

The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered www.seminoletribune.org • Free

Volume I • Number 4

April 2026

Hard Rock Hotel Malta ready to debut

STAFF REPORT

Hard Rock International, owned by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, announced March 25 that reservations for the new Hard Rock Hotel Malta are being accepted, with bookings starting in July 2026.

Located on the coast of the island country of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea, Hard Rock Hotel Malta is in the heart of St. George's Bay, 50 miles south of Sicily, Italy.

"We are thrilled to bring the iconic Hard Rock Hotel experience to the beautiful island of Malta," John Rees, senior vice president of Hotel Operations at Hard Rock International, said in a press release. "With Malta's incredible blend of history, culture, and natural beauty as our backdrop, we're establishing this hotel as a premier destination for travelers and look forward to welcoming our first guests this summer."

The property features nearly 400 panoramic seaview rooms, including 25 exclusive suites with private heated pools, two executive club floors, and a ballroom.

◆ See MALTA on page 7A

Youth delve into tribal sovereignty, self-determination in Washington

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON, D.C. — At this year's Close Up and United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) Impact Week Youth Summit, 30 high school students represented the Seminole Tribe of Florida in Washington, D.C.

Throughout the six-day program, participating students from USET Member Tribal Nations examined self-determination in Indian Country and the relationship between tribal nations and the federal government. With organized visits to the nation's iconic memorials and institutional landmarks, and opportunities to engage with tribal leaders, students deepened their insight into tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

From March 7 to 12, a total of 84 Close Up USET students represented tribes from Connecticut, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, South Carolina and Texas.

Embodying their nations with a dazzling array of patchwork, flagbearers kicked off the USET flag and opening ceremony alongside the honor guard.

"As always, a big highlight for us here is our youth," President of USET Chief Kirk Francis Sr. said, welcoming students and commencing the youth summit.

Through a sacred drum ceremony, students and leadership focused on grounding themselves in the beliefs, traditions, and principles that have served their people.

Shawn Ralston, member of the Seneca Nation of Indians and manager of Curriculum Design with the Close Up Foundation, led workshops on tribal



Daniella Hakim

Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith commences the Sovereignty Statement Council Session, presenting her portion of the statement on health to the USET SPF Board of Directors in Washington, D.C.

government, tribal action initiatives, and tribal sovereignty. By the end of the week, students experienced what it takes to tackle important issues together.

"If you were to sit in one of our sessions you might have noticed that we

were occasionally off topic," Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith said. "But somehow, we were also on topic at the same time. Our conversations had a way of wandering, but they always circled back to the bigger ideas we were working on. I think

that's what made us better. We got closer and we found our success, no matter how many rabbit holes we went down."

◆ See CLOSE UP on page 5A

OB Osceola III ready to be tribe's first FSU baseball player

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

NAPLES/HOLLYWOOD — A whirlwind day for Florida State University baseball signee and Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal member OB Osceola III appropriately started for the left-handed pitcher on the state's left coast and finished on the right coast under the tribe's iconic Guitar Hotel on the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood property.

On March 25, Osceola went from being part of a national signing ceremony with his senior teammates and other athletes at St. John Neumann Catholic School in Naples in the afternoon to seeing his accomplishment announced to a big chunk of South Florida via a vertical scrolling message displayed at

night on the 34-story tall, 638-room Guitar Hotel that towers above the Florida Turnpike in Hollywood.

"Today has been a great day," Osceola said.

Wearing an FSU turquoise jacket, the 6-foot-2, 195-pound Osceola walked up to a small platform shortly after 8:30 p.m. in the hotel's Bora Bora cabana and lagoon pool area in front of about 50 people, including family members, friends and other guests. Behind him, the hotel's dazzling light display — well defined in the darkness of the night — switched to FSU colors and logo while War Chant blasted throughout the property. Osceola, who will be the first Seminole tribal member to play baseball for FSU and will add to the small representation of Native Americans in NCAA Division I baseball, gave a few tomahawk chops as the

crowd cheered.

"I couldn't be more blessed to have all my family, the tribe, teammates, everybody has shown respect and congratulations and all that good stuff. I couldn't be happier. This is a dream come true," said Osceola, who grew up as an FSU fan, said when asked to sum up his day.

Osceola said he won't take for granted being a Seminole at FSU and representing his family and tribe.

"It means the world to me. Since being a kid, being a Seminoles fan, being around the (tribe's) culture is very impactful. My grandpa, OB Sr., is 100 percent true Seminole. He's an inspiration," he said. "I'm very blessed with the opportunity. I want to use my last name and represent my people in a good way."

◆ See OB3 on page 3C



Beverly Bidney

FSU-bound OB Osceola III, center, participates in St. John Neumann Catholic School's national signing ceremony March 25 in Naples.



Kevin Johnson

In the evening on March 25, the Guitar Hotel lights up in FSU colors and logo for OB Osceola III.

Editorial

NCAI president addresses House subcommittee

• Mark Macarro

Editor's note: On March 18, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) President Mark Macarro spoke before the House Committee on Appropriations' Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Here is his oral testimony:

Thank you Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and other distinguished members of this Subcommittee for allowing me to testify before this committee on NCAI's funding priorities for Fiscal Year 2027.

I am Mark Macarro, Tribal Chairman of the Pechanga Band of Indians in southern California and the President of the National Congress of American Indians. Founded in 1944, NCAI is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of Tribal governments and communities.

In addition to the comments in my written testimony, I want to focus my remarks today on five key requests. The federal government's relationship with Tribal Nations is rooted in trust and treaty obligations. Yet across Indian Country, those obligations remain chronically underfunded and, too often, under-implemented. We urge the Committee to focus on a simple but critical principle: funding must translate into real-world outcomes in Tribal communities.

First, we ask you to fully fund core federal trust responsibilities. Programs at the Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Bureau of Indian Education remain significantly below need. We support advance appropriations and long-term, mandatory funding approaches to ensure stability and certainty for Tribal communities. During the recent government shutdown, we saw how advance appropriations for Indian Health Services ensured continuation of essential, lifesaving programs for Tribal Nations and their citizens, while the lack of advance appropriation for BIA programs caused significant harm to Tribal communities. Leaders had to face stark choices - whether to fund law enforcement or social services while furloughing or laying off other Tribal government employees.

Second, we urge robust investments in public safety and justice. Tribal communities continue to face some of the highest rates of violent crime in the country, yet remain among the least resourced. Funding for law enforcement, courts, and implementation of the Violence Against Women Act tribal provisions must match the scale of the need. We urge this committee to require the immediate release of the FY 2022 and 2023 Tribal Law and Order Act Reports by BIA Office of Justice Services. These reports provide essential data on the current funding levels for law enforcement, detention, and courts in Tribal Nations, but more importantly, they document the unmet funding needs for all Tribal Nations, including those in PL 280 states. The FY 2021 report noted that the unmet need was over \$3 billion and we believe the FY 2022 and 2023 reports will show even greater disparity between current funding levels and the actual funding needs to keep our communities safe.

Third, infrastructure investments

must meet basic standards of living. In many Tribal communities, access to safe drinking water, reliable housing, passable roads, and broadband remains limited. Continued investment through agencies like the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other federal partners is essential to closing these gaps.

Fourth, we ask you to strengthen Tribal self-governance by fully funding contracts and compacts, including contract support costs and administrative needs. Tribal Nations consistently demonstrate that when resources are delivered directly, outcomes improve.

Finally—and critically—fund the people who make these programs work. We appreciate increased investments in Indian Country, but without the workforce to implement them, those dollars don't reach our communities. We urge the Committee to fund not just programs, but the people required to deliver them.

Across Indian Country, programs are funded on paper but not fully operational due to staffing shortages. Federal agencies and Tribal governments alike face persistent vacancies, limited hiring flexibility, and insufficient administrative funding. Without adequate personnel capacity, even well-funded programs cannot be effectively implemented.

Just this week we learned that Indian Affairs is planning on releasing and implementing a reorganization plan that will make significant cuts to the staff critical in administering programs and distributing funding to Tribal Nations. In January of this year, the GAO found that the Indian Affairs workforce was reduced by 11% in 2025 and this caused delays in carrying out work, left regions and agencies with critical gaps, and exacerbation of previously identified issues with lack of sufficient workforce capacity. This action has been done without consultation with Tribal Nations and without consideration of the impact it will have on the delivery of programs and services.

Additionally, any reduction in force will impact the tribal share calculation used when a Tribe exercises self-governance through an ISDEAA agreement. We urge the Committee to encourage Indian Affairs to reverse course and engage in robust and collaborative consultation with Tribal Nations before taking any action that would imperil the already understaffed Indian Affairs workforce.

Additionally, we urge the Committee to ensure that appropriations include sufficient funding for staffing at federal agencies, as well as direct Tribal workforce capacity—grant management, financial oversight, and program administration. Expanding administrative cost coverage and supporting workforce development pipelines will ensure that federal investments are actually delivered on the ground.

In closing, we ask you to view these requests not as discretionary spending, but as the fulfillment of legal and moral obligations. With adequate funding, sufficient flexibility, and the workforce to implement programs effectively, Tribal Nations can continue to drive meaningful progress for their communities.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Indian Country. I look forward to your questions.

Tribal members audition for roles in 'A Land Remembered'

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — A casting audition was conducted at the Seminole Okalee Indian Village & Venue in Hollywood for a new TV show in production based on the historical fiction book "A Land Remembered" written in 1984 by Patrick D. Smith.

On March 13, members of the tribal community attended the audition for multiple acting roles for the upcoming show. The casting roles to be filled called for four tribal men, four tribal women and two tribal youth. Some of the roles from the book consist of characters with names such as Keith Tiger, Bird Jumper and Tawanda Cypress.

"We're trying to treat it like a regular audition where we have a waiting room and then we call them one by one," said Everett Osceola, cultural producer and liaison for the show.

Osceola said the show will be transcribed in Creek and Elaponke.

"It's great to get the community in here," said Doc Native, who auditioned for multiple roles.

Zoey Puente auditioned for her first time. Before her audition, she said she was nervous but excited.

Multiple tribal youth auditioned. The show "A Land Remembered" will be directed by Todd Wiseman Jr. It is currently



Calvin Tiger

Macy Williams reads for a part in the upcoming TV show 'A Land Remembered' during an audition March 13 at Seminole Okalee Indian Village & Venue.

being pitched to different studios. "A Land Remembered" was originally written about the MacIvey family generations from 1865 to 1968. During that time, the MacIvey family becomes allies with the Seminole Tribe as the family migrates through Florida.



Calvin Tiger (2)

Doc Native, above and Melody Jamieson, below, stand in front of the camera and casting director Lori Wyman during their auditions.



Mullin Takes Helm at DHS, becoming first Cherokee Nation citizen in U.S. Cabinet

BY LEVI RICKERT
Native News Online

Markwayne Mullin, 48, a tribal citizen of the Cherokee Nation, was sworn in as the ninth secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security during a White House ceremony on Tuesday afternoon, with Donald Trump in attendance.

Mullin was administered the oath of office by U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi. He stood beside his wife, Christie Mullin, as he was sworn in, with their six children also present.

The U.S. Senate confirmed Mullin on Monday evening by a 54-45 vote.

Mullin becomes the second Native American to serve in a presidential Cabinet in a secretarial role—and the first citizen of the Cherokee Nation to hold a Cabinet position.

Trump highlighted Mullin's Native heritage during the ceremony.

"I didn't know all of these things," Trump joked. "I would've picked him faster if I had known. I would've made a quicker decision."

Mullin succeeds Kristi Noem, the former governor of South Dakota, whose tenure was marked by controversy. She faced widespread criticism after two American citizens were killed on the streets of Minneapolis earlier this year by federal immigration officers.

Trump reassigned Noem on March 5 following congressional testimony in which she said the president approved a \$220 million advertising campaign featuring her riding a horse. Trump denied approving the campaign and moved her to a new role as Special Envoy for the Shield of the Americas.

Mullin now takes over a department marred by controversy after a tumultuous year under Noem's leadership. He assumes control at a time when the agency is largely shut down due to Congress failing to approve a budget.

"I don't care what color your state is. I don't care if you're red or you're blue," Mullin said. "At the end of the day, my job is to be secretary of Homeland and protect everybody the same."

UNITY to celebrate 50th anniversary in July

STAFF REPORT

UNITY will celebrate its 50th anniversary at the organization's annual national conference, July 10-14, at the Oklahoma City Convention Center in Oklahoma City.

The conference will feature Native

youth empowerment events, pow wow, committee meetings, caucuses, guest speakers, training, awards, fashion show, basketball and volleyball tournaments, gala dinner, and cultural sessions. Keynote speaker topics include Indigenous wellness, mental health and social justice.

Attendees are encouraged to wear red July 13 in honor of missing and murdered

relatives. UNITY is an organization for Native youth. Its mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, physical, and social development Native youth through greater youth involvement. For more information visit unityinc.org.

The Seminole Tribune is a member of the Indigenous Journalists Association.

Letters/emails to the editor must be signed and may be edited for publication.

Subscription rate is \$35 per year by mail. Make checks payable to: The Seminole Tribune 6365 Taft Street Suite 3003 Hollywood, FL 33024

The following deadline applies to all submissions to The Seminole Tribune:

Issue: May 2026
Deadline: April 15, 2026

Advertising rates along with sizes and other information may be downloaded online at: <http://SeminoleTribune.org/Advertise>
Postmaster:

Please send address changes to: The Seminole Tribune 6365 Taft St. Suite 3003 Hollywood, FL 33024

Publisher: The Seminole Tribe of Florida
Phone: 954-985-5700

Senior Editor: Kevin Johnson, ext. 10715
KevinJohnson@semtribe.com

Staff Reporter: Beverly Bidney, ext. 16466
BeverlyBidney@semtribe.com

Staff Reporter: Calvin Tiger, ext. 10739
CalvinTiger@semtribe.com

Staff Reporter: Daniella Hakim, ext. 10704
DaniellaHakim@semtribe.com

Advertising: Donna Mason, ext. 10733
DonnaMason@semtribe.com

Contributors: Mayli Tommie, Bristol Rives

© 2026 Seminole Tribe of Florida

Community



Brian Zepeda photos, beadwork on display at Baker Museum

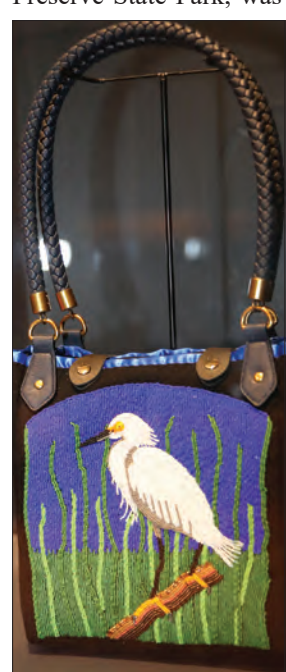
BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

NAPLES — Photographer and beadwork artisan Brian Zepeda's artwork is featured in an exhibit at the Baker Museum in Naples along with an exhibit of renowned landscape photographer Ansel Adams.

Zepeda's exhibit is in a gallery adjacent to the "Discovering Ansel Adams" photography exhibit, so patrons attending that exhibit are naturally led into Zepeda's show.

In Zepeda's gallery are 12 of his landscape photos of Florida and around the U.S. Photos of the Everglades, the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park and more grace the walls.

A photo of a rare ghost orchid, which Zepeda photographed in a tree 30 feet from the ground in the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, was enlarged to fill an entire wall. To get the photo, a guide carried a long ladder through the swamp, which Zepeda climbed to photograph the flower.



Beverly Bidney
The beaded handbag is the first of its kind made by Brian Zepeda.

Zepeda received the silver Charlie Award from the Florida Magazine Association in 2024 for the image. The exhibit also includes three beaded panel belts, a beaded purse featuring a white wading bird and a beaded bandolier bag.

On March 12, the day the exhibit opened, Zepeda met with a group of about

20 docents to discuss his work. Docents guide and educate museum visitors about the art they are seeing. Often groups of patrons follow a docent through a museum for an educational tour of the artwork.

"It doesn't matter what level you're at, you can always learn something from other photographers," Zepeda told the docents. "A National Geographic [landscape] photographer told me he learned things from an architectural photographer about composition that he uses in his work."

Zepeda told the docents that during the pandemic in 2020, he taught cell phone photography in the field, since people didn't need to be in close proximity to each other to make photographs. He promoted the classes on social media which were quickly filled up with 20 students each.

In the past, Zepeda used to shoot black and white film with a 35mm Pentax camera, but now he shoots with a digital camera. He used to print his photos on paper, and he thought they were fantastic. But now he has his photos printed on metal, which enhances the color.

"I try to make the photo see what my eye sees," Zepeda said.

Elrod Bowers, who was a student at the Fort Lauderdale Institute of Art at the time, mentored Zepeda early in his photography career and taught him about the mechanics of taking photos.

Later in his career he met Jack Dykinga, a National Geographic photographer, who was looking for a guide through the Everglades. Zepeda was happy to oblige, since he was intimately familiar with the landscape having grown up in it. The two formed a friendship which continues today.

Zepeda and Dykinga spent five days photographing the Everglades, where Zepeda learned a lot about using a large format camera and how to compose photos.

"Whenever I travel, I ask him where I should go to shoot," Zepeda said. "On a Las Vegas trip, he told me to go to the Valley of Fire instead of the Red Rocks. It was worth the longer drive; I saw things I'd never seen anywhere else. It really looks like it's on fire at sunset."



Beverly Bidney
Brian Zepeda gives insight into his work to a group of Baker Museum docents, who will lead tours of his exhibit while it is on display in the Naples museum.

The docents asked when he learned beadwork. Zepeda said he learned as a child and would travel with his family to festivals around the country to sell beadwork. He started beading on a loom, then he finally advanced to making bandolier bags.

"I used an old bandolier bag as a template and learned from it," Zepeda said. "I honed my skills and developed my own technique. There are only six people on the planet today who make them. I modeled mine on old bags and use only Scottish wool and European beads."

Zepeda told the docents that he makes the bags for museums and collectors. The traditional Seminole men's clothing had no pockets, so the purpose of the bandolier bag was to carry things. One of the docents remarked it was the first "man purse."

The first bandolier bag Zepeda made was in 1999 and its design was traditional and historic. Today he makes more contemporary pieces, including one he made

for a friend with a "Star Trek" theme featuring the USS Enterprise.

Zepeda's photography and beadwork will be on display until Aug. 2. The Baker Museum is located at 5833 Pelican Bay Boulevard in Naples.



Beverly Bidney
Brian Zepeda with some of his artwork, including a bandolier bag at left, and an enlargement of his award winning photo of a ghost orchid.



Beverly Bidney
Brian Zepeda poses with some of his photographs on display in the museum.

Still Here After 35 Years,
Guy Has Some Trustworthy Help.

"Great Reputation
and Worthy of Trust"

Meet **Andy Coffey**
Board Certified in Criminal Trial

If there is someone you love who needs help, contact us today.

GUY SELIGMAN, P.A.
Attorney at Law

(954) 760-7600
GuySeligmanLaw.com AMCoffey.com

SEMINOLE TRADING POST

BRIGHTON HOLLYWOOD
IMMOKALEE

FREE HOT DOG

+20oz. DRINK

WITH A SINGLE FUEL PURCHASE OF **\$30 OR MORE!**

REDEEM AT TIME OF PURCHASE. WILL NOT ACCEPT AFTER THE PURCHASE.



Beverly Bidney

Battalion Commander Steven Pagan shows how extraction equipment is used, including the battering ram, to get people out of automobiles. Other equipment included a hydraulic cutter and spreader.



Beverly Bidney

Brian and Briana Gil learn how to use a fire extinguisher at the expo.



Beverly Bidney

Kyle Hodge learns how to do CPR on a life-sized dummy, as other recreation kids wait their turns to try it.

Tribalwide Public Safety expos start in Brighton

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Seminole Public Safety Department held an interactive, family-friendly Public Safety Expo March 24 which showcased all aspects of public safety provided to keep tribal communities safe. The expo included hand-on activities and live demonstrations.

The community outreach event was organized by emergency management coordinator Sunny Frank. Its purpose was to engage and inform the community about the department, but it also had another objective. “We hope we can spark interest in tribal members and youth to come work with us,” Frank said. “Who better than our own tribal members to work here? We know the community better than anyone. We have departments that fit everyone’s qualifications, from office staff to wildland fire fighting and everything in between.”

The Brighton Public Safety building

features a garage so large that it has four garage doors for fire trucks and other equipment to fit inside. The bay was emptied of the vehicles usually housed inside to make way for tables dedicated to each service the department offers.

Information was shared with attendees by employees who manned tables displaying the equipment and information about how they keep the community safe. The departments included Seminole Police, Seminole Fire Rescue, Office of Emergency Management, Public Safety, Dispatch / Communications, Seminole Wildland Fire Rescue, Public Safety I.T., Public Safety Human Resources and Health and Human Services.

A group of kids from Brighton recreation came to the event where they learned CPR, how to use a fire extinguisher, what it feels like to wear a heavy fire fighting helmet and jacket, how extraction equipment helps rescue people trapped in vehicles and how fire fighters can raise a car with nothing but a jackstand and pressurized airbags.

The trucks and other vehicles were on display in the building’s driveway, where fire fighters and other employees demonstrated how the equipment was used, what was on each truck and its purpose.

Lt. Michael Dolnick showed a group of kids how auto cribbing uses a jackstand and pressurized airbags to lift a heavy vehicle, so they can save someone trapped underneath. He described the Fire Rescue truck used for that operation.

“It’s frontline fire apparatus,” Lt. Dolnick said. “All rescue items are on all the trucks, including CPR equipment and certain drugs. We don’t have specialists, we all have to be jacks of all trades and ready for anything.”

Smaller than a big city fire department, Seminole Fire Rescue fights fires with limited crews so all the trucks have hoses to hook up to hydrants, but also contain water tanks of various sizes. Some have 500 gallon tanks, others contain thousands of gallons.

As the day turned to evening, families arrived to learn about the departments and enjoy dinner outdoors under a large tent.

Similar Public Safety Expos are scheduled for to be held at other reservations’ Public Safety buildings (except where noted) from 4-7 p.m.

The schedule is:
April 7: Big Cypress
April 9: Immokalee
May 7: Fort Pierce (Community Center)
May 29: Hollywood



Beverly Bidney

Emergency Management coordinator Sunny Frank sits in the Tactical Command Vehicle, which has off-road capabilities for use in rural areas during emergencies.



Beverly Bidney

Kaine Torres and Adrian Fonseca get a chance to wear firefighting gear at the expo.



Beverly Bidney

Hartlee Baker uses a firehose with the help of firefighter/medic John Vilches.

Going pro: A conversation with mixed martial artist Waylon Micco

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

Loss has been Waylon Micco’s fuel. After reconnecting with kickboxing following a self-altering injury, Micco began to draw strength from his Native identity. Training for nine consecutive months has led to his greatest physical transformation yet.

This conversation with Micco, 33, has been edited for clarity and concision.

Seminole Tribune: Where did this journey start for you?

Waylon Micco: At 14 years old, I picked up boxing. Hanging around the wrong crowd made me want to learn more about defensive combat. Since then, I’ve engaged in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Finding an outlet for all my pent-up energy and transitioning from boxing to kickboxing, and then MMA, really helped me.

Tribune: Have you always found strength in your Native identity?

Micco: Growing up on the Hollywood Reservation, I was somewhat close with my Native identity. I wasn’t entirely strengthened by it then, though. Once I relocated to Orlando and returned to South Florida in my late 20s, I slowly began reconnecting with that ancestral strength. Groundwork jiu-jitsu helped me develop that strength and confidence, as well.

Tribune: At some point, you retired from the sport. What made you reconnect with MMA?

Micco: In the process of relocating back down to South Florida, I sold my house. While packing up my gym equipment, I herniated my lower back. I took a knee for three weeks, but losing my brothers forced me to be off the mat for a little over a year. Within that time frame, I [weighed] 300 pounds. Grief drove me to get back in shape.

My coach and I, Michael Barreto, we go way back. Nine months ago, Barreto asked me if I wanted to pick up training again and go pro. After only three months, I lost a little over 80 pounds.

Tribune: What does going pro look like, for you? What has your day-to-day lifestyle consisted of since taking on this physical transformation?

Micco: Lots of training, whole foods, and protein. I’ve trained every day, twice a day. Barreto and I focus on strength training and cardio and conditioning exercises. With two fights coming up, one in April with UFC Fit and another in July with 305 Fights, staying consistent is my main priority. I won my last two fights by technical knockout: with five amateur fights under my belt, I’d be going pro. I couldn’t be more excited.

Tribune: With the pursuit of every goal comes challenges. What do you practice or channel when you’re not feeling your best?

Micco: I look back on when I first started. I lost a handful of family members from the time I was five years old. So, I’ve come a long way. Despite these hardships, I keep choosing to move forward.

Tribune: Is MMA what you’re most passionate about?

Micco: It is. I’ve always aspired to be an actor and model, as well, and recently graduated from an online course that has gotten me to audition for more pageants. I’m doing a little bit all at once.

Tribune: What’s one word of advice you’d give to your younger self or Seminole youth?

Micco: Steer clear of harm’s way. Drugs, alcohol, try to stay away from that and find something that you’re passionate about or catches your interest. Don’t think about it, just pursue it.



Daniella Hakim

Waylon Micco wears his line of branded merchandise, “Native Warrior Never Quit,” to every training session and amateur fight.



Daniella Hakim (2)

Above, at 6-foot-3, 190 pounds, Waylon Micco has bulked up with muscle while shedding weight thanks to intense training. Below, Micco and his UFC Fit coach, Michael Barreto, train core and conditioning and upper and lower body power. These exercises are designed to forge the explosive power, endurance, and agility of a UFC fighter.



◆ **CLOSE UP**
From page 1A

On March 8, students worked with peers from their tribal nations to create a presentation about their government, economy, and culture. The Arlington Ballroom resounded with one-on-one conversations that discussed the similarities and differences between tribal governments and how they are organized and make decisions.

"I love Close Up a lot because I'm able to learn more about other tribes," said Kalina Cavazos from the Hollywood Reservation. "I love that it's a big group and that I'm able to learn about their own traditions and cultures."

From March 9 to 11, tribes re-grouped to brainstorm tribal action initiatives. Built around a central issue, students proffered different forms of civic action as solutions; these included awareness, community-based action, and policies. Not only did Close Up participants confer among themselves, but they had the opportunity to share their tribal action initiatives with tribal leaders and attendees of the USET Impact Week.

For the Seminole Tribe of Florida, central issues veered toward bullying and discrimination in schools, negligence, and substance abuse.

"Negligence centers around today's youth," said Brian Billie Jr. "People our age have gotten lazy...I, personally, try to stay active. I love volleyball; sports keep me involved."

Throughout the week, Native panelists such as Karly Toledo with the National American Indian Housing Council, Vince Redhouse of the Navajo Washington office, and Samantha Hintz with the Aspen Institute were invited to speak on Indian law and policy, while the USET executive board joined students for an in-depth discussion on Indigenous agency.

"Part of this experience that you're getting, to learn about this relationship, is that our people were done wrong," said Kiteki Carroll, USET executive director "It's a very complicated story, and we are on the back end of that story, trying to remedy all that happened. Now you must make a choice.

Do you want to be a part of that solution?"

USET's Tihtiyas Dee Sabattus (deputy director), Katie Klass (general counsel) and Liz Malerba (director of Policy and Legislative Affairs) took part in the discussion alongside Carroll.

"You shouldn't be sitting here right now," Carroll added. "If their intentions were completely successful, we would be completely assimilated, removed, and terminated. But we are here, because there were people that came before us that fought to make sure that didn't happen."

Discussions on Indigenous agency prepared students for the program's final collaboration: Close Up's Sovereignty Statement Workshop. Students were split into smaller groups, facilitated by a designated program instructor, to collaborate with their peers and create a statement about tribal sovereignty and its importance.

"Sovereignty is not something that's given to Native people," said Abby Manning, USET Special Programs coordinator. "It exists, but it is not something that's given to tribal nations."

Chaka Yani Smith, Ila Trueblood, and Cornelius Nels from the Seminole Tribe of Florida, presented the 2026 USET Youth Statement on Tribal Sovereignty to the USET SPF Board of Directors alongside James Lowry from the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut, and Helen Rodriguez from the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas.

"Representing my tribe and presenting our sovereignty statements to USET was very exciting," Smith said. "Taking on that role and answering their questions gave me the floor to say what, I feel, a lot of people felt."

The comprehensive statement encompassed four sectors: economic development, public safety, health, and education.

"Thank you for all your work this week and all the work you're doing to stay focused on the future," said Chief Kirk Francis Sr. "Every year, we see what the future looks like through you all. I want you to know this isn't just some exercise you're doing—we take your comments to heart and implement them into our everyday process."



Daniella Hakim

Ila Trueblood, 11th-grade student from the Brighton Reservation, proffers a question about civic engagement at the Native Issues Panel.



Daniella Hakim

Bethany Sexton, left, and Kalina Cavazos visit the Lincoln Memorial during the Close Up/USET visit.



Daniella Hakim

Seminole students gather at the World War II Memorial.



Daniella Hakim

Curmya Smith, 11th-grade student from the Big Cypress Reservation, speaks to panelists on their career trajectories at Native Issues Panel.



Daniella Hakim

Rodney Butler, chairman of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, responds to Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith's feedback concerning the need for funding and youth involvement across underrepresented tribes.



Daniella Hakim

From left to right, Seminole students Brody Riley, Curmya Smith, Kalina Cavazos and Melaine Bonilla stand with the Washington Monument in the background on their visit to Capitol Hill.



Daniella Hakim

Seminole students show their unity in a group photo during the Close Up week in Washington, D.C.

WHO'S YOUR ATTORNEY?

Travis W. Trueblood, LL.M
Advocacy for Sovereignty & Justice

Areas of Practice:

- Native American Law Matters
- Civil Rights & Serious Legal Matters
- Business Law
- Tribal, State and Federal Court Representation

Choctaw Tribal Member
Veteran - U.S. Navy and Air Force

Admitted to Practice:
Tribal Courts / FL / DC / MD / TX / U.S. Supreme Court

Call or Text:
(954) 871-ATTY (2889)
Calls Answered 24 Hours
Consultations Always Free

Trueblood Law
Advocacy for Sovereignty & Justice
500 East Broward Boulevard, Suite 900, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33397
www.truebloodlaw.com

Offices in Fort Lauderdale, FL, and Washington, DC

RICHARD CASTILLO
954.522.3500

HELPING THE SEMINOLE COMMUNITY FOR MANY YEARS

24 HOURS A DAY

Since 1990 I have protected rights like yours. My office defends DUIs, drug offenses, suspended licenses, domestic violence, and all felonies and misdemeanors throughout Florida and the United States.

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
WWW.CASTILLOLAWOFFICES.COM



Daniella Hakim

Betty Mae Tiger Jumper's son Moses Jumper Jr. attends the ceremony alongside his wife Laquita, Scarlett Young, TJ Young, and their grandchildren. Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford and Steve Geller joined the family for a group photo.

Legacy of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper honored at Broward reception

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

FORT LAUDERDALE — On March 23, former State Senator Steve Geller of Broward County hosted a reception recognizing women such as Betty Mae Tiger Jumper, the first chairwoman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and their remarkable achievements and impact in honor of International Women's History Month.

"To the iconic women who lead with resilience, grace, and brilliance—you are the architects of progress and the inspiration for generations," said Geller, Broward's District 5 County Commissioner, at the Broward Governmental Center in Fort Lauderdale. "Broward County stands in awe of your strength and leadership."

A distinctive group of women received the proclamation, designating Monday,

March 23, 2026, as International Women's Day in Broward County, Florida. Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford was in attendance alongside Jumper's family.

"One of the greatest strengths of Broward County, and something I'm equally proud of, is its diversity," Geller said. "Today's proclamation is designed to reach out to an international audience. Broward is among the most diverse counties in the state of Florida; this remarkable diversity is what makes Broward such a dynamic and creative place to live."

Geller recognized the significant contribution women of diverse backgrounds and cultures have had on Broward County.

"Women are sacred," Latchford said. "Recognitions like this go to show that the power is in our women."

In 1967, Jumper became the first female elected as chairwoman of the Seminole Tribe. She led Tribal Council from 1967

to 1971, cofounded the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET), and was appointed by President Richard Nixon to the National Congress on Indian Opportunity.

"Jumper was the first Seminole to graduate high school," Latchford said. "I'm in higher education—I'm in college myself. She opened many doors for us Seminoles. Seeing how powerful she was motivates me to continue the work that I want to pursue."

Jumper's memory and legacy lives on through the lives of the Seminole Tribe of Florida—a beacon of inspiration and courage for Seminole youth.

"Without her, where would we be?" Latchford added. "Jumper shows us that we can do a lot. She opened doors and broke through barriers. It's very important, not only to our history, but to our future. Being here shows the importance of carrying on that culture and carrying out her legacy. We need to remember that."



Daniella Hakim

Alongside Steve Geller, women of all ethnicities residing in Broward County receive copies of the proclamation.

Australian Bee Gees to play Immokalee in May

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — The Australian Bee Gees Show will be held at Seminole Hotel & Casino Immokalee's event center May 15

at 7 p.m. The show has been in residence at Excalibur Resort & Casino on the Las Vegas Strip since February 2011 and twice has been voted the Best Tribute Show in the city. The show features a chronology of

the greatest hits from the Bee Gees music, including "More Than A Woman," "Night Fever," "Stayin' Alive" and "How Do You Mend A Broken Heart."

For tickets, go to [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com)

Two Seminole women grace cover of Native Max

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Seminole tribal members Tomasina Chupco and Cheyenne Kippenberger are showcased on the cover of the current issue of Native Max magazine and are profiled in the "Still Here, Will Remain" feature story.

The article focuses on their leadership, visibility and insight into the importance of tribal sovereignty. This isn't the first time Chupco and Kippenberger have been on the cover and in the pages of the magazine; they were featured in February 2020 in an article titled "Unconquered."

Both women are multi-faceted and keep busy pursuing various projects and passions.

Since serving as Miss Indian World from 2019-2021, Kippenberger created C.K. Consulting in which she works with tribes, schools, universities, corporations and non-profits as a consultant on Indigenous and cultural competency. Her presentations include the importance of environmental stewardship through an Indigenous lens.

Kippenberger has also become an advocate for mental health by sharing her story in Indian Country and beyond. Being a public speaker helped her discover a career path she didn't know existed.

"There is so much power in owning and sharing your story," Kippenberger said. "It was a big realization that I was not the only one going through this, especially among Native people. By shedding the shame that is attached to it and standing firmly in who you are, you can literally take on anything in your life that you decide to do."

In August 2025, Kippenberger went to work for the tribe's Department of External Compliance in the Environmental Protection Office, which is responsible for interacting with federal and state agencies. The department communicates on behalf of the tribe with those agencies, oversees projects within a certain radius of the reservations and provides commentary from the tribe's perspective.

"Seeing our tribal sovereignty in action is the best part of the job," she said. "Our superpower is our ability to exercise our tribal sovereignty in the government-to-government consultation. Our EPO Department is phenomenal; it's a powerhouse of scientists and people who have been in the environmental sector for decades."

Kippenberger is also a student at Everglades University, where she is studying environmental policy and management.

"It's really neat being in school, learning in the classroom and applying it in my day to day work the very week I learn it," she said. "Our environmental work from the tribe's standpoint is science, policy and compliance, but there is also a cultural component as well."

Kippenberger said it's never too late to start something new.

"We are born into such blessed lives with the opportunity to pursue anything our hearts desire," Kippenberger said. "I encourage everyone to chase those desires and passions."

Chupco and Kippenberger met when both were embarking on what would become their professional lives. In 2019, they held the tribe's first symposium on Native trauma and healing at the Native Learning Center.

"We did the healing symposium together, which forced us out of our comfort zones and into public speaking," Chupco



Keyra Espinoza Arroyo, courtesy Native Max

Tomasina Chupco and Cheyenne Kippenberger in the cover shot of Native Max magazine, which was taken on the Miccosukee Reservation.

said. "We both set out on that path within Indian Country."

Chupco, an entrepreneur, public speaker and environmentalist, earned a bachelor's degree in alternative medicine and a master's degree in public health from Everglades University as well as a doctorate in education from Lynn University. She often travels to colleges, universities and conferences to speak and holds workshops and retreats for the tribe's Integrative Health department.

Chupco has a passion for ancestral healing and Indigenous knowledge. She learned about plant medicine as a child by looking for medicine plants with her grandmother Entakvopohke (Marie Tommie Gilliam) in Fort Pierce, near the old Panther Woods. Those expeditions taught her about the benefits of plant medicine and "Plantcestors," which is what she speaks about today.

During her public speaking engagements, Chupco teaches general knowledge about the benefits of plants and the Indigenous relationship to them.

"I see plants, birds and animals as kin, as many Natives do," she said. "Now more people are open to hearing that perspective since seeing the healing nature of plant medicines."

Chupco is Afro-Native and talks about the generational trauma of having both identities in her presentations. She sees her pedigree as two rooms in the same house.

"I have lineage in both cultures," she said. "I don't feel that you have to choose one or the other; you are whole in both."

In the Native Max article, Chupco said Native and Black women are starting their own brands, media spaces and consultancies and sees those women as treating business as another form of ceremony.

Seminole culture taught Chupco that sovereignty is the way to protect themselves, their lands and waters.

"It's important to take pride in your homelands and learn what it means," she said. "Culture goes back to a true sense of identity; that is true sovereignty."



Keyra Espinoza Arroyo, courtesy Native Max

Tomasina Chupco, left, and Cheyenne Kippenberger get close to nature for a photo in the pages of Native Max magazine.

HURRICANE SEASON IS COMING.

It's time to renew your homeowners insurance.

Renew coverage before June 1st

To speak to your insurance specialist, call (954) 967-5131.

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA
RISK MANAGEMENT

SCAN HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION

Jamaica's hurricane recovery efforts receive boost from Hard Rock/Seminole Gaming

STAFF REPORT

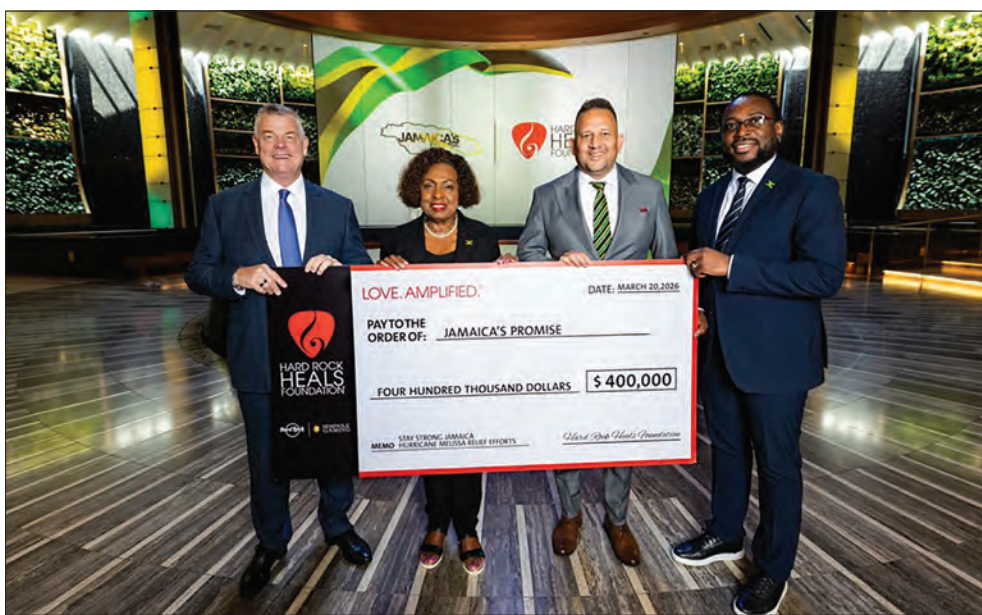
HOLLYWOOD — Jamaica's recovery from Hurricane Melissa received a financial boost with the donation of \$400,000 by Hard Rock Heals Foundation, the charitable arm of Hard Rock International.

David Hoenemeyer, COO of Seminole Gaming, made a ceremonial check presentation on behalf of the foundation to Chris Benjamin, board member and director of Jamaica's Promise, on March 20 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. Olivia Grange, the honorable Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, and Oliver Mair, Jamaica's Consul General to Miami, were also part of the presentation.

According to a press release, Hard Rock Heals' "Stay Strong Jamaica" relief effort will go toward housing, infrastructure repair, and humanitarian aid via the nonprofit Jamaica's Promise, which helps local organizations.

The fundraising efforts featured the Seminole Tribe of Florida's six Seminole Gaming locations in Florida, team members, guests and Hard Rock Heals Foundation leadership. A benefit concert Jan. 2 at Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood featured celebrated Jamaican artists, including Shaggy, Julian Marley, Inner Circle, Marcia Griffiths, Wayne Wonder, and Etana. Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming contributed \$100,000 to Hard Rock Heals Foundation to support the relief efforts.

"With so many Hard Rock and Seminole Gaming team members from Jamaica -- including more than 300 at our Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood



From left left to right, Chief Operating Officer of Seminole Gaming David Hoenemeyer; Jamaica Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport Olivia "Babsy" Grange; Jamaica Consul General Oliver Mair; and Jamaica's Promise representative Chris Benjamin at a check presentation, March 20, at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

property alone -- this Hurricane Melissa relief effort was truly personal for us. From our team members to our guests, everyone came together with one goal: to help the people of Jamaica recover and rebuild," Hoenemeyer said in the release.

"Jamaica is deeply grateful to the Hard Rock Heals Foundation, Hard Rock and Seminole Gaming and their team members and guests for their generosity and commitment to Jamaica's recovery. This major contribution will make a tangible difference in the lives of thousands of

Jamaicans who lost so much to Hurricane Melissa, and with partners like Hard Rock Heals Foundation standing with us, we know Jamaica will rebuild stronger than ever," Grange said in the release.

Hurricane Melissa was a record-setting storm that blasted Jamaica in October 2025. The hurricane's peaked 190 mph sustained winds tied Hurricane Allen for the highest ever recorded in the Atlantic basin, according to the National Hurricane Center. The storm's death toll surpassed 40 in Jamaica.

Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana receives praise for \$500,000 donation to build animal care facility

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

The design and construction of a new animal care facility in Gary, Indiana, is on its way to becoming a reality thanks to a \$500,000 donation from Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana.

During a March 12, press conference, city leaders from Gary, which is 25 miles southeast of Chicago, praised the donation from Hard Rock, which opened in Gary in 2021.

"This generous contribution from Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana demonstrates their continued commitment to being a true community partner," Mayor Eddie Melton said in a press release. "This project will allow us to provide compassionate, modern care for animals while improving essential city services. Hard Rock's support is helping us turn a long standing need into a transformative investment for our residents and our city."

According to the city, the \$1.4 million project will replace a deteriorating animal control facility. The new building will include offices, indoor and outdoor kennels, quarantine space, and storage areas. Construction is expected to commence this summer.

"Replacing our outdated facility has been a priority, and this funding ensures we can provide a safe, modern environment for our staff and the animals in our care. We are grateful to Hard Rock for helping us bridge the gap to make this facility a reality," Lori



A press conference March 12 to announce the \$400,000 donation included Matt Schuffert, president of Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana, third from left, and Gary Mayor Eddie Melton, third from right.

Latham, 1st District Councilwoman, said in the release.

"Hard Rock is proud to stand with the City of Gary on a project that enhances both public safety and community well being," Matt Schuffert, president and CEO of Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana, said in the release.

The project also received \$500,000 of

federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Since its opening, Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana has been active in supporting the community and local organizations. Examples include a \$3 million donation to help upgrade Gary's fleet of police vehicles and a \$500,000 donation to a middle school.

Kenosha Hard Rock casino project advances

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs released an environmental assessment on March 15 for the proposed Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Kenosha, Wisconsin, an important advancement in its federal review process.

The proposal would transform farmland in Kenosha right off I-94 and County Highway K, while providing critical revenue to the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin to address unmet needs and economic hardship.

"This project has been a long time coming for Kenosha, and it's exciting to see it move closer to reality," said Kenosha Mayor David Bogdala in a statement released by the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. "The Hard Rock development brings new growth to Kenosha, creating jobs, attracting investment, and strengthening our community—and we are ready for it. This is a project that's good for Kenosha, good for the region, and good for the State of Wisconsin."

According to the BIA, the tentative

environmental assessment evaluated a range of environmental considerations, including air quality, water resources, traffic, public services, and biological resources. The proposed development of the property as a casino-hotel, offering class III gaming pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, is supported and approved by the City of Kenosha and Kenosha County.

With respect to these environmental impacts, the assessment concludes that construction would result in insignificant impacts and would comply with applicable federal and state air quality standards. The assessment also found that the project has been designed to avoid any impacts to jurisdictional wetlands and other protected aquatic resources.

The assessment further determined that the proposed development is not expected to result in adverse economic impacts and that overall economic effects associated with the project would be positive, generating substantial economic benefits.

"This is a long-awaited opportunity, and we are excited to have arrived at the next phase in this process," said Menominee Chairman Joey Awonohopy. "The EA

release marks an important step forward for our tribal members, the people of Kenosha County, and all of Wisconsin. This project will deliver significant, local economic impact, create more than 1,000 permanent jobs in the final phase of the project, and support families and businesses across the region. The project's benefits will directly benefit the members of our Tribe, as we address urgent needs in health care, infrastructure, and education. This brings us all one step closer to a stronger future, and we are grateful for such strong local support for this transformative project."

"We thank the BIA for thoroughly reviewing the plans for the proposed Kenosha project and ensuring that all applicable regulations have been met," Chairman Awonohopy added. "The EA provides the Department of the Interior with the detailed information needed to determine that this project strengthens both the Tribe and the broader Kenosha community. We are confident the record demonstrates the benefit without any significant impact to the environment."

♦ MALTA From page 1A

More than 10 dining and club venues include rooftop and beachfront options. CYANA Aegean Cuisine is described by Hard Rock as "a signature rooftop destination by Chef Sergi Arola where Aegean rhythm and Maltese light will converge — sunlit and serene by day, slow-burning and alive by night, with charcoal-fired seafood, mezze, and herb-led cocktails flowing from lunch to dusk." Other dining

venues include Sessions, the brand's all-day dining restaurant; Al Kasbah, which features Lebanese cuisine; and the adult-only rooftop bar Eclipse with views of St. George's Bay.

Guests can also enjoy a Rock Spa, Body Rock fitness center, and three indoor and eight outdoor heated pools and jetted tubs, including a rooftop cantilever pool with panoramic views that Hard Rock says "sets the stage for unforgettable sunsets."

For more information, including booking, visit hotel.hardrock.com/malta/.



The Hard Rock Hotel Malta is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.



A rendering of a super king room at the Hard Rock Hotel Malta.



The Rock Suites at Hard Rock Hotel Malta.

Hall of Famers Doobie Brothers coming to Hard Rock Live

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The Doobie Brothers' "Walk This Road Tour" is coming to Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood on Oct. 20 at 8 p.m. For tickets, go to www.myHRL.com.

For over five decades, The Doobie Brothers have been known for delivering mind-blowing, roots based, harmony-laden, guitar-driven rock and roll — all of which culminated in 2020 with an induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Boasting one of the most loyal fan

bases in music, selling more than 48 million albums, and winning four Grammy Awards, The Doobie Brothers continue to write and record new material and tour the world. Their No. 1 singles "Black Water" and "What a Fool Believes," both gold, lead a catalog of indelible songs that include: "Listen to the Music," "China Grove," "Jesus Is Just Alright," "Rockin' Down the Highway," "Long Train Runnin'," "Take Me In Your Arms," "Takin' it to the Streets," "Minute by Minute," "You Belong to Me," "The Doctor" and more.

Seminole Brighton Bay Casino to host \$330,000 special bingo session

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON — More than a quarter of a million dollars will be up for grabs April 18 when Seminole Brighton Bay Casino hosts a special bingo session at 2 p.m.

The \$330,000 session features a \$205

buy-in, 20 regular games playing for \$1,199 each, two \$5,000 jackpot games, U Pick'em 20#s or Less - \$150,000/consolation \$10,000; and overall jackpot 49#s or Less - \$150,000/consolation \$10,000.

For more information and to RSVP, call 863-357-5623.

George Thorogood to play Seminole Brighton Bay Casino May

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON — George Thorogood & The Destroyers will perform at Seminole Brighton Bay Casino event center May 10 at 7 p.m.

"Our job description is 'Live Rock Performers,'" Thorogood said. "And when we hit town, that town stays hit." Trust the man who speaks from experience: For the

past 53 years and more than 8,000 shows, Thorogood and his longtime Destroyers — Jeff Simon (drums), Bill Blough (bass), Jim Suhler (guitar) and Buddy Leach (saxophone) — have remained among the most beloved/formidable live acts with hits "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer", "Move It On Over", "Who Do You Love?", "I Drink Alone", "Get A Haircut" and "Bad To The Bone."

Casino player wins \$108,000 on \$2.50 bet

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — A lucky player won a \$108,525.04 jackpot March 14 at Seminole Classic Casino Hollywood while

playing an Autumn Moon Dragon Link slot machine by Aristocrat Gaming.

The Unity member wagered \$2.50 on a 50-cent denomination to land the winning combination. The progressive jackpot has

since reset to \$100,000. A progressive slot machine starts with a base jackpot amount that increases as guests continue to play.

Museums on Main Street highlights over 200 years of Indigenous stereotypes with traveling exhibit “Americans”

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Curator

BIG CYPRESS — In the next few months, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will be working with the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), Florida Humanities Council, Florida State University, and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida to help bring a Smithsonian traveling exhibit to five Florida institutions. The exhibit, which is part of the Smithsonian’s Museums on Main Street program, is called “Americans”.

The exhibit features many images and logos that contain stereotypes and cultural appropriation about Indigenous people. It confronts a widely held notion that indigenous people have disappeared from the Americas by pointing out that they are ever present in the wider American cultural landscape. In the words of the exhibit developers:

“‘Americans’ is adapted from an original exhibition developed by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian and focuses on four historical events: Thanksgiving, the life of Pocahontas, the Trail of Tears, and the Battle of Little Bighorn. These events infuse both American history and contemporary life. The exhibition shows what is remembered, contested, cherished and denied, and why that still resonates. Objects and images in ‘Americans’ will help spark unexpected memories of visitors’ perceptions of American Indians.”

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will help by providing supplementary materials, such as museum brochures and educational collateral. We will also work with each institution to provide local programming. By doing this, we’ll make sure that visitors to these institutions know that the Seminole Tribe of Florida is here and does not deserve to be represented as a stereotype or forgotten people. Our partners in Tallahassee are wonderful allies and we’re grateful to have this opportunity.

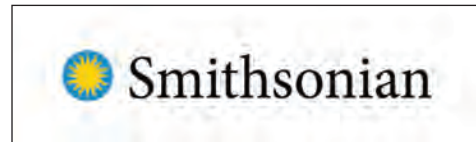
Five organizations will receive the exhibit over the next year. Florida Humanities Council generously provided grants to each of them. They each received \$10,000 to develop and host complementary local public programming and/or exhibits.

First will be Amelia Island Museum of History (August 22 – October 10, 2026) in the northeast corner of the state. Then, the Okeechobee Historical Society will host Americans, from October 17 to December 5, 2026. The next institution on the list is the Edison and Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers, from December 12, 2026 to February 6, 2027. After that, the exhibit travels to the St. Petersburg area and can be seen at Sacred Lands Preservation and Education (February 13 to April 10, 2027). The final stop will be the Historic St. Andrews Waterfront Partnership, in Panama City.

We hope you have a chance to see the exhibit when it comes to Florida. For a sneak peak, check out NMAI’s work at museumonmainstreet.org.

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

“Americans” was developed by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. The exhibition was adapted for travel by Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils across the country. The Exhibition is brought to you in Florida by Florida Humanities. Support is provided by the Smithsonian’s Our Shared Future: 250, a Smithsonian-wide initiative commemorating the nation’s 250th. Signature support for Smithsonian’s Our Shared Future: 250 has been provided by Lilly Endowment Inc. Additional generous contributions have been made by Target.



“Americans”

Courtesy photo

Final Gathering of Nations to be held April 24-25

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The Gathering of Nations Powwow will take its final bow April 24-25 at the Expo New Mexico in Albuquerque. Dubbed “The Last Dance,” the powwow will honor its 43 years of history and legacy.

Billed as the largest powwow in North America, GON is a celebration of Indigenous music, dance and art from around the world. Annual attendance consists of about 3,000 competitors and 100,00 visitors, according to its website.

Gathering of Nations Limited, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was founded by Derek Mathews and Dr. Lita Mathews in 1984, the pow wow has always been held in Albuquerque. In 1983 it began at the University of Albuquerque and over the years, moved to the University of New Mexico basketball arena and then to Expo New Mexico.

The reason for ending GON is vague. Information on the website states “Looking ahead, several factors beyond our control make long-term planning and coordination challenging. With that in mind, we have

chosen to close this chapter by celebrating its incredible history at the 2026 event.”

A popular feature of GON has been the annual Miss Indian World Pageant, but there will not be one this year. Many Seminole tribal members have attended GON over the years and numerous Miss Florida Seminoles have competed for the MIW title and crown.

The only tribal member to be crowned MIW was Cheyenne Kippenberger, who served from 2019-2021. She plans to attend the final GON.

“We all want it to be a celebration instead of a funeral,” Kippenberger said after learning this would be the last GON. “It had a really great tenure and had an impact on a lot of people’s lives. I think it will be one last beautiful gathering together and will end it in a proper way that feels good.”

The website states the 2026 GON will be “an unforgettable celebration.” The event will feature an Indian Traders Market, Native entertainment on Stage 49, a Horse and Rider Regalia Parade and the outgoing ceremony for Miss Indian World.

For more information about GON, visit gatheringofnations.com.

NCAI and Assembly of First Nations renew declaration of unity

FROM PRESS RELEASE

LAS VEGAS — On March 24, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) renewed their shared commitment to unity, cooperation, and mutual support through a Declaration of Kinship and Cooperation among the Indigenous Peoples and Nations of North America. The declaration was signed during the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development’s Reservation Economic Summit (RES).

The declaration formalizes collaboration between NCAI and AFN to advance the well-being, rights, and priorities of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and First Nations on issues of shared international concern.

“Though borders were imposed upon our homelands, the relationships among our peoples never ceased,” NCAI President Mark Macarro said in a press release. “Trade did not end. Traditions endured. Our kinship has remained strong across generations. By renewing this declaration with the Assembly of First Nations, we reaffirm that our voices are strongest when we stand together in mutual respect, solidarity, and collective purpose.”

The renewed declaration reflects the enduring ties among Indigenous Nations across North America and strengthens collaboration on shared priorities, including international advocacy, sovereignty, and



NCAI, First Nations leaders gather.

NCAI

engagement with future generations of Indigenous leaders.

“With this agreement, we look forward to working alongside President Macarro today and the NCAI in unity, solidarity and friendship to realize the full potential of our First Nations economy in North America,” said AFN National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak. “Despite the risks we face with Canada-US trade and the growth of extremism around the world, I am optimistic because First Nations on both sides of the Medicine Line are already making so much positive change. Unlike colonial governments, our leaders are showing it is still possible to tackle difficult cross-border discussions and shine a light on solutions. United, we can do anything we put our minds to.”

Leaders noted that RES provided an important space to publicly advance this renewed commitment. International convenings like RES create opportunities for Indigenous leaders to strengthen relationships, align priorities, and build momentum for cooperative action across Nations and across borders.

NCAI and AFN emphasized a shared belief that Indigenous youth must remain central to this work, ensuring that future generations inherit strong relationships, strong institutions, and strong pathways for collaboration.

“This renewed declaration is a sacred affirmation that we are, and have always been, relatives — yesterday, today, and forever,” President Macarro said.

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

April 2026

Stone tools are some of the most recognizable artifacts in southeastern archaeology. However, South Florida is not home to a lot of stone tools or materials for their production— so much so that the region is sometimes called the land without stone (Austin, ed.), making this stone tool a rare find.

This point is called a Stanfield point, which is from a period referred to as the Paleoindian period (12,000 to 8,000 BC). It refers to the time in North America where big game hunting was the norm. Animals like mammoths and mastodons were hunted regularly. This stone tool was most likely in use between 8500 and 7000 BC (Dowdy & Rainey 2015). It is probably the oldest man-made object in the THPO’s Collections. On top of being found in South Florida, it is also a rare type to find in general, even compared to other Paleoindian points. It gets its name from the Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter site in Alabama, which was a Paleoindian rock shelter site. This site was helpful in figuring out stone tool ordering through time (Meredith 2025).

Despite this point being very distinctive, little is known about its function. This is the case with many other kinds of points as well. It is possible that this type of point, or at least some of them, were actually preforms. Preforms are a stage in chipped stone tool production that happens right before the final stage (Figure 2). However, it could also be a distinctive tool, like a large blade, that would have been tied to an antler or wood handle.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Austin, R. J. (2018). Southeastern Archaeological Conference annual meeting. In No Stone Unturned: Lithic Resource Use in South Florida. Augusta: AWIARE.

Dowdy, K., & Rainey, I. (2015). Stanfield. In Legends In Stone Paleo Edition: A Florida Collection (p. 127). essay.

Meredith, S. M. (2025, August 8). Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter. Encyclopedia of Alabama. <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/stanfield-worley-bluff-shelter/>



SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - APRIL 2026

WEAVING TRADITION

Weaving fabrics from flexible materials like plant fibers and animal fur has been happening since time immemorial. The need to make clothing to protect people from the elements is as old as humanity. But the styles and methods of making fabrics differ from place to place and across time. It is especially interesting that in most cultures weaving has been strongly associated with women. So, in this article, we carry on the celebration of women’s history recognized last month.

Weaving textiles is not just a utilitarian task. Textiles are embedded with cultural symbolism that requires special skill and knowledge to produce. Think about patchwork that was first created by Seminole women in the late 1800s and continues as a Seminole tradition today. Patchwork designs carry meaning that communicate specific ideas. The artistic skill required to make patchwork includes special knowledge of the symbols that adorn the garments. The same is true for clothing across cultures, and Indigenous people in the Americas have produced some of the most beautiful and useful examples of clothing in the world.

Since they are made from organic materials like plant fibers and animal fur, textiles do not usually preserve well over time. They require special contexts, those that lack oxygen, to keep from decaying. One example is from peat bogs in northern Florida, where 7,000-8,000-year-old mats, bags, and baskets woven from palm fibers were preserved in the muck and identified by archaeologists. The Seminole ancestors that made these textiles showed great skill, weaving fabrics that had as many as 26 fibers per inch! For thick fibers, that’s a tight weave even by today’s standards.

Indigenous people of the Americas who craft textiles today are carrying on a tradition that goes back hundreds of generations and may represent one of the very oldest skills still practiced by Indigenous artists.



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

Photo: Seminole woman weaving textiles at the Tropical Hobbyland tourist camp, Miami, Florida, (ca. 1930)
Photo by Stanley Hanson



Health

Brighton holds health fair, comic con at casino

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Brighton Health Fair and Comic Con on March 6 had something for everyone, from health screenings to an interactive table filled with Legos to authentic superhero and other collectibles on display and for sale.

Sponsored by the Integrative Health Department and Human Resources, the fair was held for the first time in the Seminole Brighton Bay Casino. Its event center was filled all day with students from Pemayetv Emahav Charter School, families and Brighton residents perusing booths from tribal departments, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and a few outside healthcare and financial management firms.

“Good health is everything for the tribe,” said Brighton Councilman Larry Howard. “We want to make sure your body is okay. There is information here about how to take care of your body. The superheroes put a little spice into the event and makes it more entertaining. But it’s all about learning to do the right thing to take care of your body.”

Each student and participant at the event received a passport with all the booths

listed on it. As they visited each booth, the passport was stamped. A completely filled out passport earned the visitor a ticket for lunch provided by two food trucks outside.

“We do health fairs every few years, but we added the comic con component to widen our appeal,” said Integrative Health director Suzanne Davis. “We wanted people to come over, enjoy themselves and learn something about their health without even realizing they are learning.”

Health tests offered at the fair included kidney function, blood sugar and glucose levels and blood pressure.

At the Integrative Health’s kidney function area, Davis held up a life sized model of a kidney and asked students if they knew what it does. Quite a few knew that the kidneys clean their blood.

Davis told them to drink plenty of water to keep the kidneys healthy and avoid too much salt and sugar. She held up a vial filled with salt, which was the amount in one pack of ramen noodles. One student said he eats ramen every day after school and Davis advised he use only part of the seasoning packet to reduce the amount of salt.

“Too much salt isn’t healthy, but you can have fast food, chips and French fries once in a while,” she said.



Beverly Bidney

Integrative Health director Suzanne Davis demonstrates for PECS students just how much salt is in one packet of ramen noodles at the Brighton Health Fair and Comic Con March 6.



Beverly Bidney

Department of Elder Services employees, from left to right, Charlotte Burgess, Maria Alvarado and Daviana Miller at their booth featuring snacks for attendees.



Beverly Bidney

PECS students choose gifts from the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum table, with the help of museum curator Tara Backhouse, in the purple wig, before going through the health fair and comic con.



Beverly Bidney

PECS second graders enter the Brighton Bay Casino through the stage door, where they posed onstage before going through the health fair and comic con.

Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health launches harm reduction vending machines

BY HANNAH HABERMANN
Wyoming Public Radio

When you walk into the Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health office, there’s a big white vending machine right inside the door. But it’s not your ordinary vending machine: no chips or Sprite or chocolate bars.

Joceyln Dewey pointed to packages of red cables attached to a lock and key in the first three spots in the top row of the machine.

“We have a gun lock there that is for someone that may be dealing with suicide risk,” she said. “What it basically does is slow down that person and give them time to think through what they’re going through.”

Dewey is the community health educator at Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health. She teaches people of all ages about suicide prevention, adverse childhood experiences and how to recognize intimate partner violence.

“Even though you may not see it much or people don’t talk about it, a lot of people go through mental health challenges,” she said. “I provide adult and youth mental health first aid [trainings], which helps to give people tools and education on how to help themselves.”

In the world of public health, harm reduction is an approach that focuses on giving people the knowledge and tools to minimize harm in their own lives — think bike helmets, seat belts or even sunscreen.

It’s also a big part of overdose prevention and is the guiding principle behind two new harm reduction vending machines getting set up by the Eastern Shoshone Tribe. They’ll be open to the public in April.

“The next thing on there is a cessation kit,” Dewey said, pointing to a small zip-close bag on the top row, filled with aromatherapy essential oils and fidget toys. “It’s to help someone to stop smoking.”

Next to that are some fentanyl test strips: little pieces of paper to detect the highly-dangerous opioid in different drugs. And there’s condoms, with information about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

“Then we have Detera. Detera is for medication and drugs that you no longer need,” said Dewey. “You can put the meds into those with a little bit of water, shake ‘em, dissolve them, throw

‘em out.”

The bottom two rows of the machine are filled up with identical white boxes: Narcan.

“This is what we have to help our people that we’re not going to get them to stop, but we can help them to live through their overdose,” said Dewey, shaking one of the boxes in her hand.

Narcan is a nasal spray that rapidly reverses opioid overdoses. It’s the brand name for naloxone, which temporarily blocks opioid receptors in the brain and can be a lifesaver.

A few years ago, Dewey said there was a big uptick in overdose deaths on the Wind River Reservation.

“We were losing parents. We were losing young people in their 20s and 30s,” she said.

Community elders raised the alarm. Fentanyl turned out to be the main culprit. The drug’s been around for decades, but overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, have skyrocketed in the last 10 years.

“I started going around to find out if Narcan was available, and that’s when we figured out that it was not,” said Dewey.

She started bringing Narcan along when she would table at public health department outreach events and tried to get her finger on the pulse of the community.

“I would just take their name down and then tell them it’s not going to be reported to anybody. It’s just for my information because I have to account for where I’m getting the Narcan and where it’s going,” she said. “They were honest. They said that we need it and we don’t want to have to have our name on there, [like] how a prescription is given out.”

Narcan became available over-the-counter in 2023. With that barrier gone, Dewey and the Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health team turned their focus to getting the vending machines to address another obstacle: social stigma.

“It helps in a way that they’re not having to face anybody,” she said about the vending machine model. “They’re not having to worry about having their name on it, and they’re able to walk in and get it.”

Mike Selick is the director of capacity building and community mobilization at the National Harm Reduction Coalition. He said this approach is relatively new and



Wyoming Public Radio

A harm reduction vending machine at the Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health office.

becoming more popular.

“Harm reduction vending machines allow people who might not feel comfortable talking about their drug use to even a harm reduction worker to get access to lifesaving supplies, and that’s really where their value comes in,” he said.

Selick said, in some places, it can allow people to get access to what they need 24/7. But his hope is that they’re the first step in getting comfortable with reaching out for help.

“At the end of the day, the thing that is going to help people the most is human connection, talking to somebody who has gone through similar experiences, knowing where they can access various different ways to get support,” said Selick.

Instead of trying to shift behavior through negative consequences or shame, Selick said that harm reduction instead recognizes that change will come from “within a person.”

“What people actually need for behavior change is to be treated with value. So much of society treats people who use drugs as worthless and terrible, and that makes you want to do more drugs about it,” he said. “Helping people find that they are humans deserving of respect and dignity, helping them connect to things to keep themselves safe and spaces where they can actually have life-affirming experiences, helps people work towards behavior change and eventually make sustainable change.”

The Wyoming Department of Health partnered with the Eastern Shoshone Tribe to provide the funding for the machines, through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Overdose Data to Action in States grant.



**Proud Vendor Partner
of the Seminole Tribe**

Residential and Commercial Property

RECOVERY EXPERTS










**For 24/7 Emergency Service
call, 877-711-8001**

RRTFL.com

SEMINOLE SCENES



Kevin Johnson

PERFECT 10: While attending a PECS softball game March 26, Sarah and Lewis Gopher wear T-shirts marking their 10th year of marriage, which they celebrated that week.



Calvin Tiger (3)

TIPS FROM A PRO: Kids from the Boys & Girls Club in Hollywood enjoy their afternoon March 3 with artist Elgin Jumper, who showed them how to paint a scenic landscape with the sun. Each kid was given their own canvas and paint in a hands-on lesson as Jumper guided them.



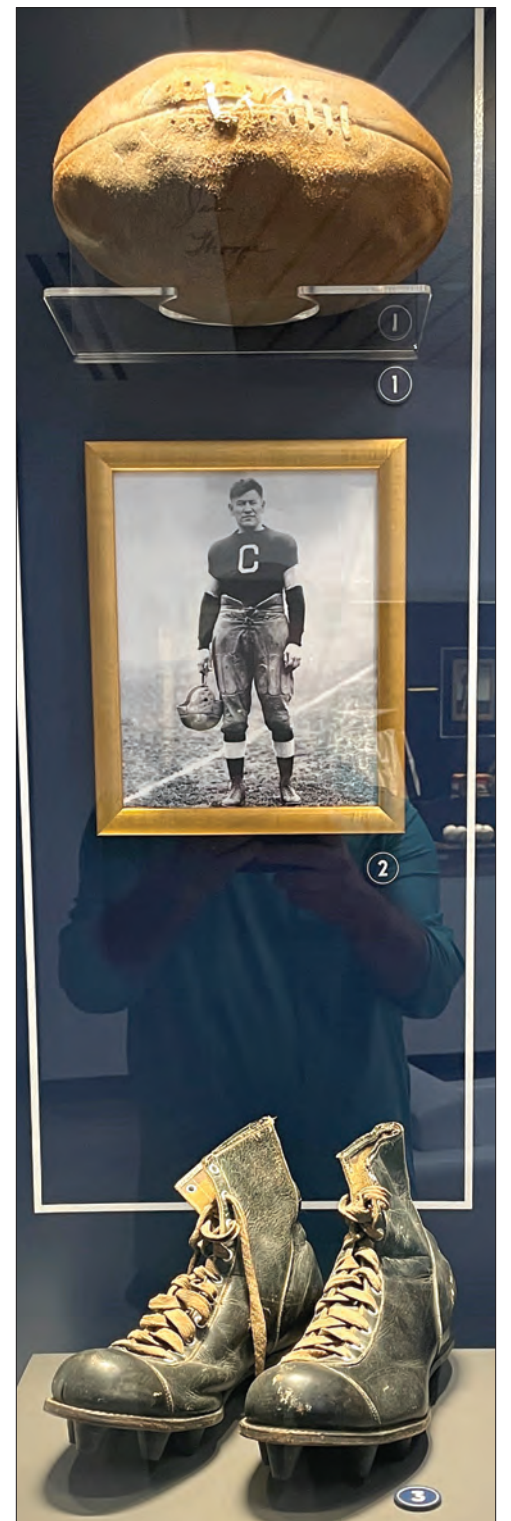
FLIFF

CHEVY AWARD: Legendary "Saturday Night Live" performer and actor Chevy Chase, 82, receives a lifetime achievement award from the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival on Feb. 26 at Savor Cinema. FLIFF, whose major sponsors include Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, presented the award during an evening with Chase which also featured the theatrical premiere of the documentary "I'm Chevy Chase and You're Not."



Kevin Johnson

LUCKY LOBBY: The lobby in the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium on the Big Cypress Reservation was decorated in green, including a Christmas tree, for St. Patrick's Day activities in March.



Kevin Johnson

THORPE MEMORABILIA: Just up the road from the Hollywood Reservation sits a couple of impressive items pertaining to Native American star athlete Jim Thorpe, who is often regarded as one of the greatest athletes of all time. The Avron B. Fogelman Sports Museum on the campus of Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton is home to a vast collection of sports memorabilia, including a football signed by Thorpe and his last-worn cleats (both pictured). The description in the case honors Thorpe as "America's most versatile athlete of all time." Born in Oklahoma in the late 1800s, Thorpe (Sac and Fox Nation) won Olympic gold medals (pentathlon and decathlon) and played in the NFL and Major League Baseball. The sports items in the museum, which are mostly baseball-related, were donated by former Kansas City Royals owner Avron Fogelman, a longtime Boca Raton resident. A few other notable items include game-worn uniforms from Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio and Hank Aaron; signed baseballs from several U.S. presidents and celebrities; and a football signed by the 1972 undefeated Miami Dolphins.



Beverly Bidney (2)

PEE WEE POWER: Kids from ages 5 to 7 are Pee Wee members of 4-H and care mostly for small animals, but some take on the responsibility of a young calf. Other popular animals include turtles, chickens, rabbits and goats. The group showed their animals in the ring before the swine show in Brighton on March 12. At left, Whiteleigh Huff is in the pen with her goat "Chewbatta." At right, from left to right, Irena Bradley, Kihyon Dodge and Izaias Bearden in the pen with a calf.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Coeur d'Alene Tribe, state of Idaho reach water rights settlement agreement

Leaders of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Idaho state officials announced March 5 they have reached what the two sides described as a historic water rights settlement agreement following more than a decade of lawsuits and negotiations.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Tribal Council Chairman Chief Allan, Tribal Council Member Ernest Stensgar, Idaho Gov. Brad Little and Idaho Attorney General Raúl Labrador announced the Coeur d'Alene Tribe Water Rights Settlement Agreement during ceremonies in downtown Boise March 5.

"It's a good day for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. It's a good day for us in Idaho with an agreement that will be with us as we go into the next seven generations to protect our environment, protect our fisheries, protect our wildlife and the people that live, play and work around our waters," Stensgar said during the ceremony.

"This agreement is the product of generations of Tribal members and leaders who laid the groundwork to protect Coeur d'Alene Lake and other water resources for future generations," Allan said in a written statement. "As the late Tribal leader Felix Aripa often said, 'water is the life of all of us.' Through hard work and constant dedication, we've been able to reach an agreement that not only protects our Tribal homelands but ensures water reliability for everyone throughout North Idaho."

The agreement came together after months of negotiations that involved more than 300 stakeholders, the Idaho Attorney General's Office said.

Under the agreement, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe receives certain quantities of water for its federally reserved water rights and control of water resources within the Coeur d'Alene Reservation, the AG's Office said. The agreement authorizes the creation of a new Tribal water supply bank and allows the Tribe to lease water off the reservation.

As for what the state receives, the Tribe agreed to recognize and protect all existing state law-based water rights, licenses, permits and claims dating to September 2023 and earlier. The Tribe also agreed to recognize and protect an additional 10,000 acre-feet per year of future state law-based water rights, which the AG's Office said ensures North Idaho cities can continue to grow.

Acre feet is a unit of volume that expresses how much water is sufficient to cover one acre of land in water one foot deep. One acre-foot is equal to 325,851 gallons of water per year, according to the agreement.

The agreement is also considered a final resolution and puts an end to future lawsuits, which the AG's Office said provides significant legal protection for Idaho water users.

"This settlement is a massive win for all north Idaho families, businesses, and communities who depend on reliable water," Labrador said in a written statement March 5. "For over a decade, this litigation created uncertainty for cities, farms, and employers across the basin. Courts had already held that the Tribe was entitled to certain water rights on the Reservation that could affect the region. This settlement avoids continued litigation, protects existing water rights, secures water for future growth, and it is a win for all parties."

In addition to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the state of Idaho, there were more than a dozen parties to the settlement agreement.

The agreement will be forwarded to the Idaho Legislature and the U.S. Congress for ratification, officials said March 5.

- *Idaho Capital Sun*

Utah Sen. John Curtis helps lead push to ban sports betting contracts on prediction markets

Utah Sen. John Curtis — along with California Sen. Adam Schiff — are leading a bipartisan charge to make clear that sports prediction markets are indeed gambling and therefore subject to regulation and, in some states like Utah, banned.

Curtis, a Republican, and Schiff, a Democrat, introduced the Prediction Markets Are Gambling Act on March 23. It would ban any entity registered with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission from "listing a contract that closely resembles a sports bet or a casino-style game," according to a news release.

It would also reinforce Congress' "original intent" that the Commodity Exchange Act "does not permit sports gambling," the release said, and "removes any ambiguity" in the law that prediction markets have used to sidestep betting bans.

"Too many young people in Utah are getting exposed to addictive sports betting and casino-style gaming contracts that belong under state control, not under federal regulators," Curtis said in a prepared statement. "Our bipartisan legislation clarifies regulatory jurisdiction, ensuring that states can maintain their authority over sports betting and casino gaming."

The Prediction Markets Are Gambling Act, Curtis said, "is about respecting states' authority, protecting families, and keeping speculative financial products out of spaces where they don't belong."

Schiff, in a statement, said "sports prediction contracts are sports bets — just with a different name. And yet, these contracts are currently offered in all fifty states in clear violation of state and federal law."

Schiff said the CFTC, rather than enforcing the law, is "greenlighting these markets and even promoting their growth."

"It's time for Congress to step in and eliminate this backdoor which violates state consumer protections, intrudes upon tribal sovereignty, and offers no public revenue," he said, adding that he's "proud to partner" with Curtis to "put a stop to these illegal markets."

The legislation comes as Commodity Futures Trading Commission Chair Mike Selig has come under fire. For years, the CFTC enforced its authority to ban contracts that resemble gaming. However, Curtis and Schiff's release said the agency's leadership has "abruptly reversed course — intervening in ongoing litigation and proceeding with rulemaking to significantly relax the CFTC's enforcement of this clause."

In Utah, Gov. Spencer Cox vowed to use "every resource within my disposal ... to beat you in court" in response to Selig's announcement last month that CFTC intends to "defend its exclusive jurisdiction over these derivative markets."

"These prediction markets you are breathlessly defending are gambling — pure and simple," Cox said at the time. "They are destroying the lives of families and countless Americans, especially young men. They have no place in Utah."

Curtis and Schiff's bill has support from the Indian Gaming Association and the California Nations Gaming Association, according to statements issued Monday.

"The bill will reaffirm existing tribal and state government authority to regulate sports betting, limit online gambling, or in some cases — continue to prohibit all forms of gambling," IGA Chair David Bean said.

Bean added that the bill will "also quiet the chaos and federal overreach that the CFTC is fostering."

"Other than the growing number of court decisions siding with tribes and states, the prediction market platforms have seen no accountability and no oversight, as they disregard clearly established regulations while exposing consumers to unchecked gambling," Bean said. "We look forward to working with leaders in Congress to hold these platforms accountable to protect consumers, sports integrity, and tribal and state sovereignty."

California Nations Gaming Association Chair James Siva also applauded the legislation, saying prediction market platforms are "taking advantage of a regulatory loophole to provide unregulated sports betting across the country."

- *Utah News Dispatch*

North Dakota wants judge to void its \$28M win in pipeline protest case in favor of fed settlement

Attorneys for North Dakota and the United States have asked a judge to toss a nearly \$28 million judgment against the federal government related to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests so the parties can pursue a settlement instead.

In exchange, North Dakota would receive a "substantial monetary payment" from the United States and the federal government would drop its pending appeal, according to court records filed [in February].

The lawsuit, filed in 2019, concerns demonstrations against construction of the crude oil pipeline, also known as DAPL, that took place in rural south-central North Dakota in 2016 and 2017.

North Dakota in the suit alleges that the federal government caused the protests to grow in size and intensity by unlawfully allowing demonstrators to use U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land. The state was then forced to pay millions of dollars to police and clean up the demonstrations, North Dakota claims. The United States denies the state's allegations.

North Dakota U.S. District Court Judge Daniel Traynor in April 2025 sided with the state and ordered the executive branch to pay North Dakota the \$28 million sum, a decision the U.S. Department of Justice appealed in June.

Later that summer, the state and federal government told the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals they had entered settlement negotiations and wanted to pause the case.

The parties have now agreed on a potential settlement, according to documents filed in February. The records don't state how much money North Dakota would receive if the agreement is made official.

As part of the settlement, the parties have asked Traynor to axe the \$28 million judgment and to nullify three other orders in which he ruled against the United States. That includes his nearly 120-page opinion from April 2025.

The state and federal government noted in the request that the judge does not have to rescind the rulings just because both parties both want him to. Judges must weigh the interests of the parties against the interests of the public and the courts, the records state.

Attorneys for North Dakota in the filing acknowledged the legal conclusions Traynor made in those orders "could have utility holding the federal government to account" in the future, which could be undermined if the rulings are nullified. But the state believes the time and money saved by avoiding further litigation — as well as avoiding the risk of getting the judgment against the U.S. overturned upon appeal — is worth the trade-off, according to court records.

Attorneys for the U.S. Department of Justice wrote in the request that while the executive branch "respectfully disagrees" with Traynor's decision, it "believes that the public interest would best be served by bringing this matter to a swift close without further proceedings."

Attorney General Drew Wrigley in a [March 12] statement said he could not provide further details about the tentative agreement.

The 8th Circuit would have to first send

the case back to Traynor before he could grant the parties' requests.

The case went to trial in Bismarck in early 2024. During the four-week trial, the court heard from witnesses including former governors Doug Burgum and Jack Dalrymple, Native activists, federal officials and law enforcement.

The Dakota Access Pipeline carries crude oil from northwest North Dakota to Illinois. It crosses the Missouri River just north of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, which prompted the tribe to begin protesting the pipeline in 2016 and 2017 on the grounds that it poses a threat to its water supply and sovereignty.

North Dakota's lawsuit originally requested \$38 million in damages from the federal government. Traynor ordered the executive branch to pay \$28 million since the U.S. Department of Justice previously gave the state \$10 million as compensation for the protests.

- *North Dakota Monitor*

Nearly four years later, sentence comes in killing of transgender Native American woman

The people who loved Acey Morrison spent nearly as much time waiting for justice as her killer is likely to spend locked up.

It doesn't feel like much, her family said. But at this point, nearly any measure of justice is welcome.

A judge [in March] sentenced 55-year-old Gregory Edward Landers to seven years in prison for fatally shooting Morrison in 2022. South Dakota lawmakers passed a truth in sentencing bill in 2024 that requires people serving time for violent crimes to serve all or most of their prison terms, but the law wasn't retroactive. With credit for the two years he's served in jail, Landers could be eligible for parole within a few years.

Landers pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter in November 2024. In exchange, prosecutors dropped first-degree manslaughter and a weapons charge, and agreed to ask for a sentence of no more than 10 years in prison, with three suspended.

"It was about the best outcome that we could hope for," said Stevie Cross Dog, Morrison's brother. "It should have been longer than seven years, but that's what we agreed to."

Given Landers' unsuccessful assertions of self-defense before the plea and his repeated attempts to withdraw the plea in the months that followed, there were times Stevie, his twin sister Raena Cross Dog and their mother, Edelyn Catches, wondered if the sentencing date would ever come.

Catches is glad it did, but the wait and the knowledge that Landers may be eligible for parole in a few years dull the feeling of justice for her daughter, she said.

Meanwhile, the family is still waiting for justice in the killing of Daniel Freeman, who was fatally stabbed in Pine Ridge 14 months after Morrison died.

Freeman is a biological nephew raised by Catches from infancy. She's all but given up hope that his killer or killers will face justice.

She's struggled to sleep for four years. Thus far, she told South Dakota Searchlight, the sentence for Landers hasn't changed that.

"After all this time, you lose a lot of faith in the system," said Catches, who's now raising Freeman's two children.

Morrison was a 30-year-old transgender woman and member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, recognized in the tribe's traditions as a "Two-Spirit." She'd cry about getting haircuts that made her "look like a boy," her mother remembers, and wanted to wear girls' clothes from a young age.

"I always knew she was Two-Spirit," Catches said.

Stevie and Raena, who are six years younger than Morrison, always knew her as an older sister. She often worked three jobs at a time, Raena said, and struggled to deal with "verbal and mental abuse" she'd experienced growing up transgender and Native American while going to school in Oehlrichs, a town in Fall River County about a dozen miles from Pine Ridge Reservation borders, and while living in Rapid City as an adult.

By mid-2022, though, Raena and Stevie both said Morrison seemed to have turned a corner after struggles with substance abuse and low-wage work. Instead of three jobs, she had one, as a hotel manager, and was "in the process" of adopting Freeman's young son. The boy was living with Morrison and Stevie at their Rapid City apartment.

"It broke me," Raena said of Morrison's killing, "because of all the progress she'd made in the past 10 years."

Morrison met Landers through a dating app called Grindr. The altercation that ended her life took place the morning after she arrived at his trailer on Aug. 20, 2022.

Landers told police the two drank alcohol, but hadn't slept together. Morrison attacked him when he asked her to leave in the morning, Landers argued throughout court proceedings. They struggled over a shotgun, he said, which Landers said he'd fired during the struggle to protect himself.

After a self-defense immunity hearing in 2024, though, Judge Heidi Linngren ruled "clear and convincing evidence" suggested that Landers hadn't acted in self-defense. The ruling allowed the prosecution to proceed.

There were too many inconsistencies and inaccuracies in his story, the judge wrote, to dismiss the manslaughter charges without a trial. The area of the bedroom where the altercation allegedly happened was largely undisturbed. Landers had accused Morrison of factory resetting his phone, but later admitted that he'd scrubbed the phone himself. He said Morrison showed

up without a phone, but also that she'd asked Siri, an iPhone voice assistant, to call the police.

Even so, convincing a jury that Landers had committed manslaughter beyond a reasonable doubt wouldn't have been easy, Pennington County State's Attorney Lara Roetzel told South Dakota Searchlight.

Pulling together enough evidence to make that possible was part of the reason more than a year passed between the killing and Landers' indictment, she said.

"Really, every expert was saying 'We don't really have any idea what happened in that room,'" said Roetzel, who also noted that her office was in a leadership transition after the departure of former state's attorney Mark Vargo, who was a few months into his interim stint as South Dakota's attorney general when the homicide took place.

Morrison was taller and heavier than Landers. They'd both been drinking. Landers was injured when police arrived, with a fractured hand and bruised ribs.

"In the end, it was all the lying and the inconsistencies," Roetzel said, that led her to conclude that Landers had been the aggressor, even though "a lot of prosecutors wouldn't have even charged this case."

He pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter, which under South Dakota law constitutes the "reckless killing of one human being" by another.

"I stand by my decision to charge it," said Roetzel. "I believe beyond a reasonable doubt that he killed Acey, certainly in the manner of the charge he pleaded to."

- *South Dakota Searchlight*

Chinook salmon are hatching in Upper Klamath for first time in a century

The Klamath Tribes' Ambodat Department documented the first naturally hatched Chinook salmon within the Upper Klamath Lake in more than a century, as observers witness promising signs of the species' return following dam removal.

Klamath Tribes Chairman William Ray Jr. said the disappearance of Chinook salmon, which his tribe historically relied on for food and cultural practices, has been devastating.

"We've been harmed as a tribe for so long," Ray said. "Our culture, our subsistence and, in particular, the medicine that those fish gave us."

He hopes the return of Chinook salmon will lead to a cultural renewal for tribal members. But he noted there is still a long way to go.

"It can't be complete unless you have a fishable population of fish," Ray said.

Fish provided a healthy diet for regional tribes, he explained, and he blames high rates of diabetes, hypertension and obesity on losing that food source.

"The survival of these fish, along with c'waam and koptu, was promised to the Klamath Tribes in the Treaty of 1864," the Ambodat Department said in a statement. "We continue to fight for this land and the revival of all treaty-guaranteed resources promised to us through the Treaty and the United States Constitution Article VI, Clause 2."

Last year, researchers documented the first adult Chinook salmon in a tributary of the Upper Klamath since dam removal. The Klamath Tribes fisheries department said the presence of young salmon is a step toward restoring self-sustaining populations.

- *Jefferson Public Radio (Southern Oregon University)*

Minnesota tribe celebrates return of land taken more than a century ago

The Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, whose reservation lies at the far northeastern tip of Minnesota's Arrowhead region along the shore of Lake Superior, has taken a big step closer to being whole again.

The band celebrated the return of three land parcels, totaling nearly 90 acres, at a ceremony and community luncheon March 23. Officials say it's the largest return of Grand Portage tribal land in recent history.

The purchase was facilitated by a \$1.2 million grant from the Duluth-based Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, which generated much of its wealth from a series of controversial deals dating back to the late 1800s through which members of the Johnson family acquired numerous parcels of Grand Portage land.

"This is a great day for Grand Portage," chairman Robert Deschampe said after signing a proclamation declaring March 16, 2026 as "Land Return Day." "This is going to go way into the future. When we talk about seven generations, this is what we're talking about, getting our land back for them."

In 1854, the Grand Portage Band of Chippewa signed a treaty with the U.S. government, along with the Fond du Lac and Bois Forte bands. The treaty ceded more than 5 million acres to the federal government. The Grand Portage Band got a 47,000-acre reservation at the tip of what is now Minnesota, along with the right to continue to hunt, fish and gather in the ceded territory.

But just a few decades later, the government began dividing up the reservation and selling it off to timber and mining interests. Federal allotment laws also took land out of communally-held tribal ownership, and assigned parcels to individual band members.

"When they did that, they began carving away at the spirit of our people and our culture, piece by piece," said elder and former tribal council member John Morrin.

"That created a lot of trauma within us as human beings, and we're still trying to deal with that trauma today."

Morrin thanked the foundation for funding the land return, which he said does much more than restore the band's land base.

"You're also restoring part of our spirit as a people," Morrin said.

By the early 1900s, the Grand Portage Band had lost about half its reservation. Much of that land was acquired by members of the Johnson family, prominent Swedish settlers in nearby Grand Marais.

"The Johnson name carries a complicated history with our people," said Deschampe. "Many of our band members know the history well. It is still recent, and it is still felt."

Lloyd K. Johnson was a prominent lawyer and businessman from Grand Marais who died in 2006. His father and uncle held key positions in the Cook County land department at the time that federal allotment policies began to split up Grand Portage land. That put them in prime position to scoop up land cheaply from band members — or in some cases without any money exchanging hands, the band said.

"Many of them lost it because they didn't pay taxes on it," said Erik Torch, executive director of the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation. "Perhaps [they] didn't understand it. They didn't work in a cash-based economy, and they lost that land."

In 2022, Torch said the foundation started digging into the "hard truths" of how it acquired much of its wealth. Then they learned that a related family trust still held three parcels of former Grand Portage land. Last month, the foundation finalized the \$1.2 million grant to the band so it could purchase the land back from the trust.

"It's the single largest grant we've ever made, and it's just so appropriate that, given the history, that it's to Grand Portage," Torch said. "This land has finally come home after too many years away."

"It's part of reclaiming our territory," said Deschampe. "In 1854, when we signed these treaties, we were allotted 5.2 million acres to hunt, gather and fish. And as of now, we're down to less than 20 percent of that land that's accessible for tribal members to exercise those inherent rights."

- *Prarie Public (Fargo, North Dakota)*

Tenth Circuit ruling confirms Citizen Potawatomi Nation reservation is disestablished

The U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals rejected an argument [in March] that challenged whether the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's reservation is still intact. While the main argument is about the CPN reservation, the tribal nation had no involvement in the case.

At the center of the case is a man named Thomas Wahpekeche, who in 2015 was convicted of sexual abuse crimes against a minor and was prosecuted in state court. Wahpekeche's appeal argues that the state never had jurisdiction to prosecute him because the crimes occurred inside Indian Country, or within the Citizen Potawatomi Nation reservation.

The court recognized that CPN had a reservation, but needed to verify whether it was still intact or whether a 1891 statute disestablished it. The court ultimately found the latter.

"The statute described the tribe's surrender of interests forever and absolute, id., and the Supreme Court has characterized this language as sufficiently clear to disestablish a reservation," the opinion stated.

The court also rejected Wahpekeche's other jurisdiction arguments, saying they were not raised properly or were unexplained.

One of those arguments was that the crimes occurred in a house held by the Housing Authority of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, which is a part of a dependent Indian community and is therefore Indian country. But as the court pointed out, Wahpekeche did not make this point in his habeas petition or supporting brief.

"In the objection, Mr. Wahpekeche also argued that the Absentee Shawnee tribe enjoyed exclusive jurisdiction because he had bought his home from the Absentee Shawnee Tribal Housing Authority," the opinion stated. "On appeal, Mr. Wahpekeche theorizes that the crimes took place in a dependent Indian community. But Mr. Wahpekeche failed to preserve this theory in his habeas petition."

Robert Gifford is a Cherokee Nation citizen and a tribal court judge for multiple tribes. He said the recent opinion still highlights the potential of the dependent Indian community argument despite Wahpekeche not preserving it.

"The court says, you know, there could have been another argument here, but you didn't raise it," Gifford said. "Which is sort of sort of a like a sending a message out to say, 'Look, pay attention. Somebody might want to raise this argument again. But when you do, make sure you include these other arguments as well.'"

Though he said it's unlikely the CPN reservation could be reaffirmed any time soon, Gifford noted the landmark McGirt case — which reshaped much of eastern Oklahoma as Indian Country — started in a similar way.

"McGirt filed his motion pro se," Gifford said. "So his case started all by himself. It wasn't until it started getting traction ... when the tribe said, we'll do an amicus brief."

Citizen Potawatomi Nation officials declined to comment.

- *KGOU (University of Oklahoma)*

SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



APRIL 2
GLADYS KNIGHT



APRIL 3
ALI WONG



APRIL 9
MT. JOY



APRIL 11
SANTANA



APRIL 12
FISTS OF FURY SERIES



APRIL 13
TRIUMPH



APRIL 15
PICKLEBALL SLAM 4



APRIL 17 & 18
KINGS OF LEON



APRIL 22
FOREIGNER



APRIL 24
THE BLACK KEYS



APRIL 25
CHRIS TUCKER



APRIL 26
PENN & TELLER



GET TICKETS!
TICKETMASTER.COM
MYHRL.COM • HARROCKHOLLY.COM



HOLLYWOOD, FL

Education



Ahfachkee students learn about careers

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The classrooms of the Ahfachkee School were filled with students and working professionals who had completed their educations and came to share their experience at the school's annual career day March 11.

The focus of the day was on the abundance of opportunities available in the world after students completed their education. More than 30 tribal departments and other businesses gave presentations to the students.

Make-up artist

Tribal member Mya Cypress, Ahfachkee alumna class of 2019, owns her own make-up business and came to school to give students a glimpse into what she does professionally.

"This is a very full circle moment for me because everything I learned here prepared me to go for higher education and now I'm bringing it back here to show students," Cypress said. "Ahfachkee gave me the fundamentals of who I am. I spent so much time here and learned a lot about myself like what kind of worker I am and what I like to do. My work ethic was built here."

Cypress does make-up for weddings, special events, movies and tv. When she was an Ahfachkee student she knew she liked doing make-up but didn't know she could have a career in it.

After graduation, Cypress went to beauty school for two years and skin care for another two. She earned her esthetician and master esthetician licenses and is a certified esthetician, but she prefers doing make-up.

"Having all that knowledge helped me know what works better on different skin types and made me a better make-up artist," she said. "I get to help people feel good about themselves and I also get the satisfaction of doing a good job."

Author and business owner

Taos Jumper Young, Jr. is an author, an ordained minister, owns a consultation business and just signed a book contract with



Second graders work together to lift a heavy fire hose at the outdoor portion of the Ahfachkee career day March 11.

Beverly Bidney

Trilogy Christian Publishing. His first book was published last year, "The Trial of Adam T. Son."

Young has completed programs at three Ivy League schools; Harvard for psychology, Yale for economics and University of

Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business for entrepreneurship.

He is also the grandson of former Seminole Chairwoman Betty Mae Jumper, who used to tell him to go to school and then come back to help your people. Jumper took

Young with her when she went to various schools to speak to students.

"I never thought back then that she was preparing me for what I'm doing now," Young said. "This is me honoring the legacy of my grandmother."

Going to college and writing came naturally to Young.

♦ See CAREERS on page 3B

NIEA seeks proposals for national convention in Buffalo

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The 57th annual National Indian Education Association Convention & Trade Show will be held Oct. 7-10 at the Buffalo Convention Center in Buffalo, N.Y.

NIEA is accepting proposals for sessions that support and exemplify this year's theme: Strength in Community: Building the Future Together.

NIEA encourages proposals aligned with its theme that offers engaging, research-informed and/or practice-based sessions created by and with Indigenous educators, experts, and communities. Strong submissions elevate Indigenous ways of knowing, center community-based knowledge, and support the holistic success of Native learners, families, and communities across educational settings.

NIEA's call for proposals includes three distinct session types:

- Convention Sessions: Sessions for the general Convention audience, taking place on Oct. 8, 9, or 10.

- Educator Day Sessions: Sessions specifically for PK-12 educators, focused on practical strategies and classroom resources, taking place Oct. 7.

- Student Day Sessions: Sessions specifically for youth (grades 6-12), taking place Oct. 9.

For more information about the sessions, proposals and convention, go to niea.org.

Formation announced for tribal energy leadership fellowship

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Haskell Indian Nations University and the Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy have launched a fellowship aimed at strengthening tribal leadership in renewable energy development and governance. The Tribal Energy Leaders Fellowship (TELF), housed at Haskell in Lawrence, Kan., will provide tribal leaders with more than 100 hours of training on federal Indian energy policy, renewable energy technologies and project finance. Faculty from Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, will contribute to the curriculum alongside Indigenous scholars and practitioners.

UNC student Bella Garcia co-chairs Carolina Indian Circle Powwow

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal member Bella Garcia, a junior at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is a drama and Indigenous studies major, but for the last year she has also found the time to co-chair the school's Carolina Indian Circle Powwow, the largest student-led powwow in the area.

Garcia has been active in the Carolina Indian Circle, a Native American student organization that organizes the powwow, for two years.

"The goal is to spread awareness of our culture and invite people to be engaged and educated," Garcia said. "We invite the public and have different tribes as part of the organizing committee. We want to celebrate our community and traditions together."

About 800 people attended the 39th annual version of the powwow March 7. Participating tribes in the powwow included Apache, Cherokee Nation, Choctaw, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Haliwa-Saponi and Lumbee.

"I was very proud of what we put together," Garcia said. "It's been part of my life for almost a full year. Finally getting to see that day after all the time and effort put in was truly beautiful."

The powwow featured about 80 dancers and six drums, including the host drum. As in most powwows, participants competed for prize money.

"The theme of the powwow, 'Fanning the Flame', honored our ancestors for their sacrifices and contributions to get us to where we are today," Garcia said. "As their descendants, the utmost responsibility to our ancestors is to continue the path they put us on and also think about the future. As Native people, that's what we are built of; strength and resilience."

After a year of planning, Garcia was pleased to see how well attendees and participants interacted.

"We had vendors from many different regions who came to support us," Garcia said. "It was a special day. Being part of that was an indelible experience in my life and a wonderful moment."



Courtesy photo

Bella Garcia doing the fancy shawl dance at the 39th annual powwow.



Courtesy photo

Bella Garcia, left, and Roxi Bark, co-chairs of the Carolina Indian Circle Powwow at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, at the Powwow March 7.



Courtesy photo

Bella Garcia, third from right, dancing with her sorority sisters at the Carolina Indian Circle Powwow.

Cattle drive makes its way through BC

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Big Cypress community and tribal members, some with their horses, met at Dusty's Restaurant March 28 to move some cattle down Josie Billie Highway for the 28th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive and Rodeo. Honorary trail bosses were cattlemaster Martha Jones and the late Carl Baxley.

Seminole cowboys, accompanied by young helpers on horseback, corralled about 12 steer and escorted them to the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena.

After the cattle drive, lunch was served to those who attended and participated in the drive. Tribal dignitaries and members of the tribe's long-standing cattle community spoke.

"I'm honored to serve as your trail boss, so I thank you for everybody," Jones said during lunch.

Jones is currently the eldest female cattle owner in the tribe at the age 84. She has been a cattle owner since 1979 and is an important figure in the cattle community.

"We have this every year, so I want to see more people come in and get the word out there and say we're having a cattle drive in Big Cypress, so it's good to see everyone here," said Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers.

"I remember this cattle drive going around from West Boundary, but you know, this route was a shorter route, so I'm glad you know, not only for the participants but for the animals, because it does get hot out there on that pavement," Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie said.

A youth rodeo took place later in the afternoon at the arena.



Roger Jumper has everything under control as the dogs direct a steer on the correct path.

Calvin Tiger



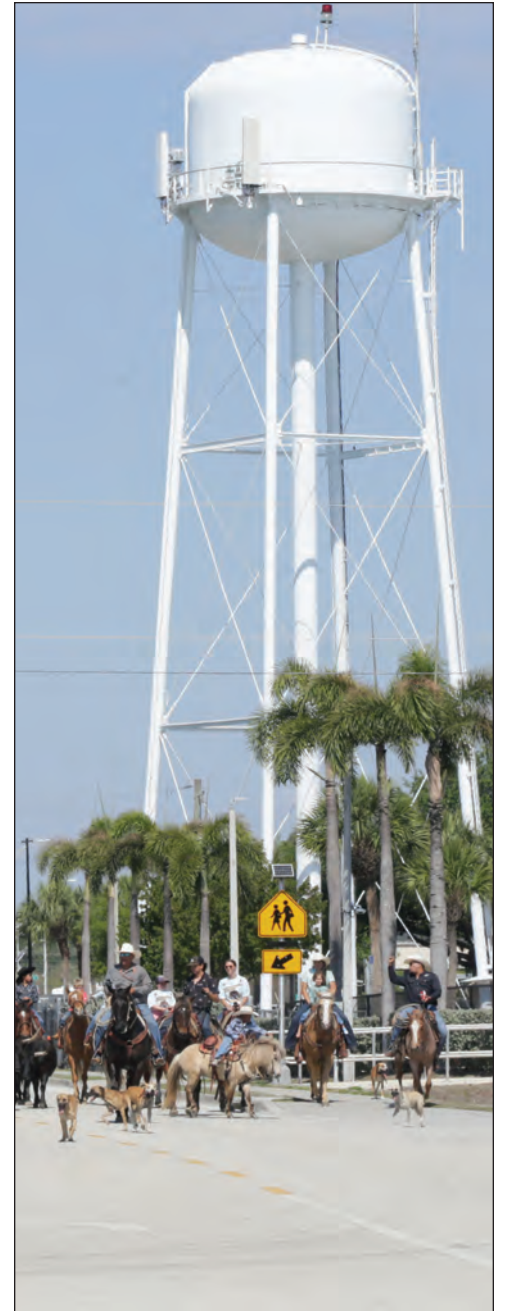
Calvin Tiger (2)

Above, Ahnie Jumper has her hands full as she and her father, Josh Jumper, guide the cattle. Below, the drive hits the street.



Calvin Tiger

Honorary trail boss Martha Jones speaks at the drive's lunch.



Calvin Tiger

The cattle drive makes its way past the reservation's water tower.



New director is a familiar face at Boys & Girls Clubs

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

A new year brings new beginnings; for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, this meant new leadership. Effective Feb. 16, Dawna Bell accepted her appointment as the Director of Organization and Development for the Boys & Girls Clubs, continuing her work with the organization after nearly 16 years.

"It's my honor to serve," Bell said. "I've been working with the Seminole Tribe of Florida for 22 years now. I started off as the Parent Involvement Coordinator within the Preschool Department. After seven years, I transferred over to the Boys & Girls Club as a Youth Counselor and worked my way up through the organization. Being named director has taken some getting used to."

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Seminole Tribe of Florida work towards engaging Seminole Youth and encouraging them to become productive contributors to society, while providing a safe, well supervised environment to express themselves in a multiplicity of formats.

"I wish to continue in the foresight of growing our club through expansion, increasing our community visibility, and continuing to move our organization forward and preparing the next generation of leaders for the Seminole Tribe of Florida," Bell added.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) were introduced to Indian Country in 1974 when a site opened on the Pala Indian Reservation in California. In 1992, the first independent Native American clubs

were chartered in Shawnee, Oklahoma and Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

Today, there are approximately 205 clubs throughout the nation, spanning 25 states, that serve Native American youth.

In 2004, the BGCA chartered a Boys & Girls Club on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's reservation in Hollywood, Florida; the tribe's first club officially opened on March 7, 2005. Currently there are four clubs located across Hollywood, Brighton, Immokalee, and Big Cypress Reservations.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Seminole Tribe of Florida are unique. As a Native club, programs are adapted to include Indigenous culture and language in its co-programming. Each Boys & Girls Club is unique to its own reservation.

"The club has evolved tremendously since the inception of Hollywood's Boys & Girls Club in the early 2000s," Bell said. "But my vision for the Boys and Girls Clubs is to strengthen visibility through national and tribal partnerships, develop comprehensive, high-quality training and development for our club staff, and provide targeted support to youth and families, while providing additional resources that develop healthy lifestyle choices and decision making skills that celebrate their culture and community."

With the upcoming expansion of the Immokalee Reservation's Boys & Girls Club space, Bell looks forward to broadening their youth services as needed for each community. The space's tentative opening date is set for May 2026.



Courtesy photo

Dawna Bell

"Our Summer Brain Gain program features theme-based weekly modules with engaging, project based activities across art, math, science, and education, giving youth the chance to learn through discovery, creative expression, and collaborative group work, while Club staff serve as mentors who guide and inspire rather than traditional classroom teachers," Bell said.

Designed to build on reading readiness and learning retention, the learning-based summer program commences on June 8 and runs until Aug. 7 across all Boys & Girls Clubs.

"I'm just excited to keep the program expanding," Bell said. "As the program's newest director, I just want to say that our doors are open. To youth, parents, and families of the community—we're here for you."

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Presents

Earth Day

FREE FAMILY EVENT

Indigenous Entertainment | Gardening Workshops | Earth Friendly Craft Activities
Seminole Frybread Vendors | Non-Profit Partner Educational Activities

April 14 | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

3551 N State Rd 7, Hollywood, FL
Across from the Seminole Classic Casino Hollywood

April 16 | 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

34725 W Boundary Rd, Clewiston, FL
On the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation

ahtahthiki.com/events | 863-902-1113

Ranching through generations: Florida's Native cattle story

BY BRISTOL RIVES

Long before Florida was known for beaches and amusement parks, its vast grasslands sustained cattle that were managed by Native American communities whose stewardship played a key role in establishing Florida as cattle country.

Florida's environment, which is defined by open grasslands, wetlands and a subtropical climate, created ideal conditions for cattle grazing prior to Florida's statehood. Native communities, such as the Seminole and Miccosukee, integrated cattle into their agricultural practices, relying on their knowledge of the land to raise livestock while preserving resources. These early practices helped anchor cattle ranching as a lasting part of Florida agriculture.

Carrying Tradition Forward

For Alex Johns, cattle ranching is not just a profession, but a continuation of a Native tradition that has shaped Florida agriculture for centuries. Born into a ranching family on the Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation, Johns has a lifelong commitment to maintaining the Native cattle industry.

After high school, he began his career as a working cowboy and later became the executive director of agriculture for the Seminole Tribe, earning a reputation as a leader who balances tradition with modern practices. He emphasizes practices that "keep in tune with Mother Nature," he says, using methods such as soil testing and proven modern techniques to blend customs with innovation.

Despite these efforts, Johns sees limited land availability as the biggest challenge facing Native cattle producers today. Johns' perspective is one of many in Florida's diverse cattle community.

On the production side of the Native cattle industry are ranchers like Christopher Green. Green runs a cow-calf operation, through which calves are raised for slaughter and a small portion of heifers are kept for replacement production. Like Johns, Green

is a fourth-generation producer. He grew up around beef production, starting in 4-H, and eventually graduated into ownership.

Green implements rotational grazing and invasive plant removal to ensure the long-term health of his cattle and pasture, as well as setting up the next generation for success. These sustainable practices set producers like Green apart.

Unfortunately, when looking at demand and costs, Green sees land availability and the price of cattle as the largest inhibitor for the Native cattle industry. There are fewer cattle in America today than there's been in over 70 years, only coming in at roughly 87.2 million head as of early 2024 — low levels not seen since the early 1950s.

As demand goes up and supply goes down, Native cattle producers face the negative consequences. However, Green continues to persevere, proving that sustainable practices offer a buffer against the changes in the cattle market.

Passing the Torch to Young Ranchers

Both Johns and Green strive to keep cattle production strong for this generation and the next, while also encouraging young ranchers and FFA members to pursue agriculture. Johns advises young people interested in agriculture to "pursue your dreams and think outside the box," he says. "There are many ways to still get into agriculture — you just may have to do it differently than your grandfather did."

Green recommends to "start with an education in agricultural science or agricultural marketing," adding that "understanding the science goes a long way toward natural resources conservation and management."

The message is clear: the future of agriculture depends on not only the land, but also on the people willing to care for it.

Bristol Rives is a 10th grader at Clewiston Christian School and lives in Moore Haven. Bristol is an FFA in the USA reporter. This article was published on FFA's website on Feb. 5.



Beverly Bidney

Andre Jumper, at left, his father Josh Jumper, at right, lead a cattle crew in Big Cypress in 2023.



Carlton Ward Jr.

Christopher Green working cattle on the Big Cypress Reservation.

IGA recognizes Matriarches of Indian Gaming

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Indian Gaming Association (IGA) announced March 18 its 2026 Matriarchs of Indian Gaming.

IGA said the Native women's leadership, vision, and dedication have played a vital role in strengthening tribal government gaming and advancing tribal sovereignty.

The honorees are:

- A. Gay Kingman (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), executive director, Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association
- Elizabeth Lohah Homer (Osage Nation), Founder, Homer Law
- Jamie Dillard, chief executive officer, Choctaw Global
- Pam Shaw (Osage Nation), United Women of Tribal Gaming; Osage Nation Congressional speaker

- Erica Pinto, Chairwoman, Jamual Indian Village
- Robin Villarreal, chief information officer, Gilar River Resorts & Casinos

The Matriarchs of Indian Gaming recognition was established by the late Ernie Stevens Jr., chairman of the Indian Gaming Association, whose lifelong commitment to honoring Native women leaders remains a cornerstone of this celebration.

"Chairman Stevens always reminded us that the women of Indian Country are the backbone of our communities and our industry," IGA Chairman David Z. Bean said in a press release. "This recognition carries forward his vision by honoring women whose leadership has shaped tribal government gaming and created opportunity for generations to come."



Beverly Bidney

Make-up artist Mya Cypress shows students how to correctly apply make-up during a career day session at Ahfachkee. Higher Education academic and career advisor Leila Patterson patiently models the eye shadow is applied.

CAREERS

From page 1B

"I've spent 50 years writing my story, but it only took me a week to put it on paper," he said. "Living is writing your story."

Young told students that it's easy to sit on the reservation, but they should have the courage to do something else with their lives. He told them to travel and visit colleges. The tribe has a great education department, which helped him get his education.

He encouraged students to discover their gifts, pay attention to their strengths, find a mentor and stay focused.

"I want students to stay on the right path and do good for people," Young said. "When they understand all that, they should turn around and help others, pull the next ones up and create a legacy."

Information Technology

Employees of the tribe's IT department-technology project manager Rande Solano, education systems supervisor Bello Solano and help desk technician Kevin Belette- explained how to get a job with the department. They shared their three different perspectives on education.

"I was a college athlete and got a degree," Bello Solano said. "If I didn't play sports, I probably wouldn't have gone to college. Some of us go, some don't."

Tribal member Rande Solano earned both her Bachelor and Master degrees at college. Belette didn't attend college but got his IT certification instead. Bello Solano talked about the differences in costs and time between going to college and getting certified for IT.

"There are plenty of opportunities to do something with or without college," Bello Solano said. "But you should always surround yourself with people who have different skills than you do so you can learn from them."

He gave the example of a YouTube influencer, Mr. Beast, who creates elaborate challenges on videos with high production values. He reportedly has more than 471 million subscribers, is the most subscribed channel on YouTube and is third most followed accounts on TikTok. Most of the students were familiar with Mr. Beast.

"Mr. Beast creates content, but he has other people do the analytics, AI and data," Bella Solano said. "Everything is about the data; collecting and analyzing it. It gives him an edge."

Seminole Gaming

Seminole Gaming Commission projects administrator Charles Hiers, Jr. shared his experience of working with gaming for the last 25 years. He said most of the money from the casinos stays in the area.

"Coconut Creek was empty before we built the casino," Hiers said. "Now it's booming and built up. Everyone benefits from casinos."

He told the students about casino internships through the education department's Student Work Experience Program and Work Experience Program. In Seminole Gaming's Tribal Career Development program, participants spend time in every department of the casino.

"By the time you get to the upper level, you can choose where you want to work, up to manager or vice president," Hiers said. "Edward Aguilar, general manager of Classic Casino in Hollywood, went through the program."

More "showy" departments, such as Fire Rescue, Seminole Police Department, Seminole Public Safety and the Department of Conservation, were in the parking lot of the Herman Osceola Gymnasium across the street from Ahfachkee.

Students learned how the DOC uses drones to survey land by watching Grant Steelman launch a drone to take pictures of the students standing below it. They were enthralled by their images on the monitor under a tent.



Beverly Bidney

Author Taos Jumper Young, Jr. speaks to students about his education and career in writing.



Beverly Bidney

Ren Osceola gets a hands-on lesson on how tattooing is done, by using a practice mat that simulates the feeling of applying ink to flesh.



Beverly Bidney

Department of Conservation forester Grant Steelman shows third grade students a monitor which shows photos being taken live with a drone overhead.

Seminoles at Chalo Nitka



Kevin Johnson

On March 3, Timothy Urbina and Jaylissa Burnette compete in Chalo Nitka's swine show as members of Moore Haven FFA.



Beverly Bidney

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard rides in the Chalo Nitka parade March 7 followed by Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge in the next truck.

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

MOORE HAVEN — The Chalo Nitka festival has been a tradition in Moore Haven since its Main Street was paved in 1948 and is also a reminder of its historic relationship with the Seminole Tribe. Chalo Nitka means "Big Bass" in the Creek language, which is spoken on the nearby Brighton reservation.

The festival began March 7 with a parade that featured local elected officials, Seminole officials including President Holly Tiger, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge as well as Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Latchford, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith, Miss Brighton Seminole Hayden Nunez and Jr. Miss Brighton Seminole Avani Smith.

The parade also included the Moore Haven Middle High School marching band, majorettes, swamp buggies, ATVs, floats and first responders with sirens sounding and lights flashing.

The festival had an array of carnival rides, local food vendors and a cooking chickee manned by Seminole tribal members who handed out samples of pumpkin fry bread and offered freshly made Indian burgers to hungry festival goers.

Chalo Nitka and Seminole royalty shared the stage in the pavilion as they introduced themselves to the crowd.



Beverly Bidney

Valene Clay makes Pumpkin fry bread at Chalo Nitka.



Beverly Bidney

The Bert family, from left Alakai, Reese, Jayna and Abril, enjoy the festival.



Beverly Bidney

Jonah Walker continues his training in alligator wrestling with his father Billy Walker, who observes nearby.



Beverly Bidney

President Holly Tiger speaks at the festival.



Beverly Bidney

Sandy Billie is followed by his son Merle Billie as they ride ATVs in the Chalo Nitka parade March 7.



Beverly Bidney

A plethora of princesses take the stage before they speak to the crowd. Third from left is Little Miss Chalo Nitka Briella Hall, at the far right are Miss Brighton Seminole Hayden Nunez and Miss EIRA Mariah Billie.

April schedule for Native Learning Center

BY NLC

HOLLYWOOD — The NLC 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 training, webinars, and podcast episodes.

Webinar: Developing Engagement Plans for Clean Energy Projects Part Four: Effective Strategies, Methods, and Relationship Building Approaches
Instructors: Michelle L. Holiday, President, Michelle Holiday & Associates

Katherine Cole, Founder and CEO, Kit Cole Consulting, LLC
Date: April 7
Time: 2– 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

When a project sparks outrage, the natural instinct is to lead with more data, more maps, and more technical justifications. However, in high-emotion environments, "more facts" often act as fuel rather than a fire extinguisher. Whether you are working with Tribal nations or local neighborhoods, traditional communication tactics often fail because they address the head when the community is speaking from the heart.

This webinar breaks down the mindset of the opposition and provides a tactical roadmap for moving beyond the stalemate. We will explore why facts alone won't change minds and how to pivot your strategy to build genuine trust with opposition leaders, their followers, and the media.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will understand approaches and tactics for working with Tribal and non-Tribal communities in high-emotion states, including why providing angry or outraged neighbors and community members with additional facts about the

project will not satisfy-or change-their opposition to the project and what approaches can move the needle with opposition leaders, their followers, and members of the media.

Webinar: Credit as an Asset: Building Financial Strength in Native Communities Part One

Instructor: Lanalle Smith (Navajo) owner, Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC
Date: April 9
Time: 2 – 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

This webinar provides Credit Builders Alliance's curriculum, Credit as an Asset. Credit is a powerful tool for homeownership, entrepreneurship, and financial security, but many Native individuals face barriers to building and accessing credit. This training provides financial educators, housing counselors, and Tribal leaders with culturally responsive credit education strategies that promote financial empowerment and credit-building in Native communities.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand how credit works and why it matters for financial success
- Learn how credit works and how it impacts financial opportunities

- Learn how to help clients build, repair, and manage credit effectively
- Explore credit building strategies for homeownership and business success

(Part 2, April 14, 2-3:30 p.m.)
(Part 3, April 16, 2-3:30 p.m.)
(Part 4, April 28, 2-3:30 p.m.)

Webinar: Workforce Employer Assisted Housing

Instructor: Shelly Tucciarelli, (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin), executive director Visionary Ventures NFP; owner, Turtle Clan Development Services
Date: April 21
Time: 2 – 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

The Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) Programs are being utilized by many companies, such as hospitals, colleges, and casinos. Employer Assisted Housing Program is a benefit offered by the employers to its employees to enable them to purchase homes. The Employer Assisted Housing Programs benefits can vary from different employers.

The EAH Program enables employees to realize the dream of home ownership sooner than they might think. In the process, the employer builds a loyal base of employees

living in important neighborhoods near their job. Employees can be part of rebirth of neighborhoods in close proximity to work.

Learning Objectives:

- After this webinar, attendees will know:
 - What is the Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) program
 - What Employers are using the EAH program
 - Who is eligible for the EAH program
 - What are the benefits of the EAH program

Webinar: Navigating Emotional Intelligence

Instructor: Dr. William R. Latchford, DCJ, president, Native Peacekeeper Consulting Group, LLC, a Native woman-owned Public Safety Consulting Firm; retired executive director of Public Safety/Chief of Police for the Seminole Tribe of Florida; Co-Director of Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice Native American Crime and Justice Research & Policy Institute

Date: April 23
Time: 2– 3:30 p.m.

♦ See NLC on page 5C

Hollywood Reservation enjoys Easter egg hunt fun



Mayli Tommie (2)



Youngsters sprint toward hidden eggs at the start of the Hollywood Easter egg hunt March 27 on the Hollywood Recreation ball fields. At right, the Easter Bunny makes a new friend.

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The Hollywood Board Office hosted an Easter egg hunt for kids – and adults – March 27 on the Hollywood ballfields.

The adults had their own chance to search and find eggs, but the focus was on the youth, who came prepared. Many were eager to fill their empty Easter baskets; some opted to use bags for perhaps greater storage potential.

Once the go-ahead cue was given, the kids dashed onto the field, and clutched and clenched as many of the colorful assortment of eggs as they could. Some eggs were easily visible; others were hidden.

Among those in attendance were Hollywood Board Rep. O'Hara Tommie and, of course, the Easter bunny.



Mayli Tommie (2)

Kids do a good job eying and grabbing the eggs that were spread across the field.



Mayli Tommie

The Easter bunny and Hollywood Board Rep. O'Hara Tommie gather for a group photo.

◆ NLC
From page 4B

Course Description:

Your EQ, your ability to connect with others and manage your own emotions and those of others, which will determine how successful you are in life. When we look at the truly extraordinary people who inspire and make a difference you will see that they do this by connecting with people at a personal and emotional level. What differentiated them was not their IQ but their EQ – their emotional intelligence. This course will help you develop your emotional intelligence.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand what emotional intelligence means
- Recognize the importance of developing emotional intelligence for personal and workplace success
- Use techniques to understand, employ and appreciate the role of emotional intelligence in the workplace
- Understand different emotions and how to manage them
- Create a personal vision statement
- Understand the difference between optimism and pessimism
- Validate emotions in others

Webinar: Financial Trauma and Its Impacts in Tribal Communities

Instructor: Lanalle Smith, (Navajo), owner, Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC
Date: April 30
Time: 2 – 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

Understanding, Healing, and Rebuilding Economic Empowerment. Financial trauma deeply affects individuals, families, and entire Tribal communities, shaping financial behaviors, economic disparities, and intergenerational wealth. This training explores the root causes, historical and systemic impacts, and healing-centered strategies to address financial trauma in a way that honors cultural resilience and sovereignty.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the concept of financial trauma and its impact on Tribal communities
- Recognize financial trauma responses and how they influence financial decision-making
- Identify intergenerational and systemic financial barriers that affect Native economic stability
- Learn trauma-informed financial coaching techniques to foster healing and empowerment
- Develop culturally aligned financial education strategies that honor Indigenous values
- Explore solutions for rebuilding financial strength and community-based economic empowerment.

APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION Month

STOP CHILD ABUSE

YOUNG VOICES DESERVE BIG PROTECTION

JOIN US AND WEAR BLUE FOR OUR 11TH ANNUAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION COMMUNITY WALK & ICE CREAM SOCIAL

FRIDAY, APRIL 10TH 2026

MEET AT:

HOLLYWOOD - BETTY MAE JUMPER CLINIC: 10:00AM
BRIGHTON - TRIBAL OFFICE: 10:00AM
IMMOKALEE - THE GYM: 3:00PM
BIG CYPRESS - THE GYM: 3:00PM
LAKELAND - THE MAIN GATE: 3:00PM
FORT PIERCE - THE COMMUNITY CENTER: 3:00PM

TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR OUR TRIBAL CHILDREN AND TRIBAL FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT ADVOCACY & GUARDIANSHIP DEPARTMENT AT 954-965-1338

Child Abuse Prevention Blue Ribbon Week

MONDAY - APRIL 6TH 2026
KICKS OF AFFIRMATION
WEAR YOUR FAVORITE KICKS AND SHIRTS WITH POSITIVE WORDS OR ADVOCACY MESSAGES

TUESDAY - APRIL 7TH 2026
COZY CARE DAY
WEAR YOUR COZY SOCKS, CARDIGANS, & HOODIES

WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8TH 2026
SUPERHERO DAY
WEAR YOUR FAVORITE SUPERHERO GEAR COSTUMES ENCOURAGED!

THURSDAY - APRIL 9TH 2026
HATS OFF TO THOSE WHO SERVE
WEAR ANY HAT & YOUR FAVORITE BOOTS

FRIDAY - APRIL 10TH 2026
BLUE OUT: EVERY CHILD MATTERS
WEAR ALL BLUE FOR CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION WALK

TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR OUR TRIBAL CHILDREN AND TRIBAL FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT ADVOCACY & GUARDIANSHIP DEPARTMENT AT 954-965-1338



DAVID FRANKEL, ESQ.
Attorney and Counselor at Law
Hollywood, Florida

Fighting for Native Rights for 20 Years
Former Lawyer for Leonard Peltier
Counsel to the Protestors at Standing Rock
Former Broward County Prosecutor for 22 Years
Specializing in Criminal Defense

www.BlueLotusLaw.com
954-683-0300



LAW OFFICES OF DAVID A. FRANKEL

YOUR VISION IS OUR FOCUS!



Alan Mendelsohn M.D., F.A.C.S.
Nathan Klein O.D.
Alec Chaleff M.D.



Voted Gold Favorite Eye Surgery

We are honored to have been selected as South Florida's premier practice for eye surgery, being renowned for laser cataract surgery!

Our expertise includes:

- Comprehensive Eye Examinations • Laser Cataract Surgery
- Multifocal Lens Implants • Laser Refractive Lens Exchange
- Contact Lenses & Scleral Contact Lenses • Red Eye
- Macular Degeneration Prevention & Management
- Diabetic Eye Disease
- Glaucoma Treatments w/ in-office laser procedures
- Myopia Management
- Optical with quality lenses, frames, & sunglasses

We would like to invite you and your family to consider the benefits of becoming patients at Eye Surgeons & Consultants in Hollywood, and allowing us to become your family's eye physicians. With kindness, compassion, and honesty, we will do our utmost to ensure that you will receive the best care possible!



954.894.1500 | MYEYESURGEONS.COM

4651 Sheridan Street, Suite 100, Hollywood, FL 33021

Hours: Monday-Friday 7:15am to 5pm • Sunday 7:15am - Noon

Sports



PECS softball wraps up strong season

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BRIGHTON — In its final home game of the season, the Pematv Emahakv Charter School softball team defeated LaBelle Middle School, 15-0, in four innings on March 26, at Ollie Jones Memorial Park on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Brighton Reservation.

Amariah Lavatta, a sixth grader, shined in the pitching circle for PECS. She tossed a one-hit shutout with nine strikeouts. On the few occasions LaBelle batters made contact, PECS' defense rose to the challenge, notably on catches by rightfielder Kahnayah Billie and first baseman Serenity Bishop, and a throw out by catcher Ameliana Osceola.

At the plate, PECS produced more than enough offense led by seventh grader Kaliyah Hodge, who crushed the ball with two doubles, one triple and two RBIs. Bishop had a two-run double and Lavatta had a single, double and two RBIs.

Okalani Collins, the team's only eighth grader, was honored before the game by her teammates. In the first inning, Collins singled and scored the game's first run.

In her first season as head coach, Faith Vest has guided the team to an outstanding



Kevin Johnson

Pitcher Amariah Lavatta warms up before facing LaBelle.

record with just one loss, which came against Moore Haven. Vest said it was an enjoyable season with a good group of players, and that the team showed a lot of improvement.

Considering the team will lose only one player to graduation, PECS should be strong again next season.

PECS was scheduled to finish its season March 31 with a rematch at LaBelle.



Kevin Johnson

The Pematv Emahakv Charter School softball team honored Okalani Collins (holding flowers) and her family prior to its final home game against LaBelle Middle School on March 26. Collins is the team's only eighth grader.



Kevin Johnson

Kahnayah Billie makes a tough running catch in right field.



Kevin Johnson

Kaliyah Hodge gets set in the batters box.



Kevin Johnson

After blasting a double, Serenity Bishop gets chased in a rundown trying to stretch it into a triple.



Kevin Johnson

PECS' infield meets in the pitcher's circle during a break. From left to right are pitcher Amariah Lavatta, third baseman Kohlani Rodriguez, catcher Ameliana Osceola, shortstop Kaliyah Hodge, second baseman Jamelynn Anderson and first baseman Serenity Bishop.



Kevin Johnson

Shortstop Kaliyah Hodge prepares to tag a LaBelle baserunner after receiving a throw from Serenity Bishop. Also looking on are second baseman Jamelynn Anderson and centerfielder Okalani Collins.

Thaddeus Johns shines for Moore Haven baseball



Kevin Johnson (3)

A good example of how valuable Thaddeus Johns is to the Moore Haven High School baseball team came March 3 in the Terriers' game against Lehigh. Playing shortstop, Johns started a 6-4-3 double play that ended the top of the first inning. Johns came off the field and said to his teammates "Let's get hits," which is exactly what he did. With a runner at third base and two outs, Johns, in the cleanup spot, fouled off five pitches before he crushed a double (left photo) down the left field line on a 1-2 count that gave Moore Haven an early lead. The Terriers went on to win, 6-5. Johns went 3-for-4 and scored three runs. As of March 30, Moore Haven had a 7-7 record.



Kevin Johnson

Before the start of their game against Jensen Beach on March 6, Seminoles on the Okeechobee High School varsity softball team gather next a sign showing support for injured teammate JoJo Nunez. From left to right are: Amalia Estrada, Hannah Platt, Tehya Nunez, Kiera Snell, Daliyah Nunez, Melaine Bonilla, Dyani Kayda, Kulipa Julian, Charisma Micco and Cherish Micco.

Okeechobee softball shows strong support for JoJo Nunez

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

OKEECHOBEE — The Okeechobee High School varsity softball team, which has several Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal members, is playing with heavy hearts this season.

Their friend and teammate Joleyne Nunez, a tribal member affectionately known as “JoJo”, was seriously injured in a 4-wheeler accident late last year.

As JoJo continues on her road to recovery, which has included rehabilitation at specialized hospitals in Atlanta, her presence is felt at the Brahman's field. Signs showing support for JoJo adorn a fence next to the team's dugout and in right field.

Some players, including her sister, Daliyah, wear eye black - the dark paste that athletes wear under their eyes - in the form of crosses. As the team prepared for a game against Jensen Beach on March 6 players talked to JoJo via phone.

JoJo, from the Brighton Reservation, has been a standout softball player for many years on tribal teams at NAYO and Okeechobee travel teams. She's in the Class of 2027 at OHS and has been a Brahman softball player since her freshman year. She comes from a big softball family. She and Daliyah grew up watching their older sister, Cheyenne, play for OHS and go on to become one of the few Seminoles to ever

play at the NCAA Division I level in any sport. Cheyenne is currently an assistant coach at the New College of Florida in Sarasota.

Guided by head coach Danny Bonilla and assistant coach Lois Kayda, Okeechobee is in the midst of a decent season with a 6-7 record. The Brahman's signature win so far was probably an 11-7 victory against Fort Meade on March 14. Melaine Bonilla had two hits and scored one run, Kiera Snell had one hit and three RBIs, and Charisma Micco scored three runs.

A few of Okeechobee's losses have been close, including a 4-2 setback to Jensen Beach. Seminoles had big nights at the plate, led by Bonilla with two hits (double), an RBI and run scored. Micco (triple) and Kierra Snell each had two hits; Dyani Kayda had one hit.

Micco shined in the circle, too. She fanned a season-high 11 batters and allowed no earned runs.

After starting at Moore Haven in softball and basketball, the Micco sisters — Charisma and Cherish shifted to OHS this spring. Charisma has established herself as one of the area's top pitchers. She has a 1.60 ERA with 53 strikeouts in 59 innings.

Okeechobee entered April with eight games left in its regular season.



Kevin Johnson

A large get well banner is displayed next to the Okeechobee dugout for JoJo Nunez.



Kevin Johnson

Brahmans cheer from the dugout.



Kevin Johnson

Daliyah Nunez, younger sister of JoJo, wears eye black in the form of a cross.



Kevin Johnson

Kiera Snell belts a basehit against Jensen Beach.



Kevin Johnson

OHS pitcher Charisma Micco warms up in the top of the first inning in the Brahman's game against Jensen Beach March 6.

8th grade baseball players honored by PECS

BRIGHTON — It was a quick season for the Pemaeviv Emahakv Charter School baseball team - just six scheduled games - but the Seminoles found time to honor their eighth graders, who will be moving on to high school this fall.



From left to right, PECS eighth graders Braylen Hunsinger, Teo Estrada, Damahni Bonilla and Chance Madrigal receive gifts March 11 on eighth grade night.



From left to right, Jennifer Osceola (mom), Miguel Estrada, Amalia Estrada, Manny Estrada, Teo Estrada, Mr. Estrada (dad).



From left to right, Malielle Bonilla, Melanie Jones Bonilla (mom), Damahni Bonilla, Danny Bonilla (dad).



From left to right, John Madrigal (dad), Chance Madrigal, Mahala Madrigal (mom), Milaleah Madrigal.



Braylen Hunsinger with his aunt, Salina Dorgan.

◆ OB3 From page 1A

Osceola comes from an athletic family, which includes his grandfather, OB Sr., who set several records as a star left-handed pitcher at Everglades City High School, and his dad, OB Jr., who played baseball and basketball at Neumann before finishing his high school career at Evangelical Christian School in Fort Myers. Osceola said seeing his grandfather at the signing ceremony is a memory he'll never forget.

"Just trying to follow in his footsteps," Osceola said. "He never got the chance [that] I have. I'm just glad on all fronts to represent myself, my tribe, and most importantly, my family."

Osceola verbally committed to FSU way back in May 2023 when he was a 6-foot-1, 170-pound freshman at Community School of Naples. After spending years playing travel ball throughout Florida and beyond, and countless showcases, including Perfect Game, making that early commitment helped provide a smooth path the rest of the way, his father said.

"It's been a blessing," said OB Osceola Jr. "He has maintained his academics and worked hard. By committing in ninth grade,

he alleviated the pressure, which let him focus on his academics and baseball. He's done a good job balancing all that. Hard work usually has a good, end result."

Next season Osceola will join an FSU program that is compiling an impressive season this year. Ranked No. 7 nationally, FSU enters April with a 21-6 record.

"The coaching staff is the top in the country," Osceola said. "Head coach Link Jarrett... knows what he wants to do and the guys he wants to bring in and ultimately win a national championship. I have a great relationship with pitching coach Micah Posey. He's had an abundance of great pitchers. He's known as one of the best pitching coaches in NCAA baseball."

Osceola said he also likes the way the university handles its relationship with the tribe. He opted to wear the turquoise jacket because of what it represents.

"I got the jacket at Florida State at one of the baseball games. It represents the heritage colors, which Florida State showcases pretty well. That's something they do that's really cool, with the heritage, is that they show the colors and they have all the gear and all the stuff, I think is a really good thing to do," Osceola said.

Before OB3 heads to Tallahassee, he still has his senior season to finish at Neumann.

His pitching was limited last season due to a back injury. This year, he's back on the mound full time. He's one of nine seniors on the roster.

"We're all faith-based driven. Good group of guys. Hopefully, we make a good state run this year," Osceola said.

Osceola is adding to a growing group of tribal members who play sports at FSU, which includes Zae Thomas (football), Xavier Osceola (basketball) and Kenna Martinez (wrestling club).

"We've got the three major sports covered," said Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, a close friend of the family who attended the events in Naples and Hollywood. "It just shows you how far the tribe has come and how much our kids have come and grown. To watch all these kids grow up and watch their dreams come true, it just blows my mind. I couldn't be more proud of these kids. They represent the Seminole Tribe, so they have not only their families rooting and supporting them, but the whole tribe is family, and I think they know that and they understand that, and I think they represent us very well."



St. John Neumann pitcher and FSU-bound OB Osceola III is joined by family and friends at the school's signing ceremony for student-athletes March 25 in Naples. From left to right are Brody Osceola, Joanne Osceola, Bryce Osceola, OB Osceola III, OB Osceola Sr. (seated), OB Osceola Jr., Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, Tina Osceola, Kevin Nelmes, Caden de Jesus and Brett de Jesus.



OB Osceola III does the FSU tomahawk chop with his dad, OB Jr., left, in Naples, and with Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, right, in Hollywood.



Above, OB Osceola III pitches against North Broward Prep on March 12. At right, he is flanked by two specially designed guitars at The Guitar Hotel March 25.

Ahfachkee students have a field day

BIG CYPRESS — Here are the results from the Ahfachkee School's field day running competition Feb. 13 on the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena grounds.

100M GIRLS FINALS MIDDLE SCHOOL

- 1st Ollie Balentine - 7th Grade
- 2nd Aspen Clark - 6th Grade
- 3rd Sky Ortega - Billie - 8th Grade

100M BOYS FINALS MIDDLE SCHOOL

- 1st Tito Orozco
- 2nd Koda Osceola
- 3rd Zackeus Jumper-Garcia

100M GIRLS FINAL HIGH SCHOOL

- 1st Ada Bruised Head - 9th Grade
- 2nd Siya Osceola
- 3rd Lena Cypress

100M BOYS FINAL HIGH SCHOOL

- 1st Joshua Billie
- 2nd Chance Frye
- 3rd Taven Edwards

200M GIRLS FINAL MS

- 1st Vivi Osceola
- 2nd Aubriana Billie
- 3rd Aspen Clark

200M GIRLS FINAL HS

- 1st Ada Bruised Head
- 2nd Curmya Smith
- 3rd Sky Ortega-Billie

200M BOYS FINAL MS

- 1st Micheal Williams
- 2nd Koda Osceola
- 3rd Derek Pray

200M BOYS FINAL HS

- 1st Chance Frye
- 2nd Joshua Billie
- 3rd Christopher Smith

MS MIXED RELAYS

- 1st Aubriana Billie, Lazarus Robbins, Ollie Balentine, Micheal Williams

HS MIXED RELAYS

- 1st Ada Bruised Head, Curmya Smith, Haloma Jimmie, Christopher Smith



Princeton Billie and Chance Frye sprint to the finish line.



High school mixed relay winners Ada Bruised Head, Aloma Jimmie, Curmya Smith, Christopher Smith.



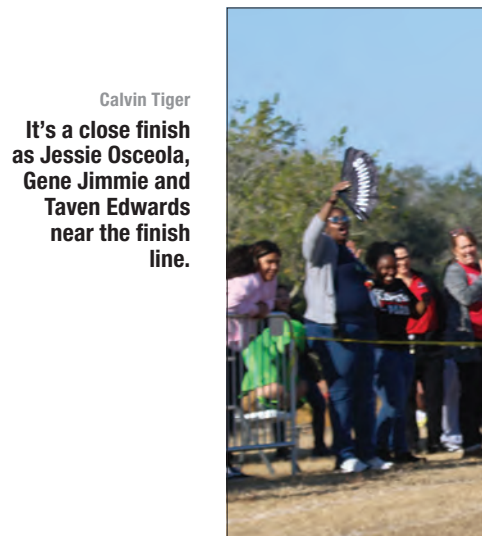
High school girls 200M winners top finishers.



Aspen Clark, Abigail Billie and Vivi Osceola compete in a close race.



Middle school relay winners: Aubriana Billie, Lazarus Robbins, Ollie Balentine, Micheal Williams



It's a close finish as Jessie Osceola, Gene Jimmie and Taven Edwards near the finish line.



Farewell field: Hollywood gets ready for new field



Budha Jumper gets ready to make contact in the softball game March 7.



Pitcher Leon Wilcox eyes the strike zone.



Above, Kylen Osceola, and below, Zaedyn Bell, participate in activities during the 'Last Hurrah' event at Osceola Park.



Jerome Davis scores a run.



STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Billed as the "Last Hurrah," a day full of softball, activities and food was held March 7 at the Osceola Park ball field on the Hollywood Reservation.

The site is scheduled to undergo major renovations, including the installation of new fields, starting in early April. So, before construction began, softball games and other activities were held as a final chance to play at the 'old ball park.'



Daenerys Billie sprints along the baseline during an activity for kids.

TRIBAL MEMBERS ONLY

ROYAL Auction Group

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA VIRTUAL AUCTION

Contact Fleet Services: 954-967-3480 or fleetservices@semtribe.com

Pickleball match at Hard Rock to feature Andre Agassi

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Eight-time major winner Andre Agassi will headline the pickleball showdown Slam 4 on April 15 at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood.

Agassi will be joined by fellow retired former tennis greats James Blake and Genie Bouchard, and 19-year-old professional pickleball star Anna Leigh Waters.

This is the fourth installment of the Slam series at Hard Rock; Agassi has been a winner in all.

"I've enjoyed the challenge of competing in a new sport and am proud of

winning three Pickleball Slams in a row," Agassi said in a press release. "I'm excited to partner with James and ready to defend my title against Anna Leigh and Genie."

"Many people still think the top women's players couldn't beat the top men's players in any racket sport. We are ready to prove them wrong," Waters said.

Pickleball, sort of a mini version of regular tennis, has been the fastest growing sport in the United States, according to several studies and reports. USA Pickleball has more than 100,000 members. More than 14,000 new pickleball courts were added in 2024, according to the organization.

"After three highly rated and successful

Pickleball Slam events which showcased legendary tennis players, I have been consistently asked when the best pickleball players will take part in our franchise. In Slam 4, viewers will get the long-awaited answer to which racquet sports athletes reign supreme," said David Levy, co-CEO and founder, Horizon Sports & Experiences. "The Pickleball Slam is the sport's crown jewel and its most prominent platform for brand and consumer engagement, capitalizing on the undeniable interest in the country's fastest growing sport."

For ticket information, go to casino.hardrock.com/hollywood.



Begay Pro Am raises money for Native youth

FROM PRESS RELEASE

CHANDLER, Ariz. — The inaugural Notah Begay III Pro Am Invitational was held Feb. 24 and 25 at Whirlwind Golf Club on the Gila River Indian Reservation in Arizona. Twelve teams, each made up of one PGA member professional and four amateurs, competed for daily cash payouts during the two day event.

The event raised more than \$10,000 to support NB3 Foundation youth programs and youth in the Gila River community. Organizers and partners expressed excitement about growing the event in both participation and locations in the future.

The tournament was produced by Elite Golf Experiences, a group of golf and entertainment professionals based in Orlando, Florida. Participants stayed at Wild Horse Pass Resort and were welcomed by Governor Lewis during the opening dinner, setting the tone for a memorable and meaningful event.

Clint Begay and Cyanne Lujan attended the Pro Am and represented the NB3 Foundation, sharing information about the organization's work in Native communities and with Native youth.

Notah Begay, 53, is a 4-time PGA Tour winner and golf analyst on NBC and The Golf Channel.

OHS football coach steps down

STAFF REPORT

BJ Pryor announced in March that he has resigned as head coach of the Okeechobee High School football team.

In an email sent to local media March 9, Pryor said he would step down at the end of this academic year, citing family reasons. Pryor said he and his wife are moving to Wisconsin to be closer to their son and daughter-in-law.

"This was not an easy decision for me and my family," Pryor said. "As some of you know we lost our daughter in 2017 and now my only child, our son Jake and his wife Amber, want us to move closer to them because they are going to start a family.

With more than two dozen years of football coaching experience across several states, Pryor was hired to lead the Brahms in April 2022. The team's best season under Pryor came in 2023 with a 6-4 record, by far the program's best since 2016. The Brahms went 3-7 last fall.

During his tenure at OHS, Pryor was very active in the community, promoting his program and the accomplishments of his players, and increasing awareness to the public about game nights as he tried to grow support.

"We are truly blessed by all of the people in the Okeechobee community and will be forever grateful for our time we lived here," he said. "We will always appreciate the love support from everyone."

A replacement for Pryor had not been announced as of press time.

World Cup comes to Hard Rock Stadium

STAFF REPORT

The world's biggest sporting event will be at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens in June and July.

Seven World Cup soccer matches are scheduled to be held at the stadium. Here's the slate:

- June 15: Saudia Arabia vs Uruguay, 6 p.m.
- June 21: Uruguay vs Cape Verde, 6 p.m.
- June 24: Brazil vs Scotland, 6 p.m.
- June 27: Portugal vs Colombia, 6 p.m.
- July 3: round of 32, 6 p.m.
- July 11: quarterfinal 5 p.m.
- July 18: bronze medal game, 5 p.m.

World Cup games will be spread out across the U.S., Canada and Mexico. For more information, including tickets, go to hardrockstadium.com.



HIT THE ROAD TO BIG SAVINGS DURING OUR 80TH ANNIVERSARY!








4 ICONIC BRANDS, 3 ROOFTOPS, AND OVER 800 VEHICLES WAITING FOR YOU! YOU'RE ALWAYS BACKED BY MORSE! - YOUR LOCAL TRIBE DEALER

**EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNT
FOR TRIBE MEMBERS ONLY!**
RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL

**\$750 OFF
YOUR BEST DEAL**

AVAILABLE TO TRIBE MEMBERS ONLY. MUST PRESENT COUPON UPON ARRIVAL. ONE COUPON PER TRANSACTION. EXCLUDES PRIOR SALES. VALID ONLY AT ED MORSE SAWGRASS AUTOMALL. SOME RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY. MAY NOT COMBINE WITH OTHER OFFERS. SEE DEALER FOR DETAILS. EXPIRES MONTH END.

**NOW OFFERING SAME DAY
SERVICE APPOINTMENTS!**
BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT ONLINE






14401 W. SUNRISE BLVD., SUNRISE, FL 33323 | 754-704-4071
EDMORSESAWGRASS.COM

4-H kids shine with successful show and sale

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — A proud group of 152 Seminole 4-H kids showed off the fruits of their labor in the show ring at the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena in Brighton March 12 and 13. They sold the animals at the sale held on March 14.

The 4-H'ers presented animals as small as a hamster and as large as a 1,500-pound steer in the ring as a crowd of well-wishing family and friends cheered them on. The kids had been caring for and working with the animals for months; they received cattle last summer and piglets in the fall.

During the months leading up to the show, the youngsters were responsible for feeding, washing and walking the animals daily. They also trained them to walk in the ring by obeying commands conveyed by a walking stick for the swine and a lead rope for the heifers and steers.

One of the objectives of 4-H is to teach the business of raising and selling livestock. To that end, the 4-H'ers kept an accounting of how much money they spent on feed and other necessities for the animals.

Over the two nights of the show, the Pee Wee Club, ages 5-7, showed 22 small animals including a hamster, reptiles, rabbits, goats and calves while the older 4-H'ers showed 143 hogs, steers, heifers and cow/calf pairs.

"We want everyone to do the best they can do," said 4-H program coordinator Jonathan Spurlock. "It's been a long seven months to get here."

The kids took center stage and led their animals around the ring as a judge scrutinized each animal before choosing the winners in each group.

Harmony Urbina, 16, joined the Pee Wee group of 4-H when she was 4-years-old; this was her fourth year showing a heifer.



Beverly Bidney

Kylo Cochran leads his heifer around the show ring during the 4-H cattle show March 13.

She also had a steer and a cow/calf pair in the show. She said selling the steer will help pay for next year's animal and the feed bills.

"I enjoy the competition and getting to meet everybody out here, it's fun," Urbina said. "But breaking the calves and making them trainable is hard."

Urbina has already raised eight calves and is building her own herd, which she keeps in her grandfather Norman Johns' Brighton pasture. A junior at Moore Haven

Middle High School, Urbina plans to attend the University of Florida to study agricultural science and then come back and help the tribe.

Gus Jumper, 15, showed his third steer in the ring.

"It was pretty easy, but there were a few challenges," Jumper said. "Working with him was kind of easy; he likes to walk. He is going to bring some good money."

Winners in the Seminole Tribe of Florida Youth Livestock Show and Sale

Hogs

Overall Champion Market Hog- Cassie Pearce (295 lbs.)
Overall Reserve Champion Market Hog- Tyse Osceola (297 lbs.)

Swine Showmanship

Junior Showmanship, ages 8-10- Arlo Jackson
Intermediate Showmanship, ages 11-13- Amariah Lavatta
Senior Showmanship, ages 14-18- Jayleigh Braswell

Steer

Grand Champion Market Steer- Lavin Billie (1,260 lbs.)
Reserve Grand Champion Market Steer - J'La Billie (1,220 lbs.)

Heifers

Champion Registered Heifer- Aponi Cochran
Reserve Champion Registered Heifer- Leona Cochran

Champion Registered Bred Heifer- Harmony Urbina
Reserve Champion Registered Bred Heifer- Khoal Chochran

Champion Registered Cow/Calf Pair- Arrow Johns

Grand Champion Registered Heifer- Aponi Cochran
Reserve Grand Champion Registered Heifer- Arrow Johns

Champion Commercial Cow/Calf Pair- Jayleigh Braswell
Reserve Champion Commercial Cow/Calf Pair- Harmony Urbina

Grand Champion Commercial Heifer- Ailynn Tommie-Smith
Reserve Grand Champion Commercial Heifer- Kylo Cochran

Steer Showmanship

Junior Showmanship, ages 8-10- Jhericko Baker
Intermediate Showmanship, ages 11-13- Iverson Huggins
Senior Showmanship, ages 14-18- Ada Bruised Head



Beverly Bidney

Arrow Johns shows her heifer at the Youth Livestock Show in Brighton.



Beverly Bidney

A group of 4-H'ers wait with their heifers as a judge assesses the animals.



Beverly Bidney

Harmony Urbina shows her heifer in the ring in the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena at the 4-H livestock show in Brighton.



Beverly Bidney

The show ring in the rodeo arena is busy as kids lead their animals past the judge while family and friends watch the show.