



The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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Spencer Battiest, Doc Native, Mag 7 perform for 60,000 in NYC

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Seminole Tribe of Florida brothers Spencer Battiest and Doc Native and some of the other members from the award-winning group Mag 7 performed their song “One World (We Are One)” for 60,000 people at the Global Citizen Festival on Sept. 27 in New York City on Central Park’s iconic Great Lawn.

The concert was headlined by Cardi B, Shakira and featured numerous other artists from around the world. Actor Hugh Jackman served as emcee. Global Citizen is a movement dedicated to eradicating extreme poverty, restoring the Amazon, bringing clean energy to Africa and supporting children worldwide, according to its website.



Doc Native, left, and Spencer Battiest at the Global Citizen Festival on Sept. 27 in New York City.

♦ See NYC on page 9A

Reservations celebrate Indian Day

STAFF REPORT

Indian Day was celebrated on every Seminole reservation in September with traditional competitions, food, stories, camaraderie and fellowship. See pages B4-11 for photos.

IMMOKALEE

The Immokalee Reservation started things off Sept. 13 with canoe races where every paddler remained in the canoe and not in the lake. Other events of the day included a fry bread contest, fan tacking and racing, log peeling, archery and skillet toss. At every event, the crowd cheered the competitors on. The fry bread contest was the highlight of the day for its three competitors. The judges – tribal employees – appeared to enjoy every bite as they discussed the attributes of each bread.

NAPLES

The Naples community gathered Sept. 19 at the Juanita Osceola Center for a patchwork sewing class, Seminole storytelling by a few tribal members, sofkee and fry bread competitions. Tribal members submitted their best examples of patchwork and wood carving to be judged. They went on a swamp buggy in the Big Cypress National Preserve Sept. 20.

FORT PIERCE

In Fort Pierce, the community at Chupco’s Landing gathered Sept. 25 for a day of activities, food, music, bingo, raffles and camaraderie. The weather cooperated for lunch under the giant chickee and for pre-contest warmups in horseshoes, corn hole, archery and axe throwing. However, a stubborn line of steady rain along the east coast made its way to Fort Pierce just as the games were about to begin at 1:30 p.m.,



Beverly Bidney

A group of 5-to-7 year old kids try to catch a pig in the pig chase event at the amphitheater next to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena during the Brighton Reservation’s Indian Day event Sept. 26. Kids of all ages competed and some actually caught a pig, which seemed relieved to be put into the peace of its holding pen.

forcing delays. Still, kids were able to enjoy their day off from school as they bounced in a giant bounce house and slid down a

slippery water slide. Eventually, the weather cleared enough to allow all the activities – except horseshoes – to be completed. In the

early evening, residents enjoyed dinner at the community center and bingo.

♦ See INDIAN DAY on page 5A

Major Florida art museum features Seminole basketry artist Kiana Bell

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Curator, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

and
BY LAURA DELLO RUSSO
Collections Manager, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

SARASOTA — The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art is one of the preeminent art and cultural collections in the United States. The Ringling’s history begins nearly a century ago, and its collection of European Renaissance art is world renowned. Currently, they are also presenting a contemporary Indigenous exhibit. “Ancestral Edge: Abstraction and Symbolism in the Works of Nine Native American Women Artists” will be on view in the Keith D. Monda Gallery for Contemporary Art from Sept. 13, 2025, to April 12, 2026.

At a special reception on Sept. 12, a group of Ringling members and special guests, together with Kiana Bell and her family, were treated to a special viewing of the new exhibit. Curated by Ola Wlusek, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, the exhibit brings together works by nine contemporary Native American artists who are making significant contributions to the field of abstraction. This includes: Teresa

Baker (Mandan/Hidatsa), Natalie Ball (Klamath/Modoc), Kiana Bell (Seminole), Elisa Harkins (Cherokee/Muscogee [Creek]), Erica Lord (Inupiaq/Athabaskan), Sarah Sense (Chitimacha/Choctaw), Sara Siestreem (Hanis Coos), Marie Watt (Seneca/German-Scot) and Dyani White Hawk (Sičáŋgų Lakota).

Explored in a variety of media—basket weaving, beadwork, collage, clay, textiles, photography, metalwork, and printmaking rooted in ancestral technologies—the works share similar stylistic and social concerns, such as vibrant colors, hard-edged geometries, curvilinear patterns, and bold mark-making, all infused with artists’ personal stories and those of their kin.

“Native American art and craft traditions have long engaged with abstraction as a meaningful, complex visual language, woven into ancestral knowledge, ceremonial practice, and material culture,” said Wlusek. She continued, “‘Ancestral Edge’ celebrates the richness of Indigenous artistic traditions and reaffirms the central role that contemporary Native American art plays in shaping a more expansive, inclusive understanding of abstraction today. For these artists, abstraction is not merely an aesthetic strategy—it is a long-standing practice to convey cultural, spiritual, and



Courtesy photo

Kiana Bell, left, stands between two of her creations with ‘Ancestral Edge’ Curator Ola Wlusek during the exhibit opening.

ceremonial meaning that predates modern art movements.”

Kiana’s baskets certainly take center stage, with dramatic shapes and sizes, unique bead and stonework additions, and expert craftsmanship. Kiana lets the materials guide her and she is very humble when discussing her amazing creations. It is obvious she deserves a prominent place in a world class museum and this contemporary Indigenous art exhibit. Kiana expressed her gratitude, saying “Carrying on this traditional form of basketry will help show how much experience, hard work and creativity goes into making a sweetgrass basket. I hope to inspire the next generation to continue the traditional ways and create their own baskets.”

On Nov. 18 at 11 a.m., you can hear from Kiana herself. She and Ola will be giving a gallery talk about the wonderful baskets in the exhibition, in the Keith D Monda Gallery For Contemporary Art. If you can’t make it in November, just be sure to visit before April 12, 2026, to see the beauty,

talent and showstopping power of Kiana Bell’s art in “Ancestral Edge: Abstraction and Symbolism in the Works of Nine Native American Women Artists”.

Courtesy photo

Dyani White Hawk’s “They Gifted (Day)”, left, and “They Gifted (Night)”, right, is part of “Ancestral Edge: Abstraction and Symbolism in the Works of Nine Native American Women Artists.”



Courtesy photo

Kiana Bell stands next to one of the displays of her artwork at the Ringling Museum of Art.

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

Editorial

Climate resilience won’t save us — but Indigenous Peoples’ sovereignty might

• Lala Forrest, MD

I’m tired of being called — and hearing the term — resilient. I am wawá acúmmááwi, an original inhabitant of the lands now commonly referred to as northeastern California. My people have been called resilient after genocide, relocation, poverty, and grief. The word is meant to be a compliment — but these days, it feels more like a dismissal.

“Resilience” has become a buzzword — celebrated in climate plans, public health programs, and mental health grants. But in Indian Country, resilience is not what we need more of. The word now praises us for surviving trauma while ignoring the systems that caused it: colonialism, environmental racism, disinvestment, extractive economies, and violence.

The burden to recover is placed on those most harmed, while the structures that created the harm remain intact. Survival and adaptation should not be the measure of success. Justice should.

Too often, resilience language justifies underinvestment: ‘They’re tough. They’ll survive.’ That same logic fuels chronic underfunding of IHS, inadequate mental health care, and climate policies that prioritize survival strategies instead of systemic change. Indian Country doesn’t need more resilience. We need repair, equity, and sovereignty.

On climate, especially, there is a better way.

A growing body of evidence supports Indigenous land return and custodianship. A recent report on the State of Indigenous Peoples’ and Local Communities’ (IPLC) Lands found that 91 percent of lands owned and governed by IPLCs — regardless of legal status — are in good or moderate ecological

condition. IPLC lands also contain 36 percent of the globe’s Key Biodiversity Areas. This is not coincidence — it’s the result of Indigenous guardianship rooted in relational, spiritual, and ecological responsibility.

Indigenous peoples are on the frontlines of climate advocacy and conservation. This frontline role often comes at great cost: in 2019, 40 percent of those killed defending the environment were Indigenous. Yet their resistance has real impact. Fossil fuel resistance blocks high-emission projects, land defense prevents deforestation and emissions, traditional fire practices reduce catastrophic wildfire risk and promote biodiversity, and the recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ sovereignty enables adaptation strategies rooted in deep ecological knowledge, restoring ecosystems through regenerative practices.

Yet despite recent investments, funding across U.S. agencies still overwhelmingly emphasizes “resilience” and “adaptation” while sidelining Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge. Federal climate–health investments — across NIH, CDC, EPA, and HHS — remain framed around ‘resilience,’ yet this emphasis sidelines Tribal governance and Indigenous custodianship, reducing climate justice to endurance rather than sovereignty.

Urban planning discussions often focus on how Indigenous communities can build their resilience to environmental threats like flooding — but rarely ask how historical displacement, neglect, and infrastructure inequity created that vulnerability in the first place. That’s not just inaccurate — it’s dangerous. When resilience becomes the goal, we lose urgency to transform the systems that cause harm. We stop asking harder questions: who benefits from the way things are? Who continues to profit off Indigenous land while promoting the very ‘resilience’ demanded of those surviving on

its margins?

To move toward true climate justice, we must restore Indigenous land and governance rights as foundational to climate solutions, not as charity or inclusion, but as reparative justice and ecological necessity. We must invest in Indigenous data sovereignty, including tools like the Native Land Information System, to strengthen environmental protections and redistribute decision-making power. And we must resource grassroots movements like the Indigenous Environmental Network and NDN Collective, not only to defend sacred lands but to enable long-term systems change rooted in relational, place-based knowledge.

What Indigenous communities offer is far more powerful than resilience. We offer worldviews rooted in ecological harmony, which stem from accountability to land, people, and spirit. Our responses to trauma are not about bouncing back — they are about re-rooting in who we are. As President of the Native Village of Paimiut Estelle Thomson tells us, “As long as we’re able to continue to practice our traditions, tell our stories, we will always have the basic building blocks to maintain the culture and to continue to grow it.”

This opinion was published by ITC at ITCnews.org.

Dr. Forrest is a psychiatrist in training at Yale University, a Climate and Health Equity Fellow at the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, and a member of the Pit River Tribe, and a descendant of the Modoc and Wintu tribes. Their work focuses on Indigenous mental health, climate justice, and the decolonization of psychiatric practice. They are committed to amplifying Indigenous knowledge as essential to collective healing and planetary survival.

HUD announces \$220M in funding for tribal housing, infrastructure

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — During a recent meeting, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced more than \$220 million dollars in new funding opportunities. According to a press release, the funds include:

- \$150 million in Indian Housing Block Grant Competitive program funding for support in the development of new housing in Indian Country.
- \$70 million dollars in Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) funds to help tribes build

infrastructure, support local business, and address water and sanitation needs.

The announcement came when Secretary Scott Turner hosted HUD’s Tribal Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (TIAC) meeting. The committee includes tribal leaders from across the nation.

“We are pleased to partner with tribal leaders and HUD to look at the issues we face today and work together to find solutions, moving Indian Housing forward,” TIAC co-chair Bobby Yandell, Choctaw Nation, said in the release. “The TIAC has built momentum in our collaboration over the last couple of years, and our level of

trust has risen to where we can have the hard discussions knowing we are all moving Indian Housing in the right direction. We appreciate Secretary Turner and the HUD staff’s efforts and look forward to continued success while building relationships and discussing policy issues.”

According to the release, the meeting focused on nation-to-nation relationships with tribal governments, program streamlining, tribal housing needs and challenges in Indian Country, and funding for tribal housing and community development programs.

Cherokee Federal acquires majority stake in DC consulting firm

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TULSA, Okla. — Cherokee Federal, a division of Cherokee Nation Businesses (CNB), announced Sept. 2 its second investment under Sovereign Capital, a growth capital firm formed in 2024 to leverage Cherokee Federal’s experience in the federal contracting market.

CNB has acquired a majority stake in Management Science and Innovation, LLC (MSI), a boutique Washington, D.C.-area consulting firm founded in 2002 with

a focus on planning and implementing agency transformation and digitization initiatives. MSI has more than two decades of experience cultivating relationships with agency leadership while supporting modernization efforts. The firm specializes in strategy, process optimization, human capital, business transformation and digital transformation, including robotic process automation and intelligent automation for federal clients.

“This is another productive step in advancing our long-term growth strategy,”

Steven Bilby, president of Cherokee Federal, said in a press release. “MSI’s leadership, track record and alignment with our vision reflects the transformative impact we aim for Sovereign Capital to bring to the federal marketplace.”

Cherokee Nation Businesses is the tribal-owned holding company of the Cherokee Nation, the largest Indian nation in the United States. The Cherokee Nation and its businesses employ 11,000 people.

Southeast Florida climate summit to be held in December

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WEST PALM BEACH — The 17th annual Southeast Florida Climate Leadership Summit will be held Dec. 16-17 at the Palm Beach Convention Center in West Palm Beach.

Dubbed “Roots of Resilience: Cultivating a Sustainable Future,” the event will feature three keynote speakers, seven

panel discussions, two panel showcases and nine presentations and county updates.

The keynote speakers are Ashon Nesbitt, chief executive officer Florida Housing Coalition; Michael Grunwald, author, journalist, podcaster; and Jeffrey Huber, professor, author, FAU School of Architecture.

For more information visit seffclimatesummit2025.com/.

Eric Church to play Hollywood in ‘26

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Country music star Eric Church will perform March 27, 2026, at Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. Kashus Culpepper to support. For tickets go to myHRL.com.

Church is a seven-time ACM Award winner, four-time CMA Award winner (including 2020’s Entertainer of the Year), and 10-time GRAMMY nominee.

Seminole Tribal Court hosts reception at DCF Summit

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Tribal Court’s Chief Justice Joe Frank, Chief Judge Mary Tigertail-Foster and Director Moses Osceola welcomed statewide judges and magistrates at the Court’s reception Sept. 5 during the Department of Children & Families (DCF) Summit in Orlando. DCF Secretary Taylor Hatch was also present and offered a warm welcome to all guests.

This year, the Seminole Tribal Court highlighted the collaboration with the 17th Judicial Circuit. Broward County Court Judge Jose Izquierdo and the Seminole Tribe of Florida have founded one of Florida’s first Tribal Courts focusing on children and families that fall under the jurisdiction of the Indian Child Welfare Act 25 U.S.C. §§ 1901–1963. Judge Izquierdo has been hearing dependency cases on the Seminole Hollywood Reservation since January 2017. This allows tribal members to be in familiar

surroundings, and Tribal Court judges and staff can observe dependency court. Also, having Tribal justices/judges present provides Judge Izquierdo with an immediate reference for Seminole culture and tradition.

In recognition of Judge Izquierdo’s hard work, dedication and unwavering commitment to the Tribal community, justice and child welfare, the Seminole Tribal Court presented him with a Seminole patchwork stole embroidered “Shonabesha” and “Mv-to” at the event.

Director Osceola also let the judges and magistrates know that the Administrative Office of the Seminole Tribal Court would like to establish a Tribal and State workgroup to focus on promoting cooperation and collaboration between the State of Florida and the Seminole Courts to ensure that tribal court judgments and court orders are recognized and enforced by other jurisdictions within the State.



Courtesy photo

Chief Justice Joe Frank, left, and Chief Judge Mary Tigertail-Foster, right, with DCF Secretary Taylor Hatch.



Courtesy photo

Broward County Court Judge Jose Izquierdo is presented a Seminole patchwork stole by Chief Justice Joe Frank, left, Chief Judge Mary Tigertail-Foster, and Director Moses Osceola, right.

National tribal housing summit to be held in D.C.

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) is coordinating HUD’s National Tribal Housing Summit that will take place Nov. 4-6 at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Washington, D.C., Crystal City. The summit will provide a forum for training, exchanging ideas, consulting on upcoming

issues, and developing best practices for models that implement and sustain effective affordable housing programs under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA). The theme of the National Summit is “Rooted in Tradition: Rising in Resilience”.

For more information visit naihcn.net.



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Community



A

‘Cooking with love’ inspires Jessica Osceola and The Pie Shop

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

ESTERO — To say Jessica Osceola is artistic, would be an understatement. She grew up in Naples, earned a Master of Fine Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in San Francisco, showed artwork at an Art Basel show in Miami Beach and taught art classes at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers.

Lately, her creativity isn’t only found in her ceramics studio; she has brought it into her kitchen as well.

Osceola lives on a 10-acre farm named Campa de Velasco in rural Estero with her husband Benjamin Velasco and sons Joaquin Velasco-Osceola, 11, and McCoy Velasco-Osceola, 4.

On the farm, she tends to livestock and crops and creates delicacies for her farm stand.

The Pie Shop at Campo de Velasco opened in December 2024 in a small building on the farm, near the road. The shop features homemade pies, cookies, breads, salsa, jams, soups, eggs and vegetables.

“I bake every day,” Osceola said. “My mom taught me how to cook with love. She also taught me how to can and I’m teaching my sons.”

Osceola said canning is a generational skill. Her grandmother Virginia Fitzgerald canned from her farm in Ohio during the

great depression and handed down the skill to her mother Sandra.

A few years ago, Osceola led a workshop at the Juanita Osceola Center in Naples where tribal members canned fresh vegetables including tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, onions and beans. Osceola sells her canned goods at the Pie Shop, which is a cottage food operation.

“This is how we eat,” she said. “I thought we would share it and it turns out that people like it. The Pie Shop came from an act of love.”

Osceola uses no chemicals or preservatives in the food she makes and only fertilizes the plants with manure from her animals. Everything in the shop is made with seasonal fruits and vegetables, many of them from the 60-foot-by-60 foot garden built by her husband.

In the garden, she grows a variety of peppers, onions, okra, green beans, Seminole pumpkins, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, bananas and herbs. She used seeds from last year’s pumpkins to grow this year’s crop.

“When the peppers are abundant, I make pickled peppers,” Osceola said. “When the cocoplums are ripe, I make jam.”

In addition to the garden, the farm has cocoplum, mulberry, mango, avocado and lemon trees. The lemon trees are from her father Douglas Osceola’s property, which were grown with seeds from her great grandmother Juanita Osceola’s lemon trees

in Naples. Her son Joaquin and her father planted the seeds in pods shortly before he died in 2022.

The lemon trees aren’t the only things she brought from her father’s property, she also moved two of the last chickees he built to the farm including a chickee located over the lake and a cooking chickee. The cooking chickee includes her grandmother’s original cooking grate and her father’s pots and pans. She cooks in the chickee on holidays, birthdays and sometimes on the weekends.

Osceola also raises chickens, Peking ducks, a turkey and a herd of 12 miniature Zebu cattle, including two bulls. She uses the eggs to bake, including duck eggs which are larger and have more protein than chicken eggs. After living a natural life, the animals are used for food. One cow can feed her family of four for about a year.

Osceola doesn’t advertise the shop or the farm; her customer base comes by word of mouth from her rural neighborhood and a nearby new housing development.

“This is an off-the-road farm stand, which are pretty common up north,” Osceola said. “I imagined it would work, but you never know. Pies are the best-sellers and some customers come in every day. But there are a lot of cookie monsters out there, too. The cookies are homey and simple. Customers come back every week for them, it’s part of their weekly grocery shopping. That’s the greatest compliment ever.”

Cooking and baking are labor intensive, so she quit her job as an art professor at FGCU to have more time to dedicate to her family and the shop.

“Now I get to spend all my time with my kids,” Osceola said. “I liked my job, but I love my kids more. You realize how precious and short life is.”

Osceola and Velasco started the farming lifestyle with cows, chickens and growing food in a garden when they lived in Naples in 2012. They went “all in” in 2013 and have lived on the farm since 2017.

“Our underlying goal is to leave a smaller footprint and reduce our impact on the Earth,” Osceola said. “We try to instill that value into our children. It’s the way we want to feed and nourish ourselves.”



Beverly Bidney

Jessica Osceola by the chicken coop and another one for the ducks and a turkey. The fowl is allowed out of the coops every other day to forage on the farm.



Beverly Bidney

Jessica Osceola outside of the Pie Shop at Campo de Velasco in Estero.



Beverly Bidney

Jessica Osceola with some of her homemade baked goods on display at the Pie Shop at Campo de Velasco.

AIAC to be held Nov. 7-8

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BIG CYPRESS — The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will hold its annual American Indigenous Arts Celebration (AIAC) on Nov. 7 and Nov. 8 on the museum’s festival grounds in Big Cypress from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. The festival features Native arts, culture and heritage. There is free admission.

The celebration will begin with a Grand Entry Powwow led by Seminole Medicine Man Bobby Henry, Tribal dignitaries, Native drummers, dancers, and hoop dance performers. The lineup also includes Pharaoh’s Wildlife Kingdom critter

show, alligator wrestling with Billy Walker, Powwow dancers & Native drummers, and hoop dance competition.

A Native fashion showcase will be held Friday featuring Ahfachkee School students. On Saturday, a featured fashion show will be held by Seminole designer Lenora Roberts.

Other highlights include a live painting demonstration by Seminole artist Elgin Jumper, hoop dance workshop with world-renowned Tony Duncan, Mexican Cultural Academy Dance exhibits presented by Ameyal Productions, photo opportunity with Native American actor Dallas Goldtooth, a meet and greet with Miss Florida Seminole and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole.

Visitors can shop from authentic Native craft vendors and artists, enjoy traditional food vendors, and take advantage of free admission to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, home to an extraordinary collection of Seminole history and culture.

“The American Indigenous Arts Celebration is one of the best opportunities to experience Native culture, living traditions, and artistry in one place,” Gordon Wareham, museum director, said in a press release. “It is both a celebration and an invitation to learn, connect, and honor Indigenous heritage.”

For more information, visit ahtathiki.com/AIAC/ or call 863-902-1113.

Hard Rock Live to host comedy festival

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Miami Comedy Festival, featuring

Sommore, Earthquake, Bill Bellamy, Lavell Crawford and Special K, will be held Jan. 17, 2026, at Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

All seats are reserved. Tickets are available at www.myHRL.com. Doors open at 7 p.m., one hour before showtime.

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Alton Mill District in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Courtesy photo

SEMREF purchases second Charlotte apartment complex

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The Seminole Tribe just doubled its presence in the fast-growing city of Charlotte, North Carolina. The Seminole Real Estate Fund (SEMREF) recently bought a second apartment complex in Charlotte, located directly across the street from the first one it purchased there in 2020.

The new property, Alton Mill District, is a Class-A 290-unit mid-rise apartment complex in a popular and vibrant area, one mile from uptown Charlotte with tens of thousands of well-paying, white collar, professional and financial service jobs.

“Our thesis continues to be buy well located properties where people want to live, renters by choice,” said Jonathan Levy, SEMREF executive director. “The first property, Alon Optimist Park, has been doing well since we bought it.”

The tribe purchased the property from Trammell Crow Residential, a nationally known developer with a strong reputation. It is the fund’s third transaction with the

developer, which normally deals with governments, large banks, investment and pension funds around the world.

“We bid on this one against a Japanese investment fund,” Levy said. “They chose to deal with the tribe. They called us to tell us they were selling.”

SEMREF began purchasing properties around the country at the beginning of the pandemic. Today the fund’s portfolio includes 13 properties in Atlanta, Austin, Charlotte, Dallas, Denver, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Nashville, New Orleans, Phoenix, Tampa, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

“We saw an opportunity that the country was going to come out of the pandemic a lot stronger and we were right,” Levy said. “We have built for the tribe a reputable and recognizable brand in only five years.”

The goal of SEMREF is to ensure the prosperity of the tribe for generations to come. Its strategy is to enhance generational wealth by diversifying through sound investments in Class-A rental apartment buildings that will generate sustainable income along with long-term asset appreciation.

Annual Jorge Pastore Foundation fundraiser to be held Nov. 9 in Texas

The former STOF firefighter who became a police officer was killed in line of duty

STAFF REPORT

The 2nd annual Humble Warrior Games will be held Nov. 9 at Reveille Peak Ranch in Burnet, Texas, about 50 miles northwest of Austin.

The event is organized by the Jorge Pastore Foundation. Pastore was a former Seminole Tribe of Florida firefighter/paramedic who was shot and killed on Nov. 11, 2023, in the line of duty while working as a police officer for the Austin Police Department (APD).

The Warrior Games is the foundation’s biggest fundraising event of the year. All proceeds fund training and wellness programs for first responders and veterans.

“Help us by participating in the event, purchasing merch or making a donation! We need prizes, sponsors and help spreading the word too! Can’t join us, sign up for the virtual workout and do it anywhere!,” the foundation posted on Facebook. “Jorge had a way of bringing people together, elevating people and motivating them to be the best they could be.”

After serving the Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue, Pastore moved to Texas in 2019. He joined the Austin Police Department as a patrol officer. He worked on several special units in the department, including its Honor Guard. When he worked for the tribe, he also served on the Honor Guard.

“Out of everything he did in his career, Jorge was most proud of his service in the Honor Guard for both the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the APD,” his obituary states. Pastore was survived by his wife and his stepchildren.

Pastore was also part of the APD’s



Jorge Pastore

Jorge Pastore Foundation

SWAT Gold Team. It was during a hostage rescue response that Pastore, 38, was shot and killed. Thousands of police, fire, EMS and civilians attended his funeral service.

The Warrior Games will feature a variety of activities that participants can pick and choose, including a 5K trail walk/run, a team obstacle course, a Staccato shooting experience, interactive tactical events, kids events, food, music and a DJ.

“He had a passion for training, fitness, and helping others, which is the driving force behind his foundation,” reads a description about Pastore on the foundation’s website.

For more information visit jpastorefoundation.com.

Museum to host sculpture garden exhibit opening, 'Addams Family' film

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BIG CYPRESS — Have you ever heard of Devil’s Garden? Join the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and the Seminole Tribe for an exhibit opening created by the talent in the community on Oct. 10 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the museum. Walk through the sculpture garden at the museum and catch glimpses of pumpkins that will frighten and delight.

Hear about the Seminole Legend of Devil’s Garden, enjoy Halloween treats and wear your favorite family friendly costume. Come early and enjoy face painting, caricature artists and food vendor serving up frightfully good smash burgers and dogs.

Take a seat on the hay bales and watch the classic 1991 “Addam’s Family” movie outdoors with complimentary treats and popcorn.

Firefighters climb stairs at Guitar Hotel to honor 9/11 heroes

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Firefighters from throughout South Florida and beyond gathered Sept. 11, 2025, at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood to honor the heroes who died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

About 20 fire departments, including Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue, were represented in the inaugural Rock The Climb 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb, which featured firefighters in full gear walking up all 34 flights of stairs at the Guitar Hotel. Some firefighters did the walk three times to closer symbolize the 110 floors of the Twin Towers. Participants rang a bell on the 34th floor after they completed the climb.

The terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers killed 343 New York City firefighters and more have died from related health issues in the ensuing years.

The event was presented by The Firefighters Benevolent of Davie in partnership with Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood. Police officers, veterans, civilians and Hard Rock team members also attended; some did the stair climb. In total, there were 326 participants, including 165 from fire departments, according to officials.

The memorial started with a ceremony in the hotel’s Oculus area with bagpipe and drummer performances, presentation of colors, the national anthem and a moment of silence. Speakers included Seminole Tribe Fire Chief Michael Mackey, Davie Fire Chief Jorge Gonzalez, Hollywood Fire Chief Jeffrey Levy and Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood President Bo Guidry.

“It’s the legacy that you all do today that’s going to keep this going,” Mackey said at the memorial.

A framed axe was presented by the Firefighters Benevolent of Davie as a gift to Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. A post-event gathering was held at the property’s DAER club.

Proceeds from the event benefit two nonprofits: the Gary Sinise Foundation and the Firefighters Benevolent of Davie.



Calvin Tiger

Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue firefighters begin climbing the 34 floors at the Guitar Hotel in Hollywood on Sept. 11.



Calvin Tiger

After reaching the 34th floor, Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue Firefighter Daniel Korn rings a ceremonial bell.



Calvin Tiger

Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue Chief Michael Mackey speaks during the memorial ceremony.



FDNY

A FDNY helmet with badge number that represents the number of FDNY firefighters killed on 9/11.



Calvin Tiger

Some firefighters made the 34-story climb two or three times.



Calvin Tiger

A ceremony to remember those who died on 9/11 is held in the Oculus area of the Guitar Hotel.

Mary Ann Doctor, a guardianship program success who now has her life, family back

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Mary Ann Doctor looked for peace at the bottom of a bottle as she dealt with the loss of her teenage son, but soon found her life spiraling out of control.

In March 2024, Doctor, 43, was drinking heavily, grieving the loss of her son, arrested on battery charges and went to jail for a less than a week. As a result of the Tribal Court-ordered Marchman Act, which allows for voluntary and involuntary admissions and assessment, Doctor was sent to a detox facility, then to a residential rehab program for about six months, followed by intensive outpatient treatment, aftercare and sober living. Eventually, she went to live with her father, Virgil Doctor, in Hollywood for a few months.

In May 2024, she joined the Guardianship Program, which helps tribal members who can no longer make sound decisions about their own welfare by helping them transition into independence. The program can be voluntary or ordered by Tribal Court. During the guardianship, the department ensures the clients' rights are protected and helps them learn valuable life and financial skills.

"I've been doing well; it was a really good thing," Doctor said. "Most people get angry and upset about the program. I feel like it was a blessing in disguise. My life was spiraling, and I couldn't find a way out. The



Courtesy photo

Mary Ann Doctor

program told me to do this and your life will get better. I did it and it got better."

The program gave Doctor a treatment plan, a step-by-step way of life which she diligently follows.

Since her son Teijo Smith died in 2022, Doctor was in and out of rehabs repeatedly. Now she has been sober for 16 months, the longest time since her son has been gone.

"When I felt like I couldn't do it anymore, there are people who reached their hand out and said we will help you and show you how to come back," Doctor said. "Guardianship, CBH (Center for Behavioral

Health), We Do Recover; there are so many outlets I have now that keep me on my toes. They check up on me."

Doctor has been working for We Do Recover since January. She moved back to the Big Cypress Reservation in March, and since June has been chairing Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and women's meetings in Big Cypress every week.

"Those meetings help me to understand my recovery as much as I can," she said. "I'm trying to keep everything going. When I was drinking, I didn't have a purpose. Today I have a purpose; I want to say I did something today."

The most important result of Doctor's sobriety has been her renewed relationship with her family. She has three daughters, three grandchildren, her father Virgil Doctor, and mother and stepfather Colleen and Chucky Osceola.

"I have my family back," Doctor said. "They want to talk to me and spend time with me. That's the thing I'm most grateful for, it's what I live for."

Doctor said she learned to follow the program and has benefited from it. She has advice for tribal members who may enter the guardianship program.

"It can be hard, but it's going to be worth it," she said. "Just do what they say and that's pretty much it. They do all this because they want you to get better and have a better life."

STOF, Hard Rock to present charity motorcycle ride in memory of Max Osceola Jr. and others

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe of Florida and Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood will present the 38th annual South Florida Presidents Council Toys in the Sun Run, a charity motorcycle ride and music festival Dec. 7.

This year's event is being organized in memory of longtime ride participant Max Osceola Jr., who served the tribe as Hollywood Councilman from 1985-2010; Rick Case; and both Bob and Dave Amchir, the event's father and son organizers from 1988-2018; as well as many others who lived to ride for the kids alongside thousands of their biker friends.

"We're doing this because it's important for the kids and the community, and because we want to honor the memories of those riders who are no longer with us," Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, grand marshal of this year's event, said in a statement.

Country music's Gretchen Wilson — a winner in "The Masked Singer" — will

headline the music festival.

With toys strapped on their motorcycles, 5,000 bikers are expected to participate and collect toys and raise money for children's charities, including Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital and Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County, plus the Bergeron Everglades Foundation.

Bikers and riders will meet Dec. 7 at 8 a.m. in the Oasis parking lot on U.S. 441 (State Road 7) across from the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The ride will end in Weston at the Bergeron Green Glades Ranch, off U.S.



File photo

Max Osceola Jr. on a motorcycle in 2014.

27 at 21111 S.W. 16th St., where the festival will be held.

Rick Case Automotive Group is a major sponsor of the event.

gator demonstration and a traditional tribal clothing contest. A bowling tournament originally scheduled for Sept. 27 was moved to Oct. 4 at Sparez.

BIG CYPRESS

The Big Cypress Indigenous Day Celebration took place over multiple days and included a variety of activities. The celebration consisted of a fashion show and showcase, traditional clothing contest, 5K health walk and run and bingo. A youth fishing contest was hosted by the BC Recreation Department. The final day, Sept. 27, featured skillet toss, horseshoe throwing, canoe race, barefoot race, fry bread contest and a cypress log race where participants tried to combine speed and strength.

See Indian Day photos
pages 4B-11B

Time to decorate the pumpkins

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — Kids from the Big Cypress Recreation Department and Boys & Girls Club decorated pumpkins which will be on display at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki

Museum's Pumpkins at the Devils Garden annual exhibit in the sculpture garden. The theme of the exhibit is the "Addams Family" movie from 1991. The exhibit opens Oct. 10 at 5 p.m. with a costume party, movie and food trucks.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Allie Billie, Daya Quintana and Azalea Gomez-Billie paint their pumpkins at the TPPK building in Big Cypress.



Beverly Bidney

Neka Cortez, left, and Akira Jumper decorate their pumpkins.



Beverly Bidney

Museum director Gordon Wareham concentrates as he decorates a scary pumpkin which depicts a mean pumpkin devouring the most innocent of beings, a unicorn. He said events like this one get the community involved in the museum.

Jazz series to be held at Broward arts center

FROM PRESS RELEASE

FORT LAUDERDALE — The Gold Coast Jazz Society's 2025–26 concert series, "Inspirations in Jazz," features a seven-concert series from Nov. 12, 2025, to April 15, 2026, at The Broward Center for the Performing Arts' Amatur Theater in Fort Lauderdale. Concerts start at 7:45 p.m.

This season showcases a mix of New Orleans jazz, straight-ahead, Brazilian and

international artists alongside local talent. Headliners include the Dirty Dozen Brass Band (Nov. 12), Allan Harris (Dec. 4), Niki Haris with the Shelly Berg Trio (Jan. 14), Diego Figueiredo & Friends (Feb. 4), Karrin Allyson (Mar. 11), Michael Kaeshammer (March 25), and Grace Kelly Quartet (April 15).

For more information visit goldcoastjazz.org or call the Ticketmaster box office at 954-462-0222.

♦ INDIAN DAY From page 1A

BRIGHTON

Brighton's Indian Day was held Sept. 26 and included corn hole and horseshoe contests in the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena. Kids from age 5 and up tested their skill at catching pigs in the amphitheater as the crowd yelled out tips for success such as "grab him" over and over again and cheered them as they managed to catch one of the five pigs. After lunch consisting of 72 racks of ribs cooked by members of We Do Recover, competitions ensued outside the arena. People signed up and waited their turns for the log carry race, thatch race and skillet toss.

TAMPA/LAKELAND

A cloudy sky and light drizzle didn't put a damper on Tampa/Lakeland's Indian Day festivities as the community gathered Sept. 27 to celebrate their heritage with competitions, culture and food. Instead of skillet toss, women participated in a kettle ball toss, men showed their skill in archery and men and women tried their hands at axe throwing. Kids and adults learned new and improved existing skills in beading, sewing patchwork, basket making and carving under the cover of the culture tent.

HOLLYWOOD

The Hollywood Reservation's Indian Day was full of activities Sept. 24-25 for its community members and non-resident tribal members. Activities included arts and crafts, fry bread contest, stickball, Elanponke bingo, canoe race, health walk, field contests, bounce houses, hog chases, live



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

RICHARD CASTILLO
FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY
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Broward County Commissioner Steve Geller, left, meets with Seminole Tribal Court on Sept. 18 at tribal headquarters in Hollywood.

Broward County Commissioner Steve Geller visits Seminole Tribal Court

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribal Court welcomed Broward County Commissioner Steve Geller for a visit Sept. 18.

Geller, a former mayor of the county and a former longtime state legislator in the House and Senate, received a tour of the court and met with Director Moses Osceola, Chief Justice Joe Frank and staff for about an hour at tribal headquarters in Hollywood.

The meeting was arranged as a way for the sides to get to know each other and for the court to explain to Geller what it does and what issues on local, state and federal levels are important to the Court.

Geller, whose district includes Davie, is a past president of the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States. He discussed his previous experience dealing with the tribe as a state legislator when the tribe’s gaming business was just starting to expand after its initial bingo days. He said he is glad the tribe also has businesses outside of gaming, such as cattle, convenience stores and oil.

“It’s always wise to have eggs in more than one basket, which you have all done,” Geller said during the meeting.

The sides discussed a variety of law-related topics and areas, including some impacting the Seminole Tribe, such as state and tribal jurisdiction issues, guardianship, and the planning of the tribe’s healing to wellness court.



Broward County Commissioner Steve Geller, left, and Seminole Court Director Moses Osceola shake hands in tribal headquarters lobby.



From left to right, Chief Justice Joe Frank; Jeanine Bennet, Seminole Court judicial advisor; Luann Fuentes, Clerk of Courts; Broward County Commissioner Steve Geller; Seminole Court Director Moses Osceola; and Jackie Gonzalez-Colman, Court special projects administrator.

Seminole artist Wilson Bowers designs Pinktober pin

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock International’s 26th annual Pinktober campaign to support breast cancer research includes a pin designed by Seminole Tribe of Florida artist Wilson Bowers.

Hard Rock Shop’s description of the “Stronger Together” pin reads: “The Seminole Pinktober 2025 Pin, created with Seminole artist Wilson Bowers, honors resilience and strength. It pays tribute to Seminole women and survivors worldwide with a message of unity and perseverance. The design presents an abstract female profile, the head shaped by a pink ribbon heart with dark tones symbolizing traditional Seminole hair. Rows of sweetgrass form necklace strands, referencing basket weaving and the role of women carrying their clans. Geometric patchwork patterns complete the piece, tying Seminole culture to the ongoing fight for awareness.”

In 2022, Bowers created the 135-foot-long mural, known as “The First Mothers,” in downtown Tallahassee with fellow Seminole artist Samuel Tommie.

All of the pin’s net proceeds will benefit the American Indian Cancer Foundation to support Native Americans impacted by breast cancer.

As part of Pinktober, which runs throughout October, Hard Rock has partnered Sports Illustrated Swimsuit to offer retail pins, shirts, hoodies, hats, tumblers and tote bags in partnership with models Roshumba Williams, Jasmine Sanders and Nicole Williams-English.

Each purchase of Pinktober items contributes to breast cancer research and awareness globally. Through Hard Rock Heals Foundation, the Pinktober program has raised more than \$13 million for breast cancer research since its inception.



Hard Rock

The Pinktober pin designed by Willson Bowers.

The Bowers-designed pin and other Pinktober items are available at <https://shop.hardrock.com/featured/pinktober-collection>.

Unity by Hard Rock Mastercard cardmembers will help raise money simply by using their card during Pinktober. Thanks to Bread Financial, a small portion of every transaction made with a Unity by Hard Rock Mastercard during October will be donated to the Hard Rock Heals Foundation (up to \$75,000). For more details, visit hardrock.com/Pinktober.

Hard Rock hotels, casinos, cafes and Hard Rock Bet also have Pinktober programs and promotions.

For more information about Pinktober in Hard Rock hotels, cafes and casinos, visit hardrock.com/pinktober.

‘Water Ways’ focuses on Indigenous relationships with water

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TALLAHASSEE —The Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts’s exhibition “Water Ways: Indigenous Ecologies and Florida Heritage,” runs Sept. 18, 2025 to March 14, 2026. “Water Ways” uses “way” to explore how routes and paths shaped by water have influenced cultural geographies, and the methods, manners, and styles — “ways” through which Indigenous communities have expressed their relationships with water.

The exhibition aims to cultivate a deeper awareness of Indigenous material cultures and ecologies in Florida, in conversation with global perspectives from the Americas

and Asia.

“Water Ways” also invites reflection on pressing environmental issues — including water access, ecological change, and climate resilience — by highlighting how communities have long understood and responded to the challenges of living with water. It features historical objects from regional collections and MoFA’s permanent holdings, alongside works by three contemporary artists—Wilson Bowers (Seminole Tribe of Florida), Harold Garcia V (El Quinto), and Samboleap Tol—whose practices engage with themes of Indigeneity, hydrology, and heritage in Florida and beyond.

For more information visit mofa.fsu.edu.



FSU College of Arts & Sciences

“Water Ways: Indigenous Ecologies and Florida Heritage” is at the FSU Museum of Fine Arts.



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Seminole Hard Rock Tampa donates \$100,000 to local Hispanic organizations

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TAMPA — To kick off its “My Rhythm. My Flavor. ¡Mi Gente!” Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa donated \$10,000 to ten local Hispanic organizations, including Coalition of Hispanic Artists, Course of Action Foundation, Enterprising Latinas, Hispanic Heritage Scholarship Fund, Hispanic Heritage Network of Orange County, Hispanic Outreach Center, Hispanic Star, Krewe of Sant’ Yago Education Foundation, Roberto Clemente Foundation and University of South Florida - Latino Scholarship Program.

“Hispanic Heritage Month is a powerful reminder of the strength rooted in Latin culture, its people, and their rich history,” Anaclaudia Solorzano, director of Latin marketing for Seminole Gaming & Seminole Hard Rock, said in a press release. “We’re honored to stand alongside local organizations that uplift and empower the region’s Hispanic communities every day.”

The Hispanic Heritage Month celebration runs Sept. 15-Oct. 15 and



Heritage organizations receive \$10,000 checks from Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa as part of Hispance Heritage Month.

features a variety of Latin-themed offerings with culture, exhibits, food and music. For more information visit DescubreTuRitmo.com/Tampa.

Hard Rock Cafe NY wins best burger contest

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Sweet & Smoky Burger from Hard Rock Cafe New York captured Hard Rock Cafe’s annual World Burger Tour competition.

The champion burger consists of:
2 Smashed Burger Patties | Fried Cheesecake Bite | Monterey Jack Cheese | Bacon | Garlic Aioli | House-Made BBQ Sauce | Smokey Onion Frizzles | Served with Seasoned Fries.

Tribal casino hotel conference to be held in California

STAFF REPORT

The 17th annual Tribal Casino Hotel Development & Innovation Conference will be held Oct. 20-21 at Harrah’s Resort Southern California in Funner, California.

The conference focuses on the design and development of tribal-owned casinos, resorts, and hotels. Tribal leaders and industry professionals will discuss the most

relevant topics in the casino and hospitality business. The conference also features advancements in technology, the latest in gaming trends, renovation and expansion plans and government legislation all mean constant change to the gaming industry.

For more information visit nativenationevents.org or call 201-857-5333.

Rod Stewart to play Seminole Hard Rock Tampa

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TAMPA — Legendary two-time Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inducted singer, songwriter and performer Rod Stewart has announced he’s returning to Hard Rock Event Center at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at 8 p.m.

Tickets starting at \$275 will be available Oct. 3, at 10 a.m. via casino.hardrock.com

and Ticketmaster.

Fans can access venue presale tickets Wednesday, September 1, at 10 a.m. through Seminole Hard Rock Tampa’s X, Instagram, or Facebook pages.

Drawing from his illustrious 50+ year catalog of hit songs, Rod personally creates a unique setlist for each show, taking audiences on an unprecedented ride through every era of his career with chart-toppers like, “Maggie May,” “Do

You Think I’m Sexy,” “Some Guys Have All the Luck,” “Hot Legs,” “Infatuation,” “You’re in My Heart,” “Rhythm of My Heart,” “Young Turks,” “Tonight’s The Night,” and “Forever Young,” as well as a few surprises and legendary covers in the mix. Fans will experience an extraordinary night of entertainment with a dynamic stage production and his award-winning 12-piece band and backup vocalists.

Hard Rock International recognized for human trafficking prevention efforts

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock International was recognized by ECPAT International as one of this year’s Top Members of The Code, becoming the first company in the gaming sector to be honored for its human trafficking prevention efforts. Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming also provided updates on anti-trafficking efforts, including new student education programs.

Hard Rock International recognized by ECPAT International as one of the Top Members of the Code for human trafficking prevention efforts

ECPAT International is a leading organization that coordinates research, advocacy and action to end the exploitation of vulnerable children. Supported by ECPAT, The Code is an international framework that equips the travel and tourism industry with resources and training to protect children from sexual exploitation. Member companies receive operational tools to help identify and prevent exploitation while showing their dedication to child protection in an industry that offenders frequently target. Hard Rock became a signatory of The Code in 2022.

“Everyone at Hard Rock International is incredibly honored to be recognized by ECPAT International and The Code for the work we are doing to combat human trafficking,” said Stephanie Piimauna, Senior Vice President of People & Inclusion at Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming. “Human trafficking is a critical issue that demands sustained action from industry leaders. While we are proud of this milestone, we view it as motivation to continue our efforts to protect vulnerable individuals worldwide.”

To commemorate World Tourism Day on Sept. 27, Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming participated in ECPAT’s “Tourism and Sustainable Transformation” event. Paul Pellizzari, vice president of Global Social Responsibility at Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming, provided video comments, and Durante Blais-Billie, Hard Rock’s social

responsibility pecialist and a member of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, presented at a webinar highlighting Hard Rock’s various anti-trafficking initiatives and how these comprehensive efforts empower every team member to embody key company mottos including Take Time to Be Kind and All is One.

Hard Rock’s anti-trafficking efforts continue to expand, with new data showing significant growth in program reach and impact:

- Social Identity Quest (SIQ) Program: This year, another 500,000 students across the United States and Mexico have completed Hard Rock’s SIQ educational program with PACT (Protect All Children from Trafficking), the US affiliate of ECPAT International, and an organization dedicated to the elimination of the sexual exploitation of children. For the fall, Hard Rock just released three new SIQ programs: a Spanish-language version, a program for grades 4–6 focusing on social media & information sharing safety and another program for grades 7–12 focusing on healthy online relationships, as well as trafficking awareness. In addition, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recognized SIQ as a national best practice in 2025.

- Supporting PACT: Hard Rock donated \$100,000 to PACT in 2025 to date through the Change for Change initiative, which allows guests at participating Hard Rock casinos to donate change from cash tickets to the Hard Rock Heals Foundation® for anti-human trafficking efforts.

- Team Member Training: Hard Rock has empowered guest-facing team members with more than 65,000 completed sessions at its hotels and casinos through comprehensive anti-trafficking training in 2025 to date, creating a frontline network of professionals equipped to recognize warning signs and respond effectively to protect potential victims.

To learn more about Hard Rock and Seminole Gaming’s human trafficking prevention efforts, visit hardrock.com/social-responsibility.

Casino emergency safety training comes to Hollywood



Calvin Tiger (2)

Above and below, Seminole Police Department, Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue, Emergency Management and casino security continued their casino safety training sessions, including role playing active shooter situations, in early September at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. Ballrooms were used to simulate incidents. The tribalwide sessions are held annually at tribal gaming facilities.

Hard Rock Atlantic City walk benefits suicide prevention

FROM PRESS RELEASE

ATLANTIC CITY — On Sept. 6, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City hosted the Out of the Darkness Walk for the sixth consecutive year, in support of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). Since 2018, Hard Rock Atlantic City has united the local community to raise awareness and funds for suicide prevention, surpassing \$1 million in total contributions.

For the second year,

under the leadership of Hard Rock Atlantic City General Manager Michael Sampson, the Casino Association of New Jersey (CANJ) participated in the walk and helped to raise more than \$300,000. This historic partnership showcased employee participation from every Atlantic City casino property.

AFSP is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy to take action against this leading cause of death.



Hard Rock Atlantic City

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City hosted the Out of the Darkness Walk for the sixth consecutive year, in support of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Premier visit in Ottawa



Hard Rock Ottawa

Ontario Premier Doug Ford visited Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Ottawa on Sept. 22. The premier is the head of government in the province. “Since opening our doors on July 3, we’ve been proud to serve as one of the region’s largest employers and a vibrant destination for entertainment, hospitality, and community connection. Premier Ford’s visit was a chance to showcase the energy and vision driving our team forward, and the exciting experiences already enjoyed by so many visitors.” Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Ottawa posted on social media.

Coconut Creek’s NYY Steak earns accolades

FROM PRESS RELEASE

COCONUT CREEK — NYY Steak at Seminole Casino Coconut Creek climbed the ranks of the Best Casino Restaurants in the U.S., earning second place in the USA Today 10Best Readers’ Choice Awards for 2025.

The recognition reflects the restaurant’s ongoing success, following a 3rd place finish in 2024, and further establishes its reputation as a premier dining destination in South Florida and across the national gaming industry.

“We are honored to see NYY Steak continue to rise among the nation’s best,” said Ryan Makiell, vice president of Marketing at Seminole Casino Coconut Creek.

Nominated by an expert panel of editors and industry contributors, NYY Steak was one of 20 restaurants selected nationwide for consideration. Public voting ultimately elevated the property to second place among the top 10 finalists.

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Renewable Energy & Sustainability
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January 26-28, 2026

Conservation of the Betty Mae Tiger Jumper memorial sculpture

BY JESSICA RUSCH
Objects Conservator, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

BIG CYPRESS — The Betty Mae Tiger Jumper memorial sculpture was created for display in the former Hollywood Multipurpose Center, which opened in February 1984 to honor Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and her legacy of advocating for the health and well-being of Seminole people. For decades, the sculpture stood as a reminder of her pioneering work as the first female chairwoman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and her lifelong dedication to community health. In July 2020, the wooden



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Betty Mae Tiger Jumper sculpture at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Seminole Museum's Conservation Laboratory.

trunk and bronze plaque were transferred to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum for conservation treatment, as years of exposure had caused the materials to weaken and deteriorate.

Since its arrival, the sculpture has been treated by several conservators at the museum's conservation lab, with each stage of work improving its overall stability and condition. Early treatments focused on the wooden trunk that frames the bronze plaque. When it first entered the lab, the wood was in fragile condition, infested with pests and their boreholes. The trunk was also visibly discolored and abraded from a lack of protective sealant and prolonged exposure to outdoor elements. Conservators stabilized the trunk by cleaning its surface, removing pests, and applying conservation grade coatings to protect it from further damage. Thanks to these earlier treatments, the sculpture's wooden base regained much of its strength and resilience.

Building on that progress, my assistant, Rosa Martinez, and I recently turned our attention to the bronze plaque at the center of the sculpture. Over time, the plaque had oxidized, creating the greenish blue patina most people associate with aged bronze. While patina can sometimes be stable and even valued for its beauty and historic character, in this case it had developed into

bronze disease. Bronze disease is a form of active corrosion that spreads across the surface, causing pitting, disfiguration, and long-term instability if left untreated. In some cases, it can even spread to nearby metals, embedding itself and continuing to grow.

To address this serious condition, we used a combination of mechanical and chemical cleaning methods. A rotary tool with fine wire brushes allowed us to carefully remove loose corrosion from the surface, while a specially prepared chelating solution lifted deeper layers of corrosion without harming the underlying metal. This treatment required patience and precision, taking two full weeks to complete.

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



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Left, bronze plaque before conservation treatment in 2020 with greenish blue corrosion. Right, the same plaque in 2025 after several rounds of mechanical and chemical cleaning to remove corrosion.

Each session involved cycles of brushing, applying solution, monitoring the chemical reaction, and neutralizing the surface before any damage could occur. Timing was critical, since the solution could etch the bronze if left on the surface for too long. In progress photos, you can see when the bright green corrosion lifted away, evidence that

the chemical bond with the metal ions had been broken and the surface was stabilizing, allowing us to remove the chelating solution along with the blueish green color.

♦ See CONSERVATION on page 9A

First Nations actor Graham Greene leaves legacy steeped in Hollywood films

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

Graham Greene, one of the most established Indigenous actors of all-time who appeared in some of the 1990s top films, died Sept. 1 at the age of 73.

Greene, a member of the First Nations' Oneida Nation, was born on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada. He was known for his work in film, including a landmark role as Kicking Bird in the 1990 hit "Dances with Wolves." His performance earned him an Academy Award nomination for best actor in a supporting role; the Oscar went to Joe Pesci in "Good Fellas."

Some of Greene's other notable films are "Thunderheart" (1992), "Maverick" (1994), "Die Hard with a Vengeance" (1995), "The Green Mile" (1999) and "Wind River" (2017).

Greene also had a long career in television dating back to 1981 when he starred in "Read All About It!" More recently, he appeared in "Tulsa King" in 2024. Greene also appeared in episodes of the Hulu hit show "Reservation Dogs" in 2023.

Greene had an association with the Seminole Tribe. He was a featured guest multiple times at the Native Reel Cinema Festival, held annually in conjunction with the tribe's Tribal Fair & Pow Wow in Hollywood.

"I grew up watching Mr. Greene aka "Unc", recalled Everett Osceola, creator of the film festival. "On the silver screen from 'Dances with Wolves' to 'Reservation Dogs,' he was so versatile in his performance. He could play serious and stoic, to funny and great comedic timing. His role in 'Skins' is one of my favorite films of his. [It] really resonated with me. He was able to capture everyday people that I grew up with such as uncles [and] older cousins."

Osceola remembered how humble Greene was when they first met. Greene's most recent appearance at the festival came earlier this year alongside other Native actors and directors.

Legendary Native actor Wes Studi first worked with Greene in "Dances with Wolves."

"I've had the pleasure of working with him and knowing him off screen since. The world has lost a true talent and advocate. It's a



Calvin Tiger
Graham Greene, second from right, speaks at the 2023 Native Reel Cinema Festival in Hollywood.

sad day indeed. Rest in peace great warrior," Studi posted on Facebook.

In Canada, Greene was fondly remembered as one of the country's great actors.

"He brought depth, dignity and authenticity to every character he portrayed, delivering countless unforgettable performances," Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, said in a statement.

One paragraph in his obituary

on an Ontario funeral home site read:

"What we will miss most is the man behind the camera - his quiet strength, his deep laugh, his way of uplifting others while he walked forward. He kept building a bridge for the next generation, brick by brick, so that young Indigenous actors could cross with their languages, their memories, and their dreams intact."



ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

October 2025

Sometimes, normal things have very fantastical names. The resurrection fern may sound like something out of a TV show, however, it is a plant that exists in the real world, and there is a good chance you have come across it.

The resurrection fern is the most widespread epiphyte plant in North America. This fern is found throughout the Southeast, as far north as New York and as far west as Texas (*Resurrection Fern*, n.d.). Epiphytes are plants that grow on other plants or objects for physical support rather than in the soil. Unlike some other epiphytes, like vines, resurrection ferns do not steal water from other plants. This fern mostly grows on trees, but will also grow on certain rocks (*Pleopeltis Michauxiana*, n.d.). Its name comes from the fact that this fern sometimes appears to die in periods of dryness and then is "resurrected" again when it is moistened. The resurrection fern can lose 97% of its water without dying, while most plants can only lose around 10% of their water. They reproduce by spores, not seeds (*Resurrection Fern*, n.d.).

Its scientific name is *Pleopeltis michauxiana*, although it was once called *Pleopeltis polypodioides* (Weakley, 2015). Unlike some of the plants in the THPO's Collections, the resurrection fern does have historic uses. The Seminoles used this fern in mixtures to treat chronic sickness and certain kinds of mental problems. They also used it for certain medicines used in childbirth (Austin 2004).



THPO



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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - OCTOBER 2025

THE SEMINOLE WAR: THE ARMED OCCUPATION ACT

Ten days before General Worth declared the "Florida War" over, the United States Congress passed an act designed to encourage the continued settlement of Florida by armed men. Officially titled "An Act to provide for the armed occupation and settlement of the unsettled part of the peninsula of East Florida" (5 Stat. 502) but more generally known as the Armed Occupation Act, the law offered 160 acres of Seminole land to those who met certain conditions. They needed to be a white man over 18 years of age and able to bear arms, they were required to build a home on the land and cultivate it for five full years, and the land needed to be at least 2 miles away from the closest military garrison. The distance was designed to place armed civilians, often full families, in land occupied by the Seminole.

By August of 1843 over three hundred claims had been applied for, with the number nearing one thousand by 1848. By then Billy Bowlegs, recognized as the Seminole leader, had established a friendly relationship with the new Indian Agent Captain John Casey. Still the claims continued and further expansion pushed the Tribe further south and east into the wetlands, and showed the effectiveness of a strategy of pressure and containment over direct attack.

FORM OF AFFIDAVIT.

I, A. B., being a settler in Florida, on the 4th August, 1842, and being about to apply to the proper authority for the benefit of the act of Congress, approved on the day aforesaid, entitled "An act to provide for the armed occupation and settlement of the unsettled part of the peninsula of East Florida," do hereby declare, on oath, that I am not the owner of one hundred and sixty acres of land.
A. B.

Sworn and subscribed before me, an acting justice of the peace, for East Florida, this _____ day of _____, A. D. 184____.
C. D.,
Justice of the Peace.

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

Above: An affidavit template found in the "Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office communicating an abstract of permits granted under the acts for the armed occupation of Florida" US Senate, April 27, 1848.



Health

Cherokee Nation to take over operation of last hospital on Oklahoma reservation operated by feds

BY EMMA MURPHY
Oklahoma Voice

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Cherokee Nation has signed an agreement with the federal government to take over operation of the Claremore Indian Hospital.

The Claremore facility is the last Indian Health Service facility on the Cherokee Nation’s land still operated by the federal government, according to a news release.

The transfer, signed by Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr., is effective Oct. 1.

Hoskin said the transfer is an example of how self governance continues to “transform” the Cherokee Nation.

“This is more than a transfer of management,” Hoskin said in a statement. “It is a moment in which decisions about health care are being placed directly into the hands of the Cherokee and Native people, the very ones who rely on this hospital most.”

The Cherokee Nation’s health system

already handles 2.6 million patient visits per year across 11 health facilities.

“Tribal Nations know best how to provide culturally appropriate care for their citizens,” Kennedy said.

About \$11 million has already been committed by the Cherokee Nation to improve the Claremore facility. Another \$244 million has been authorized for a “state-of-the-art replacement facility” that is expected to open in 2027.

While the new facility suspends operations, the tribe’s health care system will absorb the Claremore area’s inpatient cases, according to a news release. Claremore’s inpatient average was about four patients per day.

The tribal nation will double its inpatient capacity with a new Tahlequah hospital and the new Claremore health campus will be designed for future expansions.

Hiring preference was given to employees of Claremore Indian Hospital and 80% who reapplied were offered positions, according to a news release.

NYC From page 1A

“The concert was thrilling and because of the overall message of the festival, the energy was different from any other festival I’ve been to or performed at,” Battiest said. “The New York crowd gave their hearts to every performer. It was a night of joy and positivity and wanting to do good in the world. We felt it onstage and off the stage.”

Mag 7 opened the concert with a land acknowledgement by members of the Shinnecock and Lenape tribes followed by a drum group from the Shinnecock Tribe.

“There hasn’t been a land acknowledgement in Central Park that I’m aware of,” said Emcee One, a member of Mag 7. “It was significant to do it there. The crowd was locked in, focused and engaged.

We all came together under the canopy of kindness.”

After the acknowledgement, Mag 7 went on stage and performed as the video played behind them.

“It was one for the books,” Native said. “It was a great experience to be on that stage in Central Park and be back with Mag 7 again. It felt like a dream come true to be able to show the world that we are indigenous people and also modern artists. To go from the drum to one of our songs was really a special moment.”

In 2017, Mag 7 won an MTV Video Music Award for “Stand Up / Stand N Rock”, which was a protest song against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Taboo, of the Black Eyed Peas, formed the group, but was on tour and unable to perform at the Global Citizen concert. Supaman, another member

of Mag 7, was also on tour and unable to perform.

The members of the group who performed were Drezus - Plains Cree Nation, PJ Vegas - Shoshone / Yaqui, Kahara Hodges - Diné (Navajo) Nation, Doc Native - Seminole Tribe of Florida, Spencer Battiest - Seminole Tribe of Florida and Emcee One - Osage / Potawatomi Nations. They were joined by hoop dancer Eric Hernandez, (Lumbee) and members of the Lenape and Shinnecock Tribes.

“It was really an honor to represent my Seminole people,” Native said. “My brother and I carry our tribe with us everywhere we go. To be able to do that on a stage where millions of people could see us made me happy to be in the position to bring awareness of our people.”



Courtesy photo

Mag 7 performs at the Global Citizen Festival in New York City's Central Park on Sept. 27. The music performances, which also included Cardi B. and Shakira, drew 60,000 fans.



Courtesy photos (3)

Above, Spencer Battiest sings at the Global Citizen Festival on Sept. 27 in Central Park. At right, Doc Native is highlighted on a giant videoboard. Below, members of Mag 7 perform.



Indigenized Energy and partners complete off-grid solar project for Northern Cheyenne ranch operations

FROM PRESS RELEASE

ASHLAND, Mont. — Indigenized Energy, a non-profit organization dedicated to building renewable energy solutions in Native American communities, announced Sept. 17 the completion of the Off-Grid Buffalo Project, a renewable energy installation bringing power, sovereignty, and cultural revitalization to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

The 36-kilowatt off-grid solar energy system, paired with a 58 kilowatt-hour of battery storage, now powers critical ranch operations, supporting the tribe's buffalo program and broader food and energy sovereignty goals.

Located near Ashland, Montana, the solar and battery storage system replaces diesel generators and provides sustainable and reliable power in a location too remote for a traditional grid connection. The

system now powers a conditioning pasture, hydraulic buffalo chute, operations building, and watering infrastructure—supporting a herd of more than 300 buffalo, which are central to the tribe's identity, cultural restoration, and land stewardship.

"This isn't just about electricity—it's about power in every sense of the word," said Cody Two Bears, Founder and CEO of Indigenized Energy. "Power to manage your land, feed your community, and decide your own future. That's what energy sovereignty looks like."

The project was made possible through a collaboration among tribal leaders, nonprofit partners, and renewable energy companies. Indigenized Energy led development and coordination, with Freedom Forever serving as the project contractor, equipment and training from Jinko Solar, and major philanthropic funding from the Honnold Foundation and Empowered by Light.

CONSERVATION From page 8A

Once the plaque was cleaned, the next step was consolidation and sealing. For the wooden trunk, we applied Paraloid B72, a conservation grade resin prepared in our lab that reinforces weakened areas and offers protection against humidity, temperature shifts, insects, and even oils from human touch. For the bronze plaque, we applied a

thin wax coating, buffed to a soft sheen. This wax both protects against future oxidation and visually restores the surface, bringing back the shine the plaque would have had when first installed.

With treatment completed, the sculpture is now stable and protected for the long term. It will be reinstalled at the new Betty Mae Jumper Medical Clinic, where it can continue to serve as a record of her leadership and advocacy.

OCTOBER 18, 2025 TO MARCH 29, 2026
Yakne Seminoli/Seminole World
In partnership with Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum



Art and history – present and past – intersect in *Yakne Seminoli*, a vibrant exhibition in partnership with Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum at HistoryMiami Museum. Roughly translated as “Seminole World,” the title reflects the idea of “all our traditions coming together”. The Seminole people have a history of adapting, surviving and thriving despite irreversible changes in lifestyle, government, and environment. They have also helped shaped the Florida we know today. This exhibit will showcase an impressive number of Seminole artists and a diverse collection of art, revealing how these artists bring that history and culture to life. Come experience how diversity brings a community together and learn how Seminole history is Florida history.

Some of the artists featured will be: Wilson Bowers, Elgin Jumper, Erika Deitz, Brian Zepeda, Gordon Oliver Wareham, CeCe Thomas, Brody Osceola, Jojo Osceola, Donna Frank and Haley Garcia.

SEMINOLE SCENES



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Cheyenne Kippenberger, center, attends the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling's annual conference that was held Sept. 12-13 at the Daytona Grande Oceanfront Resort in Daytona Beach. Kippenberger was the conference's keynote speaker. She is a former Miss Florida Seminole and Miss Indian World who has served as guest and keynote speakers at several functions in recent years. She is founder and CEO of C.K. Tribal Consulting. "Thank you so much to the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling (AARC) for having me as your 2025 Conference Keynote speaker!," she posted on Instagram. "Cultural and historical competency is a crucial component to mental health care and research, especially for Native and Indigenous communities! Our experiences and cultures shape our communities and worldly views. I am here today because of the mental health care I had access to in the lowest point of my life. I'm grateful to still be here and for the career I've been blessed with- to share my story, advocate on behalf of my people and help to make the world kinder, more understanding and better for everyone."



BLAST FROM THE PAST: Alligator wrestler Josiah Alan Jumper is shown battling a gator at a tourist attraction in Lake George, New York, in 1959. Jumper's son, Elgin, is an artist, poet, writer and contributor to the Tribune. Elgin has a story on page 6C in this issue of the Tribune.



BC BREAKFAST: Former Chairman and President Mitchell Cypress was among those in attendance at the Ahfachkee School's Grandparents Day on Sept. 5. The program included breakfast and opportunities for students to show their appreciation for their grandparents and other family members.



CURRENT AND FUTURE LEADERS: Above, elected tribal leaders attend inauguration day for the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's Student Council on Sept. 25. From left to right are Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge along with Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Yani Smith. At right, PECS' Student Council for the 2025-26 academic year. See page B1 for more about the inauguration.

2025-2026 Student Council

Hayden Nunez
Chairwoman

Ariella Gopher Kindergarten	Skyler Smith 1st Grade	Evianna Nunez 2nd Grade	Everett Leiner 3rd Grade	Jayda Torres 4th Grade
Messariya Hardy 5th Grade	Serenity Bishop 6th Grade	Ianna Cypress 7th Grade	Jaiden Fludd 8th Grade	



Seminole Tribe reservations continue to be busy with construction projects, including a new Brighton Preschool, as seen above Sept. 23. It is being built across the street from the current preschool.



Above and below, Hollywood's new senior center is starting to take shape as seen Sept. 23. The center is being built close to the reservation's U.S. 441 entrance.



Construction of the new Recreation Department and Boys & Girls Club building is well underway in Immokalee, where it is expected to open around March 2026. The facility will also include a community pool.



NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

New Mexico tribal leaders push to protect Chaco

Suspended thousands of feet in the New Mexico skies Sunday, Pojoaque Pueblo Gov. Jenelle Roybal could see the indelible impressions of Pueblo Bonito nestled under Fajada Butte.

Built by Ancient Pueblo society, the half dome structure constitutes the most recognizable archaeological site in the Chaco Culture National Historical Park in the state’s northwestern corner.

However, recent federal efforts to revoke a 10-mile buffer zone for oil and gas development around Chaco Culture National Historical Park threaten the sacred site for New Mexico Pueblos, the Hopi Indians of Arizona and the Navajo Nation.

In a plane, the buffer just across the butte is crossed in minutes. Beyond it extends miles of oil and gas development in the Mancos Shale in the San Juan Basin. One of the busiest gas producing areas in the U.S. from the air, the land is marked with the straight cuts of roads ending in oil pads and pumpjacks.

“That land was really torn up — it’s just roads everywhere, that land’s never going to go back to the way it was,” Roybal said from the Double Eagle II airport in Albuquerque [Sept. 14].

Roybal said protecting the sacred site is crucial not only for tribal sovereignty, but also for holding the connection to the site’s sacred value.

“Any land in New Mexico impacted affects my people,” she said.

The flight, provided by volunteer pilots with the conservation organization LightHawk and the Acoma-based Native Land Institute, kicks off a week of advocacy during which at least 10 Pueblo governors are headed to Washington D.C. to meet with U.S. Congress members to press for further protections as the Trump administration vows to “unleash” oil and gas development.

In April, members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation re-introduced federal legislation to make permanent a Biden-era ban on development within 10 miles of the site. But a competing Republican-backed bill and the Trump Administration’s efforts to unwind the order are threatening that progress, the delegation said in a June letter.

Roybal recently went to Washington D.C. with other tribal governors to meet with U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, to urge further protections for preventing oil and gas encroachment around Chaco Canyon.

She said Burgum, who personally attended the August meeting, seemed receptive to visiting Chaco Canyon in the future.

“He definitely wanted to continue the conversation,” Roybal said of the meeting with Burgum. “He was very interested in coming out and looking. I think that’s important, it’s where they need to see their impact.”

Joey Sanchez, a former governor of Santa Ana Pueblo and now a tribal liaison with Native Lands Institute, said protecting Chaco means keeping “a living museum” alive and connects generations of Pueblo people throughout time.

“When you go to touch the walls, that spirituality comes back to life with you,” he said.

- Source New Mexico

Anishinabek Nation calls for respectful and flexible firearms regulations to support Indigenous hunting rights

With the fall season, the Anishinabek Nation continues its commitment to upholding the rights and traditions of its First Nations, particularly in the area of sustainable and culturally significant harvesting (hunting) practices, according to a press release from the Anishinabek Nation.

“As the federal government continues to implement firearms regulations, we are advocating for policies that recognize and accommodate First Nation practices,” Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Linda Debassige said in the release. “We need to ensure that they are protected and respected, including the statement by the Supreme Court of Canada in the R. v. Sparrow decision that Aboriginal people are entitled to use their ‘preferred means of exercising their rights’. Further, the same court in the Blueberry River First Nation decision acknowledged that for some First Nations, industrial and commercial development in their territories is increasing the amount of effort and investment required to exercise their rights. We are pleased to see that recent firearms regulations have included some important exemptions that acknowledge First Nation rights under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Specifically, Indigenous hunters have alternative means for safety certification, including Elders and others with sufficient knowledge of safety and the law.”

However, the Anishinabek Nation urges federal and provincial regulators to:

- Continue to recognize and respect First Nation hunting rights and their preferred means of exercising them in their use of all classes of firearms purchased prior to the change in regulations.

- Understand that increased industrialization and commercialization of our territories means that First Nations must become more efficient in exercising their rights, including utilizing different models of firearms.

- Provide clear exemptions and allowances for First Nations protected Section 35 rights.
- Ensure licensing requirements are

flexible for First Nations hunters, respecting their sovereignty and traditional ways, and the impact on loss of culture, including the cultural practice of harvesting.

“Our communities remain dedicated to responsible firearm use, and we seek partnerships with government agencies to ensure our traditional practices are preserved and supported with regulation that is respectful of First Nation Section 35 rights,” Grand Council Chief Debassige said in the release.

- From press release

Blackfeet Tribal Council bans kratom sales, use on reservation

The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council has banned the sale, use and possession of kratom, an unregulated plant-derived substance that can have addictive properties from the tribe’s reservation in north-central Montana.

The move, enacted via a Sept. 12 resolution, will criminally penalize retailers selling kratom products, which aren’t currently regulated at the state or federal level. Blackfeet Law Enforcement Services did not immediately respond to a question about the potential penalties for retailers.

Tribal Councilmember Lyle Rutherford said the council has not yet established criminal penalties for possessing kratom because the body must first “figure out a mechanism to enforce it.”

“We need to make sure we have enough law enforcement to do it,” he said. “We’re supposed to have a discussion this week with law enforcement and the courts.”

Blackfeet officials said the move, an apparent first among tribal governments in Montana, is intended to prevent the proliferation of potentially addictive products that can have opioid-like effects. The tribe in 2022 declared a state of emergency for fentanyl and drug overdoses, citing 17 overdoses and four drug-related deaths in one week.

“The main component is we just don’t want any of these forthcoming issues back on our plate,” Rutherford said. “Because if you look at Indian Country, or if you look across the nation, we have a nationwide issue when it comes to opiates.”

Kratom, often marketed as a mood stabilizer, has become widely sold in gas stations, vape shops and online. Some users have touted it as a way to transition off of using other substances, including alcohol and opioids.

But kratom products are often synthesized, creating inconsistent chemical properties and potencies. Some health researchers have said that synthetic products — particularly those with high levels of 7-hydroxymitragynine, also known as 7-OH — pose a higher addiction risk because of their effect on the brain’s opioid receptors.

7-OH products have recently come under fire by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration within President Donald Trump’s Department of Health and Human Services. Officials there, including Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., have said they intend to restrict access to those kratom derivatives through the Controlled Substances Act.

In their September resolution, the Blackfeet tribal council emphasized “the potential for dependence and withdrawal symptoms similar to those experienced with opioids.” The resolution also noted the lack of current enforcement by the FDA. The Blackfeet Tribe Department of Revenue sent a notice about the ban to businesses that sell or promote kratom on Sept. 22.

- Montana Free Press

Osage Nation reacquires sacred mound site

The Osage Nation Historic Preservation Office (ONHPO) announced Sept. 22 the complete reacquisition of Sugarloaf Mound.

This sacred site was constructed between 600 and 1200 AD when the Osage people inhabited Missouri. Sugarloaf Mound is the oldest known human-made structure in St. Louis. It is the only surviving Native American mound among the hundreds that once existed in the area, often referred to as “Mound City.”

The reacquisition efforts began in 2008 with the purchase of about one-third of the mound. Now, after seventeen years, it is once again entirely under Osage control. CounterPublic, a St. Louis-based arts and culture organization, played a crucial role in this reacquisition by providing advocacy and financial support.

“The Osage Nation Historic Preservation Office has been dedicated to securing Sugarloaf Mound for the Nation, and we consider this work an honor,” Dr. Andrea Hunter, Osage Nation Historic Preservation Officer, said in a press release. “It has been a long 17-year journey, and I am thrilled to finally see the entire mound come under Osage Nation control. We are extremely grateful for the support of CounterPublic in making this happen; they have been and continue to be an excellent partner in this preservation effort.”

The Osage Nation has significant historical ties to the St. Louis area and considers the mound a sacred site. Oral histories from the Dhegiha-Siouan people, along with linguistic studies and archaeological evidence, indicate that Osage ancestors have inhabited the area for over a thousand years. Archaeologists believe the mound may have been either a burial mound from the Woodland period or a platform mound from the Mississippian period, constructed roughly between AD 600 and 1200 during the time the Osage occupied Missouri. This period corresponds with when St. Louis was home to a major

Mississippian civic-ceremonial center, which had connections to Cahokia and the East St. Louis Mound Group. European-American settlers initially repurposed mounds for various uses, including houses, beer gardens, and other structures, before they began to completely destroy them. By 1875, nearly all the mounds had been leveled. The mound was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 17, 1984. In 1928, a house was constructed at the summit of Sugarloaf, which the Osage Nation purchased in 2009. However, this house was demolished in 2017. In 2025, the Osage Nation, in partnership with Counterpublic, successfully negotiated the transfer of the two properties that make up the remaining mound back to the Osage Nation.

- From press release

Shawnee Tribe, business partners celebrate tribal casino expansion in Oklahoma Panhandle

The only tribal casino in the Oklahoma Panhandle, the Golden Mesa Casino, is expanding. Leaders involved in the project said this \$78 million investment will boost not only the city of Guymon’s economy, but the welfare of Shawnee tribal citizens.

After opening the Golden Mesa’s doors in 2019, the Shawnee Tribe and its partners are celebrating another economic milestone: the expansion of its Panhandle casino. The addition to the casino includes an RV park, nearly 100 hotel rooms and an 80,000 square-foot gaming floor.

The investment has doubled the Golden Mesa employee workforce to 380 employees and will contribute to services for Shawnee tribal citizens. Chief of the Shawnee Tribe, Ben Barnes, said that is worth celebrating.

“All of the benefits and programs that these dollars go towards is things like behavioral health opportunities, substance abuse, rehab, scholarships, first-time homebuyer assistance [and] children’s back-to-school programs,” Barnes said. “We know that’s only going to continue to grow as the tribe grows, and as this opportunity allows us to grow those programs.”

Where Golden Mesa now stands off Highway 54 is the first land that was put into trust for the Shawnee Tribe, according to federal documents.

The tribe, headquartered in northeast Oklahoma, is landless, or without a reservation — making it even more substantial when the land in Guymon, which now houses the tribe’s first and only casino-resort, was put into trust.

Bill Lance is the Secretary of State for the Chickasaw Nation, one of the partners on the project through Global Gaming Solutions. The company manages the operations at Golden Mesa Casino and Resort and is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Chickasaw Nation.

Lance recalled the casino’s infancy when the Shawnee Chief at the time, Ron Sparkman, was trying to figure out where to build.

“We thought through it with what Chief Sparkman,” Bill Lance said. “We knew that no other tribe had jurisdiction in that area. So we weren’t going to receive any tribal opposition if we went into an area that was not a territory or reservation of another tribe. And we did some market studies and really determined Guymon could be a really good market for this facility.”

The studies were right. The casino created 175 jobs and about \$4 million in annual payroll, according to a statement from the Golden Mesa.

Guymon City Manager Mike Shannon called the facility a “dream come true” for the rural city.

“When you leave Guymon, headed west, what do you see?” Shannon asked. “We see the Golden Mesa Casino. And what I see as a city manager is economic development. People coming into our town, coming through our town, coming out here to enjoy this facility.”

The grand opening of the Golden Mesa Casino and Resort took place [in August] and is now officially open to the public. All those who celebrated the opening — including Barnes, Shannon and Lance — said they are eager to continue the partnerships and economic growth that began years ago.

“It’s going to allow us to plan growth for our future, not just for the next two to four years, but for the next generation,” Barnes said. “Shawnee citizens will see their lives improved, but we also get to see that improvement here in the experiences and opportunities here in Texas County, out in the Panhandle [and] here in Guymon, Oklahoma.”

- KOSU (Stillwater, Okla.)

Lawsuit from Ho-Chunk Nation accuses online platform of illegal sports betting in Wisconsin

A Native tribe in Wisconsin says an online platform is running an illegal sports-betting enterprise.

The Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court [in August], accusing a company called Kalshi of breaking state, federal and tribal laws that regulate gambling.

In Wisconsin, sports betting is mostly illegal, except at tribal casinos. Those tribes operate under agreements with the state.

But Kalshi has an app and website that allows people to put money on the outcome of events, including whether a team will win or lose.

That platform is accessible 24/7 across the country, including on Ho-Chunk tribal lands, the Ho-Chunk Nation’s lawsuit notes.

Kalshi has argued that its platform does not amount to sports gambling. Instead, the

company says it’s regulated as a financial exchange because it allows people to place trades on the outcome of future events.

Ho-Chunk Nation President Jon Greendeer says that’s clearly false.

“It’s very profitable for them to make this argument as long as they can, even though any court of competent jurisdiction is going to see right off the bat, as they have in the past, that this is clearly a gambling platform,” Greendeer said in an interview with WPR. “I don’t think there’s anyone that is confused about the operation that they’re doing.”

The suit also accuses Kalshi of false advertising through statements including one that describes Kalshi as the “The First Nationwide Legal Sports Betting Platform” and another that says “Sports Betting Legal in all 50 States.”

Additionally, the complaint describes a listing for Kalshi in the app store which read “You can bet on that.” The lawsuit also references statements that the company’s CEO made on TikTok in October 2024.

“Now, Americans can actually bet on whose going to win, Trump versus Kamala,” Kalshi’s CEO and cofounder Tarek Mansour said in a video posted to the company’s TikTok account. “You can bet on the weather tomorrow. You can bet on inflation. You can bet on whether (New York City Mayor) Eric Adams is gonna get fired, or when he’s gonna get fired.”

In July, three tribes in California filed a similar lawsuit against Kalshi, using the law firm Rapport and Marston. Rapport and Marston is also representing the Ho-Chunk Nation alongside the firm Quarles and Brady.

The Ho-Chunk Nation’s lawsuit asks a judge to issue an injunction, ordering Kalshi to stop operating on or near Ho-Chunk lands.

It also asks for monetary damages, noting that Kalshi’s “illegal, unregulated wagers” are drawing business away from the tribe’s casinos.

“Loss of revenue has a direct impact on tribal governmental functions and has a tangible effect on the services and programs the tribal governments provide to their members and all persons who live, work, and visit the Nation’s Indian Lands,” the lawsuit says.

The Ho-Chunk Nation’s lawsuit also names Robinhood Markets Inc., an investment platform that’s partnering with Kalshi, as a defendant.

Robinhood has argued that Kalshi doesn’t offer gambling. Rather, the company says the platform allows people to buy and sell futures contracts, which are overseen by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The company’s “event contacts” “(allow) retail customers to access prediction markets in a safe, compliant and regulated manner,” a Robinhood spokesperson said in a statement. “We intend to defend ourselves against these claims.”

Kalshi representatives did not respond to a request for comment.

Kalshi launched in 2021, allowing users to trade on the outcomes of real-world events, including weather and political races. In early 2025, the company filed a self-certification to trade sports events contracts. Those allow buyers to put money on a binary yes-or-no question, including whether a team will win or lose.

In January, Donald Trump Jr., the son of President Donald Trump, joined Kalshi as a strategic advisor.

- Wisconsin Public Radio

Gila River Indian Community weighs banishment ordinance, a first for Arizona tribes

The Gila River Indian Community is weighing a new ordinance that would allow for the banishment and disenrollment of tribal members convicted of violent crimes.

If adopted, the proposal would mark the first time a tribal government in Arizona formalized such a measure into its criminal code.

The tribe’s council is asking members for input on the proposal through an online survey that closes Saturday, Sept. 13. The survey was initially set to close at the end of August, but was extended on Thursday for another two weeks.

Arizona Luminaria has reviewed the survey but is not linking to it to reduce responses from people outside the tribal community.

The proposal follows months of curfews prompted by violence in the community and a recent change in law enforcement leadership that tribal officials described as part of broader efforts to enhance public safety.

The proposed ordinance would allow the tribe’s council to hold hearings to determine if tribal members convicted of a violent felony — or three violent misdemeanor offenses — should be banished, according to an introductory statement on the survey.

A banishment would prohibit a person from entering or residing on tribal lands, voting in tribal elections, participating in community-sponsored events and receiving per capita payments, the introduction states. The Gila River Indian Community is one of the few among Arizona’s 22 federally recognized tribes to provide its members per capita payments, which are regular distributions of tribal revenue that some tribal governments share with members.

The proposed ordinance would also allow the tribe’s council to approve disenrollment for members convicted of the most serious offences, including homicide, aggravated assault, kidnapping and violent sexual offense, the introduction states. Anyone facing disenrollment would be allowed to attend the council’s hearing, present evidence and call witnesses in their

defense, it adds.

A banishment would not interfere with a person’s jail sentence, and disenrollment would also not affect the enrollment status or eligibility of the disenrolled member’s children, according to the survey introduction.

Questions within the survey ask tribal members to weigh in on several potential additions to the ordinance, including whether the council should be allowed to temporarily remove people from tribal land pending trial and whether these hearings should require a unanimous vote from council before moving forward with banishment or disenrollment.

Other questions seek input about the possibility of appealing a banishment or disenrollment and potential penalties that should apply to members who knowingly harbor someone who’s been banished from tribal land.

It wasn’t immediately clear when the tribe would formally consider the ordinance. A spokesperson for the Gila River Indian Community did not immediately respond to Arizona Luminaria’s request for comment.

The survey’s unveiling follows a year of mounting violence within the community and reflects recent shifts in how the Gila River Indian Community is responding to public safety.

In February, Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis publicly addressed the community’s recent surge in violent crime for the first time by declaring a public safety emergency and issuing a temporary “enhanced” curfew for minors. The nightly curfew was initially set to end March 9 but has been extended several times over the last six months.

“This decision has been made to help ensure the safety of our children and young adults, particularly in light of recent events,” the February order stated. “Our community’s strength has always been built on unity, and we must take all necessary steps to protect the most vulnerable among us.”

Still, with those measures in place, Lewis announced in early April the death of Karen Peter, whom he described as an elder from District 3.

“It’s always difficult to lose members of our community, but this circumstance is especially heartbreaking and upsetting because our elder was taken from her family, her district and our community in a violent way,” he said in an April 4 video. “And this violence appears to have been perpetrated by members of our own community.”

Three people, identified only as two minors and an adult, were arrested in connection with Karen’s death, according to Lewis. He did not share specifics about what happened to Karen, but again stressed the pattern of violence within the community and pledged to work with tribal leadership to reform policies and strengthen federal support.

“But these are only the governmental changes, that’s only part of the solution,” Lewis said. “This isn’t who we are.”

“Violence is occurring that was not part of our community in prior times, lines have been crossed that were unheard of before,” he continued. “So the solutions cannot be found in the government alone, it’s going to take all of us working together ... to root out the causes of this violence.”

(Editor’s note: To view the entire article, go to azluminaria.org and search “Gila River.”)

- Arizona Luminaria

The Lumbee are once again close to receiving federal recognition

The U.S. House has passed a measure that would pave the way for the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina to receive federal recognition, a status that has been just out of reach for more than 100 years.

The proposal was inserted into this year’s National Defense Authorization Act, the defense spending bill Congress must pass every year. It would modify the Lumbee Act of 1956, which acknowledged the tribe’s existence but blocked federal recognition.

“Despite their long history and cohesive culture, the Lumbee have never had access to the same federal benefits enjoyed by every other federally recognized tribe,” Republican Congressman David Rouzer of North Carolina said on the House floor.

Federal recognition would allow the Lumbee to receive broad federal benefits like health care through the Indian Health Service.

The federal government generally recognizes Native American tribes through one of three avenues: federal courts, the Bureau of Indian Affairs or an act of Congress. The Lumbee first sought recognition in 1888, but more recently have been lobbying Congress to retract sections of the Lumbee Act of 1956. For decades, each proposal has stalled before getting final approval.

“We have been here before, as our bill has passed the House numerous times, and I remain cautiously optimistic that we will finally achieve our goal of full Federal recognition,” said Lumbee Tribal Chairman John Lowery in a statement released Wednesday.

In January, President Trump issued an executive memo directing the Department of the Interior to issue a report on a pathway to federal recognition for the Lumbee. That report has not been publicly released, but Lowery recently told WUNC he saw a early draft.

“At the end of the day, I think it’s going to say that the most clear and concise way to get this done is going to be through the legislative route, which is the route that we’ve been on the entire time,” Lowery said.

- WUNC (North Carolina)

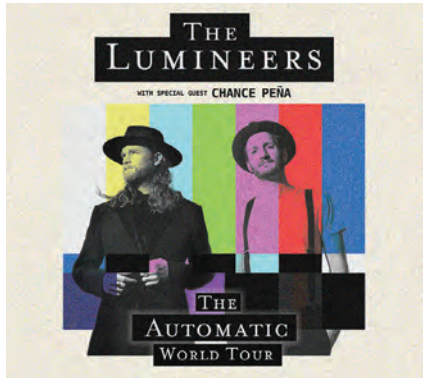
SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



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AEW DYNAMITE



OCTOBER 3
WILLIE COLÓN & JORGE CELEDÓN



OCTOBER 7
THE LUMINEERS



OCTOBER 8
ALEX WARREN



OCTOBER 9
ALLEH & YORGHAKI



OCTOBER 10 & 11
CHRIS STAPLETON



OCTOBER 15
T-PAIN



OCTOBER 16
THE BASEMENT YARD



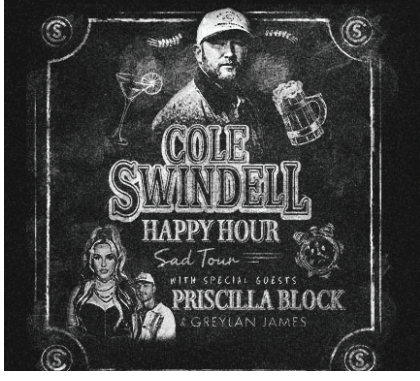
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DANCE NOW AMERICA TOUR



OCTOBER 18
DANE COOK



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Education



PECS, tribal leaders welcome '25-26 Student Council

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School Student Council was inaugurated Sept. 25 after the entire student body participated in the annual traditional clothing contest.

Principal Tracy Downing spoke to the Student Council members and the student body before the inauguration ceremony.

“Members of Student Council are your voice, your advocate and your representative,” Downing said. “They are the embodiment of our school’s democratic principles. They have committed to a leadership role at school.”

Downing encouraged students to share their ideas for the school with their representative on the Council. She said Student Council is a catalyst for change and, as developing leaders, they are the driving force for positive transformations at school.

“What you get at school is an education so you can better yourself for the future,” said Brighton Councilman Larry Howard. “You can do something for your tribe; you are the future leaders. Speak out and talk



Beverly Bidney

PECS Student Council chairwoman Hayden Nunez waves to the students after she took the oath of office.

about what you want. Silence gets you nowhere; use your voice. It’s up to you to share your ideas with student council.”

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. pointed out the similarities of being on Tribal Council and Student Council.

“As elected officials, we represent the majority of the people,” Chairman Osceola said. “In this position, you have to be a problem solver. You can help us come up with solutions. Today is another chance to be a better version of yourself. Keep that in mind as you move forward.”

“Always remember to be proud of who you are and where you come from,” said Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge. “Listen to your student body, together you can make this a better school.”

When Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Yani Smith attended PECS, she served as chairwoman of the Student Council.

“I loved leading the school,” Smith said. “You are the voice of the students, be open minded and open your heart to everything. Work hard in school because education is your first step toward success.”

Education K-12 advisor Nancy Jimmie told the students to keep working because no one can take their education away. She also urged them to be good in class and make smart choices.

With that, the swearing-in ceremony began. Culture teacher Suraiya Smith held the Bible, while the students repeated their oath after Rep. Arledge recited it first.

The 2025-26 Student Council
Chairwoman: **Hayden Nunez**
Kindergarten: **Ariella Gopher**
1st grade: **Skyler Smith**
2nd grade: **Evianna Nunez**
3rd grade: **Everett Leitner**
4th grade: **Jayda Torres**
5th grade: **Messariya Hardy**
6th grade: **Serenity Bishop**
7th grade: **Ianna Cypress**
8th grade: **Jaiden Fludd**



Beverly Bidney

The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School Student Council 2025-26 poses with Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Yani Smith, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge after the inauguration ceremony.



Beverly Bidney

After taking the oath of office, second grade student council representative Evianna Nunez speaks to her PECS classmates as culture teacher Suraiya Smith holds her speech and the mic.



Beverly Bidney

First grade Student Council representative Skyler Smith takes the oath of office from Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge as culture teacher Suraiya Smith holds the mic.

Ahfachkee Spirit Week focuses on Seminole culture

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Ahfachkee School held its annual Spirit Week Sept. 22-26 with a host of activities including traditional storytelling on Sept. 24. All the grade levels, two at a time, gathered in the large chickee at the school’s culture camp as Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum educators regaled them with traditional Seminole legends.

During the session for third and fourth graders museum educator Cypress Billie told the story of “The Bear and the Rabbit,” which is about an unlikely friendship. In the story the bear tries to help his injured friend the rabbit, but had to find someone else to help since he didn’t know what to do. He asked the buzzard for help, but the buzzard ate the rabbit, who had died of his injury. The bear was very upset, threw his knife at the buzzard and it hit him in the nose. That’s why buzzards have a hole in their noses, according to the legend.



Beverly Bidney

Gordon Wareham, museum director, enthusiastically tells the story of the little water turtle in the chickee at the Ahfachkee culture camp.

In a question and answer period after the story, students asked why the buzzard ate the rabbit.

“Buzzards do the job no one else wants to do,” Billie said. “They clean it up. They have very strong digestive systems and eat road kill and rotting carcasses from kills in the pastures.”

Throughout the day, stories were told to all the Ahfachkee students. The fifth and sixth graders heard the tale of “The Little Water Turtle,” as told by museum director Gordon Wareham.

“Every animal is given a gift and the tortoise’s was his shell,” Wareham said. “His gift was to use it to bring joy to the world. It was a crystal shell and it made prisms when the sun hit it and reflected the light. He could light up the night during a full moon.”

One night the brothers Thunder and

Lightning were around. Thunder looked at the tortoise and the tortoise reflected the light off his shell and blinded thunder, who then made a lot of noise. Lightening was upset about it and sent a bolt of lightening to the tortoise. His shell caught on fire so he jumped into the river to put it out and it cracked. His beautiful shell was now burned black and cracked. The tortoise stayed in the water and became a water turtle.

“He was given a blessing, but he hurt people with it,” Wareham explained. “Any blessing you are given can be taken away, so be careful.”

Museum educator Pablo Cardenas told the story “The Great Blue Heron and the Hummingbird,” which is about animals who raced around the world to see who was fastest.

“Back then, all the animals could talk to and understand each other,” Cardenas said. “The hummingbird won every race, so the great blue heron told the hummingbird he could beat him.”

The hummingbird flew fast but stopped to sleep. The heron flew slowly but flew through the night. The heron took his time and stopped to see all kinds of animals on the savanna. The hummingbird finally made it back home and didn’t realize the heron beat him there.

“The moral of the story is to take your time and see the things around you,” Cardenas said. “Slow down and you can learn a lot more.”

Other Spirit Week activities, from Monday through Thursday, were School Colors Day where students wore the colors to showcase the school’s spirit and values. During Our Past is Our Future day, students were invited to share memories or meaningful items that symbolize their connection to Seminole culture. A traditional stickball game was scheduled to be held Thursday before the Indigenous Day holiday on Friday.



Beverly Bidney

Cypress Billie tells the story of the bear and the rabbit as Ahfachkee students take it all in during the school’s Spirit Week.



Beverly Bidney

Ahfachkee School culture staff and principal Phil Baer with museum educators. From left to right, Cypress Billie, Van Samuels, principal Phil Baer, Pablo Cardenas, Jessica Lopez, museum director Gordon Wareham, Jeanette Cypress, Billie Walker, Mary Jene Koenes and Maxine Gilke.

Ahfachkee students celebrate family, grandparents



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Carol Cypress, Jonah Cypress, Lorraine Jumper, and Justice Jumper have breakfast together at the Ahfachkee Grandparents Day event Sept. 5 as grandparents and other family members joined students for a morning of food and fun.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Santino Tiger, Iretta Tiger, and Luci Tiger take a family photo together at the Ahfachkee family event.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Lazarus Robbines, Victoria Villareal, and Emma Sanchez.

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School holds clothing contest



Beverly Bidney

These well-dressed boys compete in Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's clothing contest, which was held in conjunction with the Student Council inauguration Sept. 25.



Beverly Bidney

Girls wave to their fellow students in the bleachers as they are judged in the clothing contest.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Chance Madrigal, Juan Howard and Silas Snow compete in the PECS clothing contest before the inauguration of the Student Council.

UNITY Earth Ambassadors explore South Florida

SUBMITTED BY GREG MENDOZA
UNITY, Youth Programs Director

FORT LAUDERDALE — In mid-September, UNITY (United National Indian Tribal Youth) Earth Ambassadors gathered in Florida for a transformative experience that blended traditional ecological knowledge with modern conservation science. Together, Native youth explored how Indigenous values and contemporary strategies can work hand-in-hand to guide the protection and restoration of our homelands.

Opening day: Platforms for environmental justice

The gathering began with Earth Ambassadors stepping forward to share their platforms, each rooted in cultural knowledge and environmental justice. Their presentations underscored a shared commitment to safeguarding Mother Earth while honoring ancestral teachings. During the gathering, Earth Ambassadors shared their platforms, offering peers concrete examples of environmental projects that could be implemented in their own communities. Codie Horse-Topetchy (Kiowa, Comanche & Otoe-Missouria) spoke about buffalo and bison as central to Indigenous food sovereignty, urging youth to restore traditional food systems as a pathway to health and ecological balance. Jada Allen (Lumbee Tribe) emphasized emergency preparedness in the face of hurricanes and flooding, highlighting how climate change requires Native communities to develop proactive safety and resilience plans. Mahiya Ramirez (Muscogee (Creek) Nation) introduced the idea of sustainable fashion, showing how youth can make an impact through mindful choices in clothing production and consumption. Finally, Nizhoni Deschene (Navajo & Turtle Mountain Chippewa) inspired participants with a vision for renewable energy sovereignty, calling on Native nations to

lead in adopting clean energy solutions that strengthen both sovereignty and sustainability. Together, their presentations empowered participants with actionable models for community-based environmental leadership.

Cultural immersion at Big Cypress Reservation

The Earth Ambassadors' journey began at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, where Jojo Osceola and Museum Director Gordon Wareham welcomed them with a powerful reminder of the importance of preserving tribal history and environmental knowledge. Big Cypress community members gave tours and emphasized how museums can serve as living connections between past and present conservation efforts. This was followed by a warm introduction at the Unity Center, where Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie encouraged the youth to ground their leadership in community responsibility, reinforcing how tribal governance plays a vital role in environmental advocacy. Councilwoman Billie has been a long supporter of UNITY since first attending the 2019 National UNITY Conference in Florida and has been bringing a youth delegation to the annual event ever since. Bailey Latchford, Miss Florida Seminole 2025–2026, further inspired participants by uplifting Seminole youth leadership, showing how cultural pride and visibility are essential to future generations of environmental protectors.

The day also included moments that highlighted cultural practices and their ties to environmental stewardship. Hali Garcia, a Traditional Sweetgrass Basketmaker, accompanied by her apprentice, shared how the art of basketmaking embodies sustainable harvesting practices and ecological teachings that extend far beyond craft. Similarly, Danielle Jumper, a third-generation Traditional Seminole Culture Teacher, reminded participants

that cultural teachings are inseparable from environmental protection, grounding conservation in traditions that honor the land and community.

Presenters also addressed how policy and science safeguard tribal resources. JJ John, a Program Analyst in Environmental Compliance, provided practical insight into how regulations and monitoring protect tribal lands from environmental harm, while Carlise Bermudez from the Environmental Protection Office emphasized the importance of tribal-led enforcement and scientific approaches to ensure natural resources are managed responsibly. Together, their sessions bridged Indigenous knowledge with data collection and modern compliance frameworks, showing how both are necessary to defend tribal sovereignty and ecosystems.

Throughout the day, the southeastern Native youth were also immersed in experiential learning. Billy Walker introduced them to a baby alligator, sparking a memorable lesson on respecting balance within the natural world and strengthening awareness of Florida's fragile ecosystems. Complementing these teachings, Melanie Turtle delivered a traditional meal (Indian tacos, pumpkin fry-bread, and sofke corn drink) that demonstrated how foodways are more than nourishment—they are cultural practices of resilience and relationship with the land.

The day concluded with a traditional dinner sponsored by the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Big Cypress community. UNITY extends heartfelt thanks to Jojo Osceola, UNITY Trustee Kyle Doney, Cheyenne Kippenberger, and community members who made this cultural exchange possible.

Exploring the Everglades with the Miccosukee Tribe

On the following day, the Tigertail family welcomed the Earth Ambassadors to the Miccosukee Reservation, guiding them across the Everglades' sawgrass trails by airboat. Participants visited family hammocks (tree islands) passed down through generations, learned about wildlife rehabilitation, and witnessed firsthand how the Miccosukee people's history and culture are deeply connected to this sacred land. A highlight came when youth encountered a baby gator — with Mama Gator watching closely only feet away — an unforgettable moment that reminded everyone of the Everglades' power, beauty, and balance.



UNITY

UNITY's Earth Ambassadors meet for their Southeast regional gathering in Fort Lauderdale.



UNITY

UNITY Earth Ambassador Codie Horse-Topetchy speaks during the group's meeting.

Reflections and Gratitude

This gathering was more than a leadership event; it was a celebration of resilience, stewardship, and cultural connection. Earth Ambassadors were reminded that protecting places like the Everglades means protecting Indigenous lifeways, sovereignty, and traditional knowledge. UNITY expresses deep gratitude to the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Councilwoman Billie, the Big Cypress Reservation, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, the Miccosukee Tribe, and the Tigertail family for their hospitality, cultural teachings, and dedication to Mother Earth.

As the Southeast gathering concludes, Earth Ambassadors return home carrying new knowledge, strengthened cultural pride,

and deeper connections with one another. Their collective voices and platforms continue to inspire action for environmental justice across Native communities.

The journey now continues westward — onward to Arizona for the next UNITY Earth Ambassadors Regional Gathering in November 2025. Stay tuned for updates as this powerful movement for youth-led environmental leadership grows.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

UNITY Earth Ambassadors visit the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum during their South Florida trip.

North Dakota releases first updated tribal textbook, with more on the way

BY MARY STEURER
North Dakota Monitor

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has released the first of a series of updated textbooks on the five Native nations that share land with North Dakota.

The book — titled “Journey to Understanding” — provides a brief introduction to the tribes’ history and culture. It’s the first time a new edition of the work has been released in more than two decades.

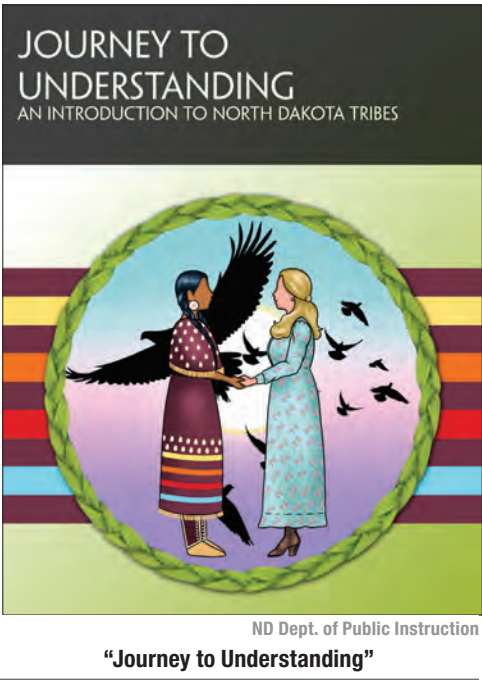
The textbook will soon be distributed to schools across the state, though a digital version is already available to download for free on the University of North Dakota’s Scholarly Commons website.

“Journey to Understanding” was first published in 2002 as cultural training material for social workers at the North Dakota Department of Human Services. The agency hired the Bismarck-based Native American Training Institute to write it to help its employees better understand the state’s Native communities.

Now, the Department of Public Instruction is promoting it as an educational resource for K-12 classrooms.

The agency will also soon release updated versions of four tribe-specific textbooks on the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and Spirit Lake Nation. Like “Journey to Understanding,” new editions of the books haven’t been published in more than 20 years.

The five books have long been considered leading sources for information on the tribes, and are referenced in K-12,



college and professional settings, according to the Department of Public Instruction.

A first-ever textbook on the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate is also in the works.

The series is a collaborative effort between the state, the tribes, Native culture organizations and higher education institutions. The tribes and tribal colleges had full editorial oversight of the books’ content.

In addition to publishing all six books online, thousands of copies will be printed and distributed to schools across North Dakota.

Bonita Springs’ zoological park, garden receives donation to build Seminole chickee for events, programs

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Wonder Gardens, a nonprofit zoological park and botanical garden established in 1936 in Bonita Springs, has received a \$30,000 donation from the Foundation of the Rotary Club of Bonita Springs to build a Seminole chickee to replace its barn.

The chickee will serve as a space for private events and educational programs and will have the ability to accommodate up to 150 guests. The barn, which originally

met this need, was deemed uninhabitable after Hurricane Ian and was demolished.

The chickee will be used for classes and summer camps, providing a covered, shaded area for activities, lunch and animal encounters during field trips. In addition to Wonder Gardens programming, the space will also be available for the community to rent for private events such as parties, weddings and other gatherings.

“We are proud to support Wonder Gardens and the City of Bonita Springs with this donation,” Julie Pedretti, president of

the Rotary Club of Bonita Springs, said in a statement. “The Wonder Gardens provides locals and visitors alike with hands-on, educational opportunities they simply cannot get elsewhere. We are honored to preserve the historic integrity of Wonder Gardens while celebrating the Seminole culture in the Bonita Springs area.”

Wonder Gardens cares for rescued, rehabilitated and non-releasable animals and provides education programs and events.

Native Forward Scholars Fund receives \$50M gift from MacKenzie Scott

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Native Forward Scholars Fund, the largest direct provider of scholarships to Native students, announced Sept. 24 a \$50 million gift from MacKenzie Scott, marking her second major gift to the organization. According to a press release, the gift strengthens Native Forward’s ability to support Native scholars and advance economic mobility, self-determination, and tribal sovereignty.

With Scott’s initial investment, Native Forward transformed its reach and impact: launching six new scholarships and matching another to establish a \$2 million endowment fund that will sustain opportunities for generations to come. Every scholar now receives comprehensive wraparound services, and the organization rebranded to reflect its mission of funding and empowering the next generation of

Native leaders while honoring the histories and cultures of Native communities. The organization also purchased its own building, generating significant cost savings that are redirected to student support. These bold steps have fueled record growth and expanded Native Forward’s ability to serve more students than ever before. Yet, with scholarship requests surging 35% this year, the need has never been greater. This new investment will allow Native Forward to meet more of that urgent demand while continuing to strengthen the systems that help scholars thrive.

“We are incredibly grateful for MacKenzie Scott’s commitment to trust-based philanthropy,” said Angelique Albert (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes), CEO of Native Forward Scholars Fund. “This unrestricted gift allows us to meet Native students where they are, respond to their most pressing needs, and ensure they

not only enroll, but thrive and graduate.”

Lillian Sparks Robinson, Board Chair of Native Forward Scholars Fund and a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, added, “This gift reflects not only the growing recognition of Native Forward’s impact, but also the trust that national leaders like MacKenzie Scott place in our ability to deliver long-term change. For more than five decades, Native Forward has ensured that Native students have the resources and support to succeed in higher education and beyond. As Board Chair, I am confident this investment will strengthen our capacity to reach more scholars and the next generation of Native leaders.”

Since its founding in 1969, Native Forward has provided scholarships, culturally congruent programming, emergency relief funding, and mentorship opportunities to Native undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

New teen thriller ‘Sisters in the Wind’ finds drama in hidden identities

BY NEDA ULABY
NPR

At a moment when young adult literature is dominated by dystopias and romantasies, one bestselling author has dispensed with dragons and death matches. Who needs them, when you can suck readers into dramas about foster care, grave robbers, meth dealers or high-stakes, high-school hockey matches?

Author Angeline Boulley has written her third thriller for teenagers, “Sisters in the Wind”, which came out the first week in September.

All of her books have been set in Native American communities in northern Michigan, like the ones where Boulley’s Ojibwe family has lived for generations.

Her new book features a heroine named Lily, a young woman on the run after a series of tragedies. Some characters, and some of those tragedies, will be familiar to readers of Firekeeper’s Daughter and Warrior Girl Unearthed, the two earlier books in Boulley’s loosely connected series.

An enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Boulley worked for her tribe for decades, then served as director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

“So my stories are all set in this fictionalized version of my tribe and my community,” Boulley told NPR. Her characters’ conversations include debates over the pros and cons of tribal enrollment and issues around casinos, Ojibwe mythology, the preservation of ancient medical practices and generational trauma from boarding schools.

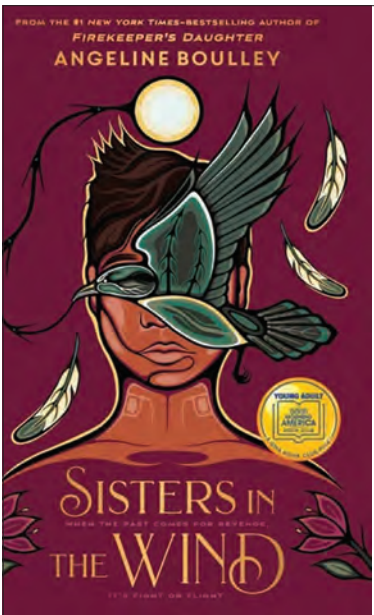
Boulley grew up in New

Buffalo, Mich. When she was in high school, a friend told her about a cute new student. Boulley never met him; she was an overachiever and he hung out with kids involved with drugs. He turned out to be an undercover police officer. (“This was before 21 Jump Street, with Johnny Depp!” she laughed.) But still, she wondered at the time: What if they’d met, and liked each other? What if, somehow, he needed her help?

“And then I had this thought that stayed with me for 36 years,” she said. “And it was, why would some undercover drug investigation need the help of an ordinary 18-year-old Ojibwe girl?”

And why would that girl help him? Those questions became the basis of Boulley’s first book. She pitched Firekeeper’s Daughter to literary agents on Twitter. It sold in 2019 for more than \$1 million. And in 2021, it became an instant bestseller. So was her next novel, 2023’s Warrior Girl Unearthed, which she says she pitched like this: “It’s indigenous Lara Croft, but instead of raiding tombs, she’s raiding museums and private collections to retrieve stolen ancestors and sacred items that do not belong in museums and in private collections. But the main character is 16, and so none of her heists go the way that she plans.”

“Warrior Girl Unearthed” is a favorite book of educational consultant Becky Hill, who attended a conference in August in Ann Arbor, Mich., about amplifying indigenous narratives. Boulley was the keynote speaker. “I had never read a book that discussed museums and Native American artifacts and the theft of them and the return of them,” Hill said. “And I went to school on a reservation



Henry Holt & Co.
“Sisters in the Wind”

from K through 8 and I cannot recall any books that had to do with Native American people other than The Indian in the Cupboard.”

Hill mentioned a 2018 study from the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Cooperative Children’s Book Center that showed Native characters are only represented in 1% of children’s literature. (In 2024, that number rose to 3%.) Boulley’s work, she says, is still a rarity.

At the conference, a group of musicians performed a traditional honor song for Boulley. And there was a land acknowledgement. Boulley told the audience she appreciated it. “But whenever you hear a land acknowledgement,” she added with a smile, “you should go and buy a book by a Native author.”

connection. Actress Telsa Wolfe will serve as a keynote speaker.

In conjunction with the forum, a special luncheon will celebrate “Enduring Spirit and Rising Star” honorees. There will also be a three-day Young Native Women’s Leadership Academy.

This year’s theme — “Transforming the Future We

Imagine,” — celebrates enhancing the beauty, strength, and integrity of American Indian and Alaska Native communities through personal empowerment and civic participation.

The forum is open to the public. For more information visit nativeactionnetwork.org or call 1-800-804-4944.

Native Women’s Leadership Forum runs Oct. 23-24

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Native Action Network will host its 21st annual Native Women’s Leadership Forum Oct. 23-24 at the Muckleshoot Casino Resort in Auburn, Washington. The forum is an annual event filled with workshops, keynote speakers, panels, and intergenerational

visions to life both in the studio and on stages around the world.

Caleb Johnson returns with the band, having established his legitimacy as the premier lead vocalist for this timeless music through his interpretations and electrifying stage presence.

Led by Meat Loaf’s longtime record producer/music director/guitarist Paul Crook alongside fellow alumni John Miceli (drums), Randy Flowers (guitar), Lyssa Lynne (female lead/backing

vocals), Danny Miranda (bass) and including Andy Ascolese (piano), Mark Kelt (piano) and Kiley Baxter (featured vocals), the band and Johnson perform a thoughtfully curated set list of Meat Loaf’s best loved classics such as “Bat Out of Hell,” “Paradise by the Dashboard Light” and “I Would Do Anything For Love.”

For ticket information visit casino.hardrock.com.

Meat Loaf band to perform Oct. 17

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEEE — The Celebrating Meat Loaf concert will be held Oct. 17 at 8 p.m. at the Seminole Casino Immokalee’s Seminole Center.

The concert is the only authentic reimagining of the legendary Meat Loaf and Jim Steinman songbook performed by world-class alumni of Meat Loaf’s official band, the same musicians who brought his musical

‘Rematriated Voices’ to stream on PBS affiliate

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Rematriation, an Indigenous women-led nonprofit founded by Michelle Schenandoah (Haudenosaunee Confederacy), will present a five-episode talk show “Rematriated Voices” on PBS affiliate WCNY in Syracuse, N.Y. and streaming at video.wcny.org.

As host, Schenandoah

interviews influential Indigenous voices to explore how Haudenosaunee principles, rooted in matrilineal governance, ecological balance, and collective responsibility, offer powerful frameworks for addressing issues such as democracy, land justice, food sovereignty, feminism, and the societal obligations to future generations.

The series will launch on

Indigenous People’s Day, Oct. 13.

- Episode 1 “Doctrine of Discovery” - 10/13
- Episode 2 “First Environment” - 11/8
- Episode 3 “Hidden Roots of Democracy” - 11/15
- Episode 4 “Eve Meets Sky Woman” - 11/22
- Episode 5 “Matrilineal Men” - 11/29.



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Indian Day

Tampa/Lakeland



Justin Billie, 7, learns how to carve a piece of soap from Bobby Henry in the culture tent Sept. 27 during the Tampa/Lakeland Reservation's Indian Day celebration on the Lakeland Reservation.



Herbert Jim aims at one of the targets during the archery competition. Each one had different points, the animal targets- deer, polar bear and hog- were worth five points, the regular targets points were allotted depending on the accuracy of the shot.



Amos Billie Jr. cooks dinner for a crowd on his barbeque grill.



Nancy Frank expertly tosses the kettle ball as rain falls on the Lakeland Reservation.



Young boys throw a plastic axe at the target as they practice for the real axe throwing competition in a few years when they are older.



Stacy Smith puts her all into it as she winds up to throw the kettle ball as the crowd watches.



Miguel Dillon takes aim during the archery competition.



From left to right, Megan Otero, Mayra Simmons and Kinsley Briggs do some shopping at the Lakeland reservation before the Indian Day events commence.



Kathy Billie has fun on the swings on the reservation.

Indian Day



Jennifer Osceola, left, and Theresa Frost compete in the cornhole tournament at the Brighton Indian Day celebration Sept. 26.

Beverly Bidney

Brighton



Layne Thomas is loaded up with cypress logs as he competes in the log run.

Beverly Bidney



Willena Tommie tosses the skillet for the very first time.

Beverly Bidney



Clarissa Urbina hopes for a good shot as she tosses the horseshoe in horseshoe tournament.

Beverly Bidney



Summer Tubby runs her fastest with a large bunch of palm fronds over her shoulder during the thatch race.

Beverly Bidney



Joyce Jumper tends to her pumpkin fry bread as she competes to be the best fry bread maker of Indian Day.

Beverly Bidney



Norman Johns, left, and John Madrigal participate in the Brighton cornhole tournament.

Beverly Bidney



Roy Alvarado, of We Do Recover, shows off one of the 72 racks of ribs he made to feed the crowd lunch at the Brighton Indian Day celebration.

Beverly Bidney



A skillet soars through the air in Brighton.

Beverly Bidney



Justin Gopher runs the course for the log run competition.

Beverly Bidney

Indian Day

Immokalee



Jimmy Wayne Holdiness is focused as he peels the bark off of the cypress log at the Immokalee Indian Day event Sept. 13.



Nathan Billie shows off his form as he aims at the target during the archery competition.



Becky Yzaguirre races through the log run.



Vanessa Cardenas, center, poses with her daughters **Khaleesi** and **Lyanna** in the photo booth.



Billie Walker peels off a large piece of bark as **Gary Yzaguirre** and **Jimmy Wayne Holdiness** hold the log steady.



From left to right, **Moleana Hall**, **Ray Yzaguirre** and **Susan Davis** navigate the cones in the zig-zag portion of the log run.



Caniah Billie, left, and **Cartaya Billie** avoid a spill into the lake during the canoe races.



The crowd awaits the return of the latest pair of rowers in the canoe races.

Indian Day



Tammy Billie makes a lot of fry bread during the fry bread competition at the Naples Indian Day event Sept. 19.

Beverly Bidney



Naples community members proudly display the rain patchwork they made with the help of culture instructor Tammy Bille during the Naples Indian Day event.

Beverly Bidney



Marissa Osceola mixes the batter for fry bread, something she makes every year on Indian Day.

Beverly Bidney



From left to right, judges Van Samuels, Gordon Wareham and Jessica Lopez assess the attributes of patchwork submitted in the arts and crafts competition.

Beverly Bidney



The spacious Naples cooking chickee was busy as cooks competed in the fry bread contest.

Beverly Bidney

Naples



Beverly Bidney

As his sister Nicole Slavik and mother Connie Slavik watch, Martin Slavik makes fry bread for the competition.



Beverly Bidney

Brothers Tony Bert, left, and Cody Bert show some of the ribs they made for lunch for the Naples community.



Beverly Bidney (2)

Above, a close-up look at how to form a fry bread. Below, Fry bread is taken out of the oil when it is golden brown.



Indian Day

Fort Pierce



Tirell Timothy, Fort Pierce liasion, reacts after he threw a ringer in horseshoes practice.



Hope Sneed, left, eyes the bullseye as she competes in the axe-throwing event.



Shalaai Tommie makes a splash on the water slide.



Josh Sneed takes aim in archery.



Dean Stokes, left, and Ertha Stokes practice corn hole before rain interrupted the games at Fort Pierce's Indian Day on Sept. 26.



Sheree Sneed smiles as she practices for the cornhole games.



Kassim Stockton shows good form as he tosses a horseshoe.



Brooklyn Villegas stays cool with a hand fan. The fans, which had the inscription "It's a good day to be Indigenous," were popular items on a warm Indian Day afternoon.



Trista Timothy enjoys sliding down the water slide.

Indian Day

Trail



Calvin Tiger

Kids have their hands full trying to roll their watermelons to the finish line in the kids watermelon race at Trail Indigenous Day on Sept. 19.



Calvin Tiger

Judges take notes in the clothing contest as Sadrilynn Tiger presents traditional tribal clothing during the Trail Indigenous Day celebration.



Calvin Tiger

Giana Steve competes in the skillett toss contest.



Calvin Tiger

Sally Osceola and Amos Billie Jr. present tribal clothing during the clothing contest.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Birdie Osceola-Bartlett, Giana Steve, Devontaye Steve, Wildcat Billie and Justin Billie are contestants in the traditional tribal clothing contest.



Calvin Tiger

Devontaye Steve focuses on making a strong skillett toss.



Calvin Tiger

It's the men's turn to test their watermelon rolling skills in the adult watermelon race.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Ida Osceola, Sally Osceola and Caryn Billie are contestants in Trail's clothing contest at the Indigenous Day celebration.



Calvin Tiger

Sadrilynn Tiger throws her skillett across the field in the skillett toss contest.

Indian Day

Hollywood



At left, Tomie Motlow, and, at right, Lena Young paddle their way to the finish line in Hollywood Indian Day's canoe race Sept. 24 at the pond across the street from the Guitar Hotel.



Mayli Tommie (2)



At left, Samuel Hunter, and, at right, Mailani Perez compete in the canoe race.



Mayli Tommie (2)



Calvin Tiger

Shirley Clay shows her log peeling skills at the Hollywood Indian Day.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Xiya Osceola, Sarafina Billie and Talia Jones display traditional tribal clothing in Hollywood's Indian Day clothing contest.



Calvin Tiger

Eric Osceola focuses on peeling a log as fast as possible at Hollywood Indian Day on Sept. 25.



Calvin Tiger

Resha Doctor carries a cypress log through an obstacle course for one of the various field day activities.



Calvin Tiger

Aaron Tommie makes it look easy as he competes in the log peel contest.



Calvin Tiger

Brandtley Osceola pounds a nail into a log as he finishes one of the obstacle courses at Hollywood's Indian Day celebration.



Calvin Tiger

Virginia Osceola participates in horseshoes.



Calvin Tiger

Peter Billie Sr. tosses a horseshoe during competition.

Indian Day



Big Cypress



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Ayze Henry, Ada Bruised Head and Osceola Billie work together as a team to start their canoe race at the Big Cypress Indigenous Day celebration.



Calvin Tiger

Arianna Osceola turns a corner as she sprints in the barefoot race.



Calvin Tiger

Martin Miller-Covarrubias makes fry bread during a fry bread contest.



Calvin Tiger

Kadin Tommie carries cypress logs and crosses the finish line during the log race.



Calvin Tiger

Wesley Garcia shows determination and skill in the skillet toss contest at the Big Cypress Indigenous Day celebration Sept. 27.



Calvin Tiger

Darla Cypress enjoys competing in the log race.



Calvin Tiger

Zihnellie Burney jumps over hay as she competes in a barefoot race.



Calvin Tiger

Rande Osceola competes in the skillet toss contest.



Calvin Tiger

Curtis Smith and his team run through an obstacle course during the canoe race at the Big Cypress Indigenous Day event.

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Sports

Seminoles play starring roles for OHS volleyball

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

OKEECHOBEE — Okeechobee High School varsity volleyball’s 3-2 win against Sebring may have been the statement victory the Brahms have been seeking in what had been a rollercoaster ride for the first month of the season.

Okeechobee entered the Sept. 16 home match with a 6-6 record that included a four-match losing streak during one stretch. But the stirring five-set thriller – the team’s biggest win of the season – not only put the Brahms over the .500 hump, but it was also a huge confidence booster against a team that was undefeated.

“It feels good. That [means] the girls are on cloud 9,” said Okeechobee coach Lauren Throop.

Scores were 25-19, 23-25, 25-20, 16-25, 15-13, in front of a boisterous crowd that included several creative verbal jabs exchanged between Brahman students and Sebring’s JV players that supplemented the match’s intensity.

Okeechobee features four Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal members – seniors Alyssa Madrigal and Yani Smith, junior Tehya Nunez and sophomore Dahlia Grezech – as well as former Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School standout Azariah Washington, who has quickly emerged as one of the top freshmen in the region and perhaps the state.

Throop said the two seniors have stepped up in the leadership department.

“They’re doing good. They’re a big part of our team,” Throop said.

Indeed, the PECS graduates did shine in the victory. Smith (12 kills, team-high 5 aces) and Washington (14 digs, team-high 17 kills) put up big numbers in the victory. Nunez contributed 10 digs. Madrigal had a kill that ended the first set and a key block that helped Okeechobee pull away for a win in third set.

Other standouts for the winners included Adleigh Schwier (32 digs) and Lindy Harwas (31 assists).

As of late September, Smith led the team in aces and was among the top three in kills and hitting percentage. Meanwhile, Washington has made a smooth and



Okeechobee High School senior Alyssa Madrigal keeps her eyes on the ball during the Brahms 3-2 win against Sebring on Sept. 16.

impressive transition from middle school to varsity high school. She leads the Brahms in kills.

“We weren’t really expecting her to come here and do what she’s done so far, but she’s leading our district in kills right now and she’s just dominant,” Throop said.

Strong season continues for JV

With five seniors on the Okeechobee varsity squad, there will be open spots to be filled next season and players on the JV team are doing what they can to get ready to move up.

The team’s 2-1 win against Sebring on Sept. 16 improved the Brahms’ record to 9-2.

The JV features tribal members Melaine Bonilla and Daliyah Nunez, both sophomores, and Ciani Smith, a freshman outside hitter. Smith delivered about five aces as Okeechobee won eight straight points on her serve to close out the first set, 25-7.

Impressive serves by Nunez, including an ace, helped the Brahms rally in set two, but Sebring hung on for a 26-24 win.

In the deciding third set, a terrific defensive play by Bonilla led to a kill by Sofie Soriano and a 6-3 Okeechobee lead.

Later, with the crowd chanting “Dali, Dali, Dali,” Nunez came through with more strong serves that led to three consecutive points and a 10-3 lead.

♦ See OHS on page 3C



From left to right, the Seminole Tribe’s Dahlia Grezech, Alyssa Madrigal, Yani Smith and Tehya Nunez on the Okeechobee High School varsity volleyball team.



Yani Smith (6), one of Okeechobee’s leaders, takes part in the pregame meeting with officials.



From left to right, the tribe’s Daliyah Nunez, Melaine Bonilla and Ciani Smith have played key roles in the JV team’s 9-2 record as of mid-September.

FSU men’s basketball staff visits Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum



The Florida State University men’s basketball staff, including head coach Luke Loucks, visited the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in early September. FSU is getting ready for its season, which starts with exhibition games Oct. 16 and Oct. 26. Its regular season begins Nov. 4 at home against Alcorn State. The Seminole Tribe’s Xavier Osceola is a freshman guard on the team.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum (2)



The men's champion Renegades celebrate after winning the Tigertail Oshaane Memorial Basketball Tournament on Sept. 20 in Big Cypress. Most of the players are from Orlando, however, the team also featured the Seminole Tribe's Ricky Garza (sitting) and Greg Carter (holding the trophy).



Skyla Osceola controls the ball in the women's third place game.

Annual Oshaane memorial tournament draws 20 teams

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BIG CYPRESS — The field for the Tigertail Oshaane Brothers 16th annual Memorial Basketball Tournament wasn't the biggest in its history, but it was still ultra-competitive.

Fifteen men's teams and five women's teams played at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium in Big Cypress Sept. 19-20.

"That was actually pretty good. Before Covid, we had it up to 28 or 29, so it's slowly starting to get back up. I'm fine with that," said DeForest Carter, the tournament organizer whose uncles – Malcolm, Duane and Jody – are who the memorial tournament is held for each year. Carter and the three men's mother – Minnie Tigertail – presented trophies, prizes and cash to the top teams.

Although Carter's team didn't reach the final, his older brother, Greg, was on

the championship men's team. Greg and fellow Seminole Ricky Garza played for Renegades, a team from Orlando.

"I said big brother can win this year; I'm going to win next year," DeForest said.

The tournament is open to Native and non-Native teams. Some Native players came from as far as the Makah Tribe in northwest Washington State.

Atlanta Fire, a non-Native team, captured the women's title. Zy Lewis, the

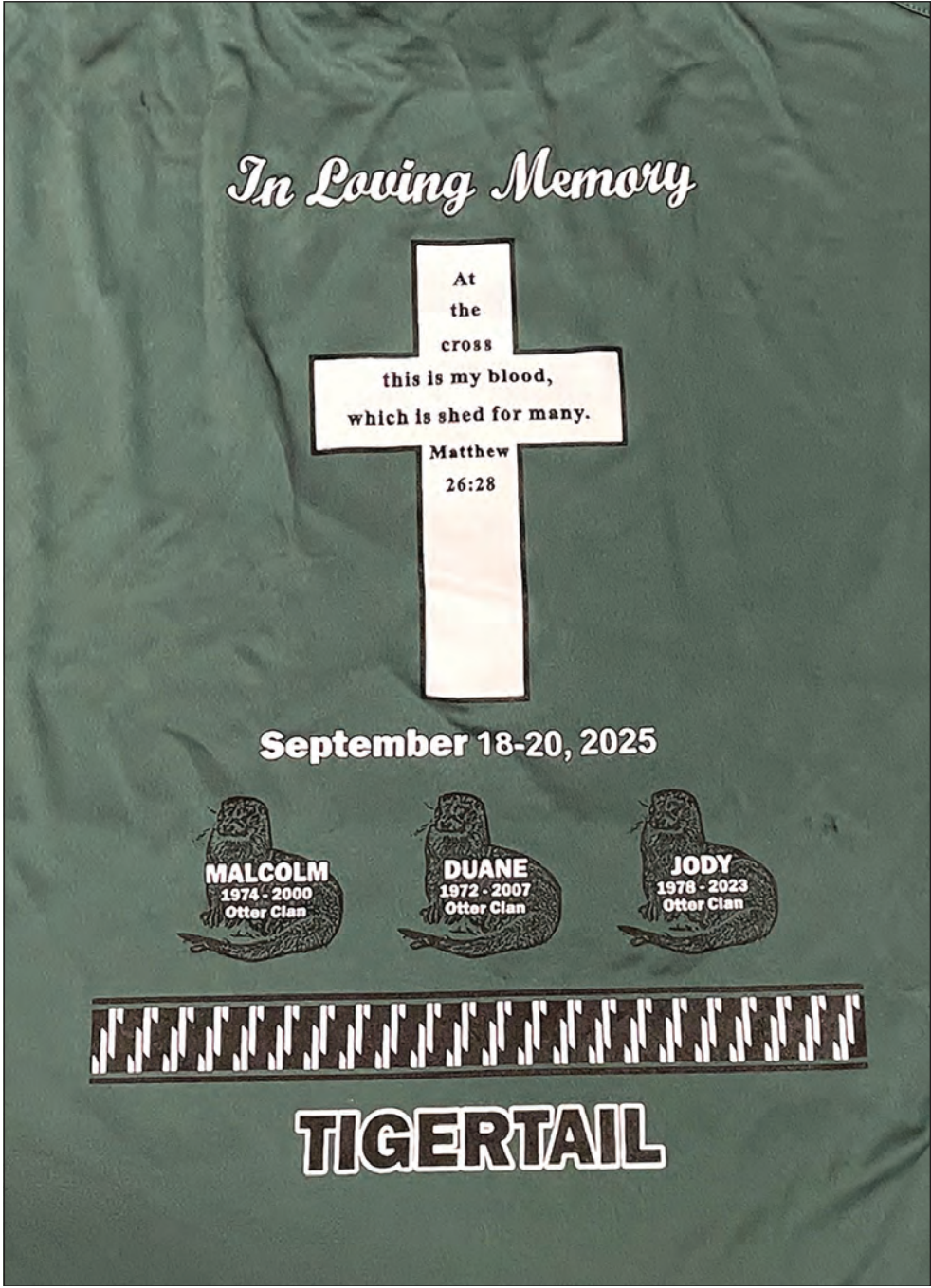
only player from Florida on the team, was named women's tournament MVP.

Skyla Osceola played for the Lady Ballers, which finished third. In one of the best games of the tournament, the Lady Ballers battled the Fire in a semifinal, or third place game. Three-pointers by Osceola and Jenna Plumley came at crucial moments and kept the Ballers' hopes alive, but the Fire emerged with a hard-fought 75-71.

The Fire went on to claim the title with

a 65-58 win against Burning Feathers, which had players from tribes in North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, Canada and elsewhere.

The men's final didn't feature any drama. The Renegades jumped to a big early lead against Big Shot Takers and cruised to a 67-45 win.



The back of the tournament T-shirt in memory of the Tigertail brothers: Malcolm, Duane and Jody.



Opening tip in the women's championship game.



Atlanta Fire, from Georgia, celebrate winning the women's championship.



The Renegades put an exclamation point on their championship win with a dunk.

Fresh Walters settling in with Youngstown State football



Fresh Walters

Youngstown State

Youngstown State University sophomore wide receiver Fresh Walters has some open field after making a catch against Michigan State on Sept. 13 in East Lansing, Michigan. Walters, a Seminole Tribe descendant, is in his first season at Youngstown State in Ohio. Through the team's first four games, Walters has three catches for 22 yards. His longest reception was for 10 yards against Towson State on Sept. 20. He also attempted a pass, which fell incomplete, in the team's 41-24 loss in front of 71,000 fans at Michigan State. Walters previously played at Iowa Western Community College. He is the son of tribal member Sheree Sneed.

Courtesy photo

BC Recreation hosts Indian Day fishing contest



Calvin Tiger

Zihnellie Burney casts her fishing rod at the Big Cypress Indian Day Youth Fishing Tournament on Sept. 23. The event was organized by the BC Recreation Department.



Calvin Tiger

Austin Billie gets his fishing line all set for the tournament.



Calvin Tiger

DanaSue Bear, left, and Akira Gore find a good spot to fish in the tournament.



Calvin Tiger

Nicolai Shaffer holds up his catch during the tournament.

♦ OHS From page 1C

Smith took over the rest of the way with a kill to make it 11-4 and an ace to close out the match, 15-7.
JV coach Carrie Heineman praised Smith for her serving, Bonilla for her defense and Nunez for her all-around ability, including serving.
“She’s a great server. When we played Sebring last week, she had a long run of serves,” Heineman said.

Kevin Johnson
Okeechobee High's Adleigh Schwier, left, and Tehya Nunez play defense on a service return in the varsity match against Sebring.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee High's Ciani Smith keeps a point alive in the JV match.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee High's Melaine Bonilla receives a serve in the JV game.

PECS volleyball succeeds thanks to successful serving

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — At the middle school level, volleyball teams that excel in serving stand a good chance at winning points. Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School used several strong serves to defeat Moore Haven Middle School, 2-0, in a varsity middle school match Sept. 8 at Moore Haven Middle-High School.

“Very good servers. We work a lot on serving,” said PECS coach Monica Koger.

Avani Hopanv Smith and Macayden

Sardina were the serving stars of the night. Each had impressive stretches of consecutive serving points, including aces. Smith started game two with six straight service points. Later in the game, Sardina blasted four consecutive aces that gave PECS a 21-11 lead.

Smith and Sardina had plenty of company, too. Jamelynn Anderson sparked PECS with a series of good serves early. Serenity Bishop delivered an ace to end game one, which PECS prevailed 25-15. An ace by Kiani Runkles ended the match as PECS won game two, 25-16.

PECS shined in other areas, too. Jaelle

Weimann had a few kills and Ameliana Osceola was a standout in receiving on defense. The team played without injured starter Jaiden Fludd.

PECS upped its record to 3-0.

In the earlier JV match, PECS also won in two games (25-10, 25-9). Jessa Davis, Willena Tommie, Amariah Lavatta, Okalani Collins and Dylanie Peak were among the standouts in serving.

It was the JV’s second win in three games to start the season.



PECS varsity players are introduced prior to their game at Moore Haven on Sept. 8.

Kevin Johnson



Avani Hopanv Smith controls the ball for PECS in the JV match.

Kevin Johnson



PECS' Willena Tommie delivers a serve in the JV match.

Kevin Johnson



Dylanie Peak keeps the ball in play in the JV match.

Kevin Johnson



Kanae Jumper gets set on defense with teammates Avani Hopanv Smith (21) and Jamelynn Anderson (15) in the varsity match.

Kevin Johnson



PECS JV gets fired up before facing Moore Haven.

Kevin Johnson



PECS varsity team forms a line for JV player introductions, including Kahniya Billie, before the JV match against Moore Haven.

Kevin Johnson

Jaelle Weimann, left, and Kaliyah Hodge show plenty of energy after Moore Haven had to call a timeout.

Kevin Johnson

Allie Williams enters senior season on Ottawa bowling squad

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Allie Williams is in her senior season on the Ottawa University women’s bowling team in Ottawa, Kansas.

The team’s season begins Oct. 18 and runs until late February.

Williams, from Pearl River, Miss., is the daughter of Brandi and Gavin Williams.

Here are some highlights in Williams’ career at Ottawa:

2024-25

- In eight events, Williams had a 173.400 average with two top 25 finishes.
- In four Tier 1 Events, she had an average of 175.375.
- Had an average of 170.438 in four Tier 2 Events.

2023-24

- Named First Team All-KCAC as a sophomore.
- Was named to the All-Tournament Team at the Clarke Invite and the NAIA West Tournament.
- Had a 183.810 average in 11 events with two top five finishes and five top 25 finishes.
- Finished four Tier 1 Events with a 188.185 average and seven Tier 2 Events with a 180.528 average.
- At the NAIA West Sunday Tournament, Williams had a seasons best average of 205.2.

2022-23

- Was named to the All-Tournament team at the Eagle Invitational.
- Competed in seven events as a freshman, three Tier 1 and four Tier 2.
- Had an overall average of 177.885.
- Finished the season with an average of 176.125 in Tier 1 Events and 178.667 in Tier 2 Events.
- Had one top five finish, placing fourth at the Eagle Invitational and one top 10, placing eighth at the Wildcat Challenge.
- Finished the Eagle Invitational with a season’s best average of 188.2.



Ottawa

Allie Williams

Boxing comes to Hard Rock Live

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Boxing takes center stage as the Fists of Fury Series returns to Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood on Oct. 12 at 3:30 p.m. Go to ticketmaster.com for tickets.

Panthers start season Oct. 5

FROM PRESS RELEASE

SUNRISE — The Florida Panthers kick off their quest for a third straight Stanley Cup on Oct. 5 when they host the Chicago Blackhawks at 5 p.m.

The Panthers will start the season without injured stars Matthew Tkachuk and Alexander Barkov, who are both out with longterm injuries.

The Panthers are home six times in October.

Oct. 5 vs Chicago, 5 p.m.
Oct. 7 vs Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11 vs Ottawa, 7 p.m.
Oct. 23 vs Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25 vs Vegas, 6 p.m.
Oct. 28 vs Anaheim, 7 p.m.

For tickets go to seatgeek.com.

Mike Tyson show to be held at four Hard Rock properties

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Boxing Hall of Famer Mike Tyson will present four shows at Hard Rock properties, including Dec. 14 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

“Return of the Mike,” features Tyson in a performance showcasing the legend like you’ve never seen him before. While Tyson’s previous hit “Undisputed Truth” focused on his formative years and rise to boxing glory, “Return of the Mike” ventures deeper into his extraordinary life. From battles with addiction and mental health to candid reflections on his celebrated career, “Return of the Mike” will revisit his wild younger self

and share wisdom through the unexpected comedy of life.

“After ‘Undisputed Truth’, people kept asking when I’d return, and now it’s time -- no holding back, no filter,” said Tyson in a press release. “Hard Rock knows how to have a good time and bring people together for unforgettable nights, just like what we’re going to create with this tour. We’re going to have some fun, tell some truths, and remind everyone that I’m still swinging hard.”

“Return of Mike” will also be held at Hard Rock in Rockford (Nov. 9), Cincinnati (Nov. 23) and Atlantic City (Jan. 23, 2026).

For more information and tickets go to casino.hardrock.com/.

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“Younger Otter”

BY ELGIN JUMPER

Author’s note: “Younger Otter” is an example of Magical Realism. I am a big fan of the literary genre. Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Daniel Wallace are two of my favorites. Their stories blend the everyday ordinary elements of life, with extraordinary and magical occurrences, without calling attention to itself. They just happen. The story blends fact and fiction and blurs the lines between history and myth.

“I would like to give a heartfelt thanks, to the kind and helpful staff at “Community Archives” Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, Tara Backhouse, Curator. I reached out to them and they helped me immensely with old photographs and pertinent literature which truly shined light on the time and locations I was focused upon. Shi-na-bi-sha.”

“I don’t want Realism.
I want Magic!”
--Tennessee Williams

1970

I am a Seminole and although a part of my youth was spent in the Everglades, I was eventually removed to a reservation in the city, when I was five years old.

Malcolm, my dad, wasn’t a “Jack of All Trades,” as folks sometimes say about a person, but he was a dabbler of many endeavors, on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. The BC reservation is located in the middle of the Florida Everglades, and although there were houses and chickees on a good part of it back then, quite respectfully, it was still an undeveloped area, for the most part. I have fond mem’ries of the place.

I remember when I was four or five, just a boy, a preschooler, playing in the misty surreal woods near my grandmother’s camp. It was a warm summer day, the ancient tribe that had made the dark wilderness their home were out in search of food. The tribe had remained hidden all these centuries, revealing their presence to just a few--I was one of the few who they trusted enough to communicate their presence to. I first met, Kai, a young girl from the Calusa Tribe on the west coast, as she was gathering colorful aromatic flowers near a group of cypress trees that stood at the edge of a glistening pond. Being somewhat of an artist, I painted her. She was six or seven, a tad older than myself, arrayed in soft beige deerskin, and her hair was a blackish-brown, like the alluring tones of Mother Earth. And if you fell into her dark brown eyes, rejoice, for the pleasant light within would be a faithful guide. Oh, we had many adventures.

A lot of roads on the BC rez were still white dirt roads--dusty, rocky--and when Indian cars or trucks rumbled over them, huge plumes of white dust and pebbles were sent upwards, upwards, till settling once again upon the echoing rez. Sometimes I’d sit with my dad in front of the Big Cypress Seminole Trading Post, where other older Seminoles would stop by to converse. One time, a much older gentleman come by--with black pants and remarkable Seminole jacket, and a white silk scarf around his neck--in front of the trading post. After pleasantries, he told us a most wonderful story. With much conviction, he told us he was a hundred and thirty-five years old and that he had fought in the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842. He spoke about his experiences so eloquently for several hours.

“Yes, I was there,” the old man said at one stage, “where the thunder and lightning battles occurred”--the old man was a poet--“Our people, defending our homes, were assailed by the US armies. Our people were brave, and they fought with great skill, and determination. I fought. Our battles in the Florida sun. So long ago--I was there. I felt the sacred poetry there.”

Now, with misty-eyes, he stated he had changed with the times, and he was quite proud and exceedingly happy with the direction modern-day Seminoles were taking. Just then, a white ‘47 Cadillac Fleetwood pulled up--A classic. The young driver got out, opened the passenger door for the old man, and the old man turned, and bid us a fond farewell. He then got in, and the driver backed the car out, heading east on Snake Road. I would’ve loved to have questioned him further, as the history he had lived through. Those hours in front of the trading post had been a breath of fresh air.

Oh yes, I have fond mem’ries of the BC rez.

I had never been to school before, but that didn’t matter to me, I had deep concerns

about it, and was still struggling everyday with it. What would the school be like? Would I make a friend like Kai there?

Upon leaving BC, for Hollywood, at last, we saw an inundation of passion flowers, in purples, pinks, and blues, descending from the sky like poems embracing gentle hearts. I took out my painting stuff, my travel easel, etc, and captured impressionistic renderings in the appropriate hues. It’s always good to stay in practice so.

I should give you a description of my dad right about now, so you can have a better idea of him:

Malcolm, tall, fit, trim, middle-aged, reigned over us like an eccentric Monarch of old.(Still, he was a sandwich short of a proper picnic). Following behind him, was us, his family, a squad of four kids and a generous loving Seminole wife, who could cook up Seminole cuisine like a gourmet chef. But unfortunately I digress. Malcolm undertook a variety of ventures, as I mentioned earlier, like he’d build sturdy chickee huts, ideal for all kinds of locations, with materials obtained straight from the Everglades. And he wrestled alligators, menacing dragons, if you will, for the innumerable tourists, and he worked as an extra in low-budget movie productions all over the country, and in South Florida. Atmosphere, as they sometimes called it.

As we traveled east along Snake Road, my dad saw fit to break out another story and regale us with it:

“So there were these two decent-sized alligators, right,” he remarked, nodding his head, “that your mother and I was transporting to an alligator wrestling gig in Miami, but somehow these ambitious alligators broke free, and they were climbing from the backseat to the front. Uh . . . “Danger, Will Robinson,” you know. So your mom here grabbed the wheel, just like that--he snapped his fingers--and I grabbed both gators--both!--and there was close combat, let me tell you, till I could secure them once more, and get this! obeying all traffic rules and traffic lights, too!” He smiled and raised and shook an index finger, for proper emphasis, I surmised.

Now, he kept a marred old Indian truck, for chickee-building, a colorful Seminole jacket, all glittery, for storytelling purposes, on account of he was a natural-born storyteller and showman, eager to get in front of crowds, all types of folks, and go to oratin, performin and speechifyin.

He had a flair for it, you see. He did other kinds of jobs, too, like workin in convenience stores, of all places, and even drivin the reservation school-bus, a huge one, too. I always felt he could do whatever it was that he wanted to, oh, by all means, that was a-okay and fine by me, go right on ahead, but I’d abruptly turn bewildered when he’d swindle me and my brother into scrubbing, sweeping and otherwise cleaning out the yellow mo-sheen.

Interestingly enough, Malcolm had worked in them various movies, since way back in the 50s and 60s and up to the present-day 70s, when this story’s taking place, why, he knew “The Creature from the Black Lagoon,” personally, the real one, and other legends like “The Invisible Man” and such, which was right helpful to him ‘cause he just loved acting theatrical-style. Pretty soon he could be an observer onstage, as well, a reactor, a witness to occurrences around him. He had a talent agent, a Mrs. Ella, and this dedicated woman--with glasses and a tender smile, and a silver shock of hair--worked tirelessly for him, too. She was all the time trying to get a hold of him for this movie or that movie. B-Movies, mostly. Why, he’d even allow himself to be photographed for advertisements on bus-benches and billboard signs, and whatnot. People recognized him, to be truthful, the way he’d be all done up in his finest Seminole Regalia. He had attitudes and looks like he could be from the distant Florida past and then, even from the present-day goings ons. It was in the mesmerizin way that he struck a memorable pose, how the camera took a instant likin to what it’s eye saw.

“You’ve got to have something, kid,” he’d tell me, “and it’s got to be something that folks can immediately take a shine to. Something you can really put your heart into, with true passions and heartfelt imagination, a heart so true. And no big gloomy ego to bring you down. As you know, I saw the light myself, eventually, much later in life, and threw away the wrongful paths that I’d been on, and I went into the wilderness, away, afar from humankind--and prayed and suffered--and come out a new man! imploring the world for a second chance.”

And yet my dad was that self-same man who’d advise a human-being on things--yep,

he was one of those kind, who would absorb a whole collection of lofty books, thick ones, skinny ones, old ones, new ones--and then he would try to impart and then inflict that illustrious knowledge on any innocent passersby that come his way, or just someone who was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Just so he didn’t keep that stuff bottled up inside, I guess, getting it out there into the Universe, and to the people, and then he was downright happy.

Malcolm was kinda funny like that. Kinda touched, I should say, and a lot of times, conducting himself dang near like “The Madman of the Everglades,” if ever there was one. And then he’d have these long stretches of when he’d be just as tranquil as a church mouse, contemplating prodigious questions from stargazing and astronomy, to the history of philosophy, and then, to complex examinations on how the Universe works. And at the Seminole Okalee Indian Village cafeteria, why he’d devour a plate of beef and white rice, and cups of coffee, like he was pressed for time, like it was a last meal, choking and catapulting out vast chunks of beef from his hatch, like he was trying to knock down fortified walls and seige-towers. We had to be careful.

Malcolm was leading the joyful life of eccentricity, alright, and people would leave him be, too--long as he wasn’t messing with anybody or bringing harm upon no one--but at the end of one particular day he reported he’d had himself a powerful vision and a doozy of one, too, which commanded him to move his family to the city of Hollywood, Fl, where a new reservation had sprung up, so he signed up for a house--And he got it, too! He had seen things in that compelling vision, he claimed, like overpopulated tourist attractions, that 9 times outta 10, needed a kinda showy Seminole who put plenty stock in theatrical showmanship--where alligator handling was concerned, anyhow--among other things. He figured he’d keep us well-fed with all the tips he’d accumulate, and with what he’d make from his chickee-building, acting and advertisements and such. And he had a good woman in my mother, as I disclosed earlier. Wonderful woman. She held us all together in a loving embrace. She was tall, but she could also be fierce, to any that challenged her, in the ebbs and flows of Life, but just as kind as Spring flowers to the downtrodden populace, let me tell you. Like Ma Joad, in “The Grapes of Wrath.” The way Malcolm packed his days with all types of ventures would oftentimes turn him onry, though, being human, but when mother got to him, massaged his temples, kissed his forehead, hummed little love songs, and worked her magic upon him, reading poems about Florida, and quoting Bible scripture, and the like, he could really do some goodness for the community.

And so, Malcolm was the leading force that moved us out to the Hollywood Seminole Indian Reservation, which used to be referred to as Dania, for some reason. After we set up in our new residence, my mom, for her part, then set about putting us kids into local schools, never minding our not knowing much about the American English lingo. Back then, Nixon was President, and the Vietnam War was raging--that much we knew--for we had several uncles already in country, what, they being modern-day warriors and all, and the news stations of the times brought it home and made it real to us every evening on the tv. So we knew all about Danang, and Tet, long-range patrols and grueling ambushes, “Search and Destroy” and horrific jungle battles and the like.

But we were in Hollywood now--Tabula Rasa--and I was starting to feel better about attending school. They had a new gym on the Hollywood rez and that’s where Malcolm, like a bolt right outta the blue, commenced to practicing and playing basketball. Believe me, I seen him do it. He always broke out his cutoff blue jeans and white t-shirts--Old School--his mind and body was always a-go-in. Never a dull moment. He soon accumulated a group of recruits for a team, and began to run up and down the basketball courts--and serious--dribbling, passing and assisting as he saw fit. Shooting and scoring. His team followed suit. Afterwards the eclectic group would meet at a local burger joint, just off the rez--with the stars barely shinning in the sky, because of the city lights--and Malcolm, after scarfing down vital sustenance, would deliver what he took to be rousing motivational speeches.

Malcolm would take command and move forward. He would address his team thusly, “Whereas we are met today to offer new energies upon the former fields of our beloved ancestors, nay, beside the resting places of our dear people, who, as you know,



Elgin Jumper

“Younger Otter” by Elgin Jumper.

were much-attached to these beloved lands, believe me when I say: There was none to dispute them.” He read a lot so his wordings at times were likened to the speeches he’d perused in history books. And then he’d holler and jump and get all animated and full of beans! As a young kid, it were just a normal thing to see my dad change constantly like the Florida weather. His team admired that kind of fortitude, as they called it, because they had other teams, of course, but none would choose them for theirs for the reason that their confidence needed work and their skill sets on the courts left much to be desired. With Malcolm, they always had a team, and were at home on the basketball court, no matter what.

And then they’d chat it up some more as to the pros and cons of shooting hoops, and in between and after hamburger bites and soda sips, would clap each other on the backs and say, “Good game, Good game.”

He invariably thought of his people as, “The Heroes of the Everglades” as he put it, and that we had as much right to Florida--as any--perhaps even more so, because we had struggled so long and hard, that we had truly cherished the rivers and lakes and wildernesses, fighting for the beloved land. “Good game, Good game . . . “

And so, we were in Hollywood, on the reservation--it had been quite the adjustmet--and my mother had enrolled us into school, locally, and we had to wake up when it was still dark, to make the bus that took us several miles east on Sterling Road, to school. Malcolm had found a good job, too, at the Seminole Okalee Indian Village, on 441 by Sterling. They had a giant wrestler and alligator statue out front. At lunch they crossed the 441 and went and broke bread for a spell. We had no cause for despair, no, not too much, anymore. School seemed tolerable and we’d make some new friends, so that was a-okay and wonderful. In time my mother obtained employment, as well, at the Okalee Village, wearing a multi-colored Seminole dress and an iridescent cape, inside the village areas, sewing patchwork designs, and crafting intricate beadwork.

On one occasion, I said, “Malcolm, you have brought us from the Big Cypress. You have made a home for us here in Hollywood. I’m starting school. We are all going about our new lives with hope. This is a good thing.” And I was just a mere kid, too, talking all like that.

“Ah,” Malcolm said, reminding me of a panther in a calm moment, “Younger Otter, come, sit with me a while, for you have a way with words, and this, too, is a good thing. Never lose your love for words. Heh-heh, kids say the darndest things . . . “ I smiled and accepted his kind sentiments.

Though my father was a busy man, he still had energy of heart, to dream, to tell his stories.

“Okay, Otter,” he began, at the breakfast table one morning, “this one’s for you. I’m going to tell you the one about a Seminole man who knew the Everglades like no other”--he was using hand gestures, lively, animated--“He knew all the sawgrass trails, the canals and rivers, the swamps that folks were familiar with and even the ones they knew nothing about. Explorers and hunters from all over the world clamored for his extraordinary wisdoms, insights and swamp services.

“Top leaders even wanted to appoint him as, “The Emperor of the Tribe”--so he could solve everything in one night. Yes, this man was at once placed within an exquisite palace

of magnificence and opulence. His eyes were like the bluest diamonds, if you can imagine it, kaleidoscopic blue, all sparkly, well and good. His gentle glances could melt the coldest of hearts. He was world-famous and crowds howled and roared to catch glimpses of him. A few enterprising citizens wanted to take polaroids of him and charge \$5 bucks a pop for them.

“But the man oddly became fixated on humility and modesty and a desire to swim away from all his trials and tribulations, as he saw them, what the people wanted of him, all the things the multitudes desired for him. And who could blame him? He was definitely in a plight, this man. No question about it. So he took to languishing on the rez, in an old, rickety chickee hut with walls and windows and a door, where he spent his time reading all about the history of philosophy, and how that might help him address his quandary. And yet on the morning of a pleasant Spring day, he noticed that--”

And then, he paused, exhilarated, and peered at me from across the table. Then he looked upwards, as though his next words were floating around up there.

“He perceived that he was changing,” my father continued, “his shape was shifting, no doubt about it.”

“What, Malcolm,” I asked. “What was it?”

“Meadow-morfus,” he said. “as the experts calls it. His feet had grown webbings, you see. He was growing a tail, an otter’s tail. No one could’ve believed it. It was like a miracle, my boy.”

I was hanging on his every word. And yet, I managed to sip some orange juice right quick. This is a good one, I recall thinking. He was quite vivid in his presentation and delivery. Very theatrical. A chunk of breakfast meat was kindly expeled from his laughing gear, but he kept on. My mom thoughtfully poured him more juice, and he drank, and kept the story going.

“Pull out all the stops!” he commanded. I looked around at the mesmerized faces in the room.

“He was growing sleeker,” he resumed, “and absolutely brown-furred in his coat. Whiskers were coming in, starting around his nostril region. His eyes started to resemble black-brown marbles, glossy, as shiny as Everglades pools and the moon through the midnight trees. He said he needed to find friends, like-minded chaps, revelers, who could dream with him in the black-water rivers, and lively streams.”

Looking back over fifty-five years now, I’d witnessed many of his storytelling performances, but this one was memorable, utterly memorable.

“They say, he went out to Andytown, and then, the Everglades,” my father revealed, “hitched a ride, in search of sacred, healing waters. He wasn’t the same, anymore. His sincere regrets had washed it all away. He had changed into an otter. And that, my dears, was the last anyone heard of him.”

It was still the blue hour outside, but God had evidently flipped the switch to the sun on, because I could discern orange-red light and feel the early morning vibes. My father tidied himself up after the story, and read a page or two of poetry--to himself, for good measure. Meantime we kids got ready for school. Not long after, Malcolm come out from the bedroom and we all loaded up into the truck for the ride to the bus-stop, near the rez. I was so excited and had considerable hopes for making new friends and starting school.

Upcoming programs at 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.For the full schedule, go to nativelearningcenter.com/

Webinar: Developing Engagement Plans for Clean Energy Projects: Frameworks for Community Outreach and Planning
Instructors:
Michelle L. Holiday
(Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma)
President
Michelle Holiday & Associates

Katherine Cole
Founder and CEO

Kit Cole Consulting, LLC
Date: Oct. 2 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Webinar: How to Build a Good Development Team
Instructor:
Shelly Tucciarelli
(Oneida Nation of Wisconsin)
Executive Director
Visionary Ventures NFP
Owner, Turtle Clan Development Services
Date: Oct. 7 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Webinar: Harnessing AI for Purpose-Driven Grant Writing
Instructor:
Diane Leonard, GPC, RST
Grant Professionals Association
Approved Trainer
President
DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC
Date: Oct. 9 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Webinar: Strengthening Native Teams: The Power of Teambuilding & Development in Tribal Nations
Instructor:
Lanalle Smith
(Navajo)
Owner, Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC
Date: Oct. 14 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Webinar: Organizational Diagnostics: Enhancing Housing Services in Native American Communities
Instructor:
Lanalle Smith
(Navajo)
Owner, Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC
Date: Oct. 16 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Virtual Training: The Pre-Planning Advantage: Winning Federal Grants in a Shortened Application Cycle Virtual Training
Instructor:
Diane Leonard, GPC, RST
Grant Professionals Association

Approved Trainer
President, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC
Date: Oct. 21 Time: 11:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Webinar: Breaking Barriers: Trauma-Informed Coaching for Financial Confidence & Success
Instructor:
Lanalle Smith
(Navajo)
Owner
Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC
Date: Oct. 21 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Webinar: How to STAY Grant Ready as Your Organization Evolves
Instructor:
Diane Leonard, GPC, RST
Grant Professionals Association
Approved Trainer
President
DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC
Date: Oct. 23 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Webinar: Restoring Balance: Self-Care for Native-Serving Professionals
Instructor:
Lanalle Smith
(Navajo)
Owner
Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC
Date: Oct. 28 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Webinar: Empowering Tribal Communities through Land Revitalization Solutions: Launching the Next Generation of Tribal Technical Assistance to Brownfields (Tribal TAB) Program
Instructor:
Oral Saulters
Tribal TAB Team
Kansas State University
Center for Hazardous Substance Research
Date: Oct. 30 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.