: Above and below, Supercar Saturdays Florida featured more than 150 vehicles for its monthly show Feb. 10 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The parking lot on the south side of the property was filled with many sleek, high performance cars. The event’s website describes it as the largest gathering of supercars, exotic cars, hyper cars, luxury cars, classic cars, race cars and custom cars in South Florida. The free shows are held on the second Saturday of each month at Hard Rock from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Kevin Johnson (2)



CONSTRUCTION SCENES: Several big construction projects are underway on the tribe’s reservations, including the Seminole Casino Hotel Brighton on the Brighton Reservation (above on Feb. 16) and a new preschool on the Hollywood Reservation (below on Feb. 20).

Kevin Johnson (2)



NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

California tribes call for new national monument

Tribes in far northeastern California are pressing President Joe Biden to create a new national monument about 30 miles from Mount Shasta.

The Pit River Tribe is asking the president to use his powers under the Antiquities Act to create the new Sáttitla National Monument on just over 205,000 acres in the Medicine Lake Highlands.

Radley Davis, an advocate for the Sáttitla National Monument and a citizen of the Illmawi Band of the Pit River Tribe, said the area is a very important watershed.

“The headwaters of Northern California goes all the way down into the San Francisco Bay Area, gets collected and goes to the aqueduct,” Davis pointed out. “That gets further transmitted down in Southern California for agriculture, so we feel protecting this area is very, very key.”

Hydrologists said the volcanically formed aquifers below the surface capture snowmelt and store as much water as California’s 200 largest surface reservoirs. The Pit River Tribe and the Modoc Nation continuously use the Sáttitla area for ceremonies and gathering medicines. It is also sacred to the Shasta, Karuk and Wintu tribes.

Davis acknowledged there has been some confusion with some local residents mistakenly thinking the area would become a national park with entry fees, rather than a national monument.

“It would not take away any of the rights that people would have to go up and enjoy the land,” Davis emphasized. “The cabin owners would still be able to enjoy the winter and the spring and the summer up there. People would still be able to enjoy horseback riding.”

The Pit River Tribe has been in litigation with the Bureau of Land Management and CalPine Energy Corporation for 25 years, trying to block consideration of any geothermal projects.

- Public News Service

Zianne Richardson crowned Miss Indian North Carolina

On Feb. 10, Hollister native Zianne Richardson was crowned Miss Indian North Carolina 2024-2025.

The event is held annually and sponsored by the United Tribes of NC to select a Miss Indian North Carolina who will serve as an ambassador for the eight state-recognized tribes: the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe, Eastern Band of Cherokee, Coharie Tribe, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, Meherrin Indian Tribe, Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, Sappony and Waccamaw Siouan Tribe, and four urban organizations.

Richardson, an enrolled citizen of the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe, succeeded the honor following Miss Indian North Carolina 2022-2024 Jayla Mackenzie Locklear, as she competed against fellow contestants Amya Richardson of the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe and Kearston Page Freeman of the Lumbee Tribe.

“It’s kind of hard to describe,” Zianne told the Herald about her reaction to being crowned. “I’m very relieved that all my hard work paid off in preparation, but also excited about the work that is about to start. So it’s kind of in an in-between phase between being excited and being very nervous about everything that is to come.”

Zianne said her traditional spoken word ties into the platform she will use during her reign titled “Look Within: The Power We Hold.”

“My platform is basically around how Native people are powerful in that we get to define ourselves,” she said. “We have always sustained ourselves, we come from sovereign nations, and we’ve always been and held that position of power in a society where we get to define what it means to be native, and we’re the only ones who get to decide that.”

Zianne graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in May with a Bachelor of Arts in education.

- The Daily Herald (Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina)

Chinook Indian Nation hails decision granting it access to land claim trust funds

Leaders of the Chinook Indian Nation celebrated Feb. 22 what they described as a precedent-setting legal victory granting the tribe access to its land claim trust funds even though it is not federally recognized.

“This ... decision is not the formal federal recognition that we’re seeking, but it is unambiguous recognition of our community’s existence and of our rightful title to the lands where we continue to live,” Chinook Indian Nation Chairman Tony Johnson said during a news conference.

Lack of federal recognition means the tribe, which is based in rural Pacific County, has no reservation and remains deprived of many resources available to sister tribes.

The federal courts, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Congress, however, confirmed the tribe’s claim to settlement funds awarded in 1970 by the Indian Claims Commission. The \$48,692.05 settlement, which was placed in a trust, was compensation for lands stripped from the Lower Band of Chinook and Clatsop Indians in the 1800s, according to a Chinook news release.

In 2011, the federal government stopped distributing the Chinook’s quarterly statements, citing its lack of federal recognition. The tribe was briefly federally recognized in 2001, but its status was

rescinded 18 months later, which Chinook Secretary-Treasurer Rachel Cushman said was unprecedented.

The tribe filed a lawsuit in 2017 for access to those funds. A federal judge ultimately decided in the Chinook’s favor, and the tribe created a use and distribution plan that was later approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Johnson said the tribe received notice in December that Congress would not oppose the plan, paving the way for the distribution of the funds to the tribe.

The decision serves as a sort of acknowledgment by the federal government, despite the tribe’s current unrecognized status, Johnson said. He said the decision is unique because tribes have typically been barred from accessing their land claim trust funds until they are formally recognized.

He said he’s proud the Chinook’s lawsuit will set precedent for “other tribes who are also pursuing similar relief from that broken system.”

Johnson said the case was not about the dollar figure, but rather about acknowledgment of the tribe’s land claim.

“We get our sovereignty from our lands and from our ancestors, and (the land claim) is the embodiment of our sovereignty,” Cushman said. “(The claim) represents our lands and represents our ancestors and it reaffirms that that’s our sovereignty and no one else’s. It is the embodiment of our aboriginal power.”

- The Columbian (Vancouver, Washington)

Umatilla tribes to launch food waste reduction project in northeast Oregon reservation

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will initiate a first-of-its-kind food waste reduction project this spring.

The campaign, titled “Nixyáawii, Don’t Throw it Away!” (pronounced “Nic-YAH-way”), will be the first coordinated food waste reduction effort the tribal government has initiated.

Through the initiative, which is partly funded with a \$172,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the tribe’s Department of Natural Resources will look to calculate how much food waste the community generates. It will also develop resources and offer educational opportunities for the tribal community on how to reduce the amount of food that ends up in landfills.

The tribe will also install a small biodigester, which will use bacteria to break down organic material in the absence of air — referred to as an anaerobic environment — and turn it to methane for cooking and fertilizer for the tribe’s community garden.

The U.S. EPA estimates each year gasses produced by food waste equal 170 million metric tons of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. A significant amount of methane and nitrous oxide also get into the atmosphere.

Colleen Sanders, the climate adaptation planner for the tribe, said the initiative serves as a way to capture gas emissions generated by food, rather than let it go into the atmosphere.

“When decomposition happens without oxygen, it creates methane,” Sanders said. “And this methane in landfills gets built up in these pockets of food waste. And then when there’s a shift in the waste, it gets released out into the atmosphere where it makes its way into our environment.”

Part of the reason the tribe is pursuing the project now is in response to former Gov. Kate Brown’s 2020 executive order to curb Oregon’s greenhouse gas emissions, which included a goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030, said DeArcie Abraham, who runs Biowaste Technologies and will operate the biodigester in partnership with the tribe’s department of natural resources.

“Food waste is a huge one, never touching soil or having oxygen it will sit there for 20 years to decompose,” Abraham said. “The project will demonstrate that food waste is a resource and not a waste product that’s worthless.”

The project will mostly focus on the Mission area of the reservation, which is the site of the tribal headquarters, including the Nixyáawii Longhouse, where several tribal ceremonies are held.

The tribe’s First Foods, like salmon, roots and berries, are a significant part of the creation story. But during ceremonial feasts, they sometimes get thrown away, said Althea Huesties-Wolf, the First Foods policy program manager.

“And so it was just another reason to get this digester project going,” Huesties-Wolf said. “Those first foods will continue to be treated with respect because they’re gonna turn into compost and come back into the land. They’re not gonna get stuck in a landfill.”

Sanders said the two-year pilot project has a lot of potential, and it could be used as a template to expand into other communities within the reservation and ultimately change the community’s perception of food.

“Everybody knows that when you are making food at home if you have a carrot that’s got an ugly spot, you cut the ugly spot off, and that usually goes into the garbage can, but it doesn’t have to,” Sanders said. “But we’re hoping by the end of this project that they will cut that ugly spot off that carrot and say ‘I am so excited for the future that this ugly spot on this carrot can have.’”

- Oregon Public Broadcasting

Teslin Tlingit Council in Yukon establishing its own laws and justice system

ALBANY, N.Y. — Teslin Tlingit Council in Yukon establishing its own laws

and justice system

The Teslin Tlingit Council is moving toward establishing its own court and corrections system.

The First Nation in the Yukon is in the final stages of negotiating funding with the federal government, and has set an implementation date for 2027.

According to Kooxuhan-Georgina Sydney, the Teslin Tlingit Council justice implementation coordinator, the First Nation has accepted a funding offer from the federal government. Now, the executive council is waiting for it to return from the federal Treasury Board so they can get to work upholding their own laws.

“If somebody breaks our law, they’ll go to our court,” said Sydney.

The Teslin Tlingit Council has been working toward establishing a two-stage court system since it signed its self-government agreement in 1995 and its administration of justice agreement in 2011.

The First Nation has already established a peacemaker court where mediation services are provided. The first chief peacemaker was appointed in 2014.

Now, this most recent agreement will fund the second stage.

A court will be established to hold trials and hear evidence in adjudicating Teslin Tlingit law. The First Nation has jurisdiction under its self-government agreement to write laws related to land management, including hunting, habitat protection, prevention of overcrowding and land development. It also has jurisdiction over adoption, inheritance, wills and the solemnization of marriage.

There will also be a corrections system established with a healing camp on the land, counselling and community support.

According to Sydney, holistic support has long been missing from the justice system.

“In mainstream justice, you go to court, you pay a fine or go to jail. That’s it,” Sydney said. “We’re providing healing services to our people, so they won’t go back to jail. A lot of our issues right now is that people don’t have that available to them.”

The Teslin Tlingit’s justice model is rooted in its traditional form of government and its clan system.

“We’re holistic in our nature,” Sydney said. “It’s hard for us to separate justice from our government — it’s all a part of it.”

There are five clans: frog, raven, wolf, split-tail beaver and eagle. Each clan has a representative on the Teslin Tlingit justice council.

Traditionally, wrongdoings would be addressed by the clan as a whole. Issues would be taken to the clan leader and addressed as a community. That would establish accountability and responsibility for one’s actions, Sydney explained.

The Teslin Tlingit Council is the first Yukon First Nation to secure a justice agreement.

Even though the administration of justice is an aspect of every self-government agreement in the territory, actually establishing justice plans for all of them hasn’t happened yet.

Erin Linklater, who works as an engagement consultant for the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), recently gave a presentation preceding some engagement sessions at CYFN’s annual justice conference. She was collecting information for the federal Indigenous Justice Strategy.

Linklater explained that justice negotiations were initially pushed back to make it easier to reach self-government agreements, with the promise that justice plans would follow.

“A lot of First Nations have been sort of half at the negotiation table for almost 30 years,” she said.

Linklater later told CBC News that federal rules implemented 10 years ago have further stalled negotiations. Now, self-governing First Nations are required to draft and implement their entire justice agreements in one go.

“That would take years, and is truly an impossible feat,” Linklater said.

Prior to 2011, the Teslin Tlingit Council was permitted to negotiate and implement its agreement in phases.

During her presentation, Linklater noted that there’s space in the Yukon for communities to benefit from Indigenous policing, rehabilitation and more humanizing court systems.

“I am trained as a lawyer ... and when you’re going through law school, it’s so obvious as an Indigenous person how contrary to our culture a lot of those practices are,” she said. “We can imagine that Indigenous courts might have a different procedure.”

- CBC (Canada)

State of Indian Nations is good, but could be better, speakers say

WASHINGTON — Tribal nations are seeing themselves represented more than ever before in the government, but they still need to make their voices heard more loudly at the ballot box, the president of the National Congress of American Indians said Feb. 12.

NCAI President Mark Macarro’s comments came as part of the annual State of Indian Nations address, that included comments from tribal youth and congressional response from Rep. Mary Peltola, D-Alaska.

Macarro, making his first such address as president, called for more stable health care funding and improved resources for tribal police — but he repeatedly turned to the need for ballot access, mentioning the issue multiple times during a nearly 30-minute address.

He cited the proposed Native American Voting Rights Act, calling it “not just a bill

that needs congressional approval, but a tool that empowers our political voice and the Native vote. Macarro pushed Congress for quick action, as he believes Native voters could play a pivotal role in this fall’s elections.

“In 2024, the power of the Native vote has the potential to swing elections and shape history, not just for Native people, but for everyone in the United States,” Macarro said.

The Native American Voting Rights Act, introduced in 2021, would have made polling locations more accessible to Native voters, expanded early in-person voting and created a Native American voting task force that would focus on increasing voter outreach and registration. But the bills died after failing to receive hearings in either the House or Senate.

Peltola, in a videotaped congressional response, called the bill a “badly needed piece of legislation.” But she said it has not been reintroduced in this Congress “because it does not have a Republican co-sponsor,” and its chances of passing without GOP support are low.

Ballot access was just one of the areas where Macarro pushed for congressional action. He urged lawmakers to change the funding formula for the Indian Health Service, saying it is “imperative” that the funding be “mandatory and permanent.”

“Our needs and rights must rise above partisan politics,” Macarro said. “This is a crucial policy that will prevent the loss of Native lives due to political gridlocks and government shutdowns.”

Macarro wasn’t the only speaker to demand that the federal government live up to its obligations to tribes: Caleb Dash, NCAI Youth Commission co-president and a member of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, called for increased funding across the board. He said tribes have been put “at the far end of the table” for too long.

“We must receive more funding from the federal government to support all our nations and efforts to build infrastructure that is vitally needed such as roads, hospitals, gas stations, schools, fire departments and so much more,” Dash said. “As Indigenous people we are neglected by the federal government.”

Dash also called on the federal government to formally apologize for its past wrongdoings.

“We ask the United States government to acknowledge on the record the genocide of our people ... as they continued to attack our freedom and our nation and efforts to destroy our ways of life,” he said.

Macarro, however, took time to praise the Biden administration, saying he had set a “powerful precedent” of collaboration. He specifically mentioned an increase in Native representation in the federal government, led by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna and the first Native American to serve as a Cabinet secretary.

“Under this presidency there are more Native Americans in the highest levels of government than ever before,” Macarro said. “This representation fosters a deeper understanding of our needs. Substantial efforts have been made to enhance government to government dialogue.”

Despite this, Macarro also called on the administration to push for more and better resources for Native law enforcement, saying “we see over-policing in our urban Indian communities and we see under-policing in our reservation lands.”

“Indian Country occupies 56 million acres of land with a combined force of 3,000 officers,” he said. “A reservation of 1 or 2 million acres is being patrolled by one or two officers. To contrast, the U.S. Capitol complex here in D.C. is 270 acres with more than 2,000 officers.”

Macarro believes that ultimately tribal requests should be met, arguing that most of them are a product of previous errors by state and federal governments.

“Indian Country’s needs are not entitlements. Indian Country’s needs are nonnegotiable, they are imperative and they must be met,” Macarro said.

- Cronkite News (Phoenix, Arizona)

Governor, tribal president clash over politics of immigration

Oglala Lakota tribal President Frank Star Comes Out has banned South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation after a speech in which she accused the Biden administration of failing to protect states from an “invasion” of immigrants across the southern border.

“South Dakota is directly affected by this invasion,” she said in a joint address to state lawmakers on January 31. “We are affected by cartel presence on our tribal reservations; by the spread of drugs and human trafficking throughout our communities; and by the drain on our resources at the local, state and federal level.”

Noem invoked the U.S. Constitution and an 18th-century essay by founder Alexander Hamilton to defend states’ rights to send militias to repel invasions. She also said she is willing to send razor wire and South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas to help the state defend its border with Mexico.

“Only entry plus enmity constitutes an invasion,” Star Comes Out countered in a statement posted to Facebook. “The unlawful entry of people into the United States cannot be construed as an invasion.”

He said, “Many of the people coming to the southern border of the United States in search of jobs and a better life are Indian people,” including from El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico, “and don’t deserve to be dehumanized and mistreated.”

Star Comes Out said Noem wants to

campaign on border issues to get former President Donald Trump reelected “and, in turn, increase her chances of being selected by Trump to be his running mate as Vice President.”

Noem responded to Star Comes Out’s Facebook post with a statement saying she has worked for years to build relationships with South Dakota tribes and to deliver services to tribal communities, including health care, economic development, social services, housing, food programs, suicide prevention and drug addiction treatment.

“It is unfortunate that President Star Comes Out chose to bring politics into a discussion regarding the effects of our federal government’s failure to enforce federal laws at the southern border and on tribal lands,” Noem said.

- Voice of America

Choctaw, University of Oklahoma partner on technology research

DURANT, Okla. — The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) Advanced Technology Initiatives (ATI) has teamed up with the University of Oklahoma (OU) to research advanced transportation technologies, resilience to severe weather events, and defense and security challenges such as the development of counter-drone systems. The two entities have signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to achieve technological advancements, workforce development, economic growth, and scientific discovery, aligning OU’s academic objectives with CNO’s educational and economic priorities.

“We are excited to work with the University of Oklahoma in several exciting fields. Both CNO and OU are developing world-class capabilities to address important challenges for our communities. This collaboration will accelerate our ability to improve the quality of life and health in our Reservation,” said James L. Grimsley, executive director of Advanced Technology Initiatives.

The MOU enables OU and CNO to share resources and connect stakeholders to find solutions for challenges facing rural and tribal communities, improving the safety and quality of life in those communities. Additionally, this agreement will create opportunities for Choctaw students interested in STEM fields like engineering, environmental sciences, meteorology, and aviation.

“We are thrilled to partner with CNO on this important work and leverage OU’s deep research expertise in radar technologies and severe weather for the benefit of the state and nation,” said Drew Allen, deputy executive director of OU’s Oklahoma Aerospace and Defense Innovation Institute.

- Choctaw Nation

\$500,000 is headed to Redding Rancheria Tribe for new green hydrogen facility

REDDING, Calif. — A wholly-owned subsidiary of the Redding Rancheria Tribe has received a \$500,000 grant from the California Department of Conservation to assist the tribe with developing a new green hydrogen production facility in Red Bluff, California.

According to a Jan. 30 news release, the green hydrogen will provide clean fuel for transportation on the Interstate-5 corridor. The green hydrogen will be produced utilizing forest biomass from the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Removing dead, down, and diseased trees and underbrush from the forest is part of a state and federal policy to prevent catastrophic forest fires.

“Converting forest biomass waste into carbon-negative energy is a critical part of achieving California’s climate goals while reducing wildfire hazards, improving watersheds and supporting sustainable local economies in the region,” Department of Conservation director David Shabazian said in the release.

The facility is slated to generate more than 30,000 kilograms of green hydrogen per day from renewable sources. The tribe is licensing the technology from H2 Energy Group, a green hydrogen producer.

“As tribal members we’ve learned to be responsible for the next seven generations,” said Jeremy Hayward, a tribal member and president of the Redding Rancheria Economic Development Corporation. “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.”

- Staff report

Anishinaabe woman appointed to Michigan NRC

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — Robin Clark of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians is the first Anishinaabe woman to serve as a board member on the Michigan Natural Resources Commission.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer appointed Clark to the position at the first of the year, and she will serve a four-year term.

Clark has also joined the Soo Tribe Department of Natural Resources as director, overseeing the tribe’s environmental, fisheries and wildlife management programs. Clark gained experience in her 10-year career at the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan and in her work as an ecologist.

Clark is one of seven members on the board that has exclusive authority to regulate the taking of game and sport fish, among other responsibilities.

-9&10 News (Cadillac, Mich.)

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Education



Seminole author Apolonia Nunez reads to PECS students

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Celebrate Literacy Week at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School featured a special guest speaker, tribal member and author Apolonia Nunez, who read from her book “I Am Indigenous.”

Nunez read to elementary and middle school students Jan. 26 and Jan. 30. She also reads at various schools and to groups online to spread the word about Native Americans and the Seminole Tribe.

“I want to let people know we are here, we are human and we have a lot to offer,” said Nunez. “Reading to the young children was incredible. I’m pretty shy and this was out of my comfort zone, but I felt I had to do it for the tribe and the students. I would do it all over again just to see those faces smiling and asking intelligent questions.”

“I Am Indigenous,” published in January 2024, is a children’s book that tells stories of family ancestors and how they lived. It shows young readers that their own ancestors’ lives aren’t just stories, but a thread that makes for a strong community in today’s world.

Nunez wrote another book, “All Grandmas Go to Heaven,” which was published in 2023. The book was a tribute to her late grandmother Alice Sweat.

The books were published and illustrated by Franklin Publishing. Nunez said she would like to find tribal students to illustrate future books. She said she was lucky to be introduced to some talented students at PECS.

Nunez grew up in Okeechobee with no tribal students in her schools. She said the PECS students are lucky to have other tribal members in school with them.

“The impression they will leave on other people when they leave the reservation will represent us all,” Nunez said. “No matter what their path is, it is bigger than themselves.”

Before she read from “I Am Indigenous,” Nunez asked the students to raise their hands if they knew what Indigenous means. No hands were raised. When she asked if they knew what Native American or Seminole means, all hands shot up in the air.



Author Apolonia Nunez reads to a group of students at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School in January.

Courtesy photo

She explained that Indigenous means being Native from a specific place.

“It was emotional with the older kids,” she said. “We talked about genocide and the Trail of Tears, which I first learned about from my grandmother. It was the only time I saw her cry. I explained who my grandmother was to the tribe and how much she loved that they were carrying on our culture. It was more emotional than I expected. I don’t know who got more out of

it, them or me.”

Nunez became the youngest Seminole college graduate at age 15 when she graduated from Indian River State College while she was still in high school. She tested as gifted and wanted more challenges, both socially and academically. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice in 2015.

Nunez loves buildings and is working on her general contractor and real estate

licenses. She is currently remodeling her Okeechobee home and building another one to sell. She sold two homes she built last year. Her father, David, is a contractor and her mother, Anita, works in real estate. She works with them at Seminole Design and Build.

“Building is the same as books; it starts with an idea and metastasizes into something great,” Nunez said. “I get rewards from each of them, but in different ways. I love to



Courtesy photo

Apolonia Nunez’s “I Am Indigenous.”

Music room debuts at BC Boys & Girls Club

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Boys and Girls Club celebrated the grand opening of its new music room Feb. 8 on the Big Cypress Reservation.

BGC youth now have a room dedicated to music where they can hone their drums, guitar and keyboard skills.

Members of the community attended a concert put together by the BGC that featured tribal youth who are interested in playing music.

Tribal leadership was also present with President Holly Tiger, Big Cypress Councilwoman Marriann Billie and Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers in attendance.

Before the start of the concert, President Tiger addressed the attendees.

“It was always a safe space, all these years, it’s always been that,” President Tiger said to the audience.

Councilwoman Billie provided encouraging words for the young music enthusiasts.

“I want see you guys all on album covers, I want to see you all out there for

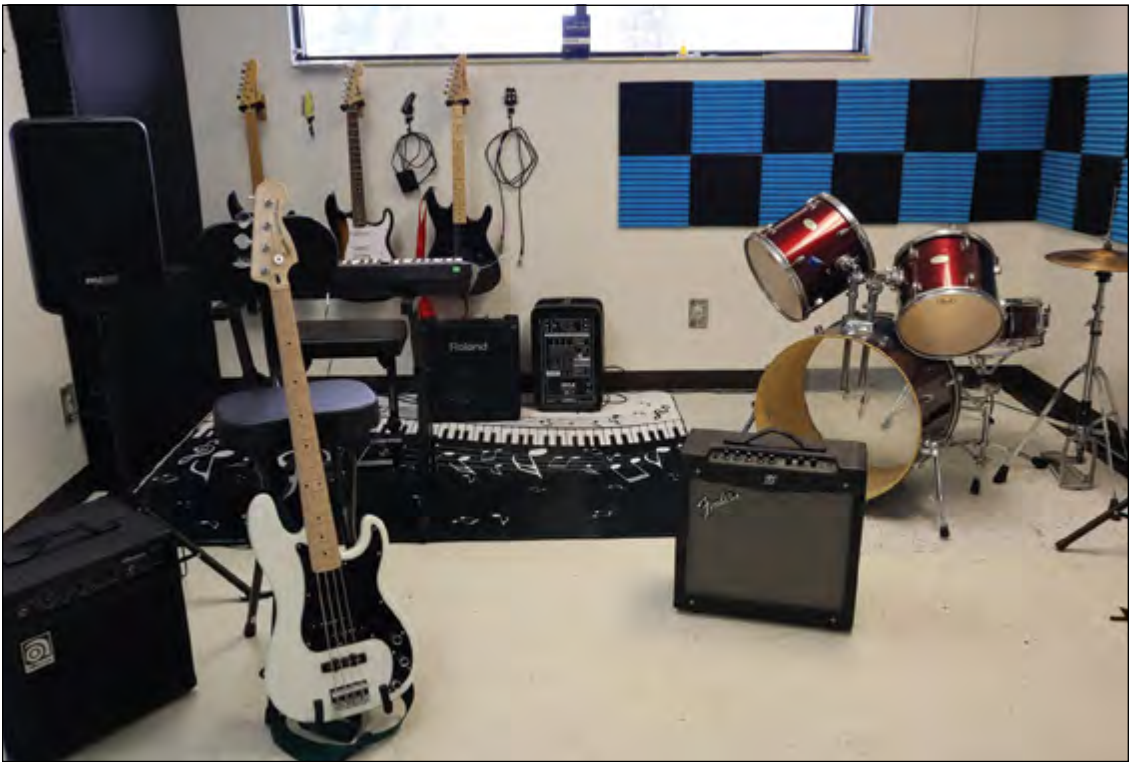
Native America, I want to see you all pushing for Indigenous people,” she said.

A music artist video montage showed various musicians from different groups such as The Osceola Brothers, Doc Native, Spencer Battiest, Paul Buster, Warren Haynes, Vince Herman, and John Medeski, to name a few. The artists voiced their support for the opening of the music room opening and implored the tribal youth to explore their musical creativity.

The Ahfachkee Warriors band kicked off the concert by playing 12 bar blues and a cover song of “I Love Rock N Roll” from Rock icon Joan Jett.

The next performance was by Aujua Williams, who sang while she played her ukulele.

The last performance was conducted by Cypress Billie, who played a few of his own songs.



Calvin Tiger

Music instruments fill the new music room at the Boys & Girls Club in Big Cypress.



Calvin Tiger

Aujua Williams plays her ukulele and sings a song during a concert at the Big Cypress Boys & Girls Club music room opening.



Calvin Tiger

Cypress Billie performs at the music room opening.



Calvin Tiger

The music room is decorated with modern and classic items.

Seminole 4-H kids compete at fair

STAFF REPORT

WEST PALM BEACH — The South Florida Fair was held Jan. 12-28 at the South Florida Fairgrounds in West Palm Beach. Members of the Seminole 4-H participated in the swine and steer shows with the animals they raised. All the swine and steer from the 4-H'ers were sold at the fair.



Nohea Collins with Boogie Johns.

Courtesy photo



Oreste Perez with Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, left, and Boogie Johns, second from left.

Courtesy photo



Elakaih Collins with Boogie Johns.

Courtesy photo



Amariah Lavatta, center.

Courtesy photo



Timothy Urbina with Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, left, and Boogie Johns.

Courtesy photo



Lindi Carter, right.

Courtesy photo

Haskell to offer new agriculture business degree program

STAFF REPORT

Several business facets in agriculture – including lending operations, risk management, regulatory compliance and customer service – will be part of a new degree program offered by Haskell Indian Nations University.

In a joint announcement Feb. 6, the Bureau of Indian Education and the Native American Agriculture Fund said the agriculture business degree program will improve relations between Native farmers and their financial institutions.

“I am excited to see Haskell implementing innovative programs to foster opportunities for the next generation of Native American farmers and ranchers,” Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, said in a news release. “This new program will help ensure that Indigenous farming students can build sustainable business models that support them, their families and our traditional food systems by bridging the gap between educational needs and agricultural financial literacy.”

Degree and certificate options will be available in agriculture and finance. The program will be part of Haskell’s business school.

“Haskell Indian Nations University looks forward to working with the Native American Agriculture Fund to advance the career opportunities and skillsets available to Native communities and individuals,” Haskell Indian Nations University President Francis Arpan said in the release. “Through this grant, we hope to expand valuable resources to Native communities in the areas of agribusiness and beyond.”

Video series showcases research work by tribal students

STAFF REPORT

In mid-February, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium began to showcase research by students from Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) through videos on its social media platforms, including Facebook.

The Sweetgrass Research Video Series features 11 videos documenting the work of students at nine of the colleges. According to the consortium, the videos feature diverse research projects, emphasizing the significant role of Indigenous identity and the crucial impact of mentorship in academic and professional pursuits.

One of the first videos released features S’Nya Sanches, from United Tribes Technical College and studying Environmental Science, who explored the modification of iron content in wheatgrass, a vital nutritional source for tribal communities.

Another video profiles Courtney Old Chief, a student at Salish Kootenai College, who conducted research on the microbial life on the bottom of Flathead Lake, an essential aspect for native communities in Montana.

State awards IRSC \$4M for support of workforce development

FROM PRESS RELEASE

FORT PIERCE — Nearly 200 were in attendance at the Indian River State College Eastman Advanced Workforce Training Complex on Feb. 7 when Governor Ron DeSantis announced an award of \$4 million to Indian River State College to create advanced technology workforce development programs and build an innovative Center of Ballistics and Emerging Technology. The funding is through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund.

“We see an opportunity to use the job growth grant to really make an impact not just with workforce, but also for the economy here on the Treasure Coast of Florida,” said Governor Ron DeSantis. “So I am today pleased to be able to award a \$4 million grant through the job growth grant fund to Indian River State College to create a new center for ballistics and emerging technology.”

The project will allow the college to expand its training in advanced manufacturing, particularly in precision fabrication and mechatronics.

The Center for Ballistics and Emerging Technology will serve as the nexus where industry partners, law enforcement agents, workforce training professionals, and Indian River State College students and faculty collaborate. The project plans to create more than 300 new advanced manufacturing-trained graduates over the next 10 years.

Native Learning Center offers tribal business startup training

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The Native Learning Center will host “Steps to Starting a Tribal Business” on March 18 and March 19.

The training will provide attendees with an understanding of business model strategies for starting a small business.

The training program is designed to empower tribal members with the essential knowledge and practical skills needed to embark on the journey of starting a small

for-profit business.

Topics include:

- overview of the needed and required steps
- typical operational structure
- marketing types and strategies
- developing components of a business plan
- accounting and finance processes
- small business resources
- processes for becoming a vendor

For information call (954) 985-2315 or visit nativelearningcenter.com.

CNAY honors ‘Champions for Change’

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Center for Native American Youth’s (CNAY) at the Aspen Institute honored its 2024 “Champions for Change” on Feb. 13 in Washington, D.C.

“We are thrilled to bring together this year’s ‘Champions for Change’ in Washington, D.C. to commemorate their unwavering passion and determination for making lasting change in their communities. Our Champions for Change show us just how impactful our youth are,” CNAY Executive Director Nikki Santos (Coeur d’Alene Tribe) said in a press release. Those

honored were:

- Tayler Higgins (Seldovia Village Tribe), University of Alaska Anchorage
- Sage Phillips (Penobscot Nation), University of Connecticut
- Ian Teller (Navajo), Diné College
- Wambli Gleska Quintana (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe & Navajo Nation), Dupree High School
- Jeidah DeZurney (Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians), Multnomah Education Service District

Native Forward CEO Angelique Albert (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes) received an honorary award.



Courtesy photo

From left to right are the 2024 CNAY’s “Champions for Change” honorees, Wambli Gleska Quintana, Jeidah DeZurney, Ian Teller, Sage Phillips and Tayler Higgins.

RES runs March 11-14 in Vegas

FROM PRESS RELEASE

RES, a multifaceted event from The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, will be held March 11 to March 14 in Las Vegas.

It is the largest economic summit in Indian Country.

The event will feature tribal leaders, members of Congress, federal agency representatives, state and local elected

officials, and top CEOs on a national platform.

Opportunities include networking, teaming opportunities and business development sessions.

Res features more than 4,000 attendees, 100 training sessions, more than 60 artisan booths and more than 200 trade show and market exhibits.

For more information visit res.ncaied.org.

Fire Rescue trains for vehicle wrecks

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

DAVIE — Vehicle extrication training is an exercise that Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue firefighters complete every year. On Feb. 21 and Feb. 23, firefighters used already-battered vehicles to practice removing chunks of vehicles and extricate dummies at the Millions of Parts venue in Davie.

Jorge Valdes, Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue division chief of training, said the continuous training provides an opportunity to expand on previous training and provide updates to new technology.

“It’s to make us more proficient. There are new techniques coming out every day about extrication. It’s an art. There’s no one way to do extrication,” Valdes said as he oversaw a crew of 10 firefighters during a training session.

One new challenge firefighters face is fires in electric vehicles. Valdes talked to the crew at the training exercise about lithium



Kevin Johnson (2)

During a training exercise, Lt. Sergio Acosta, at left, and firefighter Glen Samson, at right, practice removing doors from a badly damaged vehicle Feb. 20.

batteries in EVs and their lengthy burning capabilities even when doused with water. He said there are times when it’s best to let it burn, provided it is not posing a threat to life or property.

He said firefighters also need to be careful not to hit high voltage cables that are hidden within a vehicle.

“We have to make sure we can see what we are cutting,” he said.

Valdes said every accident is different. He explained that one difference with accidents on or near the rural reservations – like Big Cypress and Brighton – is that vehicles can end up in brush. Just finding the vehicle and gaining access can present all

sorts of challenges.

“We have to search for that vehicle and deal with elements that are not on hard pavement or hard compact grass or rocks. Now we’re going into the bush where we have wildlife and stuff like that,” he said.

Regardless of location, Valdes said step one in the extrication process is stabilization.

“We have to stabilize the vehicle before we start doing any type of cutting or anything because the last thing we want to do is cause any unknown movements to the vehicle that would cause further damage to the patient and/or one of ourselves.”

Seminole artist talk to be held in Winter Park

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WINTER PARK — The Albin Polasek Museum & Sculpture Gardens in Winter Park will host an in-person and virtual conversation between the local community and contemporary artists from the Seminole Tribe of Florida on March 26 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Winter Park Library.

Seminole artists’ works are currently featured in the museum’s Yaat Ya Oke: Welcome Travelers exhibition.

In a first ever collaboration with Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Musuem, the Polasek Museum is creating space for exchanging knowledge and building understanding between residents and visitors of all cultures and ages.

To register, go to the events page at polasek.org or visit this link <https://polasek.org/events-venue/>.



Tara Chadwick

An exhibit in Winter Park features the works of several Seminole artists.



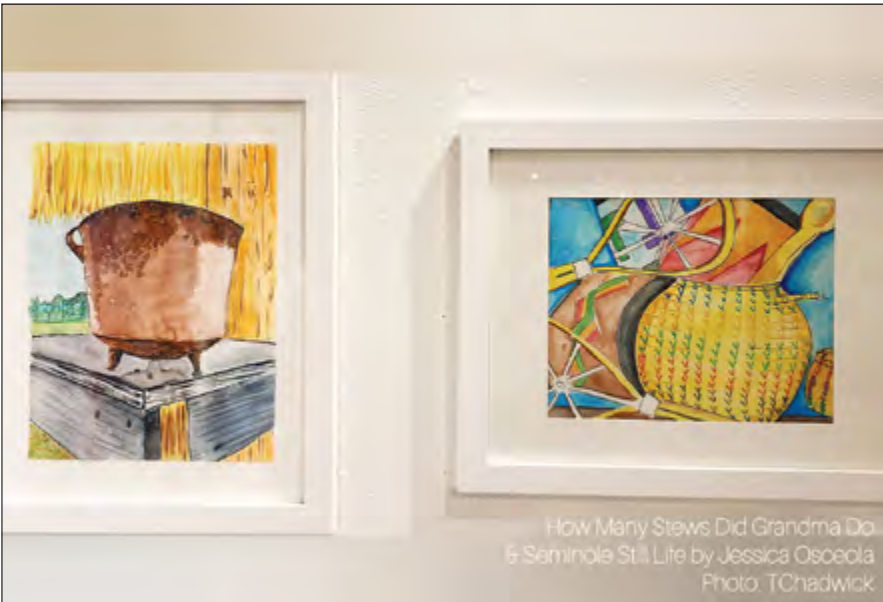
Tara Chadwick

Ruby Deitz



Tara Chadwick

Durante Blais Billie



Tara Chadwick

Jessica Osceola



Tara Chadwick

Jacqueline Osceola



Tara Chadwick

Victoria Osceola Benard, Ruby Deitz, the late Jo Motlow North, Erica Deitz, Elgin Jumper, Jessica Osceola.



Tara Chadwick

Brian Zepeda and Gordon Wareham



Spencer Battiest, center, sings “God Bless the USA” Joining him is the Seminole Tribe’s color guard, from left to right, Coleman Josh, Curtis Mottlow, Gary McInturff and Sallie Josh.

Kevin Johnson

Tribal Fair spotlight shines on veterans

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD—To say the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow began on the right note would be an understatement. Seminole singer-songwriter Spencer Battiest’s stirring rendition of the Lee Greenwood patriotic classic “God Bless the USA” set the tone for a weekend filled with appreciation for veterans. Battiest sang while standing in the middle of the Seminole Tribe’s color guard. To his right were Coleman Josh and Curtis Motlow; to his left were Gary McInturff and Sallie Josh.

The performance was a special tribute to the late Seminole veterans leader Stephen Bowers, who led the tribe’s color guard for several years. It also served as a nod to the new “Battle of the Guards” event in honor

of Bowers. The event was organized by Bowers’s sister, Wanda. Battiest posted an appreciative note on social media. “Blessed to have been invited to open up the 2024 [Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow] honoring our Indigenous Color Guards & Veterans. I began my career singing alongside my tribal color guards when I was just a child. Thank you to Elder Wanda Bowers for this invitation to honor the memory of Stephen Bowers,” Battiest wrote on Instagram.

Stephen Bowers’ daughter, Stephanie Bowers Hiatt, who lives in South Dakota, attended the Tribal Fair. “It was an honor to be there honoring my dad’s life and legacy. Wanda did a fabulous job organizing this special event,” she said.

The “Battle of the Guards” special drew seven all-Native color guards from throughout the U.S. Wanda Bowers said she

was pleasantly surprised by the turnout. “It’s more than I expected. I thought maybe three or four because we’re so far away,” she said.

The color guards were judged for their grand entry showings, but they also had the spotlight all to themselves in an evening performance Feb. 10. They had the option for their routine of doing a military drill or pow wow dancing.

A team of four U.S. Marines from South Dakota, some of whom drove all the way to Hollywood, won first place. Bowers said the team raised money through raffles, 50/50 drawings and food sales for the trip. Bowers noted the team was very disciplined in their demeanor and posture, including in the grand entries.

Veterans said they appreciated everything the tribe did for the veterans at the Tribal Fair. “It’s an honor to be here and to

participate with other honor guards. The tribe is doing real good for us veterans,” said Alex Fish from the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma’s honor guard.

Accompanied by the booming drums of more than a dozen drum groups from across Indian Country, four grand entries were held during the first two days.

“This is an event that I think has an opportunity not only to showcase and highlight the Seminole Tribe, but also to introduce locals and visitors to many tribal nations and their cultures,” President Holly Tiger said the audience that filled bleachers on two sides of the ballroom floor.

The Tribal Fair also featured dozens of Native vendors, some from the Seminole Tribe, but many from distant places, too.

Artist Michael Toya (Jemez Pueblo) drove 30-hours from his home in New Mexico. He said last year was the first time he came to the Tribal Fair. He said he did

good, so he came back this year.

Armand Polite (Alabama-Coushatta of Texas) said the drive to Hollywood from Texas was worth it. He sells T-shirts and other clothing items.

“This is one of our favorites. Every year I come here,” he said.

Fancy dance, arts and crafts, and Seminole clothing contests were also part of the event. Country music star Aaron Lewis was the featured concert performer.

Demonstrations with alligators was also a big part. Seminole alligator wrestler Billy Walker used a 7-foot, 8-inch alligator that he said was caught a day earlier to show how he handles the fierce reptiles. He also explained the importance of alligators in the tribe’s history, noting that Seminoles would capture gators and sell their hides so they could purchase other goods.



The winning team in the “Battle of the Guards” was this team of Marines from South Dakota.

Kevin Johnson



Curtis Mottlow, far right, and Wanda Bowers, second from right, greet an honor guard at the conclusion of a grand entry at the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow on Feb. 10.

Kevin Johnson



Courtesy photo

Stephanie Bowers Hiatt stands next to a photo of her father, Stephen Bowers, that was displayed at the grand entry entrance during the Tribal Fair & Pow Wow.



Kevin Johnson

The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma’s Phillip Coon, left, and Alex Fish lead their guard into the grand entry.



Courtesy photo

The guards from the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma gather for a photo at the pow wow.



Kevin Johnson
Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie, left, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahnia Billie wave the audience at the Tribal Fair in Hollywood.



Kevin Johnson
Princesses from throughout Indian Country attend the Tribal Fair.



Kevin Johnson
With her mom, JoJo Osceola, at her side, Evangelina Billie, 3, competes in the Seminole clothing contest.



Calvin Tiger
Seminole Tribe government leaders participate in a grand entry Feb. 9. From left to right are Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, President Holly Tiger, Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall.



Kevin Johnson
A display at Tribal Fair honors the dollmaking of Minnie Billie Doctor.



Kevin Johnson (2)
Vendors included Armand Polite, above, and Michael Toya, below.



Kevin Johnson
Seniors participate in the Seminole clothing contest.



Kevin Johnson
Alligator wrestler Billy Walkers gets up close and personal with a new friend.



Kevin Johnson
Dancers fill the floor of the main room at Tribal Fair during a grand entry.



Kevin Johnson
Dancers participate in a grand entry Feb. 9.

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NABI games move to Grand Canyon University

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

The largest all-Native American basketball tournament has a new home. The annual North American Basketball Invitational, which features more than 1,000 youth players from Indian Country, will be held at Grand Canyon University, about seven miles northwest of downtown Phoenix. “This new partnership is a great opportunity for NABI and the exciting place we find ourselves,” GinaMarie Scarpa, NABI president, said in a Feb. 7 news release. “Over the years we were constantly trying to secure courts to meet our tremendous growth. Staying in the central Phoenix area is also very important to NABI and the youth we serve as the exciting city of Phoenix offers so much to our youth athletes who travel from remote reservations all over the U.S., Canada and as far away as New Zealand.” Previously, games were spread throughout the Phoenix area at multiple locations, including high schools. The university has more than a dozen basketball courts, including the Canyon Activity Center, which features 10 courts. Championship games will continue to be

played downtown at the Phoenix Suns and Phoenix Mercury’s arena. In addition to the games, Scarpa said GCU is also a “perfect fit for NABI” because of the organization’s commitment to educational programs offered to players during the week of the tournament. A college and career fair and youth education summit are part of the tournament. NABI is eying a record-breaking number of teams for the tournament that runs July 22-27. NABI expects this year’s tournament to feature 160 teams and more than 1,600 players (ages 14-19) and 400 games. “NABI is one of the fastest growing basketball tournaments in the country and has rapidly expanded its footprint here in the Valley,” Brian Mueller, Grand Canyon University president, said in the release. “As one of the fastest growing universities in the country, we are proud to embrace them as part of the GCU family.” The Seminole Tribe of Florida is a longtime major sponsor of NABI. The tribe usually has at least two or three teams in the tournament. For more information visit NABINation.com.



Grand Canyon University's Canyon Activity Center features multiple courts for basketball and volleyball.

GCU



Jobe Johns competes in tie-down roping at the Silver Spurs Rodeo on Feb. 18 in Kissimmee.

Jessica Burns

Jobe Johns wins back-to-back all-around cowboy titles

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Jobe Johns had a weekend to remember in February. The pro rodeo standout, who grew up on the Brighton Reservation, won two all-around cowboy titles in a matter of days.

Johns, 25, captured the top honor at the 85th Brighton Field Day Festival & Rodeo on the Brighton Reservation and at the 152nd Silver Spurs Rodeo in Kissimmee. “Thank you, God for your continued faithfulness through the ups and downs of this sport. And thank you to my family, friends, and sponsors that help make this possible,” Johns posted on his Instagram

page. Nobody was faster than Johns in tie-down roping in Kissimmee as he put a blistering 7.7 seconds on the board Feb. 18. The next closest time to his was 8.3. Johns’ victory marked the second time he won tie-down at the Silver Spurs Rodeo; he captured first place in 2019 in 8.0. On Feb. 17 in Brighton, Johns and

Corbin Fisher combined to win first place in team roping in 4.7. Johns also finished second in tie-down roping with a time of 8.4. In the two rodeos combined, Johns won more than \$9,000. In the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) this season, Johns has competed in rodeos in Florida, Colorado, Louisiana and Texas.

Ava Nunez starts second college season

STAFF REPORT

On Feb. 10, the Seminole Tribe’s Ava Nunez notched her first hit of her sophomore season on the Thomas University softball team. Nunez had a single in the sixth inning in Thomas’s 5-3 loss to Southeastern University in Lakeland. Entering March, Nunez had started 10 of the 14 games she’s appeared in and has one hit, three runs scored and one walk. In fielding, Nunez, a third baseman, is tied for the team lead in assists with 20. Nunez is coming off a freshman season for the Thomas, which is in Thomasville, Georgia, in which she batted .241 with 19 hits and 13 RBIs in 79 at-bats. She also pitched 19 innings and had 0-2 record. She has yet to appear in the circle this season. Thomas has a 5-9 record. The team’s only regular season trip to Florida came Feb. 9-11 against Warner, Southeastern and Webber University. Thomas swept a doubleheader against Warner, but went 0-2 against Southeastern and Webber each. Prior to attending Thomas, Nunez was a four-year varsity standout for Immokalee High School.



Thomas University
Ava Nunez

Levi Phillips wraps up season with LaBelle

STAFF REPORT

Levi Phillips and the LaBelle High School boys basketball team finished their season with a 12-15 record. The 6-foot-4 Phillips, the only Seminole on the squad, was the team’s tallest player. He was one of five seniors. Before seeing its season end with a playoff loss to Gateway Charter on Feb. 8, LaBelle had found some late season momentum by winning six of its previous seven games. According to statistics on MaxPreps.com, Phillips averaged 8.8 points and 3.3 rebounds per game in 19 games. He scored in double digits several times, including 15 points each against Lake Placid and Island Coast.



Beverly Bidney

LaBelle High School senior Levi Phillips takes a jump shot against Bishop Verot on Jan. 22 in Fort Myers.



Beverly Bidney

Levi Phillips controls the ball against Bishop Verot.



Kim Bagley

Ava Nunez handles third base duties for Thomas.

Seminoles star on Moore Haven basketball teams

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — Seminoles played a big part in the success of Moore Haven High School basketball teams this season.

On the boys side, freshmen Greg James and Timothy Urbina helped the junior varsity team compile an 11-7 record, which is the most wins by the JV that anyone associated with the program could remember.

Meanwhile, Thaddeus Johns played a key part in one of the varsity team's best seasons in school history.

On the girls side, Preslynn Baker, Tahnia Billie, Kamyah Fudge and Charisma Micco excelled for the varsity Terriers, including in a district playoff victory.

Junior varsity boys

At 6-foot-3, 245 pounds, Greg James has a big presence on the court. But it's not just his size that opponents had to worry about.

"He can move. He's agile. He's a real athletic kid," said JV head coach Nate Kelly Jr.

James' versatility was on display in Moore Haven's final game of the season Feb. 2 at Boca Raton Christian School.

James, a freshman forward/center, scored seven of his team's 14 points in the first quarter. He showed his power on a 3-point play made possible by strength under the hoop. He also displayed a soft scoring touch by making a short jump shot.

He finished with 10 points amid foul trouble in the second half. He grabbed eight rebounds, had two blocks and was a big reason Moore Haven emerged with a 51-50 overtime win in its season finale.

Kelly said double-double games, or close to it, were common in James' season.

"Anytime we get it to him he can take care of business. He probably had at least six double-doubles," Kelly said.

Urbina saw minutes coming off the bench. Kelly said regardless if Urbina was on the floor or the bench, he played a key role.

"He improved a lot. He always listens. He's always willing to get better. He's never late. He really loves the game," Kelly said.

Timothy Urbina, a freshman, played sparingly in the game against Boca, but he showed plenty of enthusiasm on the bench in support of his teammates.

"He works harder than everybody else. That's what you need on your team, somebody that inspires other people to work hard. He's a team player," Kelly said.

James and Urbina helped Moore Haven produce a memorable season. The Terriers finished with an 11-7 record.

"Best year we've ever had at Moore Haven JV. To have 11 wins is amazing," Kelly said.

Varsity boys

Similar to the JV's season, the varsity boys generated one of its best seasons ever.

"We're having a great season, one of the best in history, and they're only sophomores," varsity coach Ravin Lee said just before his team started its district playoffs.

Moore Haven won its district opener, 48-30, against Oasis Christian. Two days later, Moore Haven's season ended with a 48-40 district semifinal loss to Legacy Charter.

The team finished with a 16-7 record. Those who have been around Moore Haven athletics for a long time said this year's squad was the best since the early 2000s.

Thaddeus Johns, a quick point guard brought a lot of energy with him when he transferred to Moore Haven before the season.

"I like what he brings to the game. He's always on time. He's very enthusiastic," Lee said.

Consistency was also a big part of Johns' season. He usually contributed about five to 10 points a game. His quickness and passing skills paved the way for others to



Moore Haven High School's Greg James takes a foul shot in the Terriers' 51-50 win in a JV game Feb. 2 against Boca Raton Christian School.



Moore Haven guard Thaddeus Johns gets past a Boca Raton Christian School player in a varsity game.



From left to right are Kamyah Fudge, Tahnia Billie, Preslynn Baker and Charisma Micco on the Moore Haven varsity girls team.



Moore Haven's Preslynn Baker (23) wins a battle for a rebound in a girls district playoff game against Oasis School.



Moore Haven JV's Timothy Urbina eyes the basket during the Terriers' victory Feb. 2.

Class 2A-Region 2-District 8 quarterfinal against Oasis Christian Academy of Winter Haven on Feb. 5 in Moore Haven.

Baker poured in a game-high 19 points, which included four 3-pointers. Billie, the tribe's Jr. Miss Florida Seminole, scored eight points. Both players also had strong rebounding games at both ends.

Head coach Darcel Kelly said Baker came through with big shots all season. Baker had several double-digit scoring games and a handful with more than 20 points, including 24 in a loss to Okeechobee.

Kelly said Billie also stepped up her play.

"Her defense is excellent. She has improved significantly this year," Kelly said.

Kamyah Fudge and Charisma Micco

contributed off the bench in the game against Oasis. Micco scored one point.

Other standouts for Moore Haven included Sa'Nyree Myers (17 points) and Akeelah Ling (12 points).

Moore Haven led 40-5 at halftime. The second half was played with running time.

Moore Haven's season ended two nights later in Kissimmee with a 58-51 loss to City of Life Christian Academy.

The Terriers finished with an 8-11 record.

Baker and Fudge are juniors, Billie is a sophomore and Micco is a freshman. Similar to the boys, the girls only had one senior, so next season's squad could likely surge to the other side of the .500 mark.



Moore Haven's Greg James blocks a shot.



Evechee Fludd competes in calf riding at the Bill Osceola Memorial All Indian Kids Rodeo on Feb. 10 at the Hollywood Rodeo Arena.

Kevin Johnson

Youth shines at Bill Osceola Memorial Rodeo

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — Boys and girls took center stage in the afternoon at the Bill Osceola Memorial All Indian Kids Rodeo.

The adult rodeo was held Feb. 10 in the evening at the Hollywood Rodeo Arena, but earlier in the day the future was on display.

Thirteen events were held ranging from dummy roping, mutton busting and barrel racing for the youngest (4 to 8 years old) to chute dogging, breakaway roping, junior bulls and steer riding for the older kids.

First place winners were: Lolo Jumper (dummy roping 4 to 8 years old), Newton Shaffer mutton busting (4-8), Wildcat Billie (youth pony riding 7-9), Brace Miller (pony riding 10-12), Justin Rodriguez (jr. bareback), Emmett Osceola (calf riding 7-10), Cashes Thomas (steer riding 11-13), Greyson Johns (jr. bulls), Anthony Osceola (chute dogging 17 and under), Storm Osceola (jr. breakaway roping), Lillie Coleman (barrel racing 4-8), Sue Osceola (barrel racing 9-12) and DJ Birdsong (barrel racing 13-17).

The next kids rodeo is scheduled for March 16 at the Junior Cypress Memorial All Indian Rodeo in Big Cypress.



Kevin Johnson

Lolo Jumper shows plenty of enthusiasm after winning the dummy roping event.



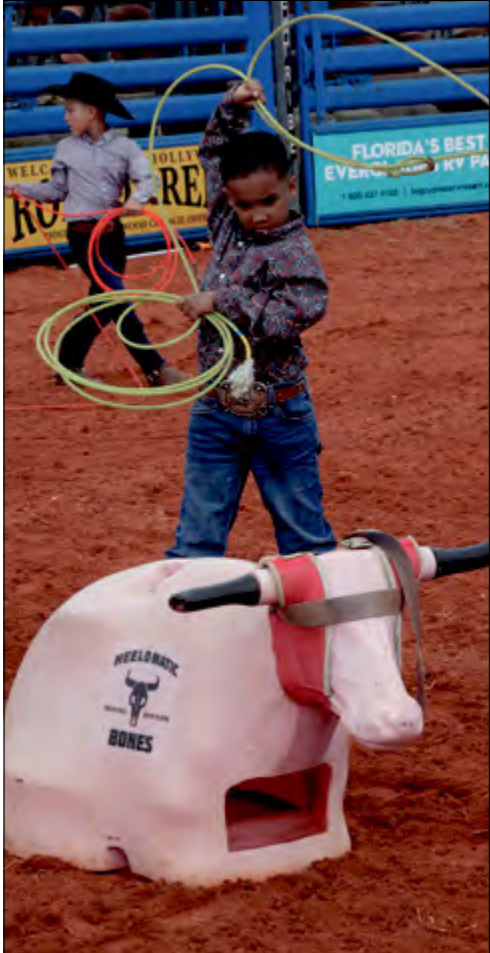
Kevin Johnson

Brace Miller gets a good start out of the game on his way to 82 points and first place in pony riding.



Kevin Johnson

Jailynn Navarro competes in the mutton busting event.



Kevin Johnson

Stanlo Jackson focuses on his target during dummy roping.

Bill Osceola Memorial All Indian Kids Rodeo Feb. 10 at Hollywood Rodeo Arena

Dummy Roping 4-8 years old

1. Lolo Jumper
2. JP Jumper
3. Jailynn Navarro
4. Messiah Beasley

Mutton Busting 4-8

1. Newton Shaffer 4.66
2. Thomas Koenes 3.09
3. Lolo Jumper 2.75
4. Wildcat Billie 2.59
5. James Osceola 2.46

Youth Pony Riding 7-9

1. Wildcat Billie

Pony Riding 10-12

1. Brace Miller 82 pts
2. Bently Osceola 2.72 sec
3. Ryker Miller 1.33 sec

Jr. Bareback

1. Justin Rodriguez 3.69 sec
2. Oreste Perez 3.00 sec

Calf Riding 7-10

1. Emmett Osceola 60 pts
2. Evin Osceola 45 pts
3. Jonah Wlaker 3.94 sec
4. Cody Tommie 3.67 sec

Steer Riding 11-13

1. Cashes Thomas 82 pts
2. Gator Boyd 78 pts
3. Koty Gopher-Turtle 70 pts
4. Brace Miller 4.34 pts

Jr. Bulls

1. Greyson Johns 2.41 sec
2. Randal Billie 1.87 sec

Chute Dogging 17 & Under

1. Anthony Osceola 4.65
2. Randal Billie 11.28

Jr. Break Away Roping 8-17

1. Storm Osceola 2.21
2. Milo Osceola 3.38
3. Gator Boyd 5.25

Barrel Racing 4-8

1. Lillie Coleman 23.942
2. Kaillin Coleman 24.023
3. Jailynn Navarro 27.988
4. Cashius Gopher 32.368

Barrel Racing 9-12

1. Sue Osceola 17.599
2. Mesa Gopher 19.790
3. Brace Miller 25.901

Barrel Racing 13-17

1. DJ Birdsong 15.592

EIRA season starts with Betty Mae Jumper Memorial Rodeo

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — The Betty Mae Jumper Memorial Rodeo was held Feb. 3 at the Hollywood Reservation Rodeo Arena. The rodeo is held annually in memory of Betty Mae Jumper, who led the Seminole Tribe as its first chairwoman. She was also a leader in the tribe in several areas, including cattle, education, health and journalism.

The rodeo kicked off the Eastern Indian Rodeo Association season.

Some of the evening's highlights included:

- Norman Osceola earned 81 points as he stayed on the bull for the eight-second requirement and finished first.

- Calgary Johns won ladies barrel racing with a time of 16.20 seconds. Boogie Johns finished second (16.51).

- Josh Jumper (header) and Alonzo Skunkcap (heeler) won team roping in 6.99 seconds.

- Skunkcap (11.73) won calf roping by a narrow margin over Corbin Fisher (11.96)

- Ahnie Jumper turned in the best time in breakaway roping (17.64).

- Oreste Perez had the top time in junior bareback with a four second ride.



Kevin Johnson

Taylor Johns gets the Betty Mae Jumper Memorial Rodeo going with a patriotic lap.



Kevin Johnson

Moses Jumper Jr. speaks to the crowd about his mother before the start of the rodeo.



Kevin Johnson

Norman Osceola goes airborne in the bareback event.



Kevin Johnson

Jaycee Jumper and horse sprint to the finish line in barrel racing.



Kevin Johnson

Grayson Johns shows he's in control in bull riding.



Kevin Johnson

Alonzo Skunkcap wins calf roping in 11.73 seconds.

★ REZ RALLY
From page1A



A beaming Edna McDuffie, one of the original organizers of the first Rez Rally 24 years ago, is in her element in the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena after the race concluded.

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney

These energetic young runners lead the start of the race with about 400 people right behind them. From left to right are Samuel Slocum, King Calisce, Cordey Jumper, Makai Newkirk and Luke Baxley Jr.



Beverly Bidney

Immokalee team member Richard Keyser, in center, leads a group of other Immokalee team members through the woods.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Brighton team members Richard Osceola, Derrick Smith and Savino Smith wait for the start of the race in the rodeo arena.



Beverly Bidney

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. begins the Rez Rally.



Beverly Bidney

Brianna Nunez runs through the wooded area of the Rez Rally course.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, David Cypress, Shirley Clay and Charley Cypress enjoy their time at Rez Rally.



Beverly Bidney

Cousins Louis Billie, left, and Randall Billie proudly show off their Rez Rally medals after completing the 5K course.



Beverly Bidney

Kieona Baker, left, and Nakoa Smiley hustle to the finish line.



Beverly Bidney

Arms outstretched, a victorious Adrian Baker approaches the finish line after completing the 5K course.

Cinema festival focuses on Native actors, films

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Native Reel Cinema Festival brought together film enthusiasts and those who work in the industry for two days at the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow in Hollywood. The festival, which was held Feb. 9 and Feb. 10 in a ballroom at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, featured short films and Q&A sessions with actors, directors and producers.

“Borders,” directed by Kenneth Shirley and Adam Conte, was among the films presented. “Borders” focuses on a group of immigrants who illegally cross the southern border. During the crossing, a woman named Evelyn gets separated from her group and is left to wander by herself through the vast open country. The woman named Evelyn eventually comes into contact with a Native American nephew and uncle who ultimately help her on her journey to where she needs to go.

Another short film had a local flavor. “An Ode For Leviticus,” directed by the Miccosukee Tribe’s Montana Cypress. The film features Native actors Gary Farmer and Tantoo Cardinal. It’s an emotional story about a pet owner, Toby, and his furry best friend, Leviticus. Toby has a hard decision to make as Leviticus is in the later part of his life.

The last short film that was presented was “Mary Margaret Road Grader,” written and directed by Native actor Steven Paul Judd. The post-apocalyptic Indigenous film bears a resemblance to movies such as “Mad Max” and “The Book Of Eli.” “Mary Margaret Road-Grader” focuses on themes



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Kenneth Shirley, Adam Conte, Montana Cypress, Doc Native, Cody Lightning and Steven Paul Judd speak to the audience at the Native Reel Cinema Festival on Feb. 10 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The festival was held in conjunction with the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow.

of gender inequality, changing traditions and survival.

The Q&A with the audience took place after the showings.

“I really appreciate the Native film festival that allows us to bring our work to

you,” Judd said to audience.

Native American artist Pat Vegas was awarded the festival’s “Mary Moore Lifetime Achievement Award” for his work in TV, film and music.

Vegas is known from the famous Native

American rock and roll group Redbone. Redbone’s resume includes hit singles such as “Come and Get Your Love,” “The Witch Queen of New Orleans,” “Maggie,” and “We Were all Wounded at Wounded Knee.” Vegas was also featured in the 2017 film

“Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World,” which sheds light on the Native American influence on rock and roll.



Calvin Tiger

Accompanied by his family, Pat Vegas receives the ‘Mary Moore Lifetime Achievement Award’ at the Native Reel Cinema Festival.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Charlie Hogan, Adam Conte, Kenneth Shirley, Cody Lightning, Steven Paul Judd and Zahn McClarnon take questions from the audience.

◆ IAMF From page 4A

Prior to the panel, Harjo, Chavez and Woon-A-Tai spent some time shopping in the vendor area. Tazbah, a co-executive producer and director of “Reservation Dogs,” talked about the show’s success.

“It’s possible that people see our stories are valid,” Chavez said. “One of the episodes I directed had only two actors; Graham Greene and D’pharaoh Woon-A-Tai.”

“I was honored to have a legend to work with,” said Woon-A-Tai, who has been acting for five years. “He guided me through it. He still messages me, he’s like a mentor. I was nervous the first day of filming. Graham is very passionate and I learned that from him. He takes the work seriously and wanted me to also. I was intimidated at first, but I wanted to prove to him that I was pretty good.”

Woon-A-Tai said Greene reminded him of his grandfather and working with him gave him a sense of home.

Now that “Reservation Dogs” is over, Harjo reflected on the series.

“I wanted to humanize Native people and tell the truth,” Harjo said. “It opened people’s eyes to how we live and made them interested in our stories. I just like telling stories. I’ve always been interested in the same stories and tell them differently.”

Harjo’s next project is very different from “Reservation Dogs.” It is a crime story set in Tulsa, Oklahoma and stars Ethan Hawke, who appeared in one episode of “Reservation Dogs.” Harjo said the project may be different, but it’s still told from his point of view.

Panel emcee Chance Rush, who acted in “Killers of the Flower Moon” movie, asked Harjo, Chavez and Woon-A-Tai questions about their experiences in the industry.

Q- How do you encourage people to get involved in the industry?

Harjo said the best thing to do it just make something. “You all have phones, you can all make something. Start doing that and keep doing it.”

“A lot of short films are shot on cell phones,” Woon-A-Tai added. “Don’t wait for somebody to ask, just film something.”

“The thing that always makes me confident is that we are all storytellers in our cultures,” said Chavez. “Cling tight to that and tell the stories in the way your people tell them.”

Q- What keeps you grounded?

Harjo, who lives in Tulsa, doesn’t spend a lot of time in Hollywood.

“I spend as much time as I can with my family,” he said. “Your family and cousins will keep you in check. Being well rounded grounds me.”

Q- Do you have advice for women starting out?

“For me, it’s always brains over beauty,” Chavez said. “As a writer, producer and director I want to be really good at my skill set, but it’s nice to layer on feminine energy. Just be undeniably good at your craft, be clear about what you want and get really good at it.”

Harjo took the question further than gender.

“I like that we, as people of color, have to work harder and our work has to be that good,” he said. “I love the challenge that we have to be at top level.”

“If you want to be an actor, don’t settle for less,” said Woon-A-Tai. “Don’t take a job on a set thinking you will work your way up. Be what you want to be; believe in yourself and just do it. Push yourself; even though you are scared, push past it. You have to have the heart to embarrass yourself and stand out.”

Q- Are we at the pinnacle or are we just getting started?

“We’re just getting started,” Harjo said. “This is just the beginning and it will keep getting better. “Reservation Dogs” was an all Native show; writers, directors, actors, crew, everyone. We got to do what we wanted, it was a total Native production. In one scene we needed sofkee, so the Muscogee chief’s wife made some and brought it to us. The same with frybread, when we needed it someone made it and brought it to us. I think eventually we will be able to continue having all Native productions.”

“I’m excited about where things are now,” Chavez said. “There were so many generations in the industry before us and we got to pull some of them through into the production with us. It’s easy to get Native writers and directors now. What Sterlin did was important; he gave a lot of us our first jobs. He held the door open and pushed us through. We need more people like Sterlin.”

“It’s important to be behind the camera, too,” added Woon-A-Tai. “Sterlin trusted so many people who never did it before.”

Q- “Reservation Dogs” touched on a lot of serious subjects, including missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW), boarding schools and the deer woman. Are you pleased with that?

“I knew deer woman would be an episode with the cool origin story of her at boarding school,” Harjo said. “We all know what happened at the schools; it’s a shared memory with our ancestors. We made the episode like a 1970s horror film. The day we filmed it, the kids [actors] were all at what used to be a real boarding school. We had a cultural advisor on the set whose father went to that school. He said his father cried every night. Filming the episode was really powerful. Even though the actors were young, they knew it was important. Their parents and families were just outside of the set. A lot of non-Native people didn’t know about the boarding schools. We do a comedy, but we knew we wanted to do an important episode.”

“I had my family with me during that episode,” Woon-A-Tai said. “It was a very emotional day.”

“This is why it’s so important to tell our own stories,” said Chavez. “We all know the heaviness of it; it’s important to have non-Native people understand it. During filming we felt safe and protected each other’s spirits.”

Q- What is the best way to get into the industry?

“Being in the film industry is about expressing yourself and being believable,” Harjo said. “Don’t be afraid of who you are, be confident and keep auditioning. Stick to it and don’t give up.”

Woon-A-Tai suggested paying attention to social media, where casting directors often post auditions.

“Follow the casting directors,” he said. “You don’t need to move to California to make it. I’d like to see more Native casting directors casting Native films. We don’t all look the same. We have to break the barrier of the big stoic Native. Also, be sure to stand out and don’t be afraid to embarrass yourself during an audition.”



Beverly Bidney

Virginia Osceola provides Sterlin Harjo with some help as he shops for patchwork jackets at Osceola’s booth.



Beverly Bidney

The Power of Dance group encourage attendees to join the dance circle after its performance. In the center is Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie.

Q- You had lots of great Native actors in the series, including Lily Gladstone [academy award nominee for “Killers of the Flower Moon”], academy award winner Wes Studi, Gary Farmer, Graham Greene and more. How was it to work with them?

“Lily played the role of an auntie in prison,” Harjo said. “She says so much without saying anything. Most people would have had an edge, but she came to the role like she was the Queen of England. I’m proud of who she is; she is full of grace and there is no one better to have represent us.”