

Tribe participates in Chalo Nitka parade
COMMUNITY 5A



Ahfachkee students learn about careers
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The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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Florida Supreme Court denies challenge to Tribe's sports betting

STAFF REPORT

The Florida Supreme Court denied a challenge to the Seminole Tribe's 2021 compact with the state which allows sports betting, as well as craps and roulette in its casinos.

The tribe began statewide mobile sports betting on its Hard Rock Bet app and online in November 2023. The compact is valued at \$2.5 billion over the first five years and billions more over the duration of the 30-year compact.

The court ruled March 21 that the opponents of the compact – pari-mutuels West Flagler Associates and Bonita-Fort Myers Corporation – filed the wrong petition to challenge the compact. The companies, which operate poker rooms, are also challenging the compact in Federal Court.

The companies believe the compact violates a 2018 constitutional amendment that restricted the expansion of casino gambling.

"This is a major victory for the people of the State of Florida, who can count on billions of dollars over the coming years to fund important state needs," Seminole Tribe spokesman Gary Bitner said. "Floridians and visitors can enjoy statewide sports betting and expanded casino games, now and into the future. And it means the Seminole Tribe of Florida can have confidence in the future."



Seminole artists discuss their work during a panel discussion at the Winter Park Library on March 26. From left to right are moderator Tara Chadwick and artists Gordon Wareham, Jacqueline Osceola, Rebecca Cypress, Corinne Zepeda and Wilson Bowers.

Seminole artists bring their work, culture to Winter Park

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

WINTER PARK — As the "Yaat Ya Oke: Welcome Travelers" exhibit comes to a close this month at the Albin Polasek Museum and Sculpture Gardens, some of the 29 Seminole artists whose work is included

in the show participated in a community conversation with art patrons at the Winter Park Library on March 26.

The exhibit, which opened Jan. 16 and closes April 14, features 47 pieces including paintings, beadwork, bandolier bags, photography, mixed media, street art, carvings, dolls, pen and paper and baskets.

It is the first exhibit to feature Indigenous artists at the museum.

The artists who participated on the panel in person were Wilson Bowers, Rebecca Cypress, Jacqueline Osceola, Gordon Wareham and Corinne Zepeda. Joining on zoom and telephone were Durante Blais-Billie, Camisha Cedartree, Elgin Jumper,

Danielle Nelson and Shonayeh Tommie.

Co-curator Tara Chadwick posed questions to the panel, starting with why they chose to participate in the show.

◆ See ARTISTS on page 7A

BC, others from Indian Country celebrate 1st anniversary of community garden

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The first anniversary of the Big Cypress community garden was a celebration of gardening, spirituality and food sovereignty. The March 6 event was attended by tribal members and guests from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Cherokee, Dine and Osage Nations.

The garden, called "Let's Be Trees," features garden beds tended to by tribal members along with a new field of Tuscarora white corn planted during the event. The corn was a gift of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which consists of the Cuyaga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga and Seneca tribes from upstate New York and Canada.

Marty Bowers, a volunteer and founder of the Big Cypress garden, organized a trip to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in June to learn more about food sovereignty with seven members of the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) and the Climate Resiliency and Native Connections departments. That trip led to the invitation for a three-day cultural exchange with the Seminole Tribe, including the "Let's Be Trees" anniversary.

"We went to their farm and garden to

learn," Bowers said. "They have five years of food put away and are bringing back centuries old varieties of corn. To them it's about connecting to the earth mother and human community. Their message moved me."

The Big Cypress Culture Camp was literally a hotbed of activity all day as Seminole women and the guests cooked their own traditional foods over the fire in the cooking chickee. Osage grape dumplings, Onondaga venison with blueberry sauce and Mohawk red corn mush with strawberries shared the fire with traditional Seminole fare, including fry bread and a turtle roasting on the grate.

"This is like a gathering of nations on the fire," said Angela Ferguson, Onondaga Nation, Eel Clan. "It's a pow wow of food."

Ferguson helped establish the Onondaga food sovereignty program, traditional farm and the Braiding the Sacred group which consists of Indigenous corn growers. The Onondaga Nation practices all aspects of food sovereignty, including traditional agriculture, hunting, fishing, bee keeping, maple tapping and hide tanning. They also have a long-term seed preservation program,

which includes the Tuscarora white corn seeds planted in Big Cypress.

"There is a real heartbeat around this fire," Ferguson said. "We are here to share our culture and knowledge and learn from the Seminoles. This creates a long-lasting friendship."

Ferguson believes all animals, plants and humans have the same life spirit. One of the Onondaga's traditional foods is deer.

"They constantly eat medicine plants in the forest," Ferguson said. "When we ingest them, we get some of their power. We honor those animals; they are here to feed us."

Wendy Gonyea, Onondaga Nation, Clan Mother, Beaver Clan, is a leader in her tribe. A clan mother is part of the traditional government and comes with specific duties. Each clan within the tribe has a chief and a clan mother. When a chief dies, the clan mother consults with other clan members and chooses the next chief. The clan mothers also give each newborn its traditional name, which is Gonyea's favorite part of being a clan mother.

"I feel connected to all Indigenous people," she said. "We have similar cultures; sharing that and coming together like this in positive ways is very uplifting. It's rewarding to meet the people here and make friends. We aren't strangers anymore."

Bowers believes by continuing the tradition of growing food, the garden will give tribal members a traditional way to feed their families. He also wants to make sure the youth stay connected to the garden.

"I'd like the entire community to see that growing food is meaningful," Bowers said. "We are following the footprint that our ancestors put down. They had a path and we're walking it. Soon we will see a field of corn growing in the middle of the community, which was probably how it used to be. This garden is magical."



A mural painted by Ahfachkee students stands over the newly planted crop of Tuscarora white corn from the Onondaga Nation.



Beverly Bidney (2)

At left, Curtis Waterman, Onondaga Nation, pours his homemade blueberry sauce over the venison he cooked at the anniversary of the Big Cypress community garden. At right, Marlin Miller-Covarrubias makes a large frybread for the dinner being prepared by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Cherokee, Dine and Osage Nations March 6 in Big Cypress.



Beverly Bidney
Michelle RedCorn, Osage, makes grape dumplings in the Big Cypress cooking chickee.

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Visit the Tribune's website (seminoletribune.org) and Instagram (@seminoletribune) for news throughout the month

Editorial

On behalf of the ancestors

• Joy Harjo-Sapulpa

We humans are story makers. We become part of a matrix of stories when we accept breath. We are connected to the stories of every creature, plant, and other beings. We are each given the task to bring understanding and vnoeckv or harmony of deep caring to all that we do. In this manner of consideration, I have a story, a story of cultural assault. It is not just my story but the story of family, of a ceremonial ground, of a tribal nation, of people who were exiled from their homelands just a few generations before. On that over 800-mile walk away from our origin story, the grounds leaders kept fire alive in their hands to replant the circle so that the descendants would have a place to come home to, to remember who they are, who they were, and who they will become.

I am a member of Hickory Ground Ceremonial Grounds, or Oce Vpofv. We are part of the Muscogee Creek Nation (or the Mvskoike Nation), long before there was a United States or a state of Alabama. Our nation is made up of many tribes who came together to form a political entity to deal with other nations, including the Spanish, France, Great Britain, and the United States. We are culturally rich made up of many tribal towns and ceremonial grounds who are connected by language, land, customs, or history.

One of the first acts of President George Washington after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, to affirm sovereignty of the new government, was to execute a treaty with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. This was the first treaty the U.S. signed under the new constitution. The head of the Muscogee treaty delegation was from Hickory Ground. Hickory Ground served as the capital of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation which was then one of the largest civilizations in existence in the Western Hemisphere.

With the Indian Removal Act of 1830 under the direction of Andrew Jackson, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation was illegally moved west by the United States government to what was known as Indian Territory. We reestablished our capitol in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, and have continued, a body politic, as the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in what is now the state of Oklahoma. We have continued to maintain our cultures and languages as a sovereign nation. The 2020 McGirt decision by the U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed our status as a reservation in the state of Oklahoma.

Hickory Ground, one of the many ceremonial grounds that make up the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, is a living, active ceremonial ground in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Reservation under the leadership of Mekko George Thompson. The story roots of Hickory Ground, or Oce Vpofv, continue to be directly connected to the lands in Wetumpka, Alabama. Despite the distance imposed by the injustice of history

we continue to know the stories that assert continuance. We know the original names of important places, the names and relationships with plants and animals and how they relate to us and how we relate to them. They are inherent in our cultural practices. We know the names of our families who were buried there in our homelands. We carry their memories in our bodies and in our stories, just as they carry us in their bones.

Because of the prominence and historical importance of Hickory Ground in Wetumpka, Alabama, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 as it was an historic place worthy of preservation. The National Register of Historic Place is "...part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources." This status conferred a public awareness of the cultural value of Hickory Ground and inferred guardianship.

In 1980 the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, an incorporated entity, not a federally recognized tribal nation, requested, and was given the Hickory Ground property using federal preservation funds. They were given care of the lands to preserve them and to prevent development, by the federal government.

In 1984 Poarch Band obtained federal recognition though they did not have a body politic and did not meet basic qualifications for federal recognition. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation did not have bands. There was no Poarch Band of Creek Indians before removal. This organization began long after removal by descendants of two families who were allotted land as spoils of war in Alabama from assisting Andrew Jackson in the massacre of Muscogee Creek Nation citizens. To stay in Alabama, they gave up their citizenship in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and became American citizens. Their allotted lands are a small area of sixteen square miles located near Atmore and (Tensaw). They are not the lands of Oce Vpofv or Hickory Ground.

In 2012 the Poarch Band of Creek Indians exhumed and removed 57 bodies of Hickory Ground family members and proceeded to build a casino on top of the lands in Wetumpka, Alabama, lands they had promised to protect. This was also against the policies of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act guidelines that essentially state, "that human remains of any ancestry 'must at all times be treated with dignity and respect'. Congress also acknowledged that human remains and other cultural items removed from Federal or tribal lands belong in the first instance, to lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations." Under the guidance of an Auburn University anthropologist, the remains and grave items were put into plastic buckets then stacked and stored at Auburn University, where they remain to this day.

In the fall of 2023, I was invited to Auburn University by the Southern Humanities Review on behalf of the Witness Prize, a prize I juried. I requested a meeting with the NAGPRA officer of the university in charge of the Hickory Ground and other remains held on campus from other digs. When we met in his office on campus, he informed me that because of the appeal he could not speak directly about the Hickory Ground case. We spoke generally about NAGPRA. He offered to allow me into the room where the remains and items were being held on campus along with remains from other digs. I had been properly cautioned about going into the presence of the remains, which I took seriously. What I have been taught by elders is that our remains carry memory. Each cell contains a spiral of stories that belong to ancestors and to descendants. What is buried is meant to remain buried. There is no word or concept in the Mvskoike language for what the Poarch Band did when they unearthed that which was never to be returned to the surface.

When I went into the room in which our relatives' bones were stored, I turned immediately to flee. I almost couldn't breathe. I paused though because I wanted to be a witness to help tell the story. I heard the roar of disturbance, the voices of the ancestors, and understood how they needed to be reinterred, for harmony. When graves are disturbed, there can be widespread disturbance that can cause illness, societal upset, and other disruption. I promised I would help them return home, to restore harmony by telling the story.

It is up to the court now to decide how this story will end. Oce Vpofv or Hickory Ground, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation are appealing for justice. This is not an issue of tribal nation versus tribal nation. This is about what is moral and just, about what is an ethical decision here when it comes to the respect of human life. The care of our Oce Vpofv ancestors must remain with their descendants, so we can ensure that they are returned correctly to their burial place. Only then will the story be restored, a restoration story that includes all the participants in this appeal.

Joy Harjo, the 23rd Poet Laureate of the United States, is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Harjo is the author of several award-winning books of poetry, memoirs, anthologies of Native literature, children's books, plays and music albums. She is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and was just named as the 2024 Frost Medalist from the Poetry Society of America. She is at work on a play that will show that Muscogee people are part of the origin story of blues and jazz. She is the first artist-in-residence at the Bob Dylan Center and lives in the Muscogee Nation Reservation.

This opinion was published March 5 on ictnews.org.

STOF awarded \$250,000 in climate resilience funding

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

The Biden administration announced March 14 that \$120 million in climate resilience-related funding has been awarded to more than 100 tribes, including the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

According to a news release, the grant funding includes \$249,886 for the Seminole Tribe's "Sustainable and Climate Resilient Communities" workshop series. The funding for STOF is listed in a planning category by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"Our program has been awaiting the announcement since January and are eager to bring the STOF departments and community together to develop sustainability goals and develop the tribe's first climate action plan," Jill Horwitz, the tribe's climate resiliency officer, said in an email to the Tribune. "This support from the BIA is critically needed for us to develop and implement a shared vision

for tribal operations and community design. There is a lot to accomplish during the two-year grant period."

The path toward creating the climate action plan includes workshops, guest speakers, tours and policy working groups, Horwitz said.

"Climate change affects all of us, so we will be reaching out across the STOF departments and all reservations for support as we develop mitigation and adaptation solutions together," she said.

The funding is part of a more than \$120 million package through the Inflation Reduction Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and annual appropriations for 102 tribes and nine tribal organizations.

"Indigenous communities are facing unique and intensifying climate-related challenges that pose an existential threat to tribal economies, infrastructure, lives and livelihoods," Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said in the release.

Native Max Magazine cover features Tomasina Chupco

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

The Seminole Tribe's Tomasina Chupco was featured on the cover of the spring issue of Native Max Magazine, marking the second time she has graced a magazine's cover in the past year.

Chupco was on the cover of *LDL Magazine's* October 2023 issue, which focuses on Indigenous culture.

The article in *Native Max* that features Chupco is titled "Roots of Resilience: Afro-Indigenous Women of Healing Work."

Chupco is an indigenous pathic medicine practitioner with a Doctorate in education and a Bachelor of Science in alternative holistic medicine. She works in educating communities in Indian Country. She founded *Indigenous Intentions*, a limited-edition cause jewelry/bipoc educational brand whose mission "is to empower individuals on their path to wellness by providing herbal remedies and sober curious resources that are deeply ingrained in Indigenous knowledge."

"Indigenous Intentions initially started as a fundraiser for a community initiative and turned into a cause-driven jewelry brand focusing on cultural and social causes. The brand donates a significant portion

of proceeds from certain collections to organizations working towards these causes. It reflects an effort to support Black and Native communities, blending traditional beadwork with contemporary designs in our jewelry." Chupco said in the *Native Max* story.

Chupco's journey in jewelry started when she was a child. Influence came from her family, including her grandmother, Marie Tommie, who taught her about herbalism and beadwork.

Chupco also serves as co-chairwoman of the "Healing The Circle In Our Tribal Communities Symposium." The symposium focuses on the traumas that affect different Native communities around the country. Another part of the symposium deals with the healing process to combat the negative effects of colonization.

Asked what advice she has for tribal youth looking to get more involved in tribal advocacy, Chupco said she implores the youth to get more involved with their culture and history,

and having knowledge will ultimately empower tribal youth to help them connect with their tribal communities. She also suggested triballyouth be active in tribal events, community meetings and various ceremonies.



Tomasina Chupco, center, is on the cover of *Native Max Magazine's* spring issue.

Senate resolution honors Native women for accomplishments

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A resolution passed in March by the U.S. Senate honors Alaska Native, American Indian and Native Hawaiian women. The resolution coincided with Women's History Month in March.

Introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Brian Schatz (D-HI), the resolution highlights women for their achievements and service in several areas.

Military

- Laura Beltz Wright, an Inupiat Eskimo sharpshooter of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II.

- Minnie Spotted Wolf of the Blackfeet Tribe, the first Native American woman to enlist in the United States Marine Corps in 1943.

- Marcella LeBeau of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, a decorated veteran who served as an Army combat nurse during World War II and received the French Legion of Honour for her bravery and service.

- Lori Ann Piestewa, a member of the Hopi Tribe who was the first Native American woman to be killed in action while serving on foreign soil and the first woman serving in the Armed Forces of the United States to be killed in the Iraq War in 2003.

Economic development

-Elouise Cobell of the Blackfeet Tribe, a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, who founded the first tribal-owned national bank; and led the fight against Federal mismanagement of funds

held in trust for more than 500,000 Native Americans.

Medicine and health

- Susan La Flesche Picotte of the Omaha Tribe, who is widely acknowledged as the first Native American to earn a medical degree.

- Annie Dodge Wauneka of the Navajo Nation, who advocated for better public health, education, and living conditions on the Navajo Nation leading to her becoming one of the first female council members for the Navajo Nation in 1951, and was the first Native American to receive a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963.

Science

- Floy Agnes Lee of the Santa Clara Pueblo, who worked on the Manhattan Project during World War II; and pioneered research on radiation biology and cancer.

- Native Hawaiian Isabella Kauakea Yau Yung Aiona Abbott, who was the first woman on the biological sciences faculty at Stanford University; and in 1997, was awarded the Gilbert Morgan Smith medal, the highest award in marine botany from the National Academy of Sciences.

- Mary Golda Ross of the Cherokee Nation, who is considered the first Native American engineer of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; helped develop spacecrafts for the Gemini and Apollo space programs; and was recognized by the Federal Government on the 2019 one dollar coin honoring Native Americans and their contributions;

Dance

- Maria Tallchief or Wa-Xthe-Thon-ba of the Osage Nation, who was the first major prima ballerina of the United States and was a recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Kennedy Center; and was recognized by the Federal Government on the 2023 one dollar coin with her sister Marjorie Tallchief of the Osage Nation, Yvonne Chouteau of the Shawnee Tribe, Rosella Hightower of the Choctaw Nation, and Moscelyne Larkin of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma and the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, collectively known as the "Five Moons", for the legacy they left on ballet.

Literary

-Northern Paiute author Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, who wrote and published one of the first Native American autobiographies in United States history in 1883;

Protection of traditional ways of life and to revitalize and maintain Native cultures and languages

- Esther Martinez, a Tewa linguist and teacher who developed a Tewa dictionary and was credited with revitalizing the Tewa language.

-Mary Kawena Pukui, a Native Hawaiian scholar who published more than 50 academic works and was considered the most noted Hawaiian translator of the 20th century.

- Katie John, an Ahtna Athabascan of Mentasta Lake, who was the lead plaintiff in

lawsuits that strengthened Native subsistence fishing rights in Alaska and who helped create the alphabet for the Ahtna language.

- Edith Kenoa Kanaka'ole, a Native Hawaiian language and cultural practitioner who founded her own hula school, Halau o Kekuhi; helped develop some of the first courses in Hawaiian language and culture for public schools and colleges.

- Dr. Gladys Iola Tantaquidgeon, a Mohegan medicine woman and anthropologist, who worked for 50 years at the Tantaquidgeon Indian Museum in Connecticut, the oldest Native American owned and operated museum in the United States, which she founded with her father and brother to preserve the culture and history of their tribe, and which contributed to the tribe's Federal recognition in 1994.

Athletics

Reel Kapoliokaehukai Sunn, who was ranked as longboard surfing champion of the world; co-founded the Women's Professional Surfing Association in 1975, the first professional surfing tour for women.

Civil rights, human rights, land rights, and safeguarding the environment

- Elizabeth Wanamaker Peratrovich, Tlingit, who helped secure the passage of House Bill 14, commonly known as the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945 in the Alaska Territorial legislature, the first anti-discrimination law in the United States.

- Zitkala-Sa, a Yankton Dakota writer and advocate, whose work during the early 20th century helped advance the citizenship,

voting, and land rights of Native Americans.

- Mary Jane Fate, of the Koyukon Athabascan village of Rampart, who was the first woman to chair the Alaska Federation of Natives; was a founding member of the North American Indian Women's Association.

Law

-Eliza "Lyda" Conley, a Wyandot-American lawyer and the first Native woman admitted to argue a case before the Supreme Court of the United States in 1909.

- Emma Kailikapiolono Metcalf Beckley Nakuina, a Native Hawaiian who served as the first female judge in Hawaii.

Government

-Wilma Mankiller, who was the first woman elected to serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation; fought for Tribal self-determination and the improvement of the community infrastructure of her tribe; and was recognized by the Federal Government on the 2022 quarter honoring her legacy of leadership for Native people and women.

Public service

- Kaahumanu, who was the first Native Hawaiian woman to serve as regent of the Kingdom of Hawaii.

- Polly Cooper, of the Oneida Indian Nation, who walked from central New York to Valley Forge as part of a relief mission to provide food for the Army led by General George Washington during the American Revolutionary War; and was recognized for her courage and generosity by Martha Washington.

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Community



Donna Frank teaches as she picks sweetgrass

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — Finding sweetgrass is a challenge that Donna Frank doesn't shy away from as she scours the Florida landscapes for prime picking areas.

On March 15, Frank went to a reliable field near the Immokalee Reservation to gather more sweetgrass for baskets. As part of her mission to spread cultural knowledge to younger generations, she had a few young women with her. At age 64, Frank has the energy to teach by example in the open field.

"I used to hang onto my mother's skirt when she went picking," Frank said. "I used to complain, but she really gave me a gift."

Frank was joined by Jillian Rodriguez, from Immokalee, who was picking for the first time, and Colby Herrera, from Big Cypress, Anissa Billie and Krystle Bowers, both from Hollywood. When they got to the Immokalee site, Frank was distraught to see the field had been "bushhogged" or mowed.

Fortunately, an area adjacent to it was still untouched and the group spent almost an hour picking there.

The sweetgrass was brought to the Immokalee rodeo area where they washed the grass with a combination of Dawn dishwashing soap, Oxiclean detergent and a little bit of bleach to brighten the sweetgrass. While they washed, Frank talked about their Seminole heritage.

"We were poor and this was part of our survival," Frank said. "It was a form of income. We used to sell baskets to the tourists. My mom used to go to a place where tourists came to look at us, it was like we were animals in a zoo."

Each woman washed and rinsed their sweetgrass bundles carefully before setting them out to dry on a table.

"I'm proud of you ladies," Frank said. "You are carrying on the culture. Do you feel it in your spirit?"

Every one of their heads nodded yes as they scrubbed the sweetgrass.



Beverly Bidney (2)

Above, from left to right, Anissa Billie, Jillian Rodriguez, Colby Herrera and Krystle Bowers watch as Donna Frank demonstrates how to pick sweetgrass in a field in Immokalee on March 15. Below, Frank rinses the soap out of the sweetgrass she picked in Immokalee.



Beverly Bidney

Jillian Rodriguez rinses soap out of the sweetgrass she washed.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Krystle Bowers, Jillian Rodriguez, Donna Frank, Anissa Billie and Colby Herrera proudly display the sweetgrass they picked in about 45 minutes in an Immokalee field on March 15.



LOAN PROGRAMS ARE GOING PAPERLESS

The Credit & Finance Department is in the process of converting to a paperless system for loan applications.

Starting in June, loan applications will only be accepted through the Tribal Portal. If you do not have access to the Tribal Portal at this time, please visit mysemtribe.com to register.

- ◊ Short Term Loans
- ◊ Agribusiness Loans
- ◊ Revolving Loans (For Debt Consolidation)
- ◊ Dividend Advancement Loans
- ◊ Payroll Loans

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Big Cypress celebrates 26th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — A herd of cattle was driven through the Big Cypress Reservation to the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena on March 15 during the 26th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive. Dubbed as “good old fashioned family fun,” the event attracted participants from South Florida and Clewiston as well as from Big Cypress.

Junior Cypress was the cattle foreman on the Big Cypress reservation for more than 30 years. When he was younger, he worked as a cowhand at neighboring ranches. The Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena was named for him because of his lifelong dedication and contribution to the tribe’s cattle program.

Two of Junior’s children are Jonah Cypress and the late Esther Cypress. One of his grandchildren, Andrea Jumper, is married to honorary trail boss Josh Jumper. The two families posed together on their horses at the rodeo after the cattle drive.

Jumper led the cattle drive, which consisted of about 20 people on horseback, a Billie Swamp Safari trolley; a float with a large umbrella, plenty of snacks and a bench; various ATVs and, of course, the cattle.

Together they moved 12 roping steer from Billie Swamp Safari to the arena. The 6.4 mile trip took about three hours. Along the route, spectators watched the procession standing by their parked cars, in front of their houses, in chairs, and on ATVs and even a school bus.

Jumper is a cattle owner and remembers

participating in the cattle drives as a child. “We didn’t always get the cattle back to the rodeo,” he said. “One year we lost some cows and had to go up in a helicopter to find them. They had been rounded up and put in a pen, so we went back with a trailer to get them.”

The halfway point on the route was set up with watering stations for the horses, a pen with water for the cattle and a spacious tent for the humans. Snacks and drinks were served from the float.

“It’s an honor to be the trail boss,” Jumper said. “I’m a fourth-generation cattle owner. I love the cattle and what I do. I get to be out here on a horse every day enjoying God’s creation; he offered me something to take care of every day. I’m glad to be here.”

“This was my first official cattle drive as president,” said President Holly Tiger. “We do a lot with the cattle owners and it’s good to see them come together today and show us what it’s like to be a cattle person.”

“I think most of us come from cattle people,” said Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. “It’s good to see the kids here. Don’t take this for granted.”

After everyone had a good rest, the cattle drive continued to the rodeo past the senior center, Frank Billie Field Office, preschool, clinic, the Ahfachkee School and Herman Osceola Gym before crossing the eight clans bridge and on to the rodeo.

Upon arrival at the rodeo grounds, the cattle seemed to know where they were since they are part of every rodeo roping event. They hurriedly made their way into the



The cattle drive passes the water tower and Ahfachkee School on its way to the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena.

Beverly Bidney

arena. A barbecue dinner for the participants and a rodeo followed.



Beverly Bidney
Trail Boss Josh Jumper leads the cattle drive through Big Cypress.



Beverly Bidney
These hard-working dogs let the steer know it’s time to get back on track with the rest of the herd. No fool, the animal complied.



Members of the Jumper and Cypress families gather after the cattle drive arrived at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena.

Beverly Bidney

Tribes, federal agencies partner for monument management plan

STAFF REPORT

A coalition of five tribal nations has collaborated with federal agencies to develop a management plan for their ancestral homelands and sacred sites on public lands.

On March 8, the five Tribes of the Bears Ears Commission — Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Zuni Tribe, Hopi Tribe and the Navajo Nation — along with federal partners at the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, announced the release of a draft Resource Management Plan for the Bears Ears National Monument.

The monument is 1.3 million acres of mostly undeveloped land in Utah that

includes cultural significance and natural resources. It was established as a national monument during the Obama administration.

The draft took two years to complete. It includes Indigenous knowledge and input from the tribes’ traditional knowledge holders, Historic Preservation Officers, elected tribal leaders, and federal land planning staff and leadership.

“The petroglyphs, artifacts, landmarks, and landforms in the Bears Ears region help Hopi people trace our migration histories,” Craig Andrews, vice chairman of the Hopi Tribe and co-chair of the Bears Ears Commission, said in a press release. “We know that our ancestors decided to leave places that had been occupied by our people

for centuries. Some non-native archeologists may use the term abandoned when studying dwellings, but that is not a word that Hopi use because we know our ancestors are still present. Though these areas were never again settled by Hopi/Pueblo physically, they remain inhabited by our ancestors spiritually. Recognition of these places is preserved in our songs and ceremonies, and these places continue to be visited for ceremonial harvesting and collecting. Bears Ears is integral to our ceremonies, traditions, and our identity as Hopi people. Supporting the Preferred Alternative ensures that we can continue to pass down our cultures and ways of knowing.”

NCAI to host mid-year convention in Cherokee

STAFF REPORT

CHEROKEE, N.C. — The National Congress of American Indians’ mid-year convention and marketplace will be held from June 1 to June 7 at Harrah’s Cherokee Resort in Cherokee, North Carolina.

Tribal leaders, NCAI members, Native youth, and partners from across Indian Country will have the opportunity to work collaboratively to protect and enhance tribal sovereignty.

For more information go to ncai.org.

FCA convention to be held in June

STAFF REPORT

The Florida Cattlemen Association’s annual convention and allied tradeshow will be held June 17-20 at the JW Marriott Marco Island Beach Resort on Marco Island. For more information call (407) 846-6221 or go to floridacattlemen.org.

Seminar focuses on how to start a tribal business

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Native Learning Center hosted “Steps to Starting a Tribal Business” training on March 18 and March 19. Vincent Franco was the instructor.

It began with the different aspects of starting a business, such as developing a purpose and mission statement. Additional topics discussed included registering a business name with the state, obtaining IRS documents to receive an employer identification number (EIN), applying for general liability insurance and creating a business checking account.

Another topic was understanding different structures of businesses, which was discussed on the first day. The different business organizational types explained were sole proprietorship, general or limited partnership, and a limited liability company. The pros and cons were discussed about each type.

Sole proprietorship is an easy and fast way to create a business and gives an owner immediate control of the business. However, a sole proprietorship is personally liable for the debts and obligations of the business and personal assets are not protected if legal action is ever taken against that type of business.

Partnerships consists of either a limited partnership or a general partnership. A limited partnership consists of at least one person who would invest his or her money into a business, but not be involved in day-to-day operations and has limited liability. A general partnership is owned by two or more people with the same level of control and risk.

A limited liability company (LLC) lets a business owner take advantage of the benefits of both incorporation and a partnership business. Profits and losses can get passed through the business owner's personal income without facing corporate taxes. LLCs protect the business owner's personal assets from the business in the event of legal action taken against the business that has a LLC structure.

In addition to the different business structures, understanding business marketing was also addressed in the seminar. When utilizing a business marketing plan, attendees learned about how product, price, place and promotion are essential when starting a small business.

Starting with the product, it is crucial that a new business focus on the uniqueness of the product or the service provided.

Determining the price or service that will be provided is another aspect of business marketing. During the seminar, it was explained that a starting business should set its pricing based off of calculations such as estimating that benefit to the consumer and comparing the product/service to others that are similar.

Place focuses on how the product/service is displayed to the public and attracts the consumer. Also mentioned was the costs

of distribution of the product/service portion. Lastly, promotion was mentioned as being extremely important to a starting business. Examples of utilizing a promotion part of business marketing would be advertisement, sales promotion, creating a website, attending tradeshows and using social media.

During the second day of the seminar, business accounting, finance, and business resources were discussed.

The importance of business accounting was addressed to help those understand the basics of bookkeeping, recording transactions, making financial statements, and discussing the differences of cash versus accrual basis accounting. Understanding the basics of business accounting is a benefit to a starting business owner because it is essential to keeping the new business functioning and to also identify when potential problems arise such as misuse of funds, poor financial decisions, and fraud.

The next topic that was business finance, which included an explanation about the different types of funding that are used for businesses. Some of the types of funding discussed were self-funding, bank loan, and venture capital from investors.

Self-funding, also known as bootstrapping, can be in the form of having help from friends or family for capital, or even using a personal savings account. The main benefit of self-funding is that the business owner retains complete control over the business, however, the owner takes on all the potential risks and is leveraging his or her personal finances to support the business.

Another common type of business finance is a bank loan. During the seminar it was shown to the class what is needed to establish a bank loan for a business, starting with proper identification, EIN document, articles of incorporation, ownership or partnership agreements, personal tax returns, business license/permit, and business insurance. Since the seminar is about starting a small business, it is also required to show a bank profit and cash flow projections and financial statements as well.

Venture capital from investors is another type of business financing. The TV show “Shark Tank” is an example of venture capital from investors. The venture capital is offered in exchange for an ownership share of the company and the investor can also have an active role in the company.

Toward the end of the seminar, understanding the different business resources was addressed. The Small Business Association (SBA) is an important tool for new and current business to receive assistance. Some of the ways the SBA can help a starting business is to help a business owner write a business plan, provide help with a business, and local assistance. Finally, another resource for a small business owner is SCORE, which is the Service Corps of Retired Executives. SCORE can help in the way of mentorship with new and existing business owners in their own local area.



Brighton Councilman Larry Howard tosses candy to kids March 2 while serving as a grand marshal for the Chalo Nitka parade along with Glades County Commissioner Tim Stanley.

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, princesses featured in Chalo Nitka parade

STAFF REPORT

MOORE HAVEN — The The Chalo Nitka Festival parade — one of Moore Haven's biggest annual events — included Seminole Tribe presence as it usually does.

The parade kicked off March 2 from 1st Street and headed west on Avenue J, passing some of the town's most notable landmarks, including the water tower, courthouse and middle/high school.

Seminole participants included Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, who served as co-grand marshal with Glades County Commissioner Tim Stanley. They were busy during the parade, waving to spectators who lined the streets and tossing candy. The tribe's princesses — Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahnia Billie — rode in convertibles. Tahnia Billie is a student at the high school, where she plays basketball and softball.

Sandy Billie Jr. and his Eco Lawn Service company featured a float that included a chickee on a trailer.

The parade route ended at the fairgrounds, where rides, vendors and food filled the grounds.

The parade was part of the Chalo Nita Fair Week, which ran Feb. 26 to March 2.

Chalo Nitka began in 1948 as a celebration for the paving of Main Street in Moore Haven.



Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie waves to the crowd on Avenue J.



Sandy Billie Jr. displays his Seminole attire while walking in the parade.

U.S. Treasurer, Mohegan Chief Lynn Malerba scheduled to speak at Hard Rock

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — NAFOA's 42nd annual conference will be held April 29-30 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

The conference features educational breakout sessions and general sessions focused on discussing critical issues facing Indian Country.

Day one's opening general session is scheduled to feature U.S. Treasurer Lynn Malerba, the first female Chief in the Mohegan Tribe's modern history. She previously served as chairwoman of the Tribal Council and executive director of the tribe's Health and Human Services.

Malerba's career in healthcare also included being a registered nurse and director of Cardiology and Pulmonary Services at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital in Connecticut. She earned a Doctor of Nursing Practice at Yale University, a master's degree in public administration from the University of Connecticut, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the College of St. Joseph.

According to the conference's agenda, Malerba will provide an overview of the Treasury's tribal policy and discuss the priorities of the Office of Tribal and Native Affairs for tribal economies, including tax policy, pandemic recovery funds and equity in compliance.

The opening session will also include a blessing and cultural sharing.

Malerba is also scheduled to speak in a breakout session about the Treasury Tribal Advisory Committee. The session is scheduled to include Martin Tucker, CFO, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; W. Ron Allen, Chairman, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe; and Robert Yoder, attorney at Yoder & Langford.

Another item on day one's agenda is titled “Reel Impact of Hollywood on Tribal Lands.” A panel discussion will highlight economic benefits from the film industry working on tribal lands and how tribe's can ensure cultural respect and positive economic outcomes.

Cody Harjo, director of Learning Initiatives and Media for NAFOA, will be the moderator. Scheduled speakers include Geoffrey Standing Bear, Principal



Lynn Malerba

Chief, Osage Nation; Rio Jaime, Tribal Council Treasurer, Quileute Tribe; and Shauna Williams, executive director of Communications, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Other topics during the conference include sessions about election year issues and their impact on tribes, new Department of Labor regulations regarding classification of employees and independent contractors, new tribal tax legislation, sovereign wealth funds, cybersecurity, tribal funding, tribal agriculture, cannabis industry and others.

A member tribe meeting and reception will be held April 28, one day before the conference starts. The meeting and reception is for employees of a tribe or a wholly-owned tribal enterprise who is representing the tribe or enterprise at the conference.

NAFOA was founded more than 40 years ago as the Native American Finance Officers Association to focus on the role of tribal finance in fostering economic opportunities.

For more information, including the complete agenda, go to nafoa.org.



Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahnia Billie greets parade spectators along the route.



The Moore Haven High School marching band's performance included the Jimmie sisters from the tribe: Miley (flute) and Marley (tuba player).

Tribute program honors legacy of Max Osceola Jr.

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — More than 500 guests attended a tribute dinner to the late Max Osceola Jr. on March 2 in a ballroom at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

“To the Max” was lit up in light displays and other signage throughout the ballroom.

Max died at age 70 on Oct. 8, 2020, during the pandemic. He was a longtime leader in the Seminole Tribe of Florida. He served as Hollywood Councilman from 1985 to 2010.

The program, whose entire proceeds went to charity, highlighted Max’s devotion to his family and tribe, his extensive philanthropy, and the crucial role he played in the tribe’s purchase of Hard Rock 17 years ago.

Melissa DeMayo Osceola, Max’s daughter, welcomed the guests with opening remarks. Jimmy Osceola delivered a prayer before the program began.

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola and Seminole Gaming CEO/Hard Rock International Chairman Jim Allen were the featured speakers.

Councilman Osceola, who has been Hollywood’s councilman for more than a decade, shared with the audience the valuable mantra he learned from Max.

“Take care of the people, and the people will take care of you,” Councilman Osceola said.

Allen mentioned Hard Rock’s success

and growth, which includes a presence in 70 countries, more than 60,000 employees and more than \$10 billion in system-wide revenues.

“It is not an exaggeration; the Seminole Tribe of Florida would not own Hard Rock International if it wasn’t for Max Osceola,” Allen said.

A large display featuring items that belonged to Max was unveiled with his family standing nearby. It will be installed as a permanent display at the casino.

The evening’s entertainment included two songs performed by brothers Spencer Battiest and Doc Native.

Battiest said Max played a big role in the brothers being able to perform in cities such as London and Barcelona.

“He always had time for me and my family when I was growing up,” Battiest said to the audience. “He always gave us the space to perform, to share our music and to tell our stories...”

The event also featured a live band and performances by the choir and marching band from McArthur High School, Max’s alma mater, giving part of the evening a pep rally-type atmosphere.

Education was important to Max, who earned degrees from Broward Community College and the University of Miami. He was a longtime fan of Hurricanes football. As a young adult, he worked in the tribe’s Education Department. In 2017, he was inducted into the Broward Education Foundation Hall of Fame.

The proceeds from the evening included an auction that featured several prominent



Kevin Johnson

In front of a large display on stage honoring Max Osceola Jr., Hard Rock International Chairman and Seminole Gaming CEO Jim Allen speaks to the audience.

sports-related items, including some that were owned by Max. All money raised went to Children’s Harbor, a South Florida based non-profit agency whose focus is to strengthen families and help children in need. Melissa DeMayo Osceola said having

a charity be a big part of the evening was what her father would have wanted.

Max’s devotion to helping others was a theme repeated often during the evening. Councilman Osceola said Max’s commitment to organizations extended

beyond Florida, recalling the way Max helped a Boys & Girls Club on a reservation in South Dakota.

Locally, Max played a big role in STOF’s Boys & Girls Clubs and Winterfest, to name just a couple.



Kevin Johnson

Max Osceola Jr.’s family, including his wife, Marge, second from right, stand in front of a display of Max’s items that will be installed in the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.



Kevin Johnson

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola shares his memories of Max Osceola Jr. with the audience.



Kevin Johnson

The marching band from McArthur High School - Max Osceola Jr.’s alma mater - performs before the start of dinner.



Kevin Johnson

Doc Native, left, and Spencer Battiest perform at the tribute program.



Kevin Johnson
Max’s famous quote about buying Manhattan back “one burger at a time” was shown during a tribute video. The quote was said when the Seminole Tribe purchased Hard Rock in 2007.



Kevin Johnson

A display of gourmet doughnuts was part of a charity promotion for Children’s Harbor at the dinner.



Kevin Johnson

Each table at the dinner had a special guitar dedicated to Max Osceola Jr.



Calvin Tiger

Spencer Battiest receives a big ovation from the audience as he walks up to the stage to receive the Harvey Milk Medal on March 9 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Spencer Battiest receives diversity honor

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Seminole Tribe of Florida singer-songwriter, producer and actor Spencer Battiest was awarded the Harvey Milk Medal at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Hollywood on March 9.

Other Harvey Milk Medal recipients honored at the gala included multiple Grammy winner Belinda Carlisle, and Emmy, Grammy and Tony winning actor, singer, director, composer and playwright Billy Porter.

The awards were presented during the Diversity Honors gala, a benefit for the Harvey Milk Foundation and The Pride Center at Equality Park.

"I want to dedicate this to those whose actions on the frontlines being visible to the world every single day, fighting for our planet, for equality, and for Indigenous rights," Battiest said to the audience.

Battiest, who is also Choctaw, won an MTV Video Music Award in 2017 as part of a seven-member all-Indigenous collaboration that included his brother, Doc Native.

ARTISTS From page 1A

"This exhibition is important because it isn't Native American month or Indigenous Day," said Blais-Billie. "It's just us as artists. We are artists beyond the confines of primitive art. We are also involved in a global way; it's important to contribute to the world artistically."

"I love the educational side of art to show we exist and we do amazing, brilliant, creative things," added Zepeda. "It isn't November and it's pretty awesome that we are here."

The artists introduced themselves to the audience by giving a bit of their history and outlook toward art.

"I like to express my emotions with art," said Tommie, 9, via zoom. She also held up another piece she is working on.

Bowers has been making art since he was in middle school. He includes aspects of Seminole culture in all of his work.

"We all work in different mediums and interpret things in different ways, but we all come from the same people," Bowers said. "Doing art gives us a chance to share who we are, what we do and how we keep our culture alive in our own way. It gives me an outlet to express myself."

Zepeda comes from a family of artists and began creating art at a very young age.

"It came naturally to pursue a career in art," she said. "I like to bridge art with social justice issues in an indigenous way. All of my pieces subtly say something."

Cypress learned beadwork from her grandmother and learned to make patchwork after she found some of her great grandfather's patchwork.

Osceola, who works in a variety of mediums, had a few uncles who were artists, including Noah Billie.

"I get that from them," she said. "I work from stories told by my elders. I'm glad to see everyone's interest here."

Wareham was given a camera at age 9



Beverly Bidney

Seminole artist Wilson Bowers talks to an audience member about his work after the panel discussion.

or 10 and by the time he was 15, his family made requests for photos. He's been taking pictures ever since. He also does beadwork, which he learned from his cousin and fell in love with the art form.

Jumper has been drawing since he was a child, but he didn't take it seriously until about 20 years ago. He loves art history and learns as much as he can about contemporary and old masters.

Danielle Nelson has been sewing patchwork and making clothes for about 20 years.

"I truly enjoy creating things," she said. "I love to go into nature, look at the colors and then go home and put them together."

Camisha Cedartree is from Oklahoma, but grew up in a camp in Florida until she was 20 years old. She is half African

American and wanted to dive into her Native American culture.

Osceola's parents used to sell arts and crafts in villages to people who didn't realize Seminoles still existed.

"I'm glad these artists are here to relate what they believe and put it into art," she said. "It's so important that people who don't know anything about Native Americans know we are here."

Wareham is the director of the Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum, which collaborated with the Albin Polasek Museum on the exhibit.

"I work with these artists in my role at Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki, but I'm also a collector," he said. "It's also my responsibility to show our art and history. We see each other as one family. We are not part of Florida, we are Florida."



Calvin Tiger

Spencer Battiest with Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, center, and Hard Rock executive Susan Renneisen.



Beverly Bidney

Beadwork by Rebecca Cypress, Tina Osceola and Gordon Wareham are part of the "Yaat Ya Oke: Welcome Travelers" exhibit at the Albin Polasek Museum in Winter Park.



Calvin Tiger

Spencer Battiest with Stuart Milk, nephew of Harvey Milk.



Calvin Tiger

Spencer Battiest holds up a framed award in his honor.



Beverly Bidney

Corinne Zepeda, right, Rebecca Cypress and Jacqueline Osceola, center, talk to patrons after the panel discussion.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Gordon Wareham, Corinne Zepeda and Rebecca Cypress pose in one of the galleries at the Albin Polasek Museum featuring Seminole artists, before participating in a panel discussion with art patrons at the Winter Park Library.



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FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY
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Completed photo project marks milestone

BY MISTY SNYDER
Museum Assistant

BIG CYPRESS — We have reached a milestone at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, one that we would like to share with our community. In 2015, the museum received over 40,000 photographs, negatives and transparencies taken by Seminole Tribe staff while covering stories and creating articles. These objects came to us in cardboard boxes – largely unorganized – and it has since been our task to sort, scan, catalog, and house them for their preservation and future use. After many years of dedicated work by all members of the Collections Team, along with SWEP and WEP participants, interns, volunteers, and the Tribal Community, we have completed this goal.

To complete the process for each object, it followed a pathway through the hands of many team members. First, the photos were organized by event, place or time period. For the people who have done this part of the process they will tell you that it is like playing the most difficult game of “Memory” that you will ever play, trying to match and remember events that have been covered in the over 40,000 images! Next, Barbara Billie and Iretta Tiger went through the images one by one and identified people, places, and events; this gives the images context and meaning.

The tribal community is a hugely important part of the process as well. All images that were not initially identified were taken by Barbara, Iretta, and other museum staff to community events to gather as much information as possible and to make the images more understandable, useful, and accessible.

The images were then scanned by Graysun Billie, who used a professional high-resolution scanner. The images could then be accessed, viewed, and copies created all while preserving the original photograph safely without continued, repetitive use that could eventually cause damage to it. The image was then cataloged into the museum’s database called PastPerfect.

While this is how I spend the majority of my time, I have also received help from many others – past and present – including Laura Dello Russo and Tara Backhouse. The process of cataloging includes uploading the digital image and entering a detailed written description of the object including the image’s content, dimensions, condition, relationship to other images or objects within the collection and where the object will be stored within the archival vault. Objects that have been damaged, for example bound with rubber bands that have melted from heat, are separated and treated by the museum’s conservator, Maria Dmitrieva. Once all of this is completed, the objects are placed in several layers of protective housing and then placed in their permanent storage location in the archival vault.

It has taken the entire Collections Division at the museum working together to complete this project. I am grateful for the hard work and support from my colleagues that it has taken to catalog all 40,107 images and I am honored to contribute to preserving the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s history and culture.

Most of the images in this lot are from the 1990 to 2015 timeframe but some, including a photo of the first tribal council of the Seminole Tribe of Florida in 1958, were from much earlier. We are committed to preserving these resources for the future and to providing access to them for the tribal community. Now we are looking forward to what we will discover while cataloging the next lot of photographic material that has begun.

Courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

A photographic print of the first Tribal Council of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Seated from left to right is Howard Tiger, Laura Mae Osceola, Billy Osceola, Mike Osceola, John Josh, and John Cypress. Standing is Charlotte Osceola, left, and Betty Mae Jumper, right. As noted on the back of the photo: “Frank Billie missing from this picture.” This meeting comprises members of the Constitutional Committee.



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

Native films recommended for streaming in 2024

BY RYAN FINN
Tribal College Journal

“Lakota Nation vs. United States”

Chronicling a contested, problematic history, this documentary explores how the government-to-government treaties the Lakota people entered into in good faith were violated by the United States nearly as quickly as the ink dried. A masterclass in recent North American history taught by a variety of grassroots tribal teachers and distinguished Indigenous scholars such as Nick Estes (Lower Brule Sioux), Layli Long Soldier (Oglala Lakota), and Mary Kathryn Nagel (Cherokee), the film confronts both the dehumanizing narratives popularized in American media and the actual oppression imposed upon the Lakota people. Focusing on their fight for the Black Hills, the

interconnections between the Lakota people and sacred space where America carved its presidents show both the inherited tenacity of the Indigenous people and the persistent indifference of the country that colonized them. (AMC+)

“War Pony”

A fictionalized drama inspired by co-writers Bill Reddy and Franklin Sioux Bob’s experiences on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, the gritty plotlines explore the lives of two Lakota men trying to find some measure of happiness. The filmmakers do not flinch from the harsh reality of abuse, addiction, and sex trafficking, but there’s beauty in Lakota actors JoJo Bapteste Whiting and LaDainian Crazy Thunder’s nuanced performances. There are moments of levity amongst the bleakness, and the

film’s undertones speak of a return to cultural healing and the connections formed within a tribal community. What resonates loudest is the subtly in which the film’s didacticism presents itself. No one preaches or teaches how to walk a good road, and yet the young men we come to root for find it nonetheless. (Amazon Prime)

“Oyate”

This documentary traces the progression of Lakota people as they confront the imposition of the Dakota Access Pipeline that threatens their water supply. Framed by Russell Means’ (Oglala Lakota) famed 1989 quote to a senate subcommittee—“In these United States of America, this great country of ours, we American Indians, can be anything we want to be except American Indians”—the film highlights the United

States’ history of placing capitalist gains ahead of Indigenous rights and cultural values. Still, the Lakota people are resilient, and they lead a peaceful resistance that stems from their Dakota homelands to Washington, DC, showing both that human rights trump profits and that cultural teachings offer a sacred form of endurance to all who practice them. (Amazon Prime)

“Frybread Face and Me”

Set in the summer of 1990, this drama follows a pre-teen urbanite’s exodus to his Diné grandmother’s home on the reservation so his parents can finalize their divorce. Through common undertones of each person living a life scarred by disappointments, Benny and his family clash over imposed expectations before finding joy and laughter through the acceptance of one another.

Written and directed by Billy Luther (Diné, Hopi, and Laguna Pueblo), the film reflects his own experiences as he was coming of age. Rich in subtle moments, the drama explores familial dynamics, gender norms, and tribal traditions while highlighting the power that comes from affirming the beauty ingrained within those who cannot always see it for themselves. (Netflix)

Ryan Finn teaches in the Liberal Studies Department at College of Menominee Nation. This article was published by Tribal College Journal.

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

April 2024

In the tropical to subtropical climate of Florida, frogs are not an uncommon sight. To some people, frogs are just another cute animal, while to others they are disgusting creatures. This month the THPO’s Collections team will be highlighting this bullfrog vertebra (Figure 1).

This vertebra was found along with several other types of animal bones such as fish, deer, turtle and salamander. It can often be difficult to distinguish frog vertebrae from other amphibian vertebrae like salamander. However, the body of the salamander vertebrae are triangular in shape and they have shorter transverse processes. The bottom illustrations highlight the length of a bullfrog’s transverse processes as compared to those of a salamander. Some of the bones that were found with this bullfrog vertebra were burned, evidence of cooking. Putting all of this together, it can be suggested that this frog was probably part of a meal, which is not too different from the bullfrog’s use today; with some people from the Southern US eating frog legs as part of their normal diet.

Bullfrog bones are not the only frog remains that Collections have accrued. Several other smaller frog species have been found across many sites. This makes sense considering that there are 27 native species of frog in Florida (Johnson, 2021). Bullfrogs have many features that can distinguish them from other species. The biggest indicator is their size. They are the largest native species of frog, not only in Florida but in North America, reaching a maximum size of 8 inches long, although usually they are around 3 to 6 inches long (wec.ifas.ufl.edu)(Johnson, 2020).



Figure 1



Figure 2

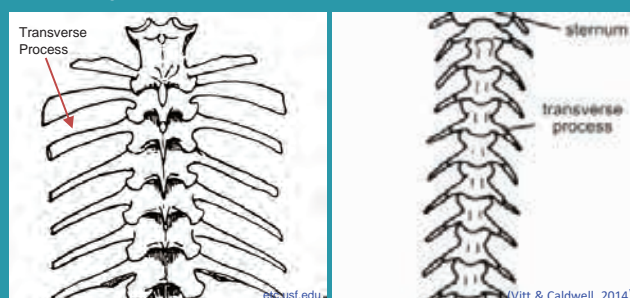


Figure 3 Bullfrog Vertebrae

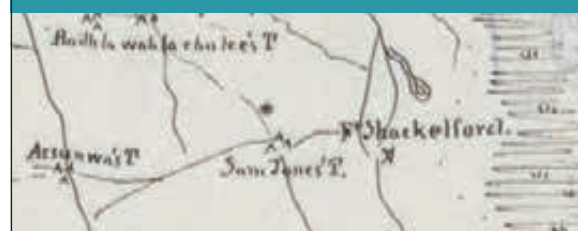
Figure 4 Salamander Vertebrae

American Bullfrog, sdrherps.org, (n.d.).
https://www.sdrherps.org/species/amna_catesbeiana
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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - APRIL 2024

THE ELUSIVE FORT SHACKLEFORD



Built in April of 1855 by the US Army as part of their pressure campaign against the Seminole, Fort Shackleford stood for barely three months before it was abandoned in the summer. Almost immediately after the Seminole burnt it to the ground. However, during its short life, it was included on the map of Florida forts used by the US army. This map became the most thorough map of the region for decades, being used as references for maps into the 1900s, showing a rough location of Fort Shackleford.



In 1947 D. Graham Copeland created a detailed map of Collier County. Working with the historic maps, Copeland identified the location of Fort Shackleford, out in the middle of the Big Cypress Reservation. He commissioned a marker for the site and with the aid of Tribal members the small cement pyramid was placed. These markers drew outside interest however, and before long looters and treasure hunters were seeking out the location, convinced they could find valuable artifacts or even a buried Seminole War pay chest.

The Seminole did not want the site disturbed, however in the early 20th Century little could be done to keep the looters away. Josie Billie found a solution to this problem, the Seminole had placed the marker, and they could move it. The next time outsiders came to dig up the lost fort, Josie let them know that the Tribe had moved the marker over a mile away from the original location. The treasure hunters still tried to find the site, but every attempt ended in failure.

Years later the Tribal Archaeology Section of the THPO decided to take on the search for Fort Shackleford. After research, metal detection, and excavation the remnants were finally located... almost exactly where the marker stood! The marker had never been moved, Josie Billie had simply told the treasure hunters the story that it had, and let them search everywhere else. The fort had been hidden in plain sight.

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

Top: Military map by George Hartsuff, 1847
 Middle: Josie Billie at his camp, 1942
 Bottom: The Fort Shackleford Marker, 2018



Health



Immokalee gathering focuses on heart health

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — The Integrative Health Department celebrated February's American Heart Month on March 1 with a coffee and chat event in Immokalee, which served up a healthy dose of information about heart health along with a selection of tasty breakfast options.

The table was set with an assortment of whole grain waffles and breads, peanut butter, honey, fruit, hard boiled eggs, cheese and avocado halves. Immokalee registered dietician nutritionist Alejandra Francis helped Linda Frank assemble an avocado toast with ham, egg and cheese.

As Frank was eating, Francis talked about risk factors for cardiovascular disease, which is the leading global cause of death, according to the American Heart Association (AHA). Risk factors include obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cigarette smoking. The AHA also states that a healthy diet and lifestyle are key to preventing and managing cardiovascular disease.

"About 28% of adults have cardiovascular disease," Francis said. "Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the

U.S. Someone dies of it every 33 seconds." She said preventative measures include better nutrition choices, including lean protein such as chicken or fish, whole grains with their high fiber content, fruits and vegetables.

"We should eat at least one to one and a half cups of fruits and vegetables every day," Francis said. "Research shows that they reduce the chance of chronic disease and lower blood pressure."

Physical activity is a big part of remaining heart healthy. The AHA recommends 150 minutes of moderate physical activity throughout each week, or 30 minutes five days a week. Frank has nine dogs, so taking care of them is how she gets most of her exercise.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, American Indians/Alaska Natives are 50% more likely to have cardiovascular disease than their white counterparts.

"Stress management is important to heart health," Francis said. "Sleep, exercise and relaxation techniques help reduce stress." Integrative Health plans to hold more coffee and chat events throughout the year.



Immokalee registered dietician and nutritionist Alejandra Francis, left, helps Linda Frank make a healthy breakfast during the Allied Health Department's Coffee and Chat on March 1.

Tribes, feds spar before Supreme Court over who pays for health care

FROM CRONKITE NEWS

WASHINGTON — The San Carlos Apache said March 25 that the federal government owes it \$3 million for health care services, one of two tribes arguing before the Supreme Court for more support from the Indian Health Service.

But attorneys for the government argued that allowing tribes to claim additional overhead costs for the health care they provide their members would strap the system, and end up siphoning away money for care of Native Americans in other tribes.

Caroline Flynn, an assistant to the U.S. solicitor general, told the justices that the tribes' argument "would work a sea change" in the law that sets out how tribes are compensated for costs they incur in providing care to their members.

Flynn said that if the court were to side with the tribes, it would "upend how the statute has been administered for 35 years." What the tribes are asking for is "potentially tripling the federal government's contract support cost obligation and eventually transforming what the statute designates as mere support costs into the primary component of contract funding," Flynn said.

That was disputed by Adam Unikowsky, who argued on behalf of the Northern Arapaho Tribe of Wyoming, which he said is seeking reimbursement of \$1.5 million from 2016 and 2017. He said the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act (ISDA) "entitles the tribes to recover the disputed contract support costs in this case" from the Indian Health Service.

"In the ISDA contract, IHS transferred to the tribe the responsibility both to collect and to spend the program income on health care," Unikowsky said. "So when the tribe carries out health care services using program income, it does so as a means of fulfilling its contractual obligation to further the general purposes of the contract. So, it's acting pursuant to the contract."

At issue is the interpretation of the contract that IHS enters into with tribes that agree to take on the job of providing

health care to their members in lieu of the federal government. Under that deal, the government gives tribes the money it would normally spend on health care, along with additional funding to compensate tribes for the overhead costs of administering such care.

Flynn said that IHS currently spends about \$1 billion a year on contract support costs out of a total program budget of about \$8 billion.

"It stands to reason that if all of a sudden contract support costs just explode, Congress is going to have to find the cuts elsewhere to keep the budget under the discretionary spending caps," she said.

Several justices picked up that thread during arguments, with Justice Brett Kavanaugh asking if such an increase in costs to the IHS would end up hurting the overall program.

"Because Congress couldn't cut, without changing its rules, mandatory spending, correct, so it would have to come out of the other discretionary funding?" Kavanaugh asked.

But Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson asked whether the government couldn't simply renegotiate its contracts with the tribes in such a situation.

The government said the added costs could ultimately range from \$800 million to \$2 billion — a number the tribes said was "taken out of nowhere" and of which Justice Neil Gorsuch appeared skeptical.

Gorsuch also questioned the government claim that a ruling in favor of the tribes would open the door to the potential for non-Indian individuals to have their health care funded by IHS — something attorneys for both the San Carlos Apache and Northern Arapaho flatly denied.

"You raised the specter that they're going to expand their programs to help non-Indians," Gorsuch said. "Maybe they're free to do that — you're right — statutorily. But, in terms of the contract support services that would be required to be paid from the government, it would seem to be limited."

Child advocate Auna McCagh aims to keep families together

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, but for child advocate Auna McCagh every day is an opportunity to protect children from abuse or neglect.

McCagh, who works in the Seminole Tribe's Advocacy and Guardianship Department in Tampa, has worked in child welfare for more than 11 years. She said the goal is always to keep families together.

Working with families while they are going through a Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) investigation, McCagh makes sure proper protocols are being used and attends every DCF visit, either on the phone or in person. If a family needs services, she refers them to the tribe's Center for Behavioral Health for counseling and/or mental health evaluation.

Reasons for DCF investigations vary. They could be triggered by a report of domestic violence, physical or sexual abuse, concerns about the environmental condition of the home or anytime someone feels a vulnerable child or adult is being abused or neglected in any way.

"We make sure removal is the last option," McCagh said. "If we cannot safely keep children in the home, we try to make sure the child goes to a relative, clan member

or a tribal foster parent so the child stays within the tribe."

The tribe has seen an increase in tribal member awareness and participation in fostering.

"The more aware they are, the more they are stepping in to help," McCagh said. "We can always use more foster parents."

The amount of time to foster a child varies. Completion of the DCF process typically takes about a year. During that time, the family has access to the child through supervised visitation rights.

Another role of the child advocate is as a liaison between the tribe and county courts during DCF investigations.

"Some counties have not dealt with the Seminole Tribe of Florida," McCagh said. "Part of our role is to explain it and stay in close contact with [the court] so we all have the information to best help the family."

McCagh said the best part of her job is the success stories, including seeing parents overcome obstacles and have the family unit back together and doing well.

"Every job comes with challenges," McCagh said. "It's sad when a child is removed from the home. We still try to advocate for the child and help parents get the help they need to get the family back together."

To that end, families have a case plan

with tasks they must complete before the child may go back to the home.

Advocacy and Guardianship also deals with prevention and will work with families to mitigate a situation so it never has to go to DCF. They offer referral services and help families make the home safe.

"We are just here to help and want people to know we are available if anybody needs us," McCagh said. "We are a good place to start with advocacy."

Child advocate Auna McCagh can be reached at (954) 966-6300 ext.19327 or aunamccagh@semitribe.com. Advocacy and Guardianship program administrator Winstera Young can be reached at (954) 965-1338 ext.10348 or winsterayoung@semitribe.com.



Courtesy photo
Auna McCagh

NICWA urges prayer for Native children

FROM PRESS RELEASE

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) will host the 42nd annual Protecting Our Children Conference, a national event in Seattle, Washington, addressing tribal child welfare and the well-being of Native

children. On April 9, NICWA invites individuals and communities to demonstrate support for Native children by joining in a National Day of Prayer for Native Children.

The National Day of Prayer for Native Children coincides with the conference as an invitation for advocates to join NICWA for this respectful gathering and/or host a community event to demonstrate support for

all Native children.

During April, NICWA will share resources to promote child safety as a collective community responsibility with examples of reorienting tribal child welfare systems to stop the intergenerational transmission of trauma and support healing.

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month.



Alcohol dependence is a major health concern. There are many ways to get help and healing for us and the ones we love. We deserve to be healthy and happy.

If you have Medicaid or are insured through the Marketplace, you may qualify for treatment options.

For more information, contact your local Indian health care provider, visit [HealthCare.gov/coverage](https://www.healthcare.gov/coverage), or call 1-800-318-2596



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SEMINOLE SCENES



Beverly Bidney

WORKTIME FUNTIME: Education Department employees, from left to right, Padmini Dukharan, Dolores Lopez and Magdalie Dumorne, have a ball at the 360-degree photo booth at the Immokalee employee appreciation luncheon Feb. 29. The event was sponsored by Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Immokalee council liaison Jaime Yzaguirre.



Kevin Johnson

HELPING HAND: After getting a cramp during a NAYO game in Cherokee, N.C. on March 30, Steven Brown is helped up by his coach, Eric Osceola.



Beverly Bidney

CHICKEN CHAT: 4-H pee wee members Equoni Cypress, 6, right, and Asaiah Fludd, 8, are deep in conversation before taking their chickens into the ring for the pee wee show March 6 at the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena in Brighton.



Courtesy photo

BIG BASS: Marshall Tommie holds up the 7.09 pound bass he caught that earned him second place in the Chalo Nitka Big Bass tournament Feb. 24 at the Alvin Ward Boat Ramp in Moore Haven. The Seminole Tribe is a sponsor of the tournament, which drew 91 anglers.



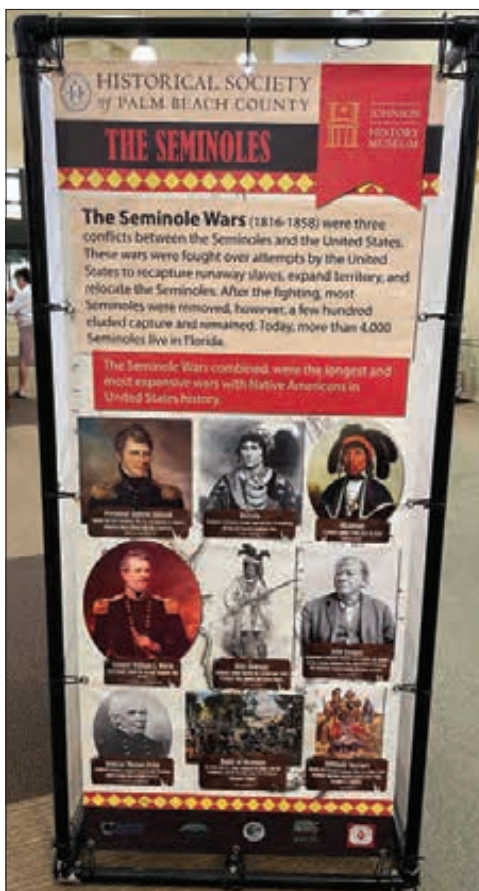
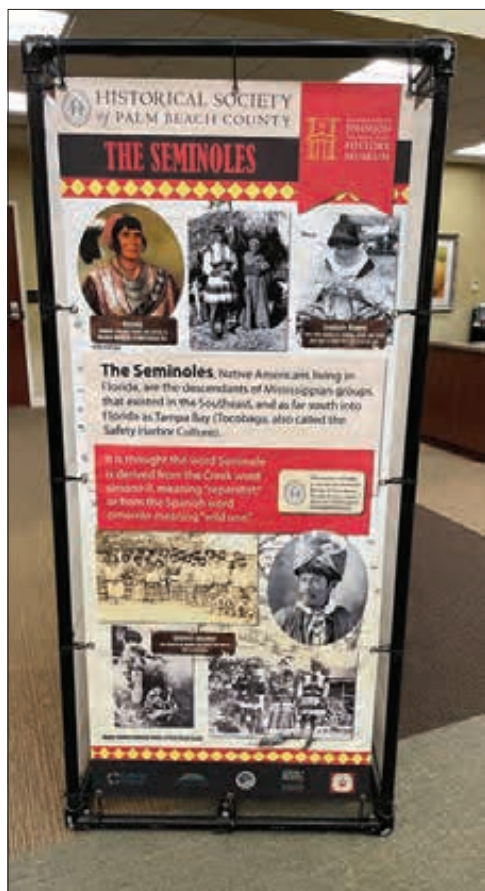
Kevin Johnson (3)

LIBRARY DISPLAY: A display about Seminole history is shown at the Palm Beach County Library System's Glades Road branch in Boca Raton. The four-panel display was placed in March. It has information and photos about the Seminole Wars, Seminole culture and the Seminole Maroons. It is presented by the Historical Society of Palm Beach County.



Kevin Johnson

SUPPORTIVE SIGNS: The outfield at the Moore Haven High School softball field includes a trio of Seminole signs showing support for the Terriers. From left to right are signs from head coach Preston Baker and his wife, Ramona; Three Js ice cream and smoothies, which is owned by the Bakers' daughter Jaryaca Baker, who is a former Terrier player; and a sign from the office of Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie.



Hard Rock Atlantic City

TEAMWORK: On Feb. 27, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City announced that thousands of union and non-union team members at the property will receive a share of more than \$10 million in bonuses. The day also included opportunities for team members to win a share of \$100,000 in cash and prizes.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Tribal health care funding fight splits Supreme Court

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court appeared divided March 25 over whether the government should be responsible for covering more health care costs for Native American tribes.

The Department of Health and Human Services wants the court to reverse two lower court rulings that held the tribes were entitled to money for the costs of implementing their health care programs. The department claims Congress didn't intend for tribes to receive additional funds. Still, many justices were concerned that the government was short-changing the tribes out of money they desperately need.

"It's not as if all of this money is bringing us to a luxury health care spa," said Justice Sonia Sotomayor, a Barack Obama appointee. "It's actually bringing us to a fairly minimal level of health care for tribal members."

Sotomayor noted that tribal health care represents about one-third of what is spent by the average American.

Chief Justice John Roberts, a George W. Bush appointee, said the government's position would give the tribes less money if they used the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which allows tribes to operate federal programs otherwise run by the government.

"Under your approach, a tribe is worse off the more they undertake in the direction of self-determination," Roberts said. "In terms of funding, they are undertaking more health care responsibilities and getting a smaller percentage of the money back from the government."

The Northern Arapaho Tribe and the San Carlos Apache Tribe entered into contracts with the Indian Health Service — which would normally oversee tribal health care. IHS pays the tribes to carry out duties it would normally oversee.

These funds include most of the overhead and administrative costs that the tribes incur. However, the tribes also have to collect program income from Medicaid, Medicare and private insurers. The support costs associated with this work are not reimbursed by the government.

The Northern Arapaho Tribe said it is contractually obligated to collect income from these insurers so the government should have to cover the costs to do so. The tribe said it wouldn't face these fees under IHS oversight.

"If IHS isn't paying, nor should the tribe," said Adam Unikowsky, an attorney with Jenner & Block representing the tribe.

The San Carlos Tribe assured the justices that the refund for these costs must be used according to the guidelines in the contract. Lloyd Miller, an attorney with Sonosky Chambers representing the tribe, said it needed funds for its emergency services. Miller said the money owed to the tribe would go towards hiring more emergency crews and updating vehicles.

Some justices expressed concern that ruling in the tribes' favor would leave the government with hefty costs. Justice Samuel Alito, a George W. Bush appointee, worried the case would be "a mastodon in an ant hole," citing the government's estimate that repaying the tribes could cost \$12 billion.

The tribes and some of Alito's colleagues questioned that figure, arguing that the government was making up that number. The Northern Arapaho Tribe said it was seeking \$1.5 million from the government while the San Carlos Tribe was asking for \$3 million.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, a Donald Trump appointee, was similarly concerned about the costs of the court's ruling. He questioned who would pay for the potentially costly decision but added, "I'm not looking at this with any fiscal responsibility canon."

Sotomayor said some of her colleagues might see the case as picking between two sides but this case was about reading the statute before them.

"I know some of my colleagues believe we shouldn't be making choices of who to favor in interpretive principles, but it's not us making that choice," Sotomayor said. "It's the statute making that choice."

The justices will issue a ruling by the end of June.

- Courthouse News

Native American man fights for son's right to wear eagle feather in graduation cap

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A Native American man spoke out at a recent Rutherford County Board of Education meeting to allow his son to wear an eagle feather in his graduation cap.

Stephen White Eagle spoke at the BOE meeting to fight for his son, who attends La Vergne High School, to wear an eagle feather in his graduation cap due to its significance to their family's religion and culture.

"We use the eagle feather in our tribal dances, ceremonies and when we pray every day, and they are sacred to us. My son is a senior and graduating this year and has been told by the La Vergne High School administrative staff and by certain administration at the district that he is not allowed to wear his eagle feather with his cap at graduation," White Eagle said. "My son and I have been told that his religious beliefs do not fit into the school's policy. And that is unfair and unconstitutional. Unless you're going to tell all students that includes the girl who wears the hijab or the Jewish boy that wears a yamaka that their religious items are not permitted at graduation, then my son should be allowed to wear his religious item that being the eagle feather."

Board member Tammy Sharp spoke up after public comment and made a motion to

vote to allow the student to wear the feather at his graduation ceremony.

- WSMV (Nashville, Tennessee)

Mad River Brewery sold to Northern California tribe

[On March 20], the Mad River Brewery announced that the Yurok Tribe has sold the operation to the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, headquartered in Corning, California. Andrew "Dru" Alejandre, tribal chairman of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, said they considered the distance between Blue Lake during the purchase, but expects it to work out just fine.

He said that the staff at the facility in Blue Lake will remain the same and they're going to focus on the existing beers and quality right now. In fact, the resident master brewer, established staff and partnerships were a major benefit, he said.

"When we heard about the opportunity, we didn't want to waste any time and felt like it was going to be the right fit for us. Especially it being a native-owned brewery," he said.

The brewery was purchased by the Yurok Tribe's Agricultural Corporation in 2019 and underwent a rebrand highlighting parts of Yurok culture — like the traditional Yurok basket design known as sturgeon back, a seltzer celebrating dam removal and other branding highlighting environmental health.

"It fills my heart to know the business will remain in tribal hands and continue supporting the tribal community. I have no doubt Mad River Brewery will continue its growth with this Paskenta Partnership," said Linda Cooley, CEO of Mad River Brewery in a news release.

The Yurok Tribe is the largest Native American tribe in California, spanning through Humboldt, Del Norte and Trinity counties with 6,567 members, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The Paskenta band of Nomlaki Indians in Tehama and Glenn counties has roughly 240 members.

The purchase price was not disclosed — a spokesperson for the Yurok Tribe did not respond for comment before the Times-Standard's print deadline. Cooley did not respond to phone or email requests for interview before the Times-Standard's print deadline.

- The Times-Standard (Eureka, California)

Tribes ask U.S. interior secretary to deny proposed casino in Oregon

Four tribes opposed to a proposed tribal casino in Medford are asking U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to stop the project from moving forward.

For 10 years, the Coquille Indian Tribe has been working to turn a bowling alley on land it owns in Medford into a casino, more than 150 miles from the tribe's reservation near the Oregon Coast. The project would need to be approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is part of the Department of the Interior, and the land would have to be put into a federal trust. Under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, casinos operated by tribes can be built on reservations, land held in trust by the U.S. for the benefit of a tribe and on land governed by a tribe.

Four tribes in the region oppose the project, which they say would cause them harm. [In March], the chairs of the Karuk Tribe, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Elk Valley Rancheria and the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation sent Haaland a letter asking that she visit their homelands in northern California and southern Oregon to hear their concerns. They said approval of the casino would violate the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and would cause "irreparable harm" to other tribes in the region. They're also worried that approval of the casino would encourage tribes across the U.S. to also open casinos off reservations, including in urban areas, drawing revenue from existing tribal casinos. In Salem, the Siletz Tribe is also proposing a casino off reservation lands in Salem and seeking federal approval to put it into a trust.

Carla Keene, chair of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, said in an interview with the Capital Chronicle that revenue from the Cow Creek's Seven Feathers Casino on its reservation 70 miles from Medford could drop at least 25% if the Coquille casino were built. She said that revenue pays for the tribe's medical services, among other public services.

"It is a slippery slope," Keene said. "I would hope that Secretary Haaland would see the necessity to say 'no.' This is not a good idea for the tribes, and this is going to cause harm. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is responsible for all tribes across the United States, not just one, and this is affecting more than just Cow Creek and it is only benefiting one tribe."

The letter coincides with a federal environmental assessment of the project, among the last hurdles facing the project. Coquille Tribal Chair Brenda Meade responded to the opposition in an email that said Haaland should respect tribal sovereignty.

"It is heartbreaking that other tribes, including tribes in California, continue to attack our sovereignty and seek to limit our economic development rights within the reservation restoration area specifically defined by Congress," Meade said.

She added: "Secretary Haaland and the Biden administration have expressed their support for tribal sovereignty, and we trust they will honor this commitment to enable our continued economic development."

The Coquille have faced opposition to the casino from other tribes and state leaders for 10 years. Former Govs. John Kitzhaber

and Kate Brown and members of the state's U.S. congressional delegation have said that the state and tribes have a longstanding understanding that each one will operate one casino on its own reservation.

Four years ago, the Department of the Interior rejected the Coquille casino project over jurisdictional issues and the proposed use for the land. But in 2021, the tribe proposed the casino again, with a new interior secretary, and Haaland agreed to let the environmental assessment and public comment move forward.

Keene, of Cow Creek, said the project would have a wide, harmful impact. "This is not going to just affect Oregon," Keene said. "This is going to go beyond the Oregon border, and it is going to create chaos in Indian country for a very long time," she said.

The opponents said it's important that they voice their concerns to Haaland in person.

"Your visit is also consistent with the department's stated commitment to meaningfully consult with affected tribal nations in advance of policy decisions of tribal implication, as well as the Biden administration's promise 'to protect the ability of every Native person here in the United States to lead safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives in their homelands,'" they wrote.

- Oregon Capital Chronicle

For Maine tribes, eclipse stories are many and varied

HOULTON, Maine — The total solar eclipse is coming in spring when things are starting to wake up and beginning to grow anew, said Dolores Crofton-Macdonald, language coordinator with the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.

Crofton-Macdonald shared a story about the eclipse or seqe (pronounced zehk-kwehy), the 13 moons of the celestial calendar and how Mother Earth, the sun and moon have an effect on tides, people and animals.

"Mother Earth supports all of our activities. Without her we would not have any way of survival. That nurturing energy is the life force that sustains us here," she said. "So with the seqe it's like a renewal of the agreement that Mother Earth and the Moon and the Sun have together to provide nourishment and love and growth for us and the animals and plants."

Across the nation, as the total solar eclipse moves from west to east on April 8, indigenous teachings about the event often tie to closely held origin stories varying from family to family and tribe to tribe. Some, like the Navajo in the southwest, view the eclipse as a time of quiet, often solitary reflection. Some stories warn of the dangers — eye damage and bad omens — of looking at the eclipse. Others talk of the eclipse and the moon cycles.

These stories are deeply personal and for most, the details are not shared publicly but rather held close to their hearts.

Crofton-Macdonald, who does not talk about eclipse ceremonies, shares that her eclipse stories are about celebration and gratitude for Mother Earth's life-bringing force. But she points out that the stories told to her about the seqe may be different from stories told to other native people, even within her tribe.

"They pass down to family and community members. But we are not talking for the whole community. We do not talk for the community, they are our own stories and what we have learned and the stories that were given to us," she said.

According to many Wolastoqiyik, the preferred reference to Maliseet Indians in Maine and New Brunswick, the sun, moon and stars have been guiding native people along Maine's waterways and passages for centuries. Elders' stories, passed from generation to generation, often include the importance of the cosmos to daily life.

"Our travelers that came up the Wolastoq (St. John River) and turned at the Meduxnekeag were absolutely the best astronomers because we looked up at the sky for navigation," Crofton-Macdonald said. "Our people used the sun, the moon for traveling, for season traveling and watching the way the animals moved and how they navigated through our forests."

The Mi'kmaq, as far as Vice Chief Richard Silliboy knows, saw the eclipse as a natural occurrence and did not pay a lot of attention to it.

"As far as the eclipse goes from my tribe, it is a big understanding that we never made a deal of it," he said. "It was just an occurrence that happens every now and then. My understanding was, my people knew what it was but they probably didn't know when it was going to happen."

He talks about how the Mi'kmaq are known as the people of the dawn and how they have always worshiped the sunrise.

"We all have sunrise ceremonies and when we build our huts or sweat lodges today, we always build the door to the east to draw in the morning sun," he said. "My people also were very knowledgeable about the stars, the seasons and the equinox. It's difficult to get additional information because the coming of the Europeans was so devastating to the Mi'kmaq people."

Many of their stories were lost when nearly 95 percent of their population died within a few years of the Eupopeans coming to America because of the spread of disease. The epidemic in 1610 and 1611 was devastating to the Mi'kmaq, he said.

"When the native people were getting used to the Europeans, they would seek their help when they got ill and they would bring back more disease into the communities," he said. "We never really had a whole lot of written documents and it is difficult to bring

back these traditions and legends. We are struggling today to revive our culture and our language."

Silliboy said from what he has been told, his people over time had seen partial eclipses and had an understanding of what caused the moon to go in front of the sun. Because it was only a few minutes, they just went on with life.

The elders of both the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy tribes chose not to share their intimate eclipse stories because they did not want them published.

- Bangor (Maine) Daily News

NC tribe, Senate republicans clash over medical marijuana

Marijuana is illegal in North Carolina. But on the tribal land of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in far west North Carolina it's a different story.

Medical cannabis is legal, and last fall tribal members overwhelmingly voted to support recreational use, although legalization is still being discussed by the tribal council.

Next month, the tribe-run cannabis production company will open for medical-use sales.

It's an issue that's personal for Myrtle Johnson, who lives on the tribal land.

In 2023 she was diagnosed with lung and colon cancer.

The discomfort she faced from surgery was overwhelming. She also had a major fear of becoming addicted to oxycodone, which she was prescribed.

"I was supposed to take them every four to six hours, but it was so painful I was taking them every two hours," Johnson said.

But then a friend introduced her to medical marijuana.

"It's a miracle drug. That's how I felt at the end of the week after he sent me that medical marijuana, and I didn't need the oxycodone anymore. I had still had the pain, but it was more relieving," Johnson said.

But the implementation of medical marijuana in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has sparked concern from some North Carolina Republican leaders.

In a letter to law enforcement, including the county sheriff and the Department of Justice, Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd laid out a series of concerns, including whether there are safety assessments for the drug's cultivation and how the product is transported.

The drug is "still illegal under state law," the senators said in their letter. "With unclear guidance, it makes it difficult for state and local officials to uphold the rule of law in our communities. In particular, we have the responsibility to ensure our youth are shielded from untested marijuana products being produced and sold."

In a statement to Spectrum News 1, the tribe said it has "been open about our efforts with law enforcement and regulatory bodies."

The tribe also said "it's a shame that Senator Tillis and Senator Budd did not respectfully communicate their concerns directly to Eastern Band of Cherokee leaders, instead choosing a frontal attack on Cherokee sovereignty."

Johnson said she's looking forward to the medical marijuana being more easily accessible.

"I'm especially excited for those of us that depend on it for pain, anxiety, depression but especially for those that are addicted to drugs. I've seen how it helps those who are wanting to get off the man-made drugs," Johnson said.

Johnson is now cancer-free. She's also a fierce advocate for medical cannabis and said she's been invited to be one of the first people in line when the tribe starts selling medical marijuana.

Its first day is April 20, which is known as the national cannabis holiday.

- Spectrum News (North Carolina)

Tribes oppose federal offshore wind projects in Oregon and California

A growing number of tribes in Oregon and California are coming out in opposition to federal offshore wind projects. Some tribes don't believe there's been enough research into the impacts on the environment.

At least five tribes along the West Coast have announced their opposition to proposed offshore wind development. Five areas off the California coast were auctioned off in late 2022 to build floating wind turbines. And the federal government is considering sales off the Southern Oregon coast.

Derek Bowman, a council member with the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria south of Eureka, California, said the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, or BOEM, hasn't involved the tribes enough in the process.

"We have a huge amount of traditional ecological knowledge that could assist in a lot of assessments that they're doing," Bowman said. "And we're not really included in it. It feels like we're just a checkbox that they have to check in order to say, 'Hey, we talked to the tribes, we're good to go.' And we're not alright with that."

The Northern Chumash Tribe, which people live in Southern California, expressed concerns about the proposed sale of two offshore wind areas near Morro Bay in 2022 before they were auctioned off. Their opposition wasn't about offshore wind in general, but because of the sites overlapping with a nearby proposed National Marine Sanctuary.

This year, a number of other tribes came out in formal opposition to the projects. The first was the Confederated Tribes of the

Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians in mid-February.

"BOEM's press release states that it has 'engaged' with the Tribe, but that engagement has amounted to listening to the Tribe's concerns and ignoring them and providing promises that they may be dealt with at some later stage of the process," said Tribal Council Chair Brad Kneaper in a statement.

More tribes quickly joined in opposition, including the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria and California's largest tribe, the Yurok. All three announced their opposition in early March.

Bowman said that historically, logging and gold mining industries took natural resources and gave little back to tribal communities.

"It's just hard for us to accept that what's best for everyone actually means it's good for us too," he said. "Because we always suffer when the government comes in to say, 'This is what's best for everybody and we need to do it in your area to help people in another area.' It never works out for us."

Beyond a lack of engagement, Bowman says there hasn't been enough research into the environmental effects, both on the ocean and on land. Those include possible effects of turbines on fishing and marine animal activities, as well as transmission lines on land that could harm endangered species in the region.

"More importantly, when it comes to overland transmission lines, it's the potential for fires. They cause fires all over California," Bowman said. "And now running right through our ancestral territory, there are going to be these very large transmission lines overland."

In a statement, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management said it agrees that tribes must have a seat at the table.

"We have taken coordinated actions to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge and Tribal input into our decision making process and we are working to help Tribes expand capacity to engage in environmental reviews, work with industry, and develop partnerships," said BOEM in a statement.

Development of offshore wind farms on the California coast are underway, but turbines won't be deployed for at least four years. The agency is currently developing its environmental assessment for two offshore wind areas on the Southern Oregon coast.

- Jefferson Public Radio (Oregon)

Caldwell First Nation, Parks Canada sign 'historic' agreement to co-manage park

WINDSOR, Ontario, Canada — A landmark agreement will see Caldwell First Nation help manage the much-anticipated Ojibway National Urban Park in Windsor, Ontario.

Caldwell leaders on March 25 signed a memorandum of understanding with Parks Canada marking their shared commitment to overseeing conservation efforts and the operation of Ojibway National Urban Park, a protected natural area in the city's west end.

"This MOU with Caldwell First Nation is an incredibly significant milestone in the Ojibway National Urban Park process," said MP Irek Kusmierczyk (L — Windsor-Tecumseh).

"First Nations were the original stewards of this land, and it's about reconnecting to that heritage."

The planned national urban park includes the 865-acre blueprint of the Ojibway Prairie Complex, as well as surrounding natural areas.

A ceremony at Point Pelee National Park, the traditional land of Caldwell First Nation, was held Monday to mark the moment of reconciliation in action. About 50 community members and politicians gathered at the Northwest Beach Pavilion for the ceremony.

"Signing this agreement at Point Pelee National Park, the heart of our ancestral lands and waters, highlights the positive relationships we have already built with Parks Canada," said Chief Mary Duckworth of Caldwell First Nation.

The agreement establishes Indigenous communities as "co-creators and co-managers" of the national urban park following more than a year and a half of discussions, said Kusmierczyk.

"They have knowledge and experience that they will be sharing with us, in terms of leading conservation efforts and protecting the Ojibway lands and the surrounding water," he added.

"So this process is about connecting our community to the land and the waters of Ojibway, but it's also about us connecting to the history, knowledge, and tradition of First Nations; specifically Caldwell First Nation, Walpole Island First Nation and the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation."

The Ontario government announced in April last year that it would hand over the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve for the national urban park.

Another vital piece of land — Ojibway Shores — was also transferred from Transport Canada and Port Windsor to Parks Canada. The 33-acre natural area boasts roughly seven acres of shoreline waterfront.

"As the original stewards of lands and waters in Canada, it is imperative that Indigenous peoples tell their stories," said Ron Hallman, president and chief executive officer of Parks Canada.

"By enhancing relationships with First Nations, like we are doing with Caldwell First Nation, we are ensuring that the factual histories of these places are being shared with current and future generations."

- Windsor (Ontario) Star

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Education

B

Ahfachkee students learn about tribal career possibilities

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Ahfachkee School students learned about careers available within the Seminole Tribe on March 14 during Career Day presentations from 18 tribal departments, many of which were represented by tribal members.

Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie addressed the students before the presentations began.

"Today you get to learn about the departments in the tribe," Councilwoman Billie said. "You have a unique opportunity to work in the tribe. Every position is important, from alligator wrestler to janitor to doctor to the CEO of Gaming. You have to reach for those opportunities; the tribe does a good job of reaching back."

Councilwoman Billie started working for the tribe in the Education Department as a teenager for a few years. She left to attend college and earned a Bachelor of Science in business administration. From there, she worked in the tribe's Human Resources Department where she worked her way up from answering phones to doing background checks to hiring people to work for the tribe. After taking time off to raise a family, she is back working for the tribe as an elected official.

"I would love to see our tribe be successfully run by mostly tribal members," Councilwoman Billie said. "Take advantage of seeing what the departments can do for you. It's all here for you guys. Ask questions."

The tribe has 79 departments and more than 2,200 employees. Many of the presenters shared their personal stories with the students.

Staff from the Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD) explained what the department does, with the help of python-detecting dog Shato, which recently helped find a 20-footer.

"Pythons eat everything," said ERMD assistant director Craig Van Der Heiden. "Shato will pick up the scent of a python in the woods and lead me to it. He finds them every time; people find them less than a third of the time."

Biological technician Mandy D'Andrea



Ahfachkee kindergarten student Austin Grasshopper tries his hand at aiming a firehose with the help of Seminole Fire Rescue firefighter Michael Maulini during the school's career day March 14.

told the students that the department does water remediation, monitors wetlands and wildlife and even checks home sites before a housing permit is provided.

"I was not a good student, but then I realized school wasn't as hard as I thought," D'Andrea said. "Everyone here can do great things. Things might not click right now, but you will find something you love. I love being outside."

ERMD has a summer youth program and is part of the Education Department's work experience program (WEP).

"We all want to find out what we want to do," said ERMD operations and maintenance manager Alfonso Tigertail. "You can get paid to go fishing through the WEP program. Not everybody wants to sit inside all day."

ERMD sets up wildlife cameras in the woods in their quest to assess the animals

living on the reservations. The department also identifies and monitors invasive plants and animals.

"What we do on this earth is very important," Tigertail said. "We manage the reservation land and its water. We need water and we need to protect the environment. As the tribe grows, there will be more opportunities for us. You will find fulfillment when you find your purpose. Take this

opportunity to find it. You can make a career of something that will make a difference."

Health Clinic Nutrition Coordinator Karen Two Shoes told a third grade class about the importance of food to their health.

"Native Americans are at high risk of getting diabetes," Two Shoes said. "I have diabetes. I wasn't eating well and wasn't healthy. I learned to manage my diabetes with healthy food and exercise."

She passed replicas of five pounds of soft, squishy fat and five pounds of firm muscle around the room so students could feel the difference.

Gaming and the Tribal Career Development Department participants told students about what it means to work in the hospitality and gaming industries. They explained that Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming have multiple departments.

♦ See CAREERS on page 4B



Museum educator Cypress Billie, right, shows objects from the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum to students during the Ahfachkee Career Day.

After graduating, Billie Cypress returns and gives back to Ahfachkee

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Billie Cypress graduated from the Ahfachkee School last year but knew she would be back; she is now teaching in the school's culture program.

"I wanted to give back the things I know and the things I've learned," Cypress said. "I grew up taking care of kids, so it comes naturally to me. I enjoy it and am thankful for it because it's something I'm good at."

Cypress works with the staff to help teach elementary, middle and high school classes. She also helps in the garden. Teachers Mary Jene Koenes, Jeannette Cypress and Danielle Jumper-Frye are glad to have her on board.

"We're happy she's here working with us," said Jeannette Cypress. "She's a great mentor to the kids."

During a second grade class March 12, the students were learning Elaponce. Culture instructor and program director Jeannette Cypress, who spoke no English during the class, used the call and response method. She held up items, including a basket, a bag and a cardboard box, identified them in Elaponce and had the students repeat the word. Then students were called upon individually to identify one of the objects as Cypress held it up.

Billie Cypress sat with the students and helped keep them focused on the lesson. She said the best thing about the job is watching as the students think a question through to its solution; the hardest part is disciplining



Billie Cypress interacts with a student during an Ahfachkee culture department language class.

them.

"I try to compromise and discipline them in a way they understand," she said. "I mostly watch the other teachers do it and figure out what works and what doesn't."

She is learning how to keep a structure with the students. Sometimes she wants to be sensitive and open with them, but realizes

she needs to use a little toughness as well.

"I know what it's like to be their age; it wasn't that long ago," Cypress said. "I want to be a safe person for the kids, especially because it's such a small community."

Her goal is to ultimately pursue higher education but said working at Ahfachkee is helping her get some direction. Cypress

plans to go to college and possibly study agriculture or a similar path since she enjoys being in the garden.

"I was always told to go out into the world, learn what you can and bring it back to your people," she said.

The teachers are pleased with her progress.

"She's a wonderful help," Koenes said. "She's been the missing puzzle piece."

"For someone who went through our program and came back, she bridges the generations," said Jumper-Frye, the culture program's assistant director. "It's a good thing. It lets us know these things are living on to the next generation."

NAFOA to hold leadership summit at Seminole Hard Rock

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The sixth NAFOA Leadership Summit will be held April 28 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. Participants will be immersed in a full day of career development, business and economic development discussions, and networking. Following the summit, they will attend the 42nd annual NAFOA conference, which will also be held at Hard Rock.

The summit offers young Native American professionals the opportunity to accelerate their professional development. NAFOA selected 10 participants based on leadership experience and strong interest in finance, accounting, business, and tribal economic development policy. Each participant has demonstrated a commitment to the well-being and advancement of Indian Country.

NAFOA was founded in 1982 as

the Native American Finance Officers Association.

The participants selected are:

- **Emerson Billy, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians**
Conehatta, Miss.
BS in accounting, Fort Lewis College
- **Miko Brandon, Chickasaw Nation**
Choctaw, Okla.
BS in forestry natural resource ecology and management, Oklahoma State University
- **Vanessa Farley, Chippewa Cree Tribe**
Anchorage, Alaska
BS in manufacturing engineering, Stanford University
- **Sage Logan, Tlingit & Seneca**
Bremerton, Wash.
Business Administration, University of Alaska Southeast
- **Waycen Owens-Cyr, Fort Peck**

Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes

- Wolf Point, Mont.
BSBA in accounting, Montana State University Billings
- **Frederika Thomas, Navajo Nation**
Crownpoint, N.M.
AAS in accounting, Navajo Technical University
- **Jillian TopSky, Chippewa Cree Tribe**
Rocky Boy, Mont.
Bachelor of Native American Studies, University of Montana
- **Carolina Wasinger, Delaware Tribe of Indians & Cherokee Nation**
Alexandria, Va.
BA in American Studies; minor in Native Studies, College of William & Mary
- **Angelica Wright, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**
Tucson, Ariz. and Denver, Colo.
PhD student in Curriculum and Instruction with a Concentration in Career



Emerson Billy

and Workforce Education, University of South Florida



Carolina Wasinger

• **Bailey Yazzie, Navajo Nation (Diné)**
Tolani Lake, Ariz.
BS in Business Administration, Haskell Indian Nations University

Kids with animals command the ring at annual show 4-H show

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — After months of raising and caring for their animals, more than 100 young members of the Seminole Tribe 4-H took their place in the show ring on March 8 and 9 and proudly presented the results of their efforts.

Brighton's Fred Smith Rodeo Arena was filled with family and friends who cheered loudly for the 4-H'ers as they directed their pigs, steer and heifers around the ring while a judge examined each animal and youngster.

The kids received their calves last summer and piglets in the fall and over the months, learned how to take care of them and prepare them for the show ring. In addition to being responsible for feeding, washing and walking the animals every day, they had to train them to walk in the show ring by responding to the 4-H'ers command given by a swine walking stick or a lead rope on the steer and heifers.

A 4-H country fair was also held and the participants' work was on display under a tent in the rodeo arena. The fair had 22 participants, some who submitted multiple projects in various categories including baking, traditional arts and crafts such as beadwork and patchwork, ceramics, painting, scratch art, drawing and photography.

Pee Wee exhibitors included 16 enthusiastic 5 to 7 year old children who cared for and showed rabbits, chickens, goats and calves. After opening the show with the pledge of allegiance and the 4-H pledge, the kids gamely showed their animals in the ring.

"What an amazing event," said 4H special projects coordinator Kimberly Clement. "Our takeaway this year is that there is growth in our youth getting involved in agriculture. We have prayed for this and seeing the positive youth development is so rewarding."



Pee Wee 4-H'er Ofelia Urbina talks to the judge about her goat in the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena.

Before the swine show on March 8, first year parents were compelled to participate in the annual hog calling contest. After a few laughs and some very loud calls, Nicole Platt won the event.

Kids were excited to show their hogs before the show and reflected on the past months of caring for their animals.

"The best thing is hanging out with my pig," said Alizayh Alvarado, 11, from Immokalee. "He's really calm."

Gia Garcia, 10, from Immokalee, liked her pig "because she's playful."

"I like teaching him how to be shown," said Evaray Stewart, 16, from Hollywood. "It's challenging and I like that."



Mary Jene Koenes holds the 4-H flag as the Pee Wee 4-H'ers recite the 4-H pledge at the Seminole Tribe 4-H show March 8.

4-H Country Fair winners

Baking – Best in Show: Nancy Shaffer – 4-H Cake
Most Unique: Natalie Shaffer – Pig Cake

Arts & Crafts – Best in Show: Sue Forbes-Osceola – Native Patchwork Skirt
Most Unique: Koty Gopher-Turtle – Turq/Silver Beaded Necklace

Photography – Best in Show: Luke Smith – Day working Horse & Dogs
Most Unique: Reflections – Ada Bruised Head

Beef breeding winners:

Grand Champion commercial heifer – Harmany Urbina
Reserve Champion commercial heifer – Ka'Shyra Urbina

Grand Champion 2yr old bred commercial heifer – Arrow Johns
Reserve Champion 2yr old bred commercial heifer – Zechariah Tigertail

Grand Champion cow/calf pair – Kylo Cochran

Grand Champion registered heifer – Arrow Johns
Reserve Champion registered heifer – Jayleigh Braswell

Grand Champion Registered 2 yr old Bred Registered Heifer – Khoal Gopher

Grand Champion heifer showmanship junior – Arrow Johns
Grand Champion heifer showmanship intermediate – Kylo Cochran
Grand Champion heifer showmanship senior – Jayleigh Braswell

Steer winners:

Grand Champion steer – Dakota Mariscal
Reserve Grand Champion – Tommie Osceola

Grand Champion steer showmanship junior – Arrow Johns
Grand Champion steer showmanship intermediate – Ada Bruised Head
Grand Champion steer showmanship senior – Harmany Urbina

Swine winners:

Grand Champion hog – Jayleigh Braswell
Reserve Champion hog – Tayton Bear

Grand Champion swine showmanship junior – Jolietta Osceola
Grand Champion swine showmanship intermediate – Caysie Platt
Grand Champion swine showmanship senior – Jayleigh Braswell



Gia Garcia pets her pig Flounder in the pen before the 4-H show.



Members of the 4-H Pee Wee group say the pledge of allegiance to open the show March 8.



From left to right, Norman Johns, aka "Dad", observes as Marcelo Garza, Remy Rodriguez and Kaillan Coleman guide their pigs around the show ring.

Stephen Marley to perform in Immokalee

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee will host eight-time Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter/producer Stephen Marley and his "Old Soul Tour Unplugged" with special guest Inner Circle on May 4 at 8 p.m.

For tickets go to ticketmaster.com or moreinparadise.com.

\$1 of every ticket will benefit the mission of Ghetto Youths Foundation (GYF) to provide aid and assistance, support and critical resources to people in need across the globe. Each year GYF programs serve hundreds of young people, seniors, families, and communities

with transformative outreach initiatives supporting health and education, sports and arts, community-building and fundamental social services. For more information, visit ghettoyouthsfoundation.org

Beginning his lifelong musical journey at the age of six, Stephen Marley shared some historic stages with his legendary father, Bob, and toured the world with his brother Ziggy and sisters Cedella and Sharon, The Melody Makers. The Tuff Gong (Bob Marley's nickname) instilled a strict work ethic and an awareness in all his children that "music is way more than just music."

Over the past 45 years, Marley has won no fewer than eight Grammy Awards – three

with The Melody Makers, three times as a solo artist, and twice as a producer of his younger brother, Damian Marley. Every one of his solo projects to date has topped the Billboard Reggae charts.

Stephen Marley released his latest album "Old Soul" in September 2023 and it is his first full-length project since 2016.

"Old Soul" explores a musical palette that spans a variety of cultures and genres alike, with hand-selected special guests furthering the spiritual journey that encompasses the album.

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION
Seminole Tribe of Florida
Seminole Tribal Court
Civil Action
23-CV-0008
ANIYA GORE, Respondent

TAKE NOTICE that a Civil Complaint seeking relief against you has been filed in the Seminole Tribal Court. The nature of relief is as follows:

Monetary damages arising from vehicle accident on November 6, 2021.

Respondent should make a defense of this pleading by filing a Response no later than 20 days from the date of this publication, April 4th, 2024.

Upon failure to do so, Plaintiff, as the party seeking services of process by publication, will proceed to court to obtain the relief sought.

This is the 4th day of April 2024.

Museum educators make presentation to National Council of History Educators

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Two educators from the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum taught 50 Broward county elementary and secondary school teachers about the Seminole tribe March 2 during a presentation to the National Council of History Educators (NCHE).

The objective of the NCHE program, called Project EDGE (Engaging Dialogue through Global Encounters), was to spread awareness about Seminole culture, the museum and its programs. The seminar was held at Discovery Elementary school in Sunrise

“There is a lot of misrepresentation from the past and we wanted to dispel that and tell the truth about Seminole tribe and culture,” said Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum education coordinator Abena Robinson.

Museum educators Cypress Billie and Brandon Frank answered questions from the teachers and Robinson served as moderator at the seminar.

Frank said some of the teachers had never heard of the Seminole tribe and he wanted to give them some information so they could have a better understanding of the tribe’s history and culture. As a child, he experienced alienation and bullying in both private and public schools in Lehigh Acres and Naples.

“The only thing taught about Native Americans was a paragraph in a history book,” Frank said. “A lot of my classmates didn’t think we were still alive. I just wanted to be treated the same as everyone else.”



Courtesy photo

From left to right, Cypress Billie, Abena Robinson and Brandon Frank.

The teachers wanted to know how to better educate their students about the tribe. Some of their questions were about the Seminole’s ties to the ancient Florida tribes, how they could incorporate Seminole information into their classes and what are some of the tribe’s cultural practices and customs.

Billie told them Seminoles share similarities with a lot of North and South American natives, but since the Seminoles

are far apart from those tribes geographically the customs and traditions aren’t always the same.

“I told them our influence today through gaming and the Hard Rock has brought an economic boom to Broward County and provided a lot of jobs,” Billie said. “But there has always been a footprint here from our past. It’s only in the last 40 years that Native Americans started being acknowledged as who we are.”

Federal government responds to MMIP recommendations

WYOMING PUBLIC RADIO

In 2020, Congress passed the Not Invisible Act to help address the Missing and Murdered Persons Crisis (MMIP). The bill formed a federal commission made up of tribal leaders, federal agencies, families, and survivors, who were tasked with developing recommendations on how best to address the crisis. The Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) responded to these recommendations in early March.

After conducting seven listening sessions across the country, the Not Invisible Act Commission published its final 212-page report last November, titled “Not One More: Findings and Recommendations of the Not Invisible Act Commission.”

The document calls for the U.S. government to declare a “decade of action

and healing” dedicated to addressing the MMIP crisis. The report emphasizes the importance of increased funding, both for tribal law enforcement and for victim support, as well as policy reform, action-oriented programs, and action-oriented programs focused on safety, justice, and prevention.

“The United States government’s failure to fulfill its trust responsibilities to Tribal nations, coupled with historic policies that sought to disconnect American Indian/Alaska Native people from their land, language, and culture, have given rise to a public health, public safety, and justice crisis in Tribal communities,” states the report’s opening Executive Summary.

By law, federal officials were required to respond to the report within 90 days. The DOI and the DOJ responded to the report in early March, weeks after that 90-day

window.

The more than 200-page response from the two federal agencies outlines their commitment to continuing to work with tribal communities to find solutions to the crisis. It outlines six overarching concepts, which include data collection and reporting, jurisdictional structure, public safety resources, and agency collaboration.

Enrolled Northern Arapaho tribal member Jordan Dresser was part of the 36-member Not Invisible Act Commission. He emphasized the report’s assessment that more coordination between different agencies is crucial.

“The biggest takeaway I have is just the fact that a lot of our resources are not streamlined. It’s like a scattershot. So when a family is going through something like that, I think they sometimes don’t know where to turn to,” he said.

Immokalee celebrates Easter



Beverly Bidney

From left, Cecelia Pequeno poses with her daughters Zoey Garcia, Jazzy Garcia and Gia Garcia in the Immokalee pavilion during the Easter celebration.



Beverly Bidney

From left, Cheyenne McInturff and her daughter Katelyn Marscal pose with family matriarch Nancy Motlow.



Beverly Bidney

From left, Susan Davis, Bonnie Davis and Faith Billie enjoy the Immokalee Easter celebration.

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Earth Day

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Proposed wilderness designation threatens tribes access to Big Cypress National Preserve

BY KELLY J. FARRELL
Special to the Tribune

Congress is to consider a protection that could limit access to Big Cypress National Preserve ahead of the Preserve's 50th anniversary.

Despite opposition from the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) and more than 25,000 other vocal opponents, the National Park Service is moving ahead with the wilderness designation at the park located in South Florida. It is the most restrictive land policy possible, advocates said. The wilderness designation is meant to protect the Preserve, particularly from vehicular traffic and machinery.

"People don't understand what a wilderness designation will do. Even for the Preserve to be managed, this hinders their ability to properly address invasive species," said Betty Osceola, a member of the Panther Clan of the Miccosukee Tribe and an environmental steward.

Python and other animals as well as plants, including melaleuca and Brazilian pepper, require access to be managed, said Osceola. "But if you can't go out with machinery and vehicles, you can't manage these," she added.

Osceola is particularly concerned about access to ceremonial ground, she said.

She is a resident of Ochopee and operates Buffalo Tiger Airboat Tours in Miami. Airboats are one of the common activities within Big Cypress that could become limited.

The Preserve is approximately 729,000 acres, making vehicles necessary for practical access throughout the Preserve. It's larger than Rhode Island, the National Park Service points out.

Osceola warns the wilderness designation will keep Miccosukee and Seminole tribes off the land they have traditionally used.

"The proposed areas to designate wilderness hinder the tribe and members' access to ceremonial ground," said Osceola. "This includes Loop Road where we have a ceremony scheduled in April," she added.

Osceola echoed the stance of the tribe in their letters of opposition to Big Cypress National Preserve's superintendent Thomas Forsyth. Now, the letter writing extends to Congress.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as an area "untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor and does not remain."

The Tribe wrote that the Miccosukee and Seminole people are at home in the Big Cypress National Preserve.

And, Osceola stated that the concept of a place "untrammelled by man" does not exist anymore, if it even did in the 1960s.

"Wilderness devoid of human activity doesn't make sense," said Osceola. "The process of a Wilderness Designation needs to be redefined. There is no area not trammelled by human activity. I don't think that exists. Maybe deep in the ocean."

Instead, people need to maintain and improve their connection with the Preserve, taking care of it and the environment overall, rather than separating people from nature, living only in cities, she added.

"The foundation of national parks and designation of wilderness areas has often resulted in the eviction of the Indigenous people who live there, causing direct harm to the ecosystems which they had been stewarding," wrote Miccosukee Chairman Talbert Cypress in a letter dated Oct. 18, 2023, to Forsyth.

He warned that history at Yellowstone



Kelly J. Farrell

Betty Osceola, of the Panther Clan of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, speaks to a group at a landmark along U.S. 41, Big Cypress National Preserve, in Ochopee on Oct. 14, 2023, about the history of park designations limiting Indigenous people's access to land. The National Park Service is sending a proposed wilderness designation at Big Cypress National Preserve to Congress.

and Everglades National Parks shouldn't be repeated. The foundation of Everglades National Park resulted in the eviction of six villages and the removal of a reservation spanning 99,200 acres, Cypress wrote.

"Neither park is healthier now than it was when stewarded by our ancestors and relatives," he continued. "It is not the presence, or lack of human habitation that defines the health of a landscape, but rather, it is the relationship of humans to that land which determines the land's fate," Cypress said.

The Preserve continues to be home to the Miccosukee after centuries with 15 active traditional villages, multiple ceremonial grounds and burial grounds, he added.

The land area of the wilderness designation is yet to be decided, but proposals include 40 percent of the Preserve.

"Big Cypress is unique, not just in its physical landscape, but in its management. It is one of the only places where Indigenous peoples, settlers, hunters, fishermen, conservationists, and our plant and animal relatives live in relative harmony," Cypress wrote.

The Miccosukee and Seminole tribes shall retain use and occupancy of the entirety of the Preserve, Cypress advised.

Joining his sentiments are other Indigenous groups.

"The American Indian Movement and United Confederation of Taino people are highly opposed to the Wilderness Designation at Big Cypress," said Robert Rosa, chairman of the American Indian Movement of Florida and a member of the Taíno Iukaieke Guainia, a tribe of the Virgin Islands. "We've all taken a stance and we feel it's going to do a great injustice, not only to the Seminole and Miccosukee, but to the people they've allowed on their land and are friends with."

FWC wrote of its opposition to the designation.

"Any wilderness designation would deny public access and traditional uses within the BCNP as originally envisioned and intended by the U.S. Congress, representatives of the State of Florida, and many stakeholders

involved in the establishment of this ecological and recreational resource," wrote FWC chairman Rodney Barreto in a letter dated Feb. 6 to the U.S. Department of Interior.

The wilderness designation would contribute to loss of biodiversity, Barreto added.

DEP warned of a potential hindrance to continuing the Western Everglades Restoration Project, which is to restore water flow, or hydrology, to the Preserve if the designation garners Congress's approval. The WERP is vital to Seminole and Miccosukee tribes who are dependent on the health of the lands within Big Cypress and adjacent areas as part of their heritage and traditional practices, wrote DEP secretary Shawn Hamilton in a letter dated March 14 to the Department of Interior.

Another significant concern includes fire response and emergency response, Hamilton wrote.

Senators Rick Scott and Marco Rubio wrote to Deb Haaland on March 18 advising her that the U.S. Department of Interior should not support a wilderness designation at Big Cypress for these same reasons of proper resource management, public access and significance to tribes.

"We share the concerns raised by stakeholders that the proposed wilderness designation would unduly restrict public access, falling far below the appropriate and sustainable levels required to maintain a healthy balance between conservation and recreational opportunities," the Senators wrote.

Big Cypress was the first national preserve established in October 1974. The National Park Service has estimated that approximately a million people visit each year.

Advocates of the wilderness designation include the National Parks Conservation Association, a nonpartisan membership organization founded in 1919, and the Wilderness Society, a nonprofit supporting such designations in general. There are approximately 112 million acres of land designated wilderness in the U.S., which is approximately 5 percent of the land.

Advocates state that resource management and fire protection are still possible within a wilderness designation.

One of the most environmentally harmful activities in Big Cypress, according to the NPCA and others, is oil exploration, which has led to long-term damage over large expanses of land in Big Cypress. Attempts to prevent such damage have included requests for government agencies to deem oil exploration and drilling to be violations of the Clean Water Act. Meanwhile, the Miccosukee Tribe has been working toward purchasing the mineral rights with WildLandscapes International estimating a fair market value of the mineral rights and working with the Department of Interior urging use of taxes from offshore oil drilling to purchase those mineral rights at Big Cypress. Texas-based Burnett Oil currently leases the mineral rights from Collier Resources. While it's not uncommon for parks to not protect mineral rights, Big Cypress is unique.

"The size of a proposed oil exploration and drilling project within BCNP is far and away the largest and most damaging energy development project within any park unit in the country," wrote WildLandscapes International communications team.

Osceola encourages people to write letters to Congress to prevent the wilderness designation and instead urge Congress to support the purchase of the mineral rights at Big Cypress National Preserve to prevent what continues to be the biggest threat to the Preserve.

Hollywood kids hunt for Easter eggs



Calvin Tiger (2)

Above and below, kids in Hollywood show plenty of enthusiasm as they start an Easter egg hunt March 21 on the ballfields. Dozens of kids participated in the event that was sponsored by the office of Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall.



Mayli Tommie

Aislinn Osceola, Kenna Osceola, Sally Alfonso and Sue Osceola enjoy their time at the egg hunt.



Mayli Tommie

McKinley Osceola with a shiny egg.



Mayli Tommie

The Easter bunny gets ready to receive a high-five.



Mayli Tommie

Kids also had a chance to enjoy bounce houses at the egg hunt.

CAREERS From page 1B

A sixth grade class was ready with a list of questions for the presenters, including why this job is significant to them and what their typical day is like.

"We all own this company," said Joseph Hughes, a tribal member who works in operations, construction and design. "Right now, I'm helping Tampa Hard Rock renovate the high rollers area."

The class also heard from other tribal members who work in gaming. Aaron Tommie works in the marketing department at the Coconut Creek casino and assists teams in all areas with their advertising needs. Jo-Lin Osceola is the TCD director and works in the corporate office where she strategizes and develops plans for the company.

"You all have greatness in you," Tommie said. "I've been fortunate to have people who believe in me. Tap into that greatness and don't let anyone dim your shine. Don't let people tell you what you can't do."

"Don't turn 18 and forget your dreams," Hughes said. "Find your purpose, find what you like to do. You have a heads up over 99% of people in the world. You have a billion-dollar company there to help you. TCD will help you find what you want to do and eventually you will."

Educators from the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum shared their experiences. Cypress Billie passed out a variety of objects from the museum for students to hold and examine during the presentation. He identified each one in Elaponce and told the students that

the tribe was recognized by the federal government in 1957.

"We have always been cowkeepers," Billie said. "Our people are cowboys at heart, we have always raised livestock. But now we also have gaming and tourism."

Students wanted to know about their jobs and what they like best about working at the museum.

"I get a better understanding of our culture and talk to my elders about things," Billie said. "It's very informative; I talk to people about our culture."

"I get to talk to people from all over the world, including tourists from Australia and monks from Tibet," said museum educator Brandon Frank. "You can connect with them, we have similarities in our cultures and a lot of the same principles."

On a typical day, Billie and Frank lead tours through the museum and explain the



Beverly Bidney

Nutritionist Karen Two Shoes watches as third graders pass around a replica of five pounds of fat during her career day presentation.

displays. When he isn't leading a tour, Billie takes the time to read some of the many books in the museum.

"You are our next generation," Billie said. "Having a work ethic is very important. Without a job or a sense of purpose, you will fall into anxiety and depression. We all need structure in life. It's important to have a career or go to college to keep you on a schedule and give you something to do."

April calendar for Native Learning Center

FROM NATIVE LEARNING CENTER

HOLLYWOOD — The Native Learning Center offers free training, technical assistance, and Kerretv online webinars to Native Americans and those working within Indian Country. The NLC's housing related training opportunities and resources focus on areas that are critical to the growth and improvement of tribal communities. Stay informed about the latest trainings, webinars, and podcast episodes.

Webinar: Stand Out or Sit Down: How to Communicate the Value of Your Native Business to Customers
 Instructor: Russ Seagle, Executive Director
 The Sequoyah Fund, Inc.
 Date: April 2, 2024
 Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Without a value proposition, customers have no reason to do business with you. Learn why and how to clearly define your competitive advantage(s), the two main types of competitive advantage, and how you can use community resources and your own capabilities to create competitive advantage. Learn how to best communicate the value you bring to your customers. As Tom Peters says, "Be distinct, or be extinct!"

Webinar: Feedback and Performance Improvement Discussion Part 2
 Instructor: Lisa Perez, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Human Resources Consultant
 Founder & CEO, HBL Resources, Inc.
 Date: April 4, 2024
 Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Legal and effective feedback, coaching, and corrective action processes are one of the best safeguards against charges of discrimination or wrongful discharge. Discover the critical communication skills necessary to engage others in day-to-day and ongoing coaching sessions, increase knowledge of legal and appropriate corrective action procedures, improve confidence in conducting performance infraction discussions, and understand appropriate documentation procedures.

Webinar: Useful Life Requirements Under NAHASDA
 Instructor: Cheryl A. Causley, Principal
 Cheryl A. Causley and Associates
 Date: April 9, 2024
 Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

NAHASDA recipients are required to put in place a mechanism for Reporting Useful Life: a description of the recipient's plan or system for determining the useful life of the housing it assists with IHBG funds must be provided in the IHP. A record of the current, specific useful life for housing units assisted with IHBG funds should be maintained in the recipient's files and be available for review. This course will cover NAHASDA Useful Life requirements.

Webinar: The Home Buying Process for Tribal Members
 Instructor: Marie Bonville, Tribal Housing and Education Consultant
 MPA, C2EX, ePro, REALTOR®
 Sunlight Armour Training, LLC
 Date: April 10, 2024
 Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Let's walk our buyer's step by step through the process. This homebuying webinar series will review essentials like saving for homeownership and understanding debt to income. It will also provide attendees with a practical guide to evaluating home loans and selecting a real estate professional. Learn what it means to have an offer accepted and understand the process through to the closing table.

Webinar: Preparing for the Small Business Journey in Indian Country
 Instructor: Russ Seagle, Executive Director
 The Sequoyah Fund, Inc.
 Date: April 11, 2024
 Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

If you were planning a trip into the wilderness, you'd need to be prepared, traveling light while carrying all the essential supplies and equipment. You'd also need a map and compass, an emergency plan, and enough flexibility to handle any contingency. Starting a business is no different. This webinar will get you ready for the ultimate small business journey into the unknown. You'll learn how to plan your trip, all the resources you'll need, how to find financing, marketing, keeping the books, choosing your legal structure, insuring your journey, and how to avoid the most common things that can prematurely end your journey.

Webinar: The Home Selling Process for Tribal Members
 Instructor: Marie Bonville, Tribal Housing and Education Consultant
 MPA, C2EX, ePro, REALTOR®
 Sunlight Armour Training, LLC
 Date: April 17, 2024
 Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

They say owning a home is the largest purchase you will ever make. Although that might be true, what about the largest sale? There are plenty of reasons why a homeowner might want to sell their home. Maybe they need more space, maybe they need less space. Perhaps they want



to access their equity to pay for college or medical expenses. Regardless of the "why," homeowners must understand the selling process. Through the seller's lens, we will discuss how to be ready when the time is right.

Webinar: Setting Priorities and Delegating Duties to Your Tribal Department Staff I
 Instructor: Lisa Perez, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Human Resources Consultant
 Founder & CEO, HBL Resources, Inc.
 Date: April 18, 2024

Understanding the essential responsibilities and the practices to employ when selecting and managing priorities and task delegation are essential skills for any supervisor's success. This session provides techniques for establishing priorities, developing clear goals, and getting results through others. It covers best practices for planning, monitoring, and following up on delegated responsibilities and goals to ensure supervisors and the employees they manage are successful.

Webinar: How to Hire the Right People for Your Business in Indian Country
 Instructor: Russ Seagle, Executive Director
 The Sequoyah Fund, Inc.
 Date: April 23, 2024
 Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

When it comes to hiring employees, a lot has changed since the COVID pandemic. Do new employees want more money? To work from home? More flex time? A say in how their work gets done? YES - All of that and more! Turnover costs money, time, and customers. But what if hiring the best talent was your superpower? This webinar will walk you through a step-by-step process for getting the right people on the bus.

Webinar: Navigating the New Teen Workforce with Your Native Business
 Instructor: Russ Seagle, Executive Director
 The Sequoyah Fund, Inc.
 Date: April 30, 2024

Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST
 Teenagers are squarely in the middle of Generation Z. Contrary to popular opinion, they can be just as hard-working, loyal, conscientious, and thorough as any other employee. They want to prove themselves, learn skills, and achieve their goals. If your business or organization could benefit from employing teens, this webinar will help you hire the best and avoid the pitfalls of employing a young workforce.

Follow the Native Learning Center on social media or visit www.nativelearningcenter.com to keep up-to-date. For technical assistance, feedback, or more information, contact us through our website or call (954) 985-2331. The Native Learning Center values your input and welcomes your questions. Let us know what courses you and your community would like to see offered, or if there are insights and lessons you and your community would like to share with others through the Native Learning Center.

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ED MORSE SAWGRASS
 CHEVROLET

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Sports



Coach Cheyenne Nunez shares her passion for softball with new program

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Anyone who watched Cheyenne Nunez play softball – whether it was at Okeechobee High School or in college – knows the fiery competitiveness she brandished.

She didn't like losing as a player, and the same holds true now that she is a coach.

Nunez, who grew up on the Brighton Reservation, is in her first season as an assistant coach for the New College of Florida (NCF) softball team in Sarasota. It's a new program led in its first year by head coach Alyson Bermudez.

Nunez said she has enjoyed being a part of the inaugural season.

"I love everything about it," Nunez said. "I couldn't be more grateful for the job that I have. I love being able to teach the game as I used to play it. I love impacting these girls and praying that they get at least 1% better every day."

As a player, Nunez demanded a lot from herself. As a coach, she's demanding a lot from the players.

"Not only am I teaching them the beautiful game of softball, but I am also teaching them life lessons. I am very hard on them and I am also very understanding," she said. "It is a lot of 'tough love' is what I like to call it. In the real world they are going to

need to be prepared for anything that comes their way and not be afraid to stand up for themselves. I'm dedicated and 100% all in for this softball program."

The program's first victory came in its seventh game, a 5-0 win against Heartland Community College on Feb. 7.

"Their reaction was definitely full of excitement," Nunez said. "They have worked so hard, day in, and day out. This was the moment they had been waiting for."

As of March 26, the team had a 5-26 record. Nunez said expectations weren't high entering the debut season, but losing still stings.

"I love to compete and I don't like losing but I will say with NCF being a first-year program no one has expectations for us," Nunez said. "The only job that we can do is give a good fight and make teams have to worry about us beating them. If we win then it is awesome. Or if we don't win and my team gives me 100% and leaves everything they have on the field, then I can be okay with it. If we go down we better be going down fighting. Anything can happen in the game of softball. If you have an opportunity then you have a chance to win."

In addition to coaching the current players, Nunez is also busy learning the recruiting game and helping build the program with potential future players. On

the recruiting path, she attends showcases, travel ball tournaments and high school games. She said she's constantly on the phone with recruits or texting them as well as giving them tours.

Nunez is one of only a handful of athletes from the Seminole Tribe to play NCAA Division I athletics; she did so at the University of South Carolina-Upstate. Her college playing career also included stops at Florida SouthWestern State University in Fort Myers and State College of Florida in Sarasota, where she served as a volunteer assistant coach before getting the NCF job.

Losing will never be comfortable for Nunez – it's just not in her DNA – but she knows a season chock full of learning has its benefits.

"This year has been one of the hardest, yet most humbling years I have ever coached," she said. "Starting a first-year program has a lot of ups and downs. I have learned to have a lot of patience and to have to really trust the process. I just continue to trust that I know the game and it is always OK to go back to the basics. You are never too good to go back to the basics. The biggest lesson I have learned is to try to make the game click in each individual's head and get everyone on the same page. This will help with our team chemistry tremendously."



New College of Florida
Cheyenne Nunez, standing in center, is in her first season as an assistant coach for the New College of Florida softball team, which is also in its first year.

PECS dominates on the diamond

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

So far it's been smooth sailing for Elle Thomas in her rookie season as head coach of the Pemaquid Emahakv Charter School softball team.

"It's going good. We're undefeated," said Thomas, who played for PECS before going on to star for Okeechobee High School. She played last year for Indian River State College but opted to stop playing after the season.

Through the first handful of games, nobody has come close to beating PECS, starting with a 12-0 win against Imagine Charter.

"Really good pitching. We have a lot of good pitchers. Everyone has improved a lot since the start of the season. Their bats are on fire," Thomas said after the team's 14-8 win against Clewiston Middle School on March 27 in Clewiston.

Naylahnie Hardy sparked the offense against Clewiston with a 2-run single. Later, Amalia Estrada smacked a home run and also belted an RBI double.

The pitching trio of Melaine Bonilla – the team's No. 1 pitcher – Estrada and Rosalie Jones combined for the victory. Each struck out three batters in the first three innings, although some batters reached base. Jalaaya Hunsinger delivered a run-scoring single.

Only three eighth graders are on the team. Despite its youth, PECS is following in the footsteps of the school's volleyball and basketball teams, which didn't lose a game.

"I hope to go undefeated and I hope they have fun and get a little better at the sport," said Thomas, who is being helped by assistant coach Mallorie Thomas.



Pitching and hitting have been strong for the Pemaquid Emahakv Charter School softball team this season. At left, pitcher Rosalie Jones winds up in a game against Clewiston Middle School on March 26. At right, Amalia Estrada blasts a home run.



Lois Billie (2)



Kevin Johnson

Mattie Platt sprints to first base as the ball stays close to the line.



Kevin Johnson

First-year coach Elle Thomas talks to her infielders during a visit to the circle.



Kevin Johnson

Starting pitcher Melaine Bonilla delivers a warm-up pitch.



Kevin Johnson

Naylahnie Hardy puts bat on ball in a bunt attempt.



Kevin Johnson

Caysie Platt handles catching duties against Clewiston.

Seminoles lead the way for Moore Haven softball

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — The Moore Haven High School softball team entered April with a 6-5 record that included a pair of one-run losses.

The team features plenty of Seminole representation, including head coach Preston Baker and players Preslynn Baker, Halley Balentine, Teena Marie Covarrubias, Carlee Osceola and Tahnia Billie, the tribe's Jr. Miss Florida Seminole who plays first base.

Covarrubias (third base) and Osceola (shortstop) handle the left side of the infield. Baker is the team's main pitcher and Balentine is an outfielder.

Through 10 games, Baker, a junior, had already belted three home runs and driven in 15 runs with a .467 batting average, all team highs.

Osceola, a sophomore, was fourth on the team in hits with nine.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven High School pitcher Preslynn Baker winds up for a pitch against Frostproof on March 21. In the background is first baseman Tahnia Billie.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven's Carlee Osceola gets set in the batter's box.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven's Halley Balentine is focused as she waits for a pitch.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven third baseman Teena Marie Covarrubias gets set in the field.



Kevin Johnson

Preslynn Baker takes a lead off of third base next to her father and head coach Preston Baker.

Big Cypress's Unconquered T-ball team takes the field

STAFF REPORT

CLEWISTON — For some Big Cypress kids, the first steps of being softball and baseball players are taking place this spring on ballfields in Clewiston and on the Big Cypress Reservation.

Everybody hits, everybody runs the bases, everybody plays the field and, from all appearances in a game March 12, everybody has fun in the Clewiston T-ball league for five and six-year-olds.

Scores are not kept as teams focus more on learning the basic fundamentals of the game.

Big Cypress's Unconquered team is coached by Recreation staff members Carlton Banks and Marcus Thompson. Every player has an "Unconquered" equipment backpack.

The team practices on the reservation and plays games in Clewiston.



Kevin Johnson

The Unconquered T-ball team from Big Cypress. Kneeling from left to right are Ebaline Vazquez, Merle Koenes, Newton Shaffer and Briella Hall. Standing from left to right are Harvey Bowers-Billie, Austin Billie, coach Marcus Thompson, Shayln Koenes, Justice Jumper and coach Carlton Banks. Also on the team but not pictured are Evaliah Billie, Ayziana Gutierrez, Equoni Cypress, Zihnellie Burney and Thomas Koenes.



Kevin Johnson

Justice Jumper sprints to first base on a hit.



Kevin Johnson

Shayln Koenes smiles after scoring a run.



Kevin Johnson

Austin Billie makes solid contact.



Kevin Johnson

After fielding a grounder, Harvey Bowers Billie throws the ball to first base.



Kevin Johnson

Briella Hall gets into position at shortstop.

Ahfachkee holds school track meet

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — Athleticism and teamwork were displayed at the Ahfachkee School's track and field meet March 22. The school-wide meet featured spirited sprints and relays at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena grounds as students competed against and with classmates.



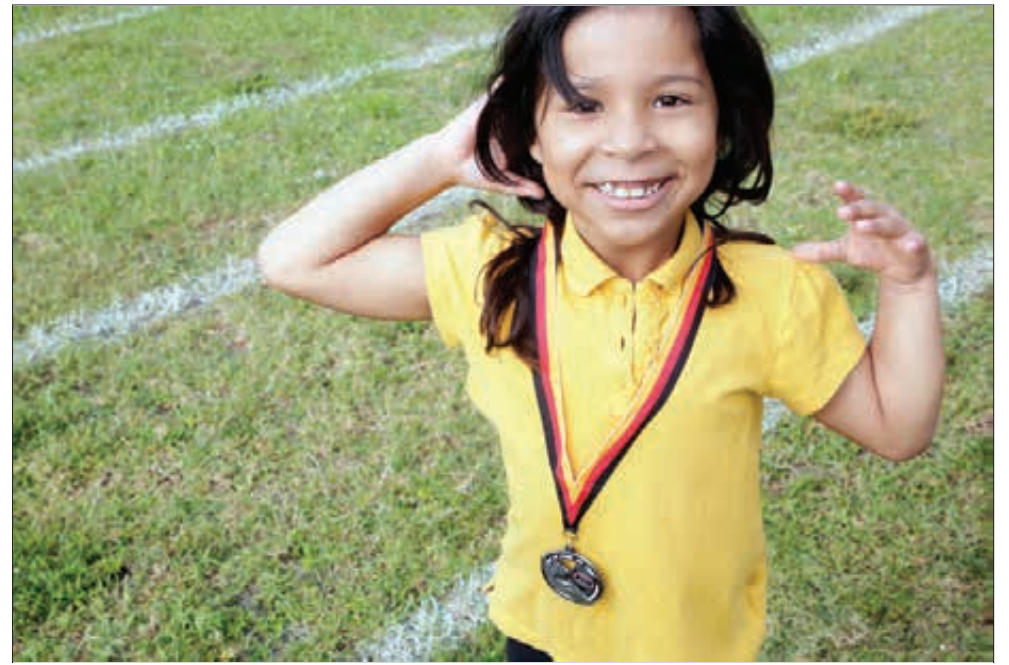
Mayli Tommie

Ahfachkee students sprint toward the finish line during the school's track meet March 22. From left to right are Ziana Osceola, Shayln Koenes, Lorraine Jumper, Mason Bear and Akira Gore.



Mayli Tommie

Students cheer for their classmates.



Mayli Tommie

Ziana Osceola has plenty of reasons to smile after earning a medal.



Mayli Tommie

From left to right, Vivi Osceola, Arya Quintanilla and Shonayeh Tommie display their medals.



Mayli Tommie

From left to right, Talia Osceola-Fuller, Caleigh Osceola - Fuller and Azaliah Billie reach the finish line.



Mayli Tommie

Athena Osceola sprints to the finish line as she passes spectators.



Mayli Tommie (2)

Austin Billie, left, and Allie Billie participate in the relay events.



Mayli Tommie

From left to right, Harvey Bowers-Billie, Hiram Huggins, Austin Billie, Kenai Micco, Equani Cypress, Kealon Cypress and Maseo Marziliano-Hernandez compete in a sprint race.

Defense paves way for Rez Ballers' 2nd place finish

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

CHEROKEE, N.C. — For eight of the nine Seminole Tribe teams, the NAYO basketball tournament ended before the afternoon on the final day. But the Rez Ballers 1 boys 14U squad kept playing and winning.

They were the only team from the tribe to win a trophy, capturing the runner-up prize.

After going 2-1 in the first two days, Rez Ballers 1 entered the last day — March 30 — without any room for error. Anchored by a relentless defense led by starting guards Zaiden Frank and Lucan Frank Jr., Rez Ballers 1 used their speed and size to win their 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. games and emerge from the losers' bracket.

"That's what our team is known for, pressure. Those two guards are built for that," said coach Eric Osceola.

Having to come out of the losers' bracket with three hard-fought games in a four-hour span — and with some players dealing with cramps — took its toll for a team that had only seven players.

In the championship, Rez Ballers 1 never found the rhythm that got them to the final and fell to Choctaw's Native Soldiers, 61-41, in front of more than 400 spectators at Peaches Squirrel Sports and Recreation Complex. (Rez Ballers 1 would have needed to win two games to win the championship).

"They played hard, but they ran out of gas," Osceola said.

Native Soldiers dealt Rez Ballers 1 their only two losses.

"They had lost the first game to these guys so it put a little doubt in their mind," Osceola said.

Native Soldiers built an early 11-2 lead and led 26-15 at halftime. Rez Ballers 1 trimmed the deficit to seven points early in the second half, but never got closer.

Kalijah Osceola led Rez Ballers 1 with 14 points. Remy Griffin's six points came on a pair of 3-pointers. Terrance Osceola and



The 2024 NAYO boys 14U runners-up Rez Ballers 1. From left to right are head coach Eric Osceola, Zaiden Frank, Remy Griffin, Kalijah Osceola, Lucan Osceola Jr., Jared Billie, Terrance Osceola, Steven Brown, and assistant coach John Kyle.



Lucan Frank Jr. (0) drives to the basket.



Steven Brown takes a 3-point shot.



Kalijah Osceola uses his body to gain position on an inside move to the hoop.

Steven Brown each scored six points.

In a close victory earlier in the day against Frybread Elite (Choctaw), suffocating pressure from Zaiden Frank and Lucan Frank Jr. caused several turnovers and shifted momentum to the Rez Ballers 1. Terrance Osceola and Jared Billie each snagged key offensive rebounds in the waning moments to keep Rez Ballers 1 ahead.

The dynamic Frank backcourt duo each scored 11 points and Brown dominated down low with 13 points.

In the losers' bracket final against Rez Runners (Choctaw), the game was tied 22-22 at halftime. Rez Runners started the second half with five straight points before Zaiden Frank took command of the game.

For a period of about three minutes, Frank was unstoppable. He scored seven unanswered points — including two 3-point plays — to give Rez Ballers 1 the lead for good.

Griffin made a crucial layup late in the game after Rez Runners has pulled to within two. Billie pulled down a couple of key rebounds to keep the lead safe.

Overall, coach Osceola said his team's seven-game run (5-2 record) in the tournament was a memorable experience for players and coaches.

"We represented our tribe, our community," he said.

Learning experience for Florida's Native Soldiers girls

In an 18U girls losers' bracket game that was close from start to finish, Native Soldiers was ousted by I.A.C. (Haudenosaunee), 51-50.

Native Soldiers led 26-23 at halftime and built a 48-43 lead in the second half thanks to a steal and two layups by Mattisyn Bell.

I.A.C. hit a long 3-pointer with a minute left and made a pair of free throws with :14 remaining for the winning points.

Native Soldiers coach Skyla Osceola spent about 10 minutes talking to her team after the loss.

"I just told them I know we're young, but it doesn't matter when you step on the court. Everyone is here to win. It's important to work out every day because basketball doesn't reward if you don't work hard and basketball does reward you when you work hard," Osceola said.

◆ See NAYO on page 5C



Terrance Osceola, far right, battles for a loose ball.



Head coach Eric Osceola, far right, and assistant coach John Kyle, second from right, applaud their players.



After making a steal, Remy Griffin sprints away from an opponent



Zaiden Frank muscles his way past an opponent.

2024 NAYO results

STAFF REPORT

CHEROKEE, N.C. — Here are the results of Seminole teams at the 2024 NAYO basketball tournament:

14U Boys

Seminole Ballers
Coach: Richard Osceola
W vs Dem Boys (MBCI)
W vs Heat (MBCI)
L vs Rez Runners (MBCI)
L vs vs Frybread Elite (EBCI)

Florida Warriors
Coach: RaeAnn West
W vs One Nation (MBCI)
L vs Rez Ballers 1 (STOF)
W vs Tonawanda
W vs I.A.C. (Haudenosaunee)
W vs Rez Ballers 2 (STOF)
L vs Frybread Elite (EBCI)

Rez Ballers 1
Coach: Eric Osceola
W vs Florida Warriors (STOF)
W vs Flights (MBCI)
L vs Native Soldiers (MBCI)
W vs Frybread Elite (EBCI)
W vs Krazy Nation (EBCI)
W vs Rez Runners (MBCI)
L vs Native Soldiers (MBCI)
championship

Rez Ballers 2
Coach: Krishawn Henry
W vs Some Choctaw (MBCI)
W vs Savage Storm (MBCI)
L vs Krazy Nation (EBCI)
L vs Florida Warriors (STOF)

14U Girls

Lady Rebels
Coach: Jovanny Torres
L vs Chaos Elite (MBCI)
L vs Respects (MBCI)

18U Boys

Rez Ballers
Coach: Ivan Billie
W vs MS Arrows (MBCI)
W vs Bulls (MBCI)
L vs Ice Spice Elite (MBCI)
L vs Dem Boyz (MBCI)

Florida Warriors
Coach: Kelvin Huggins
W vs Jayhawks (MBCI)
W vs WNC Elite (EBCI)
W vs N7 (MBCI)
L vs YBE (MBCI)
L vs Dem Boys (MBCI)

Florida Rebels
Coach: Jovanny Torres
W vs I.A.C. (Haudenosaunee)
L vs N7 (MBCI)
L vs WNC Elite (EBCI)

18U Girls

Native Soldiers
Coach: Skyla Osceola
W vs Chaos (MBCI)
L vs MBCI Elite (MBCI)
L vs I.A.C. (Haudenosaunee)



Florida Warriors 14U boys coach RaeAnn West talks to her team after its final game.

Kevin Johnson



Gian Tommie drives to the basket for Rez Ballers 2.

Maylii Tommie



Seminole Ballers 14U boys' Amani Billie has his eyes fixed on the basket as he tries to elude a defender.

Kevin Johnson



Troy Stubbs goes airborne as he makes a layup.

Maylii Tommie

◆ NAYO From page 4C

Native Soldiers was led by Bell, who scored a game-high 24 points, including 14 in the second half. Other strong games came from Kashlynn Cooper (13 points), Aubrey Montalvo (7 points) and Tatum Billie (6 points), who made a pair of 3-pointers. The team finished with a 1-2 record.

Determined efforts by Florida Warriors impress coach

After her Florida Warriors team was eliminated in the 14U boys division, coach RaeAnn West made sure her players knew what she thought of their performance in their final game and the tournament.

As the team gathered moments after it was ousted from the double-elimination tournament, West went to each player, looked that player in the eyes, and said, "I'm proud of you."

One of the reasons for West's praise was because of how hard her team fought in the second half of its last game. The Warriors trailed Frybread Elite (Choctaw) by 19 points at halftime.

"We're trying to teach these kids how to push through hard things," West said.

Rather than pack it in, they responded with a solid half of basketball. Amos Huggins provided his team with an example of not quitting by draining a 3-pointer a few seconds into the second half.

Huggins made three more 3-pointers in the half as the Warriors narrowed the deficit to 11 at one point. He finished with 12 points.

Kyrie Huggins also showed plenty of determination as he finished with a team-high 14 points. Ditto for Captain Osceola, who scored four of his five points in the second half, and Homer Huggins, who hit a 3-pointer in the half.

The Warriors outscored Frybread by six points in the second half, although it wasn't enough to prevail.

"I'm real proud of them because they could have given up and got mercy-ruled, but they came in here and represented. South Florida needs to be real proud right now," West said.

The Warriors began the tournament by splitting their first two games before reeling off three straight wins.

Fast start for Seminole Ballers

The Seminole Ballers 14U boys team started in an impressive fashion by winning its two games on day one, both against Choctaw teams.

"We had a good day. What I like about the team is that they're all hustle from the beginning to the end," said coach Richard Osceola.

Day two wasn't as smooth as the team lost its first two games and was eliminated.

Osceola said his team played well in the tournament despite little practice. He said it was tough to get the team together because some players are playing other sports.

In a loss to the Rez Runners (MBCI), Walt Fortner (8 points), Greg James (4 points) and Amani Billie (4 points) were the top scorers.

"Usually, we're two and out. We made a good run," Osceola said.

Wild start in game for Warriors' 14U boys

The Florida Warriors 14U boys team pitched a shutout for the first 12 minutes while building a huge lead in its first game on day two. The Warriors led 29-0 in the first half enroute to a 53-17 win. The game ended at the 10-minute mark of the second half due to the mercy rule.

Warriors open 3-for-3

The best start of all Seminole teams belonged to the Florida Warriors 18U boys team, which won its first three games, beating two Choctaw teams and one Cherokee team.

In a win against N7 (MBCI), the Warriors were led by Ezekiel Billie, whose game-high 21 points included four 3-pointers, all in the second half. Louis Billie also had a hot hand from beyond the arc. He made four-3-pointers and finished with 16 points. Jemere Osceola (10 points).

Losses late on day two and early on day three knocked out the Warriors.

Summary

Overall, Seminole teams dominated on day one. They went a combined 13-3. In day two, six of the teams were eliminated.

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) won three of the four titles; the host Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) won one.

- Champions were:
- Native Soldiers (MBCI) – 14U boys
 - Ice Spice Elite (MBCI) – 18U boys
 - Lady Braves (EBCI) – 14U girls
 - Choctaw Elite (MBCI) – 18U girls.

◆ See MORE PHOTOS on page 6C



Kashlynn Cooper takes a 3-point shot for Native Soldiers 18U girls.

Kevin Johnson

Rez Rally results

BRIGHTON — Here are the results from the 2024 Rez Rally that was held Feb. 24 in Brighton.

Tribal youth 6-11 male

1. Makai Newkirk
2. Charles Julian
3. Kihyon Hodge

Tribal youth 12-17 male

1. Louis Billie
2. Adrian Colon
3. Hinton Anderson

Tribal run 18-36 male

1. Luke Baxley Jr.
2. Tyrek Lasane
3. Brandon Posada

Tribal run 37-54 male

1. Charley Cypress
2. Elton Shore
3. Neil Baxley

Tribal run 55-68

1. Richard Keyser
2. Noah Yzaguirre
3. Joseph Kippenberger

Tribal run 69+ male

1. Andrew Bowers

Tribal walk 18-36 male

1. Erik Puento III
2. Edward Gaucin
3. N/A

Tribal walk 37-54 male

1. Adrian Baker
2. Bryan Arledge
3. Brian Billie

Tribal walk 55-68 male

1. Sandy Billie
2. Dean Youngblood
3. Mark Steve Osceola

Tribal walk 69+

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. N/A

Tribal youth 6-11 female

1. Mitchellanie Cypress
2. Dalyse Baker
3. Abigail Billie

Tribal youth 12-17 female

1. Amalie Estrada and Daveny Osceola Hahn
2. Nichelle Cypress
3. Aaliyah Billie and Presleigh Osceola-Hahn

Tribal run 18-36 female

1. Carlise Bermudez
2. Leisset Baker and Brianna Nunez
3. Keithana Osceola

Tribal run 37-54 female

1. Cathy Cypress
2. Mercedes Osceola
3. Priscilla Sigurani

Tribal run 55-68 female

1. Mary Lou Alvardo
2. Bonnie Motlow
3. N/A

Tribal run 69+ female

1. Patty Waldron

Tribal walk 18-36 female

1. Stacy Smith
2. Susanna Severe
3. Kaylynn Pewo

Tribal walk 37-54 female

1. Jennifer "Ebo" Osceola
2. Amy Yzaguirre
3. Amy Garza

Tribal walk 55-68 female

1. Almira Billie
2. Kay Braswell
3. N/A

Tribal walk 69+ female

1. Shirley Clay
2. Martha Jones
3. Nancy Frank

Senior 1-mile walk male

1. John Madrigal
2. Mitchell Cypress
3. David Cypress

Stroller male

1. Michael Gentry
2. N/A
3. N/A

General youth 6-17

1. Terrance Osceola
2. Randall Billie
3. Angelo Colon Jr.

General run 18-54 male

1. Giovanni Alvarez
2. Andrea Nocentini
3. Dalton Collins

General run 55+ male

1. Thomas Foss

General walk 18-54 male

1. Kenneth Doney
2. Edward "Ted" Clewell
3. Ganpapersad Rambarath

Senior 1-mile female

1. Rose Tiger
2. Mahala Madrigal
3. Diane Snow

Stroller female

1. Jo Leigh Jumper
2. Nina Frias
3. Raina Robinson

General youth 6-17 female

1. Andria Sigurani
2. Samara Yzaguirre
3. Kylee Baker

General run 18-54 female

1. Rosa Arce
2. Jara Courson
3. Janelle Osceola

General run 55+ female

1. Sandy Hazelip
2. Keyana Nelson
3. N/A

General walk 18-54 female

1. Keyana Nelson
2. Anupa Rahaman
3. N/A

General walk 55+ female

1. Georgette Smith
2. Sherry Allgair
3. Jody Goodman

Wheelchair

1. Lawanna Osceola-Niles/Kathlyn Ojeda
2. Judy Jim /EMS
3. Betty Billie/Yanca Nunez



Former Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr., center, competes in the Rez Rally running race.

Beverly Bidney



Giovanni Alvarez, a Seminole Fire Rescue lieutenant, smiles on his way to finishing first overall in the general run for 18-54 males.

Beverly Bidney

◆ **NAYO**
From page 5C



Kevin Johnson

Derrick McQueen fights off three defenders to grab a rebound for the Florida Warriors 14U boys team.



Kevin Johnson

Florida Rebels 18U boys' King Hughes battles for a loose ball.



Kevin Johnson

Kyrie Huggins sinks a 3-point shot for the Florida Warriors 14U boys team.



Kevin Johnson

Seminole Ballers' Greg James eyes two points in a 14U boys game.



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Seminole Ballers 14U boys' Amani Billie (0), Brody Reilly (13), Zaden Spencer (4) and Kowi Osceola (5) all keep their eyes on a loose ball.