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Voice of the Unconquered

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Hard Rock fans get sneak peek of proposed Virginia project

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Hard Rock ventures are underway across the globe, even as the hospitality industry has faced new challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hard Rock International unveiled one of its latest partnerships in mid-September with a public viewing of a 3D model for its proposed Bristol, Virginia, hotel and casino project that would mark the first such project in the state.

The new Hard Rock hotel and casino would be located at the site of the former Bristol Mall – located at 500 Gate City Highway – if voters approve a local referendum on the Nov. 3 ballot.

The Virginia General Assembly and the Bristol City Council had previously authorized to give voters the decision on approval of the project during this year's general election.

Bristol is the twin city of Bristol, Tennessee – just across the state line. It has been nicknamed the "birthplace of country music."

✦ See HARD ROCK on page 6A

Seminole Tribe key partner on 'immense' Fort King project

Big plans for National Historic Landmark in Ocala

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Many historians have presented an inaccurate version of Seminole history – sometimes intentionally, sometimes not. That is, if there was an effort to tell the history in the first place.

In addition, the histories of the 19th century that involve the U.S. government are often lopsided and paint Seminoles in an unflattering light.

But a project moving forward at Fort King in northeast Ocala is looking to change those narratives and deliver something accurate.

The 42-acre site, which is also a National Historic Landmark, is set to undergo a $14.7 million transformation after a 15-year master plan was recently approved by the city of Ocala and Marion County.

It's not just the scope and dollar amount that's significant; it's also that the Seminole Tribe has been engaged in the process from the start.

The plan consists of two major parts: the development and construction of a museum and education center and the reconstruction of the entire Fort King complex – including archaeological and archival research work.

"The end goal is to provide a park that is not just passive in its education but immersive as well," the 40-page master plan states. "[It] sets the course for interpreting the most accurate version of Seminole War history …"

Paul Backhouse, the senior director of the Seminole Tribe's Heritage and Environmental Resource Office, said the partners on the Fort King project have been clear about their intentions.

✦ See FORT KING on page 4A

Courtesy Keifer Calkins

Fort King will be home to an education center and museum, set to be completed in the next five years.

Courtesy Keifer Calkins

Seminoles, including Daniel Tommie, have participated in Seminole War reenactments at Fort King in Ocala. The fort is scheduled to undergo a major development and reconstruction project.

Tribal member Allen Colon earns promotion to SPD lieutenant

He's also previously served the Tribe as sergeant, patrol officer and community service aide

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Allen Colon's ascension through the ranks of the Seminole Police Department continued Aug. 17 when he earned a promotion to the rank of lieutenant.

The Seminole Tribal member, whose aspirations to be a police officer extend back to his teen years, has excelled in a variety of roles during his nearly 15 years of service with SPD. All along the way – first as a community service aide, then as a patrol officer and more recently as a sergeant – he's earned respect.

"He identifies with Tribal members and police officers," Seminole Police Chief John Auer said. "It's rare that people understand both. He never loses that insight."

As a Seminole, Colon, 53, has a unique perspective on his chosen profession.

"I have a better understanding of the community," he said. "It isn't the easiest job being a Tribal member because you are looking at both sides. Sometimes that makes it difficult, but we get through it. Knowing the language and growing up in the culture is a good tool to have."

As a lieutenant, Colon is the reservation commander for Big Cypress. His new responsibilities include daily police operations, initial response deployment, follow ups, complaints, education, making sure staff is equipped and trained, maintain discipline and interact with the community. He is one of five reservation commanders; the others are in Brighton, Hollywood, Immokalee and Tampa.

A self-described "old school" person, Colon has worked since his youth and has earned everything he has. As a way to give back to the Tribe, he decided to pursue a career in law enforcement with SPD.

In 2006, Colon saw his opportunity and planned to join the SPD's neighborhood watch program. When it turned out that he was the only applicant for the program, he was instead offered a job as a community service aide. That led to him attending and graduating from the Fort Myers Police academy in June 2007. He served as an SPD patrol officer until 2016 when he was promoted to sergeant.

"I love being on the road," Colon said. "You get to interact with the community and tourists, anyone and everyone who comes through the reservation. I like working with people and helping the community. I want to be a person you can count on."

Auer saw something unique about Colon. He is one of only a handful of tribal members who have been sworn SPD officers over the years.

"At a certain point in his career, I saw he started to take an interest in preserving the Tribe," Auer said. "He got to see from an officer's standpoint some of the issues that affect the Tribe. By his questions, he was taking more responsibility. He is committed to the betterment of the Tribe."

As a sergeant, Colon interacted with the community and supervised officers.

"I liked taking care of them as much as taking care of the public," he said. "Being a lieutenant is completely different than being a sergeant; there is more responsibility and administrative work."

Colon spent about 12 weeks at SPD headquarters in a mentoring program, where he worked with William Latchford, executive director of public safety, Auer and Kevin Tyrie, assistant chief of police. While there, Colon learned how every department within SPD works and learned there was a lot more he didn't know.

"I know I have a lot to learn," he said. "But I will do my best and take care of whatever comes up. The buck stops here in my office. It's a lot of responsibility and I won't take it lightly."

Police officers are among the first responders who are on the front lines of the pandemic. Auer saw how concerned Colon was for his officers and their possible exposure to Covid-19.

"He was looking out for his officers," Auer said. "Public safety is never convenient and he understands that."

Auer believes the decision to promote Colon was the right one as he watched him rise to the top.

Courtesy photo

Allen Colon has been promoted to lieutenant at the Seminole Police Department.

"He has a thirst for information that most people don't have," Auer said. "He did all the right things and asked all the right questions. Because of his unique perspective and the ability to see the job from that perspective, he is invaluable to the Tribe. He was a logical and excellent choice and a perfect fit for the community."

Senators: Give tribes more access to CARES Act funds

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Even as some states continue to emerge from various Covid-19 restrictions, the ongoing hit to the service, tourism and hospitality industries remains profound.

Those impacts are especially felt among tribal enterprises within Indian Country – many of which rely heavily on those sectors to fund government operations, programs and services.

Because the situation is still a bleak one, a bipartisan group of lawmakers in Washington, D.C., has issued a call for an increase in access for tribal governments to two specific lending programs that were created under the CARES Act.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, is a $2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill that was passed in March. A second stimulus bill has been stalled in Congress for months.

The group of lawmakers calling for the greater lending access for tribes consist of four senators: Tom Udall, D-NM, vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; John Hoeven, R-ND, chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, ranking member of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; and Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs.

The senators sent a letter Sept. 16 to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Jerome Powell, encouraging them to take action on behalf of tribes.

"Tribes and tribally-owned businesses from across Indian Country have been severely impacted by the economic strains brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic," the letter reads. "These businesses, from hotels, conference centers, restaurants, and entertainment venues to gas stations and shopping malls, are some of the biggest employers and income generators for tribal and nearby non-tribal communities."

✦ See CARES ACT on page 3A

INSIDE:

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Editorial

During this time of change, it's essential Natives have a voice

• Tiger Morales

My name is Tiger Morales. I am a soon-to-be a 17-year-old Tribal member. My father and I created a large mural that Indigenous Lives Matter. That fact seems to be forgotten among the general U.S. population.

Let me make myself clear – All Lives Matter: Black lives, Asian lives, LGBTQ+ lives matter. All minority lives do, but Indigenous people seem to be forgotten even though we are the ones native to this country. Our democracy, our way of life – we've been generalized into the Plains Indian tribes like my father's tribe. For years we have been fighting back against negative stereotypes such as the drunken Indian, the savage Indian and the drug addicts. We do not get positive press or portrayal, except from our own people.

You don't hear about the Natives striving to be doctors, lawyers or CEOs. You only hear the negative. If a police officer kills an Indigenous man or woman, you hear they were a junkie or addict, or they did not comply, if you hear anything at all. Throughout this country's history, Indigenous peoples' problems have been put on the back burner by the U.S. government and the main stream media. Indigenous people are reduced to a war bonnet, a piece of clothing or jewelry, or a trendy piece of art work for someone's living room. We have no representation. We are too often depicted as addicts of difference vices. The over 1,000 treaties made with the U.S government are too ignored or forgotten, or have been broken.

In this time of change and hopeful growth, it is essential for us to have a voice and have that voice be heard. In words of youth and innocence, we need to set aside our differences of what tribe we belong to, our class status and our traditions so we can come together as Indigenous people that are sick and tired of not being heard. Not through violence or harming others, but peacefully and diplomatically. I hope that our mural is seen as a catalyst for change and a step in the right direction so that our words mean something and are heard.

Seminole Tribal member Tiger Morales, son of John Morales and Jo-Lin Osceola, recently earned his high school diploma at age 16. He attended Poplar High School in Montana.

Courtesy photos

Tiger Morales hopes a large mural he painted in his backyard in Poplar, Montana, which reads 'Indigenous Lives Matter,' helps spark change in several areas, including how Native Americans are perceived.

We can all win with a casino in Bristol

• Kingsport (Tenn.) Times News Editorial Board

Residents of the Virginia side of Bristol will have an opportunity in November to approve what could be the community's saving grace and the most significant development in this region's history, offering more jobs than were initially created by the Pinnacle development on the Tennessee side.

Bristol, Va., has been in financial difficulty for years. It opened a new landfill in an abandoned rock quarry, but the limestone walls were porous, and to prevent dangerous chemicals from seeping out, the city had to buy a new lining roughly every two years, which eventually led to some $30 million in debt. At the same time, the city's tax base eroded as the coal industry collapsed and a major employer moved to Mexico.

The city then borrowed more than $50 million to build a retail development along Interstate 81 at Exit 5, banking on its future financial success to pay for the construction of The Falls. But the project faced setbacks including a major retailer closing its doors. Then came Steve Johnson, and we all know that story.

However, two Virginia businessmen, Jim McGlothlin and Clyde Stacy, began a movement to bring casino gambling to the city, partnering with Hard Rock International, owned by the Seminole Tribe in Florida. The Pinnacle was a $200 million project that created 2,000 jobs. The proposed casino resort at the vacant Bristol Mall is billed as a $300 million project that will create more than 3,000 jobs.

"Hard Rock will operate the hotel and casino," said United Company President and Chief Operating Officer Martin Kent. He serves on a "Vote Yes for Bristol" referendum committee along with McGlothlin, chairman and CEO of United, and Stacy, president of Par Ventures.

"There will be connectivity with their other resorts here in the U.S. and abroad, so we will have truly international reach," Kent pointed out. "Bristol will be given the opportunity to draw from a large pool of highly sought-after performers. ... We expect restaurants and a shopping experience. People are going to come here and stay and play and participate in many attractions as well."

Projections have the casino project feeding Bristol, Va., up to $20 million in new revenue annually, taking the city off the state's distressed community list. More than that, it could attract more than four million tourists annually.

It's up to Bristol voters to approve the referendum, but the entire Appalachian Highlands will benefit from the project, should it come to pass. That's the kind of win we can all support.

Native Americans still overlooked in debates

• Dawn Custalow

The 1619 Project is gaining more traction in the media since its unveiling last year in the New York Times magazine. Its premise, "to reframe American history by regarding 1619 as our nation's birth year." The question is "What would it mean not to seek a 'new' history for our country but to acknowledge the already existing history pre-1619?"

Why is there talk of reframing history for this country? If anyone has the right to do so it would be the Native Americans of the East Coast of Virginia. The formal beginning of the unborn United States occurred with the establishing of the first colony, Jamestown, in 1607. This area was the home of the Algonquian Native Americans of the Powhatan confederacy. It would be 12 years later before the arrival of the first ships carrying enslaved Africans that docked in Point Comfort. How then is it that The 1619 Project aims to reframe history with claims that the American nation began in 1619?

Virginia Indians told stories of settlers who would not have survived without their help during the long brutal winter of 1609-10. The natives, including the powerful family confederation of Powhatan and Pocahontas, taught the colonists how to plant food and even traded with them during the initial years of their relationship. The colonists survived and founded Virginia democracy with the original governmental template still as the foundation of the Virginia House of Delegates today.

Obviously, there was history in Virginia before the arrival of the ships at Point Comfort. I know this history because it is my history as well. I am a direct descendant of Pocahontas, a Mattaponi Indian. My tribe, through its oral traditions, knows the demise of own cultural ways that were once strong during the Powhatan and Pocahontas era. In fact, Eastern Native Americans' history has served as a harbinger of what was to come for our Western tribal brothers and sisters in the loss of their lands and culture some 200 years later.

Yet, in the midst of the loss of a lifestyle of the Native Americans in Virginia, my people endured well through injustices. My father was refused entrance as a student in the white high school near our reservation. However, he was also refused at the local Black high school. He and his brother would board a train bound to Indian territory in Oklahoma to finish out their education. Perseverance prevailed and they both went on to university.

U.S. history shows clearly that two people groups were subjugated at the beginning of this nation's history and this subjugating was a grave wounding. But wounds cannot be used to reframe history. Wounds are not healed in changing a storyline. The only narrative open to creating is the one that is in the present.

To propose that 1619 was the beginning of this nation denies the recognition of the Powhatans and their present-day descendants who continue to live on and outside of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Indian reservations today. How can any group of people reframe another's history when the descendants of the original people are still alive and can testify to the validity of their history? As Virginia and American Indians, we honor our history. It is sacred — it cannot be changed. If we attempt to change history, then identity, memories and interpreting our present events become clouded, if not obsolete.

Native Americans want to see our history preserved, not altered, as it already has been over the 400 plus years from the first European settlers' landing. If the idea that U.S. history began in 1619 is accepted, then my people's collective memory is blotted out forever. With all due respect, no matter how painful it was for the Africans who came in 1619 and for their descendants today, history itself cannot be changed to accommodate another narrative.

No group, whether cultural, historical or political should be granted a pen to reframe history. Reframing does not erase the wounds that ultimately must be dealt with. The telling of true historical facts helps us all pass down a legacy to our children that history is theirs to make, but never to recreate — no matter how appealing and desired the story might be.

Dawn Custalow, an English language learner teacher who lives in Roanoke, Virginia, is a tribal member of the Mattaponi Tribe whose reservation is located in West Point. This opinion article appears on the Virginia-Pilot's website pilotonline.com.

Finding solutions to bring connectivity to Alaska, Indian Country

• Tara Katuk Sweeney

As an Inupiaq, I grew up north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska, home to some of the most remote communities in the United States. Arctic living requires resourcefulness, respect for nature, and, most importantly, strong connections to community members. You can't make it on your own, and like all tribal communities, social connectivity and kinship are critical to survival.

Connectivity has taken on a new, important layer of meaning today: broadband.

Broadband internet now serves as a vital pillar of social infrastructure; quality broadband is necessary for education, health, commerce, and cultural retention and revitalization. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical need for accessible and reliable broadband connectivity, especially for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.

Native people in Alaska and across Indian Country face significant challenges with accessibility to broadband when compared to non-tribal populations. Overall, broadband deployment across tribal areas lags 25 percent behind urban areas and an average of five points behind non-Tribal rural areas.

The Trump Administration has worked to carve out a long-term broadband policy focus, including accessible broadband for Bureau of Indian Education students. Recently, Indian Affairs installed broadband on 25 BIE buses to promote learning and help with homework on bus rides that can be hours-long for many students.

Indian Affairs also awarded the first National Tribal Broadband Grant to 25 tribes in August 2020. This grant facilitates the funding of feasibility studies for tribes to determine the best path forward for broadband deployment.

The Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai, NTIA leadership and other federal partners have opened their doors to Indian Affairs for collaborative problem-solving.

Indian Affairs recently offered several tribes technical assistance on their applications to the FCC Tribal Priority Window for the 2.5 GHz spectrum, which allows tribes to bid on available 2.5 GHz spectrum. At the request of the tribes, Indian Affairs successfully advocated for FCC to extend the priority window deadline by 30 days to Sept. 2.

Indian Affairs strives to honor tribal treaty rights and live up to the federal trust responsibility. We seek to develop initiatives informed and guided by tribal leadership and invite private sector participation to amplify fresh ideas and highlight new sources of capital. Closing the broadband gap in Indian Country requires collaboration from and between government and industry.

✦ See CONNECTIVITY on page 6B

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Community

Seminole Indian 4-H perseveres through the pandemic

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost every facet of life, and the Seminole Indian 4-H program is no exception.

The 2020-21 4-H year has begun and it is like no other before it. The kids will tend to their livestock face-to-face, but everything else will likely be done virtually online.

With the "Safer at Home" order in place until further notice, the 4-H kids will not attend meetings in person. Instead they will gather in front of their computers, tablets or cell phone screens to connect with their peers and 4-H leaders.

Even with the pandemic in full force, 47 4-H'ers joined the cattle program, including 10 in the three-year heifer program for the first time. Kids received their animals during calf shipping in July.

"We are very pleased with the steer and heifer numbers," said Aaron Stam, Florida cooperative extension agent and 4-H leader. "Having 10 first-year heifers means they will come back as second- and third-year kids. The heifer program trains for future cattlemen and women."

Stam said 4-H plans to have an in-person show and sale on March 26 and 27, 2021, but they are developing a contingency plan in case it needs to be held online.

The 4-H staff has been busy making sure the facilities in Big Cypress, Brighton and Hollywood are ready to go. Kids will get hogs in late November or early December. The goal is to have 100 kids in the hog program.

To attract kids' interest, 4-H has been communicating on Facebook, emails and texts. The results have been positive so far.

"We talk about the values of the program and have 4-H alumni help," Stam said. "We are doing what we should do; be a positive youth development organization."

Although the club had to adjust to the stay safe at home order, Stam is hopeful things will return to normal by the end of the year. If not, they will create a virtual 4-H experience. The club will comply with the safer at home edict as long as it is in effect.

"We are hearing great things about the steers and heifers," Stam said. "We have some first year kids who are having a good deal of success and having fun."

New programs for this year are a slew of University of Florida 4-H virtual clubs including dairy, horses, poultry, swine, teen life and a young leaders clubs.

"The teen life is a good curriculum for 13 to 18 year olds; it teaches 'adulting' skills," Stam said. "The young leaders club will focus on what type of leader they want to become and how they can make a positive change throughout their lifetime. It will advance their leadership and communication skills."

Stam would also like to recruit Tribal elders and cattle owners to speak to the kids in a virtual space. Ideally, he would like them to speak about the history of the Seminole cattle program.

"What makes our program unique is that we are tied directly back to the cattle program, which is part of Seminole culture," Stam said. "More kids need to understand this; we would like to start incorporating more of that into the program. If there is a silver lining in any of this, it's being able to explore some of these things."

Volunteers are an important part of 4-H and many have offered to help when they can, but 4-H is being very cautious about it during the pandemic.

"We have a great group of volunteers who are chomping at the bit to go as soon as we get the green light," Stam said.

Beverly Bidney

4-H'ers participate in the Seminole Indian 4-H show and sale in March 2019 at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena in Big Cypress.

Nearly $1M awarded to Seminole Tribe from HUD

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Native American tribes have been awarded $100 million as part of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Indian Community Development Block Grant Imminent Threat Program. The funding includes $900,000 to the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

HUD Secretary Ben Carson made the announcement Aug. 31. According to HUD, the funding "will be used to help tribes prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19."

"This $100 million investment will go a long way to help Native Americans persevere during this unprecedented time," said R. Hunter Kurtz, assistant secretary for Public and Indian Housing.

The largest amount of funds for $3 million each are for the Cook Inlet Tribal Council in Alaska, the White Mountain Apache Housing Authority in Arizona and the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma.

The $100 million is provided through the CARES Act and earmarked to support several projects on tribal lands across the U.S. including:

- Construction of new rental housing to address overcrowding and homelessness;
- Construction of water infrastructure, including water wells and water lines;
- Purchase and renovation of an old clinic facility to facilitate access to testing, diagnosis, and treatment of Tribal members; and
- The provision of emergency food supplies to geographically isolated communities.

Key diabetes program still searches for stable funding

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

The clock is ticking once again toward the expiration of funding for the Special Diabetes Program for Indians, or SDPI.

The latest in a string of short term funding appropriations expires Dec. 11.

SDPI serves more than 300 Tribal and urban Indian communities across the country, including the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Congress created it in 1997 in response to a diabetes epidemic among American Indians and Alaska Natives. The program provides funds for diabetes treatment and prevention to IHS, Tribal, and Urban Indian health programs across the U.S.

Officials say the continued short-term extensions combined with the Covid-19 pandemic has severely complicated matters.

The National Indian Health Board estimates that nearly 1 in 5 SDPI programs have experienced employee furloughs since March – the majority of those directly linked to the economic impacts of the pandemic.

In addition, NIHB estimates that roughly 1 in 4 SDPI programs have reported delaying essential purchases of medical equipment to treat and monitor diabetes due to funding uncertainty, and nearly half of all programs are experiencing or anticipating reductions in the availability of services.

On Sept. 11, the NIHB sent a letter with 17 signatories to the leaders of Congress urging a fully funded, five-year extension of the program – which encompasses a variety of other health services for Indian Country, including SDP – the Special Diabetes Program – which generally focuses on type-1 diabetes.

"In order to prevent additional interruptions in patient access to vital public health services, interruptions in medical research, and to mitigate additional threats to medical training programs and health care provider placements during a national pandemic, it is essential that Congress approve a five-year reauthorization of these key programs and consider proposed increases requested during the 116th Congress," the NIHB letter reads.

Continued strain

In just over 12 month's time, the SDPI has gone through five short-term extensions – some lasting only a few weeks.

The most recent authorization was Sept. 21 – part of a short-term budget resolution in the House of Representatives to avoid a federal government shutdown.

Stakeholders say the short term extensions put undue strains on long-term budgeting and planning and result in cuts to essential public health services for medically underserved patients; cuts to type-2 diabetes prevention, treatment, and management services; delays in research to treat, prevent, and ultimately find cures for type-1 diabetes; setbacks to provider recruitment and retention in high need areas; and even the closing of residency programs training the next generation of health care professionals.

The NIHB said in its letter that without the stability and security of a long-term reauthorization, many Community Health Centers (CHCs) would not have the resources to accommodate growing populations.

"We remind you that millions of Americans rely on these public health programs to receive their health care services, diabetes services, medical trainings, and potential cures," the letter said. "Each of these programs is integral to our national Covid-19 response efforts and for protecting the public health and safety of our communities."

Further, the letter stressed that Congress has supported SDPI and related programs in a bipartisan manner for many years.

NIHB officials said it's unclear if a long-term reauthorization can be achieved before Dec. 11, and could hinge, in part, on the outcome of the November election.

CARES ACT

From page 1A

The letter stressed that unlike other governments, tribes do not have traditional tax bases that are used to generate government revenue.

"Instead, tribes rely on their businesses to generate revenue for government operations and essential services, such as health care, public safety and social services for their communities," the senators wrote.

The specific outreach to Mnuchin and Powell is due to a provision in the CARES Act that gives the Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Board the authority to address two specific programs were created under their authority – the Main Street Lending Program (MSLP) for corporations and the Municipal Liquidity Facility (MLF) for governments.

Both programs provide relief by facilitating loans. It's access to these two programs that the lawmakers want to see expanded for tribes.

"Further, by expressly including Indian Tribes in the definition of 'States,' Congress gave Treasury broad authority to account for the unique financing needs of tribal governments and their enterprises," the letter reads.

In the letter, the bipartisan group of senators also expressed appreciation for the Department of Treasury for its previous consideration of the particular lending challenges Tribes face.

"[But] dßue to the unique nature of tribal governments and tribal enterprise debts, tribes and their businesses are unable to fully utilize the MSLP and the MLF. Accordingly, we encourage you to provide tribes and tribally-owned businesses greater access to the MSLP and MLF," the senators concluded in the letter.

As of press time, there had not been an official response to the letter from Mnuchin or Powell.

For more information, go to indian.senate.gov.

Seminole Casino and Hotel Immokalee welcomes back guests

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — After being shuttered for more than five months, the Seminole Casino and Hotel Immokalee finally welcomed its first few thousand guests on Aug. 31.

The casino and hotel closed on March 20 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Normally open 24/7, the casino's games remained silenced and hotel rooms empty until the reopening.

Immokalee was the last of the Tribe's Florida casinos to reopen. Like other Seminole casinos, Immokalee will operate at 50% capacity and adhere to the "Safe + Sound" program protocols.

More than 500 employees have returned to work. At the height of the tourist season, and during normal capacity, more than 800 work at the property.

"Managers are monitoring business levels and hiring needs and hope to bring back more team members over the next few weeks and months," said Gary Bitner, the Tribe's spokesman.

"Safe + Sound" specialists in the casino focus on managing guest compliance with the program including proper use of required masks or face coverings that meet CDC guidelines, social distancing, crowd control and remaining stationary while eating, drinking or smoking.

"We have received a lot of compliments from guests and employees that they feel safe," Jim Allen, CEO of Seminole Gaming and Chairman of Hard Rock International, said in a video released to the media. "If it looks like a hospital, that's fine with me. Safety first. The business will grow and we know eventually, over time, we will have people create some type of ability to cure or restrict the spread of this disease. It's more about creating an environment where people are safe today."

Safety measures are everywhere to be seen in the casino, as are the employees who clean them often. Plexiglass barriers are in place between each seat, the players and the dealers at table games; one slot machine is turned on for two that are turned off to give customers a safe distance from each other; hand sanitizing stations are ubiquitous and everyone gets a thermal temperature scan upon entry. Signs are posted throughout the property encouraging guests to follow the "Safe + Sound" guidelines.

The EE-TO-LEET-KE Grill and Cappucino's Coffee and Pastry Bar are open for dine in or take-out orders only. EE-TO-LEET-KE Grill is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Cappucino's is open 24 hours. Seating is limited to follow social distancing requirements. Eating and drinking are not allowed on the casino floor.

The hotel is open and taking reservations.

"Safe + Sound" program guidelines include:

- Temperature checks for all guests and team members prior to entry. Any guest or team member with a temperature above CDC guidelines of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit will not be allowed entry.
- A requirement that all guests wear masks or cloth face coverings that meet CDC guidelines, without exception. Masks will be provided to guests as needed.
- Alternating slot machines will be turned off to help ensure social distancing on the casino floor.
- New Plexiglas barriers will divide players at table games and customer service areas.

Seminole Gaming

Card tables and other gaming areas are back in action after the Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee reopened Aug. 31. The venue is following the 'Safe & Sound' program guidelines.

HARD ROCK

From page 1A

The public viewing of the model, and several pieces of country music memorabilia, gave residents and Hard Rock aficionados an opportunity to see what a finished project would look like.

In addition to the hotel and casino, the development would consist of seven restaurants, four bars, a 3,200-seat Hard Rock Live venue, a 20,000 capacity outdoor entertainment venue, a "country western nightlife experience" and a Hard Rock Cafe with a stage for local musicians.

The resort would also feature other amenities that are familiar to Hard Rock fans, including a Rock Shop and retail store, Rock Spa and Body Rock fitness center and a convention and meeting space.

HRI said memorabilia pieces at the site would include country music legends Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn, Garth Brooks, Taylor Swift, Carrie Underwood, Buck Owens and Hank Williams.

The Bristol project would also include an e-sports simulator – a form of multiplayer video game sports competition.

HRI expects the project would attract more than four million visitors annually and be an economic driver for the city and the region.

Using the formidable draw of the Hard Rock brand, officials said the draw for both residents and tourists would generate millions of dollars in new tax revenue for the city and create thousands of new jobs.

"This model is a symbol of our commitment to residents that Hard Rock is prepared to invest in Bristol and bring a world-class destination resort that will make the community proud," Sean Caffery, senior vice president of casino and business development for HRI, said in a statement. "Hard Rock is looking forward to being a part of the community, history, people and culture of Bristol."

HRI said there would be more dates announced for the public to view the 3D model and country music memorabilia at the site.

Partners on the project with HRI include the United Co. and Par Ventures.

There are Hard Rock venues in more than 70 countries. Its two most successful flagship properties are in Tampa, and in Hollywood, Florida – where the world's first Guitar Hotel opened in 2019.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida is the parent company of HRI.

More is at hardrock.com.

Courtesy Hard Rock

A 3D model of the proposed Hard Rock development in Bristol, Virginia, was recently unveiled.

FORT KING

From page 1A

"They came down to [Big Cypress] early in the project and have continued to engage the Tribe in absolutely every facet of what they are doing," Backhouse said. "I would honestly say Fort King is a model of how to work collaboratively with the Tribe."

Backhouse said Quenton Cypress, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office community engagement manager, has been consulted on the project from the beginning as well.

Osceola's spark

Fort King was considered the most important interior U.S. Army fort of its time in the first half of the 19th century. It is unique among many other sites in Florida and the U.S. because it not only represents the period associated with the Indian Removal Act, but also the resistance to it.

Led by Osceola, the Seminoles ambushed a detachment of soldiers near Tampa and Osceola killed Gen. Wiley Thompson, the U.S. agent to the Indians. The Seminoles then moved on to Ocala and waged another attack, burning down the fort.

The events are considered the spark that ignited the Second Seminole War.

Reenactments at Fort King have been held since a fort reconstruction was completed in 2017.

"We won't burn it down again," Cypress told The Seminole Tribune earlier this year at a reenactment. "The fact that the fort was rebuilt creates a more accurate reenactment that allows us to tell the full story. We're keeping a legacy going by coming up here and doing our demonstrations. We can spread our message and let people know about us."

Cypress is part of the Osceola Warrior Legacy – created by Charlie Osceola – who does demonstrations of traditional Seminole weaponry at reenactments.

Daniel Tommie, Pedro Zepeda, Tucomah Robbins and Jason Melton are also Fort King regulars, among other Tribal members.

Tommie also built a small hunting chickee on the site.

Prior to 2017, there was virtually nothing on the site, save a 1940s-era house that was used as a temporary visitor center. A working blacksmith shop, historically recreated, is currently being built and should be completed by the end of the year.

But it is the fort reconstruction that was finished in 2017 that laid the groundwork for the new projects in the master plan.

'The Seminole story'

Keifer Calkins is one of the supervisors at Fort King and a main author of the master plan. He's managed the Fort King National Historic Landmark for about five years.

"We worked very much as a team on the city side to make sure the goals are implemented and make sure we're doing it correctly," he said. "The project is immense."

The site is also uncommon, Calkins said, because it has avoided private development over the years – unlike some sites in the Tampa area, for example, that have seen intrusive commercial projects.

The Fort King site is now insulated from such activity thanks to the city and county's approval of the master plan.

"It's very rare to have a fort site that hasn't been developed in an urban interface area," Calkins said. "It is a rare opportunity to reconstruct the whole fort complex."

It was Calkins and Bill Rodriguez, head of Ocala's parks division, who reached out to the Tribe early on about how the Seminole story should be told.

"We don't think it's our place to tell their story," Calkins said. "We don't want to control that narrative. In the plan, it's very clear that the Seminole narrative should be spoken by the Seminole Tribe."

The approval of the master plan also serves as the green light to begin raising funds.

Calkins said there's no exact timeline for the groundbreaking of the 21,000-square-foot education center and museum, but both are expected to be completed by 2025. He said he's especially excited about that part of the project because it's where the Tribe will really come into the picture.

"There's a perception in some museum institutions and displays where they talk about Indigenous communities as if they've passed," he said. "It's our goal to talk about history and also about how Seminoles are alive and well. We really want this place to be one that tells the Seminole story and educates people about the Seminole Tribe in general."

The plan is expected to soon receive a final approval by the state.

"We want to make sure we are telling 100 percent of the story," Rodriguez recently told the Ocala Gazette. "That's been our full intention from the get-go and we won't waver from that."

For more, go to fortkingocala.com.

Courtesy Keifer Calkins

Seminoles Jason Melton, left, and Quenton Cypress are part of the Osceola Warrior Legacy that has partcipated in reenactments at Fort King.

Courtesy Keifer Calkins

Participants in the reenactments line up against the fort's wall.

Tribal climate conference addresses environmental issues in Indian Country

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

More than 2,400 participants from 30 countries and over 150 tribal nations sat in front of their screens to attend the first biennial National Tribal and Indigenous Climate Conference, held online Sept. 14-17.

The virtual conference examined how climate change affects Indigenous peoples and emphasized the importance of traditional knowledge and Native stewardship of the earth.

Paul Backhouse, senior director of the Seminole Tribe's Heritage and Environment Resources Office, attended the conference with staff from the Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

"It was a really timely conference given the Tribe is working on our climate plan and recognizes this is a huge threat," Backhouse said. "It was a great conversation and we got insights from across the world."

Opening session

All conference presenters and panelists came from different locations around the globe. Ann Marie Chischilly (Diné Nation), executive director, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, welcomed attendees to the opening plenary session while standing outdoors in the foothills of the San Francisco peaks on the Navajo reservation in Arizona.

"I wanted us to come together even during the pandemic to give hope, encourage each other and share our stories," Chischilly said. "We are in the time of the long walk. The Navajo people were taken from their lands and kept away for years. They struggled to stay alive so I could stand here. It's through that resilience that they came back and built a new life. Resilience in in our DNA."

Ella Ruth Ahrens (Diné Nation) spoke from the bottom of her 9-year-old heart.

"Mother Earth is one of a kind and we need to take care of it," said the S.T.A.R. School student, from Flagstaff, Arizona. "Actions have consequences and we can't afford that. We need your help."

Dr. Donald Warne (Oglala Lakota Nation) comes from a family of traditional healers and medicine men and understands how the health of the earth has a direct effect on people.

"We can't separate ecological understanding of climate change from the health of human beings," said Warne, associate dean, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences. "We have to be aware that climate change is having a big impact on people. This isn't different from traditional beliefs that the earth is our mother. When we blend modern science and medicine with traditional beliefs, we can make real strides."

Warne talked about the long history of genocide of people and animals and the removal from their homelands.

"We are told our ancestors are still watching over us," Warne said. "If we look for the signs, we can see them. In this image of the map of Minnesota, look carefully at the eastern border; it is the image of a beautiful Lakota chief looking directly at the Black Hills, the heart of everything that is. There is a deeper knowledge and understanding among Native people."

He showed four maps of forests across the country from 1620, 1850, 1926 and 1990. The difference across the years was striking. When huge swaths of forests are destroyed, it has an impact on the climate.

"The health of the earth impacts us all," Warne said. "The buffalo are back; what do they teach us? The strongest bulls stand and face the coming storm to protect those behind them. We have to be those strong bulls and face each challenge head on. Our future generations are depending on us."

Keynote speaker Winona LaDuke, Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe) and co-founder of Honor the Earth, said crises create opportunities.

"What a time we are in, maybe when our descendants come they will say it was the time of the bat," LaDuke said. "Little creatures can make a huge difference in our lives, causing more diseases to come from them to the world. My advice is to help protect our biodiversity."

She believes now is the time for Indigenous nations to rebuild their food and energy resources to protect the biodiversity of the earth.

"Biodiversity is what you want in a time of climate crisis," LaDuke said. "When you have many different sources, you keep your seeds strong."

LaDuke noted three things she is focused on to meet the biodiversity goal: food, energy and hemp. She talked about how the Incas in Peru were the first to cultivate potatoes; by growing them at different altitudes, they created new varieties.

"Our seed savers are saving our communities," she said. "We need to think about how not to waste food."

She said climate change will cause more frequent power outages.

"We need to create more local energy production, such as solar panels," she said. "We need to get more simple, smart and efficient. We have to figure out how to reindustrialize the country using renewables, like wind power in Indian Country."

LaDuke has been growing fiber hemp for five years and said the country had a choice in the 1920s to pursue a hydrocarbon economy based on fossil fuel or a carbohydrate economy based on hemp. She said the country made the wrong choice; small farmers are now growing hemp and calling it the new green revolution.

"Look to our ancestors, hold our heads up and pray hard," LaDuke said. "We have the opportunity to take a new path, to make a regenerative and restorative economy. The next economy isn't about competition, it's about cooperation."

Courtesy image

Winona LaDuke, co-founder of Honor the Earth, was the keynote speaker at the National Tribal and Indigenous Climate Conference in September.

Courtesy image

Ann Marie Chischill, executive director of the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, provided welcoming remarks to the attendees of the conference, which was held virtually.

Air, health and well-being

The climate has always been changing and over the last 12,000 years temperatures have been both warmer and cooler. But for the last 150 years they have been getting warmer more quickly, according to Maureen McCarthy, research professor, Desert Research Institute at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Drought is tied to climate and temperatures; there have been extensive droughts during the last 1,000 years, but recent droughts are extreme. McCarthy believes Native wisdom and western science should be integrated to understand how humanity fits into the natural world.

"In March 2020 the Covid pandemic hit the world, but hit Indian Country exceedingly hard," McCarthy said during a session that explored intersection between air, health and well-being as it relates to climate change. "Indigenous people are resilient, but the combination of the two has put a stress in the system."

McCarthy and a group researching Native waters on arid lands identified a few urgent issues which included economic relief for farmers with irrigation payments due; essential needs such as food, wood to heat homes, water and hay for livestock; educational support for students who don't have electricity, computers or internet access making virtual school an impossibility.

They got the USDA to bring food and supplies to rural communities, including wood, hay and personal protection equipment to Hopi and Navajo communities.

"We are facing concurrent emergencies of climate and Covid," McCarthy said. "Climate issues have been compounded by Covid. Arid lands' major issue is drought, which has gotten worse since July and the projections are not good."

Wildfires are another serious result of climate change. Native communities have knowledge about wildfire management. McCarthy said not using that knowledge for the last 100 years was a mistake. She hopes we use it for the next 100.

One positive thing coming from these times is the increase of food sovereignty programs on reservations. McCarthy said the impact of Covid shutdowns and limited access to food supplies, compelled some tribes to enhance and build their food sovereignty programs. With the help of the CARES Act funding, these programs have been expanded substantially.

Alaska is on the front line of climate change; as temperatures rise sea ice disappears, storms are stronger and more frequent causing substantial coastal erosion. The Local Environmental Observer (LEO) is an online platform that connects people about climate change in the state.

Anyone in Alaska can join the network and report changes they see in their own communities. LEO reviews the data to try to determine trends going forward.

"Our goal is to raise awareness about climate change and develop specific adaptation strategies," said Erica Lujan, LEO coordinator. "Animal mortality was a big trend in 2019; seabirds, ice stranded seals, krill and salmon kills have a huge implication for food security in communities."

When LEO gets information, they pass it along to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other agencies. The LEO network is meant to be the hub of a wheel, information they get from local observers provide information and guidance to inform the public. LEO currently has 1,300 observation posts throughout Alaska.

Each community has its own page on the LEO website. Residents' posts document the changes in real time. Put together over a few years, a larger picture of climate change emerges.

"LEO shows how we can work together," Lujan said.

Climate justice

Indigenous climate refugees exist already in Alaska and Louisiana. The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe in southern Louisiana saw 98% of their ancestral lands vanish due to rising sea levels and coastal erosion and are forced to relocate.

Nancy Van Leuven, assistant professor, California State University, Fresno discussed how native versus mainstream media voices can define an issue. In the case of the Louisiana tribe, she said the mainstream media framed it as a sad story.

"The story shifted because of the tribal community's messaging," Van Leuven said. "They see it as a living bridge between the ancestral lands to a future that is now sustainable. Their leadership used it as a toolkit for other tribes undergoing environmental pressures."

Culture can be a powerful weapon in communications and powerful statements keep Native American messages front and center. Van Leuven showed a video of an Alaskan Native woman.

"In Alaska, 100 years ago we were completely nomadic community. We harvested whales, fish, birds and were there when they were. We had to keep land clean for them or they wouldn't want to come back. We love to eat what they gave us and had much gratitude for them when they came. This is our land where we get our whale and fish," she said.

As a climate justice organizer, Ruth Miller advocates for the protection of Native environments and food systems.

"We know the core of climate justice work is bringing our view to industry to create a balance in the world," said Miller, who lives and works in Alaska. "Alaska is at the front line of climate change. Corporations increase toxins and cancers in our people, food systems, caribou and salmon. Erosion, permafrost melt and melting sea ice are making our environment uninhabitable. We as a global community have degraded our environment."

Miller sees some clear battlegrounds for climate justice.

"Culture informs and directs our work, we need to think about how we can incorporate marginalized indigenous views," she said. "The western viewpoint of science is just data, with less value in storytelling and history. Indigenous people who live closely to the land witness science firsthand; we need to look to them for leadership in climate policies."

Who gets to tell the story of climate change and justice is critical to Miller's work.

✦ See CLIMATE on page 9A

Courtesy image

Ella Ahrens, of Flagstaff, Ariz., was a guest youth speaker at the conference.

Brighton Reservation celebrates Indian Day

STAFF REPORT

Indian Day for the Seminole Tribe in 2020 was far from what usually takes place. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the Tribe's biggest annual holiday celebrations was limited. There were no large gatherings, no amusement rides, no bands, no vendors and no games as safety precautions prevailed.

Reservations' offerings were vastly reduced. Some held drive thru meal distributions and received arts and crafts entrees in dropoffs. Hollywood's arts and crafts contest included guest judges online.

A socially-distant fishing tournament Sept. 26 was among the highlights to Brighton's celebration as residents tried to reel in big ones at Tucker Ridge and in canals. The program We Do Recover assisted in the distrubution of meals.

Brighton Council Office

Jenny and Eddie Shore enjoy their day and their catch in the Brighton Indian Day Fishing Tournament on Sept. 26.

Chayton "Chik" Billie, 14, shows what he reeled in during the Indian Day fishing tournament.

Brighton Council Office

An impressive catch at the tournament.

Brighton Council Office

Enjoying a day of fishing at the tournament.

Brighton Council Office

At right and below, amid the rain, We Do Recover helped Brighton Council & Chairman's office staff hand out meals in a drive thru line. Brighton Council handed out shirts, tickets for raffles, and meals to the Brighton community. The Chairman's Office handed out items and tickets for raffles.

Native voters deserve to have their voices heard

BY DONNA M. OWENS

When Deb Haaland and Sharice Davids made history in 2018 as the first Native American women ever elected to Congress, it symbolized the collective journey of Indigenous people who've lived on these lands for millennia. Rep. Haaland represents New Mexico and is an enrolled citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna. Davids, a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation in Wisconsin, represents Kansas. Now the congresswomen are raising their voices in tandem with fellow lawmakers, advocates, and community leaders to urge Indian Country to participate in the November general election.

"Voting is sacred," said Rep. Haaland during a televised speech at the Democratic National Convention in August. Davids, appearing on a video call with fellow convention vice chairs, termed the 2020 presidential race "the most consequential election of our lifetimes."

Indeed, much is at stake for the nearly 6 million people — about 2% of the population — who identify as American Indian or Alaska Natives, per the Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey. The Bureau of Indian Affairs lists 574 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages. Additionally, dozens of state-recognized tribes exist across the country. Each has its own culture, traditions, language, music, and ceremonies, passed down through generations by elders.

For tribal nations that have long been recognized by the federal government as sovereign, its members are citizens of three groups: their own tribe, the state where they reside, and the United States.

Fawn Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians explained this unique, political relationship at the annual State of Indian Nations address held in February in Washington, D.C.

"Across this land, tribal nations are writing remarkable stories of cultural, social, political, and economic renewal," said Sharp, an attorney and president of the Quinault Indian Nation in Washington state. "In the face of great obstacles, we relentlessly plow forward in our eternal quest to create futures of hope, opportunity, and cultural vibrancy for our youth and those generations yet to come."

While declaring the state of Indian Country "strong," Sharp's speech didn't shy away from detailing various challenges. High dropout rates, murders of Indigenous women, the desecration of sacred lands, climate change, policy and court battles are among them. So is "ignorance" of Native American cultures and discrimination.

The federal government, Sharp asserted, must honor early treaties and promises and step up to help with pressing contemporary needs, such as "a full count of Native people" in the 2020 Census participation and voting.

"The United States must… protect the right of Native people to participate in the American political process against voter suppression — suppression tactics that are meant to marginalize their voice—and it must include tribal governments as equal players in the administration of elections across this country," she said. "This is what we demand — and this is what we deserve. We will settle for nothing less, and we will exercise our rapidly growing political power and voice in Washington and at the ballot box against any and all who fail to meet this standard."

Voting rights are the subject of a new report titled "Obstacles at Every Turn: Barriers to Political Participation Faced by Native American Voters," released by the Native American Rights Fund and the Native American Voting Rights Coalition. Based on nine public hearings over two years and input from dozens of tribes across the country, the report highlights the barriers American Indian and Alaska Native communities face in the voting process, from registration to casting votes to ensuring votes are counted.

"The first people on the land should not be the last to vote," said Jacqueline De León, a staff attorney at the Native American Rights Fund and co-author of the report. "Native American voters have the potential to decide elections."

The examination of voting comes as many states nationwide reconsider operations for the 2020 elections and adapt to changes wrought by the coronavirus pandemic. The Native vote is critical in congressional districts and states such as North and South Dakota, Alaska, and the Southwest. Yet current voting systems often depress Native turnout.

The report lays out dozens of barriers, including geographic isolation, voter ID requirements, poor funding for voting in Native communities, and ballot-collection bans. Moreover, 44% of eligible Native Americans are not registered to vote, De León said, "meaning there are more than 1 million potential Native votes unaccounted for."

"It's all of our duty to exercise our tribal right that our elders fought for and that our ancestors fought hard to give us, in a new era."

Vote-by-mail options — a hot topic across the country — is especially tricky for Native communities. Many reservations do not have street names or addresses, and residents may not receive mail delivery at their homes. Tribal languages may also pose potential barriers to voting, especially for elders in the community.

Native advocates have called on Congress to address the voting issue. In March 2019, Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) and Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) reintroduced the Native American Voting Rights Act. Both Haaland and Davids are also among dozens of co-sponsors.

Among the bills' provisions are expanding the types of facilities that can be used as voter registration agencies, increasing polling site accessibility, requiring approval for actions like moving a polling place, and validating certain tribal identification for voting or registering.

So far, the legislation hasn't moved past the committee stage on Capitol Hill. Still, Udall and Haaland aren't giving up. The legislators recently joined Ahtza Dawn Chavez, executive director of the Native American Voters Alliance Education Project, and Tiffany Muller of Let America Vote for a virtual panel on protecting voting rights in tribal communities.

"It's all of our duty to exercise our tribal right that our elders fought for and that our ancestors fought hard to give us, in a new era," says Chavez, a member of the Diné Nation. "My grandfather stood in front of the tribal court for the right to vote."

To prevent disenfranchisement, the report recommends that secretaries of state and state and local election officials work with tribal governments to increase voting and registration locations on Indian lands. It also suggests the creation of Native American task forces to oversee policies that have caused a maze of obstructions that voters face, some of which are exacerbated by the pandemic.

In August, the Congressional Native American Caucus, co-chaired by Haaland and Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), highlighted priorities included for tribal governments and Native American families in House-passed appropriations bills for fiscal year 2021. They termed the proposed federal investments in health, education, economic development, housing, and more as "critical" to Indian Country.

Advocates told ZORA that eradicating barriers to political participation for Native Americans will improve socioeconomic status, self-determination, land rights, water rights, and health care.

"The redemption of America is that power is available," De León says. "If Native Americans can engage fully in the political system — free from the barriers that currently obstruct them — they can reclaim power and participate in America in a way that is fair and just."

Donna M. Owens is an award-winning digital, print and broadcast journalist. This article appears on zora.medium.com.

Miss Indian World emphasizes importance of Census

STAFF REPORT

Having the title of Miss Indian World means Cheyenne Kippenberger carries some clout across Indian Country. The former Miss Florida Seminole, from the Hollywood Reservation, has been helping lead an online movement that stresses the importance of being counted in Indian Country for the 2020 Census.

"I beg you to please complete the 2020 Census. This 9 question questionnaire will be used to determine funding, political representation and data for our community for the next 10 years. 10 minutes of your time provides enough support to uplift our communities and future generations for years to come!," she posted on Facebook in September.

Kippenberger and other royalty from throughout Indian Country have been posting photos of themselves holding signs such as "Indian Country Counts" and "Be Counted."

Representation compiled in Census data helps determine federal funding for programs and grants. Questionnaires can be completed online, by phone or mail. For more information, go to 2020census.gov or call (844) 330-2020.

Facebook

Miss Indian World Cheyenne Kippenberger holds up a "Be Counted" sign in front of Tribal headquarters in Hollywood as she urges Indian Country to fill out the 2020 Census.

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA

AH-TAH-THI-KI MUSEUM

A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

Making negatives positive; a new photograph project begins at the museum

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Collections Manager

BIG CYPRESS — I'm happy to say that in July the Ah-Tah-Thi Museum was awarded a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services award program. This is a long way of saying that the U.S. government is giving the Tribe some money to complete a worthwhile project at the museum over the next two years. We got a similar grant a few years ago, and after we finished it, we were able to put 15,000 new photographs in our online collections. Many of you have found pictures of family and friends through our website because of this project. And the more images we catalog, the more of them you will see on our website. You can search for people, and if you find pictures you would like to add to your personal collection, you can request copies directly from our site:

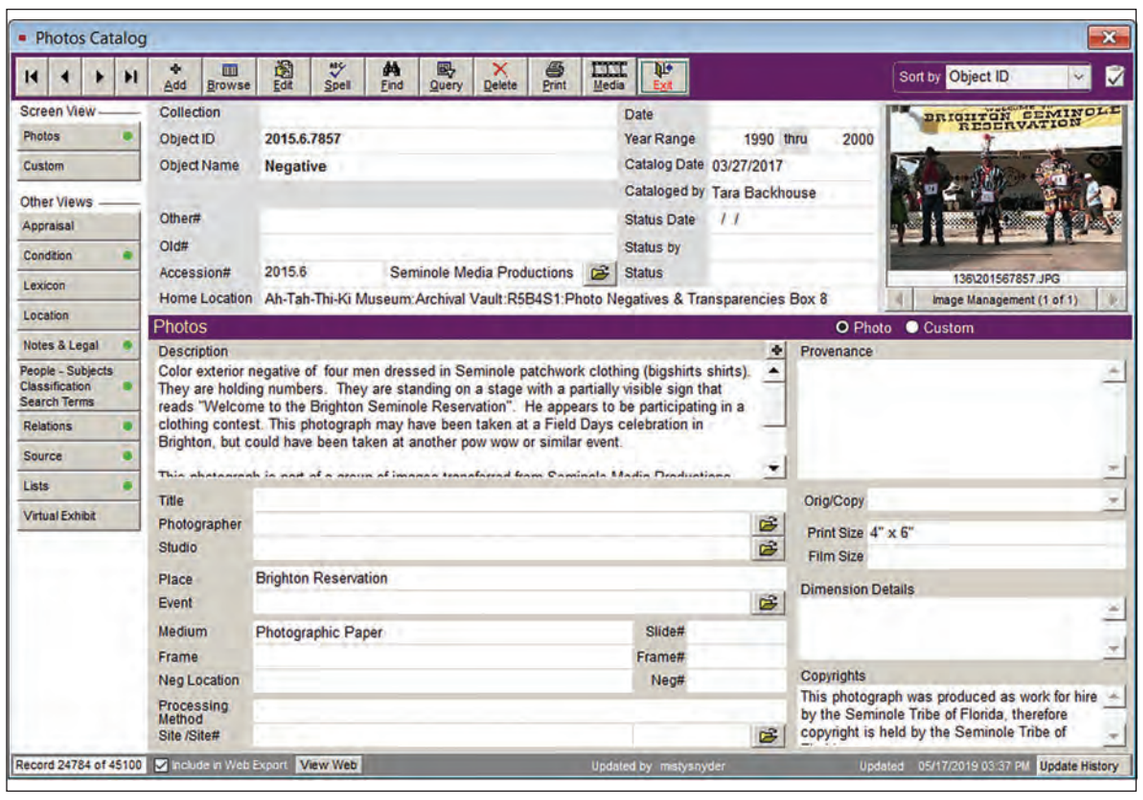
https://semtribe.pastperfectonline.com/

The project we're starting now will eventually allow us to add 9,000 more images to the online database. But this time, instead of cataloging thousands of 4" x 6" photographs, we will be cataloging thousands of photographic negatives. Hmm, photograph negatives, who remembers those? It actually wasn't that long ago that almost everyone had experiences with them. Anyone who put film in a camera would have to get those pictures developed, usually at shops that specialized in that or at photo centers in major retail stores. Those are rare these days! And it was there that the film turned into negatives. Photographs could then be printed in a number of sizes, directly from the negatives. It seems like a long lost memory to some, and an inconvenient old-fashioned procedure of the past to others. But it was only 15 to 20 years ago that people began transitioning to digital cameras and negatives became a thing of the past. This happened quickly, and these days people are growing up not needing to worry about keeping their negatives in order to get photos reprinted. That is one of the benefits of the digital age. However, where negatives exist, they are valuable pieces of history. Scanning a photographic negative can allow someone to reproduce a higher quality image than just scanning the associated photograph.

The museum has far more photographs than negatives, but we know we can provide more images to the community if we catalog thousands of negatives that originally came from the Seminole Tribune's editorial work. Our new cataloging assistant, Chelsea Nielsen, will begin this project at the end of September. And even though the museum is not currently open, she will be working tirelessly behind closed doors to scan and describe these negatives, so that we can get them back to you. When the time comes, you'll be able to request images or give us feedback through the website. If you know who the people in the photographs are, just let us know. We'll add that information to our records and then other people in the Seminole community will be able to more easily find those pictures. During the pandemic, we are thinking of ways to get our collection out there, and we're still here for your photographic needs. Stay safe everyone!

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

This box of jumbled negatives won't look like this when we're done with it. The negatives will be organized and stored safely with identifying numbers that match up to catalog records in our database.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

The database records will look like this. We'll add as much information as we can, but we need your help identifying people, places and dates.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services Award Number MN-245232-OMS-20. The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Native American to curate Native American art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

STAFF REPORT

NEW YORK CITY — Patricia Marroquin Norby was named associate curator of Native American art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. She is the first full-time Native American art curator in the museum's 150-year history.

She is of Purépecha heritage. The Purépecha is an Indigenous population in northwestern Mexico.

Norby started on the job Sept. 14. She will be responsible for developing long-term partnerships with Indigenous communities, scholars, artists and audiences.

Norby most recently served as senior executive and assistant director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in New York, prior to that she was director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies at The Newberry research library in Chicago. Norby was also an assistant professor of American Indian studies at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and earned a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, in American studies, with a specialization in Native American art history and visual culture.

"Dr. Norby, an award-winning scholar of Native American art history and visual culture, is also a museum professional," said Max Hollein, director of the Met. "We look forward to supporting her scholarship and programmatic collaborations with colleagues across the Met as well as with Indigenous communities throughout the region and continent for our diverse international audiences."

The curator position was made possible by a gift of more than 100 Indigenous works of art from museum trustees Charles and Valerie Diker in 2017. The art is in an ongoing exhibition in the Met's American Wing, where Norby will work with curator in charge Sylvia Yount.

"That installation laid the groundwork for the Museum's new Native Arts program, which Patricia will shape and lead at this transformational moment," Yount said. "We are thrilled to have Patricia join us in the American Wing, where we've been exploring entangled narratives of cross-cultural encounter between Native and non-Native individuals and communities."

Norby looks forward to returning to her fine arts roots.

"I am deeply honored to join with American Indian and Indigenous artists and communities in advancing our diverse experiences and voices in The Met's exhibitions, collections, and programs," Norby said. "This is a time of significant evolution for the museum. I look forward to being part of this critical shift in the presentation of Native American art."

Scott Rosenthal

Patricia Marroquin Norby is the first full-time Native American art curator in the history of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

National Museum of the American Indian in Washington reopens to the public

STAFF REPORT

WASHINGTON — After being closed all summer due to the pandemic, the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., will reopen to the public Sept. 25. Its regular operations will will be open Wednesday to Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free timed-entry passes are required and are available on the museum's website.

The reopening will include enhanced safety precautions. Some areas of the museum will remain closed, including the cafes, stores, theaters and the imagiNATIONS Activity Center. The "Our Universes" exhibition and the Sealaska Gallery on the will also be closed. No onsite programming or tours will be offered. More information about the museum's reopening is available at americanindian.si.edu/.

NMAI's venue in New York City remains closed.

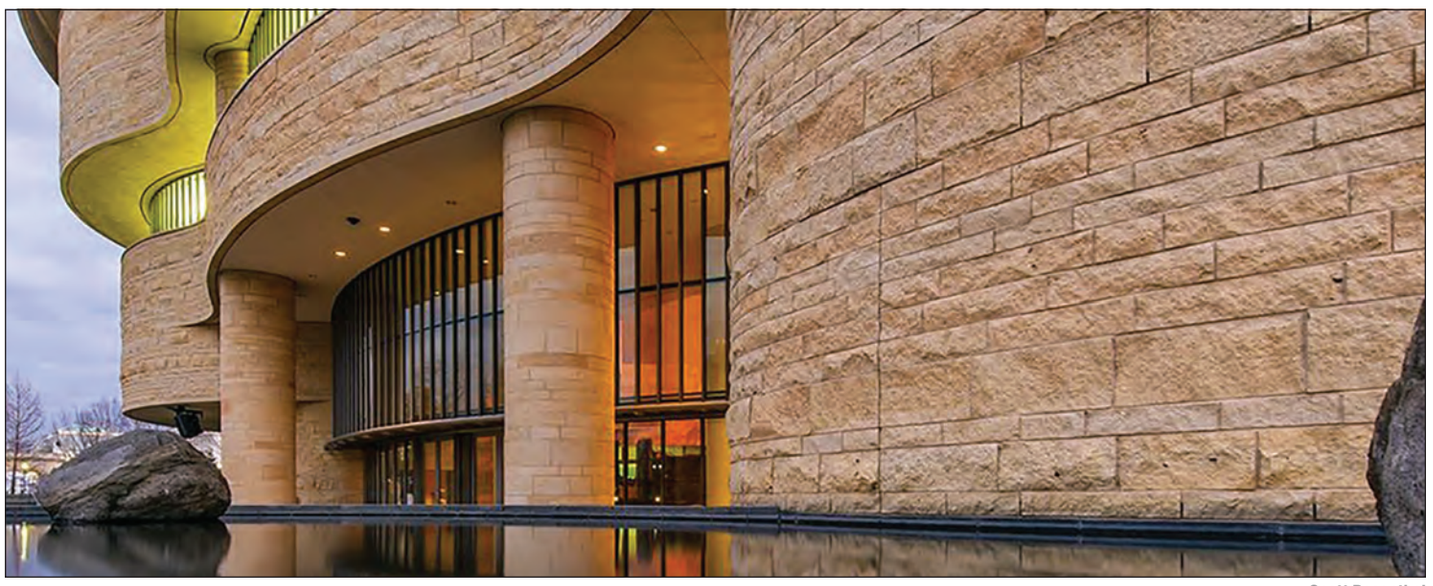
New exhibitions include:

"Developing Stories: Native Photographers in the Field," an online exhibition of a series of photo essays created by Native photojournalists Russel Albert Daniels and Tailyr Irvine in collaboration with the museum. This photo essay provides thought-provoking insights into 21st-century Native life and a nuanced perspective on an American experience that is largely invisible to mainstream society.

"Why We Serve," opens Nov. 4. This exhibition tells personal stories of Native American veterans and details the history of more than 250 years of Native American participation in the military, from colonial times to the present day.

"Indigenous Peoples' Day: Mascots, Monuments, and Memorialization" will be held as a virtual event Oct. 12 at 1 p.m. How do people's memories of the past inform and influence the current racial and social landscape? As part of the museum's new series Youth in Action: Conversations about Our Future, participants can hear from young Native activists who are propelling this conversation forward and addressing the tension between history, memory and the current movements happening across America. Featured panelists include Brook Thompson (Yurok and Karuk), Julian Brave NoiseCat (Canim Lake Band Tsq'escen and Lil'Wat Nation), Lina Krueck (Oglala Lakota), Dylan Baca (White Mountain Apache) and Alberto Correa III (Taíno).

The event will feature an introduction by Kevin Gover (Pawnee), director of the National Museum of the American Indian, and a musical performance by hip-hop artist Frank Waln (Sicangu Lakota). The panel will be moderated by museum cultural interpreter Michaela Pavlat (Sault Ste. Marie Band of Chippewa Indians).



Scott Rosenthal

The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., reopened Sept. 25 after being closed for several months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

NAMI/Facebook

Visitors can once again view the exhibits in-person at the National Musuem of the American Indian.

Health

New Betty Mae Jumper Medical Center up and running in Hollywood

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The unconquered spirit of the namesake of the Hollywood Reservation's new medical building is alive and well despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Betty Mae Jumper Medical Center was a goal of Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola and Tribal Council for many years. That goal was reached this year when construction was completed and the center gradually opened, even though a planned community event to mark the occasion was canceled for safety reasons.

The center is located at 111 West Coral Way at the Seminole Estates in Hollywood. The towering Guitar Hotel is just to its north.

Jumper, of course, is the matriarch and Seminole legend – someone with a long list of personal and professional accomplishments – including her health care advocacy and 40-year career as a nurse. She died in 2011 at 88.

A ceremonial groundbreaking for the center was held Jan. 16, 2019.

Carlos Fuentes

The new Betty Mae Jumper Medical Center opened earlier this year on the Seminole Estates portion of the Hollywood Reservation.

One stop shop

The hurricane resistant state-of-the-art medical center is two stories tall and 40,000 square feet with many amenities.

One of the key reasons it was developed was to locate all of the offerings that fall under the Health & Human Services umbrella to one building, and to add some new ones, like pediatric dentistry services. In addition, the existing health clinic had been outgrown.

Enhancements and services at the new center include:

- More treatment rooms
- Dialysis treatment
- Pharmacy with drive-thru
- Extra triage station
- Special needs space during hurricane season in the event of an evacuation
- Optometry/optical services
- Massage therapy
- Chiropractic and spine care services
- Physical therapy
- More urgent care services

The programs that have moved to the complex include:

- Advocacy & Guardianship
- Center for Behavioral Health
- Children's Center for Diagnostics & Therapy
- Health & Human Services Administration
- Tribal Health Clinic/Non-Clinical Services
- Tribal Health Plan Administration.

New leadership

Vandhana Kiswani-Barley is a physician and the new interim executive director of Health & Human Services, succeeding former executive director Paul Isaacs.

She's been in the position since June 29, after working at the Big Cypress health clinic as a family practitioner for about two years.

While the new center is completed and open, Kiswani-Barley said some of the departments are operating with limited in-house staff due to Covid-19.

However, medical and dental services are fully staffed, she said, and the pharmacy is up and running normally.

Kiswani-Barley said she hasn't noticed that Tribal members were canceling appointments because of the pandemic.

"Social distancing is in effect, but if they need to come in, they come in," she said, adding that the center is open to any Tribal member regardless of what reservation they live on.

The clinic accepts walk-ins, but encourages appointments due to Covid-19.

"All staff is wearing full [Personal Protective Equipment] to see all patients at all times," Kiswani-Barley said.

There aren't any facility tours taking place, as there would have been at a typical grand opening, but Seminole Media Productions produced a video to give Tribal members a peek with a virtual walk thru.

"It's a beautiful building with a lot of different departments compared to the previous one. All services are under one roof and it's easy access," she said.

Kiswani-Barley was already familiar with Hollywood's health care system, because she used to visit the clinic once a week while working in Big Cypress. She also lives nearby in Weston.

She was first medically trained in New York City, and then in Iowa, where she was trained in rural medicine – including populations with high levels of comorbidities (patients presenting more than one disease).

But Iowa was too cold and warm Florida weather called to her, so she and her family moved to Broward County in 2017 where she was in private practice for about a year before she interviewed with the Tribe.

"I liked Big Cypress because it's kind of like urban medicine, but in a rural area," she said.

Kiswani-Barley said that while the Tribe has more financial resources than others, there are still comorbidities in the community.

"I learn new things every day about different disease pathologies every day," she said. "It's intriguing and makes the day go by a lot faster."

For a complete list of health care-related programs and services provided by the Tribe, go to semtribe.com.

Vandhana Kiswani-Barley is the interim executive director of Health and Human Services.

CLIMATE

From page 5A

"We experience climate chaos firsthand," she said. "What happens to the water happens to us. We see the changes in food security, patterns in animals, fish and birds. We are the original stewards of this land and have been so since creation."

Miller believes market based solutions won't help indigenous communities or heal the world. Directing resources to collective well-being, however, could begin to undo the damage colonization had on Native regions.

"We, in Alaska, have the knowledge that will sustain us for the millennia," she said. "We have our original instructions and we have a plan that will lead this world to a more liberated, collective future."

Karla Bollier, founder and director of the Climate Justice Initiative, focuses on Indigenous human rights and climate change.

Indigenous people have always been adaptable in the past, but climate change is more complex and is compounded by cultural and social pressures. Adjustment to new conditions require resources that a lot of communities don't possess. Indigenous people who migrate from their traditional homes can be more vulnerable.

"Deforestation is pushing indigenous from the forest to urban slums," Bollier said. "Climate change exacerbates existing inequalities. Women are effective agents of change and are the ones people often look to in a crisis. Empowering and investing in women provides a ripple effect in a community; when women do well, families do well and thus the community does well. Women have always been the stewards of our lands, families and cultures."

Elders and youth

Tribal elders and youth provided insights into climate change from their unique perspectives. The session revealed things that can be learned from the past to prepare for the future.

Rose High-Bear, founder of Wisdom of the Elderberry Farm in Oregon which helps to restore native food species and habitats, believes young people will make great change in the world.

"There are many things we can say about climate," High-Bear said. "We never had out of control fires because we always did controlled burns. The forest was rich and full of food and medicine. Today we have soil that isn't being taken care of because of single purpose farms. Monoculture depletes the soil. Now I am surrounded by fires but we don't call them wildfires, we call them climate fires."

As the principal of the Oneida Nation High School, Artley Skenadore spends his life surrounded by young people. He said climate change provides the opportunity to share stories, understand the way life was for their ancestors and what can be done together to shape the future.

"Mother Earth provides for us," Skenadore said. "This type of gathering bundles us together to look at a common footprint of what steps we need to take to renew her strength and spirit."

He gave advice freely including: air, water and earth need to be respected, Earth is our only home and we all share the responsibility for it.

"The footprints of the future come to us through resilience," Skenadore said. "As we look at all the struggles Earth has been through, she has worked to fulfill her responsibility and we need to make sure we do a good job of making her stronger. We will never quit; we are Earth people."

After the adults spoke, young people shared stories of their own resilience in this time of climate change and coronavirus.

Sixth- and seventh-graders Prathona and Prokriti Datta, of Saskatchewan, Canada, have been keeping busy and gaining respect for the environment during the months of the pandemic. They have listened to ancestors' stories, read, wrote, walked, danced, played instruments and sang.

"I am writing about Covid-19 so the next generation can learn about what happened during this pandemic," Prokriti said.

Their parents are originally from Bangladesh, where they were a minority.

"Minorities, like indigenous, face racism in everyday life," Prathona said. "First Nations elders taught us about the resiliency wheel. We learned why the natural elements are important and that the air, sun, water and insects are all our relatives. We don't own the land, it owns us. The land is our mother; it gives us food. Culture is who we are; in language and knowledge we find our identity."

Northern Arizona University student Meronda Walker has been aware of climate change since first grade and has tried to incorporate sustainable techniques into her lifestyle.

"I care about future generations, wildlife and the planet," she said. "Everything we do is intertwined with what happens to our planet. The Earth doesn't belong to us, we belong to Earth and have an obligation to make it livable for future generations. Native Americans are about preserving for the future, that's our duty."

Walker believes the solution to climate change will be collaboration and everyone must work to reduce their carbon footprints with hard choices.

Sara Sprague grew up in the woods and experienced the effects of climate change first hand. She was devastated when the woods around her were replaced with houses.

"It's hard to put into words how important nature is," said Sprague, at graduate student at Northern Arizona University. "As a child I was surrounded by wild flowers, fruits, plants and was privileged to have the experience of living in the wilderness. Climate change impacts everyone, but most of all people of color and those least able to contribute to the problem."

She believes everyone should become more connected to nature.

"We have no other home," Sprague said. "We need to consider how we can live without exacerbating climate change. We are at risk of losing something vital and need to act before it is too late."

Graduate student Sarah Chacon believes climate change classes should be taught on the reservations, as it is in some other schools.

"As we become knowledgeable of how interconnected we are with the Earth, we will realize we have to make it a priority and teach it to our kids," said Chacon, who also attends Northern Arizona University. "I believe our people have a lot of fight in us. What you do to the Earth affects everyone. Kids need to know about climate change, so let's keep spreading awareness."

During the sessions, attendees were able to contribute comments or ask questions through the chat session on the screen. One comment came from Sheema Saeed, who grew up in the Maldives, a nation in the Indian Ocean near the equator.

"In 1971 I was 3-years-old when an elder taught me about climate change, about polar ice caps melting. I was living on an island on the equator and had not even seen an ice cube than. Who would have thought we Maldivians will be the most vulnerable to impact of climate change? In 2010, I tried to teach primary teacher trainees at Leicester University science of climate change in a way kids could understand. I was told kids are too young to understand climate change and here I am listening to kids talk about it," Saeed wrote.

Many of the sessions were interactive and ended with a live question and answer period.

"It's been a fabulous experience being in a Zoom box with all of you," High-Bear said. "We have the opportunity to bring healing messages to one another. I think the young people will do a lot to save the Earth. I found a new medicine; all these young people rising up. You are filling my heart today."

Juan Cancel, THPO assistant director, and Quenton Cypress, THPO community engagement manager, are creating a climate resiliency plan for the Seminole Tribe. With input from the community they have been building the plan that will maintain the Tribe's cultural identity. They attended the conference and were pleased to learn from people the world over.

"It speaks to how people are anxious to learn," Cancel said. "We want to make sure we build some of the things we learned into our climate resiliency project. It's an intriguing concept, how to protect against climate change while adhering to cultural norms. A lot of this is about planning, but be careful about technology. If you don't have a good plan it won't matter. That helped us with the adaptation plan we are trying to build."

SEMINOLE SCENES

Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, Hollywood

RED IT: Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa, left, and The Guitar Hotel on the Hollywood Reservation were lit up in red on Sept. 1 to show support to the live events community, production personnel and crews. Venues throughout the country came together online and posted photos on social media under #RedAlertRESTART. According to the coalition #WeMakeEvents North America, more than 2,000 performance venues, iconic structures and residences were lit in red in over 75 cities and towns to raise public and media awareness in support of the live events sector. The coalition also said 95% of live events have been cancelled due to Covid-19 and nearly all companies have cut staff and/or wages.

Seminole Scenes Rewind: Photos from the past - Boehmer Collection

Boehmer Collection

A scene from the Brighton Indian Day School in 1950 features students with William Boehmer and his wife, Edith, who were hired to work at the school when it first opened in 1938. Photography was a hobby of William Boehmer, who maintained an extensive photo collection of Seminole life with well over 1,000 photos.

Boehmer Collection

A gathering in 1954 includes some of the Tribe's leaders.

Boehmer Collection

Youngsters gather in a photo that is perhaps from the 1950s.

Boehmer Collection (2)

Youngsters in patchwork appear in this undated photo.

Boehmer Collection

School children play ball in this photo from 1950.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

'We'll define our own moderate livelihood,' First Nation Chief says of Treaty right to fish

SAULNIERVILLE, Nova Scotia, Canada — A week after a Mi'kmaq First Nation launched its own lobster fishery in southwest Nova Scotia, a Liberal member of parliament is breaking with his party, asking the government to clarify what's permitted.

The Supreme Court has ruled Indigenous people have a right to earn a moderate livelihood, but it's not clear what that means.

On Sept. 24, fishermen from Sipekne'katik First Nation held their position on the wharf overlooking St. Marys Bay as the RCMP parked nearby.

"There's no definition exactly," said Chief Michael Sack of Sipekne'katik First Nation. "We're here to fish, collect data, go back to our community, and have consultation with our community."

In a letter, Kings Hants Liberal MP Kody Blois voiced his support for the First Nations fishery, but also notes there needs to be clarification around what moderate livelihood means.

"The court has not defined it and, of course, because we don't have some of the certainty that I've mentioned, I think that's where some of the tension lies," Blois said.

He also suggests Ottawa use its authority to regulate a moderate livelihood fishery.

"It's an option," Blois said. "Whether or not that's an option our government pursues, I don't want to speak to that ... That doesn't seem to be a case."

The coast guard was in the air on Sept. 24 and, on the ground, the RCMP continued to receive complaints about uttering threats and vandalism.

Chief Sack is accusing the commercial fishermen of stealing his crews' gear.

"They've been interfering with our fisheries the whole step of the way," Chief Sack said. "Right from the wharf here to the water."

CTV News tried to speak with commercial fishermen on Thursday, but they said they've hired a public relations firm and were told not to talk right now.

At issue is whether a Supreme Court decision from 21 years ago, known as the Marshall decision, that affirmed the right of Indigenous groups in Eastern Canada to fish and hunt for a "moderate livelihood" enables Indigenous fisherman to catch and sell lobster outside regular fishing season.

Wayne MacKay, a professor Emeritus at Dalhousie Law School who teaches constitutional law, said the term "moderate livelihood" was not defined in the Marshall decision, but notes the 1760 and 1761 treaties talk about the right for Indigenous people to continue to hunt and fish for "necessaries."

"There's two questions left unanswered, I think," MacKay said. "How broad are these necessaries that people from the First Nation can hunt and gather, and then how many can they do in this moderate livelihood without becoming a commercial fishery?" MacKay said.

"The main thrust of the Marshall decision is that the federal government should define what the moderate livelihood is and what limits should be put on it in consultation with the First Nations," MacKay said.

As for the definition of what a moderate livelihood is, Chief Sack says it's up to the Sipekne'katik First Nation.

"We'll define our own moderate livelihood," he said. "We're not here to have anybody decide anything for us."

When asked about Blois' suggestion to regulate the fishery, the minister's office says "it is not the minister's view or the government's position."

"That letter does not reflect the position of the government or the minister's views," said Jane Deeks, press secretary with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Bernadette Jordan. "We are not talking here about regulating or infringing on their right. We want to work with them to implement it."

- CTV News

First Nations demanding federal government take action on fish farming along B.C. coast

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Canada — A coalition of over 100 B.C. First Nations are 'turning the screws' on the federal Fisheries Minister, demanding she take action on coastal fish farms.

Coalition spokesperson Bob Chamberlin says their group is calling for immediate action, noting that under the Cohen Commission report, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has until the end of September to prove that fish farms on B.C.'s coastal waters don't pose more than minimal risk to Fraser River salmon stocks.

"With reports that we became aware of in the past month or two, it's very clear that the Minister and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is unable to demonstrate that minimal risk," Chamberlin said.

Because the DFO is unable to adhere to the recommendations of the Cohen Commission when it comes to salmon farms they will need to remove fish farms from the ocean.

Sea lice, disease, and pathogens have impacted fish in the Fraser and Thompson River but Chamberlin claims the DFO's reporting is not accurate.

"We've seen reports now and analysis that the industry has been under-reporting sea lice for six or seven or eight years. I mean there's nothing that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has done that proves that they're not in a conflict of interest."

The group says Ottawa has a Sept. 30 deadline to adhere to the recommendations.

"When you consider right now that the government has the commitment to transition the land-based closed container they made that commitment to Canadians. They have a path of reconciliation that they often speak of," he said.

Chamberlin wouldn't say what — if any — action the coalition may take if its demands aren't met.

- City News (Vancouver, B.C.)

Crow Tribe partners with Montana Native Vote for 2020 Census

The U.S. Census Bureau recently cut the response period deadline by a full month, from Oct. 31 to Sept. 30, 2020, disproportionately affecting the counting of Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant communities.

The Bureau's new deadline has sent Montana tribes and social justice organizations like Montana Native Vote (MNV) into crisis mode, fearing a historic undercount that could curtail funding for tribal programs for years to come.

In response to the new deadline, MNV has partnered with the Crow Incident Command Center to set up census drive-through count stations to help members of the Apsaalooke Nation complete the 2020 census.

With one less month to get people counted, the Crow Tribe signed a letter of support to allow local MNV organizers to establish the stations. MNV hired people from within the tribal communities to help facilitate the stations.

All people working at the stations have received specialized safety training and supplies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the stations are designed to get people counted in an entirely contactless manner.

"Our Montana tribal nations are in crisis mode reacting to the new deadline amid the Covid-19 pandemic." said Marci McLean, executive director of Montana Native Vote. "All of our tribal communities in Montana are coming in under 50% counted and the lowest is at 11%. This is just another political move to silence the people of color in our country. We are so thrilled to be able to assist our tribal communities in getting every person counted. We are sending a message to Washington to let them know that we are still here and we will be counted."

The census determines the allocation of nearly $1.5 trillion in federal funds yearly for essential programs and is used to determine representation in the House of Representatives based on population.

If Indigenous people are undercounted, it could mean the loss of as much as $1 billion per year nationally in resources that tribes rely on, such as healthcare, schools, roads, and other essential programs and services.

The US Census Bureau estimates that it undercounted Native Americans living on reservations by 4.9 percent in 2010. The result was a severe misallocation of federal funds that left some tribes drastically underfunded.

Many homes on reservations don't have city-style addresses and most tribal members living in remote areas lack access to broadband or a computer, making it almost impossible to complete the census online. So census enumerators typically go door-to-door, updating addresses and leaving paper questionnaires, which can be mailed in. COVID-19 changed all of this.

Montana's Native communities are among the hardest hit by the virus. Although Native Americans account for 6.6% of Montana's population, they comprise 17% of the state's total COVID-19 cases and 32% of deaths from COVID-19, according to a July 24 Department of Public Health and Human Services report. The pandemic sent many tribal communities into lockdown. As a result, all census activities were initially halted in Montana's tribal nations; they were resumed for some nations in July.

- Sidney (Montana) Herald

Lumbee Tribe emerges as pivotal swing vote in North Carolina

This presidential election all eyes are on battleground states such as North Carolina, particularly Robeson County, just south of Fayetteville and home to the Lumbee Tribe.

The Native American tribe is the largest non-federally recognized tribe east of the Mississippi. Robeson County is one of the most diverse areas in the country, and after consistently voting Democrat, went red in favor of President Trump in 2016.

But this year, many members of the Lumbee tribe remain undecided and could emerge as a critical "swing tribe" in the upcoming election, says Lumbee Tribal Chair Harvey Godwin Jr.

Godwin says being a swing tribe is actually good for Indian country because it will bring national exposure to the issues Native Americans are facing across the U.S., such as access to broadband, health care, education and affordable housing. The Lumbee are recognized as a state tribe by North Carolina, but the lack of federal recognition means they miss out on the full benefits awarded to other Native American tribes.

"I'm hoping that it will inspire other tribes to become more involved in the political process," he says. "And the bottom line is our native voices matter most when we are active in the nation's form of government."

Living in the Bible Belt, Godwin acknowledges that many members of the tribe are "devout Christians" and hold conservative values, which is why many have thrown their support behind President Trump in the past. He says there has been more buzz around Trump because he has visited North Carolina multiple times, while Democratic nominee Joe Biden has not yet made a trip to the key state during the campaign.

This election is being seen as a referendum on President Trump and his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lumbee Tribe received $5 million in CARES Act funding and set up their own testing sites across rural areas, Godwin says.

"We've administered 4,500 tests ourselves," he says. "We came together as a tribal government and we were able to do these things for our people, and I think that's [what's] unique about the Lumbee people is that we had to create our own way of helping our people."

Godwin says he is encouraging the Lumbee people, especially the elderly and those vulnerable to COVID-19, to take advantage of early voting options and mail-in voting. Few Lumbee registered voters have voted by mail in the past.

This year has also been defined by a summer of protests against police brutality and racial inequality. Since the Jim Crow era, the Lumbee Tribe has been on the front lines of fighting for racial justice, Godwin says, most notably by driving out the Ku Klux Klan at the Battle of Hayes Pond in 1958.

Now, the Lumbee tribe is following in their ancestors' footsteps by answering these new calls for racial equality.

"Our people have come through that time, and we welcome others into our community," he says. "We've always worked together for the greater good of each other, not just African American and American Indian, but the other groups as well."

- Here & Now (NPR)

It won't replace Columbus Day, but Arizona governor proclaims Oct. 12 'Indigenous Peoples Day'

PHOENIX, Ariz. — State Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai has been working since 2013 to get a bill passed that would replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day in Arizona, but she was always met with leaders telling her it would never happen.

The closest she got was in 2018, when she got a bill passed recognizing Native American Day on June 2.

"It was really a hollow victory," she said, "June 2nd in the hottest state as a day to celebrate Native people, it was more of a slap in the face."

Peshlakai still hasn't passed a bill to establish Indigenous Peoples Day, but she has made some progress. On Sept. 4, Gov. Doug Ducey signed a proclamation presented by Peshlakai and the Indigenous Peoples' Initiative that recognizes Indigenous Peoples Day on Oct. 12, which is also Columbus Day.

The proclamation does not replace Columbus Day as a state holiday.

"We're grateful for the contributions and influence of Arizona's Native American communities," said Patrick Ptak, communications director for the Governor's Office.

When she heard the proclamation was signed, Peshlakai said everyone involved was surprised and happy about it. She had run so many bills trying to create an Indigenous Peoples Day but was told it would never happen.

"I don't think any other governor has ever done that," Peshlakai said of the proclamation. "This is the first."

Peshlakai thinks "the governor saw this as a chance to mitigate the racial tension. I really appreciate him doing this. It says a lot about where our state and our nation is hopefully headed."

"When I introduce this legislation in January 2021, I need the momentum of this proclamation and the national movement to do this," she added.

In the future, Peshlakai hopes to "make Columbus Day Indigenous Peoples Day and maybe make June 2 Native American Civil Rights Day."

If her idea becomes law, she said, "it's an opportunity to move the conversation forward and to start really working on the inclusion of Native Americans in every part of American life and opportunity."

The proclamation says Arizona "rejects oppression against underrepresented groups that perpetuate socioeconomic disparities." It says the state "recognizes that Indigenous people are the first inhabitants of the Americas, including lands that later become the United States of America," and that Arizona acknowledges "historic injustices suffered by Indigenous people."

Indigenous Peoples Day has been recognized by the city of Phoenix since 2016, after the City Council voted 9-0 to establish the day as an annual city commemoration event. The city's recognition did not create an official city holiday nor replace Columbus Day.

"I'm grateful to our Governor for signing this proclamation. This has been an effort close to the hearts of many Indigenous people," Peshlakai, D-Cameron, said in a press release. "It is time we move beyond Columbus Day and onto a day that celebrates Indigenous people."

Peshlakai worked with the Indigenous Peoples' Initiative on securing the proclamation. They are also working with California Congresswoman Norma Torres to sponsor a bill recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day on the federal level.

Peshlakai praised the work of Dylan Baca, the 18-year-old president of the Indigenous Peoples' Initiative. She said without his help the proclamation wouldn't have been signed.

"He's a high schooler and he's really about inclusion. He started the nonprofit simply to pass Indigenous Peoples Day in Arizona," she said. "This wouldn't have happened without him. He's the one who really lobbied the governor.

- AZcentral.com (Arizona)

Vandals target Michigan historic site where Native American children were forced to assimilate into 'white culture'

MOUNT PLEASANT, Mich. — Vandals have once again struck a mid-Michigan historic site that once served as a boarding school where hundreds of Native American children were housed after being taken from their families.

The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, or MIIBS, is located on 320 acres in northwest Mount Pleasant. The school was in operation from 1893 through 1934 and had an annual enrollment of about 300 students. It was part of the federal Indian boarding school system, which removed American Indian children from their families and culture as part of a forced education and white-culture assimilation initiative that persisted for nearly a century.

The site is now owned by the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2018. The tribe is in the planning stages of rehabilitating and repurposing the site for the healing of its people.

About a week and a half ago, vandalism was discovered at the site, according to Frank Cloutier, public relations director for the tribe.

"This happens about every year around this time," Cloutier said. "It's a constant, persistent (problem) around Halloween, with the old, abandoned buildings."

The site has two dormitories, what's left of an administration building, an old gymnasium, and a wood shop, Cloutier said.

In 2019, the tribe's Tribal Historic Preservation Office was awarded a Tribal Heritage grant from the National Park Service to install a protective fence around two buildings on the site. Trespassers deliberately cut a portion of the protective fence and broke door hinges on the old gym to gain entry, Cloutier said.

"It had to be premeditated, because most people don't carry heavy enough cutters to get through chain-link fencing," Cloutier said. "In the past, we've had people in there looking for copper pipes or artifacts. A lot of the time, it's just young people looking for a quick thrill, going into an abandoned building to find something spooky."

Tribal police have been alerted to the damage, though no arrests have been made as of Wednesday, Sept. 16, Cloutier said. He added that just Tuesday, a tribal member reported seeing four juveniles on the site, two of whom were wearing sheets like ghosts.

"We must now face the cost of repairs and deal with the very painful reality that people are desecrating the site," said Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Marcella Hadden in a post on the tribe's Facebook page. "Based on postings on social media, some think it is 'interesting' or 'fun.' Some think they are 'ghost hunting' on the site of an 'Ancient Indian Burial Ground.' These hurtful actions have prompted the tribe to call on university, civic, and public communities to support and assist tribal efforts to stop the unlawful access to this important historic site."

The tribe holds an Honoring, Healing and Remembering event at the location every June 6, the date commemorating when the school closed. The event honors those children and families who suffered from the effects of the Boarding School-era and creates opportunities for healing the tribal community. It is the only time of the year the site is open to the public.

"By preserving and protecting this important cultural and historical resource, we take a step toward restoring trust with the non-Native community and the Federal Government," the tribe said in a Facebook status. The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, the tribe's museum and cultural center, has a permanent exhibition about the MIIBS and co-hosts the Honoring, Healing and Remembering event.

"We remember the lives of Native students that had passed during their tenure at the school," Cloutier said. "Today, well over 100 students recorded as going to school there never returned home. We don't know what happened with them, with their remains.

"It's a very sensitive area for us, culturally and historically," he continued. "We've been trying to do what we can through the years to protect it and keep aspects of it preserved. It just makes it very difficult when we have these constant interferences and trespasses."

The costs of the damage is currently being assessed, Cloutier said.

"One message I'd like to get out there is the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe is extremely serious about maintaining the integrity and safety of those buildings," he continued. "It's very much a dangerous place to be poking around."

- mlive.com (Michigan)

Native American tribes' reservation boundaries now on Google Maps

The reservation boundaries for Cherokee Nation, Choctaw Nation, Osage Nation, Muscogee Creek Nation and Chickasaw Nation are now shown on Google Maps.

Choctaw Nation said this will make it easier for people to search and view the reservation boundaries with just a few clicks.

"After the monumental US Supreme Court ruling in McGirt vs Oklahoma, we've had many questions about our reservation boundaries, which always existed on paper maps," stated Cherokee Nation Principal Cheif, Chuck Hoskin Jr. "Now that our reservation is labeled on Google Maps, it's easy for people around the world to search and see our reservation boundaries."

Cherokee Nation citizen, Joseph Erb, provided feedback about the reservation mapping project, which includes mapping for all five civilized tribes.

"It is an exciting step forward to be included on the map," Erb said. "This is a visual reminder that our nation is still here and a contemporary Indigenous nation of Continent."

On July 16, 2020, Oklahoma's attorney general and five major Native American tribes in Oklahoma announced an agreement on proposed federal legislation regarding civil and criminal jurisdiction following a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Republican Attorney General, Mike Hunter, announced the deal with leaders of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole nations after the high court ruled that much of eastern Oklahoma remains an Indian reservation, according to an Associated Press report.

The Associated Press report said, "Under the agreement, the state would have criminal jurisdiction over non-Native American offenders throughout the treaty territories, with some exceptions, while the tribes would have overlapping jurisdiction over most offenders who are tribal citizens. Federal prosecutors would still have jurisdiction under the Major Crimes Act over certain serious crimes committed by Native Americans."

The Choctaw Nation is an American Indian territory covering about 6,952,960 acres, occupying portions of southeastern Oklahoma in the United States and the third-largest federally recognized tribe in the United States and the second-largest Indian reservation in the area after the Navajo.

The Cherokee Nation, also known as the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, is the largest of three Cherokee federally recognized tribes in the United States. The Cherokee Nation reservation boundaries include 7,000 miles in northeastern Oklahoma.

- 5newsonline.com (Arkansas)

3 million pounds of firewood donated to Native American tribes after severe northern Utah windstorm

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — Nearly 10,000 volunteers collected and delivered over 3 million pounds of firewood to Native American Tribes across Utah in September. This comes after a major windstorm rocked Northern Utah and downed thousands of trees.

Operation Firewood Rescue, an initiative sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in partnership with Utah government entities, Utah Navajo Health System, the Utah Trucking Association, Associated General Contractors and the Rotary Clubs of Utah, recently transported the firewood to Navajo Nation and other tribes in Utah.

According to a press release from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, from Logan to Draper, thousands of Latter-day Saints and other volunteers donated their time and resources to help with the massive cleanup that was left after the severe windstorm.

Volunteers would help remove trees and then cut the wood into 18-inch pieces before moving them to a county-owned lot nearby.

Pete Sands, a public relations specialist for Utah Navajo Health System, said that he started a firewood program last October explaining that firewood is a lifeline for the Navajo Nation community in Utah.

"The unemployment rate and the infrastructure on the Navajo reservation is not that great, so you put COVID on top of that and it just decimated everything," Sands told Church volunteers. "We don't have heaters, we don't have central cooling systems on the reservation, a lot of the homes here depend on firewood for food."

In response to the firewood need, piles of wood from storm-ridden areas were collected and dropped off at 42 different locations.

"The magnitude of this project is far larger than we ever anticipated and it's astounding," said Stephen Studdert, chairman of "Operation Firewood Rescue".

Once the 3 million pounds of firewood was collected along the Wasatch Front, the firewood was quickly distributed to the various Native American Tribes in Utah.

Drivers of 80 long-combination vehicles such as semi-trucks and double-trailers lined up to load firewood and then made their way to drop off firewood loads to Navajo, Goshutes, and Shosone tribes.

"Even though we come from a different background, different cultures, we can still come together and help each other," said Sands. "It's a great example for the Church, people like myself and others."

Once the curing process is complete, the split and stacked firewood will be distributed to Native American elders and families at each location.

"It's a tragedy to see those trees go down," said Samuel Alon Pugh, Blanding's stake president for the Church. "But they were able to take that tragedy and turn it into a miracle of love, a feeling of warmth that is not just in the wood that will burn but in the hearts that will swell with love and appreciation for the people that have given the gift. [For those] receiving, the gift [will] give for a long time."

- ABC4.com (Salt Lake City)

THE SHOPPES AT THE GUITAR HOTEL.

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We are pleased to announce that Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood is open and under our new Safe + Sound program guidelines. Rigorous sanitary protocols are in place, and there's more space to win. So, come shop, play and dine with peace of mind. For more information about our Safe + Sound program guidelines, visit **HardRockHolly.com/good-clean-fun.**

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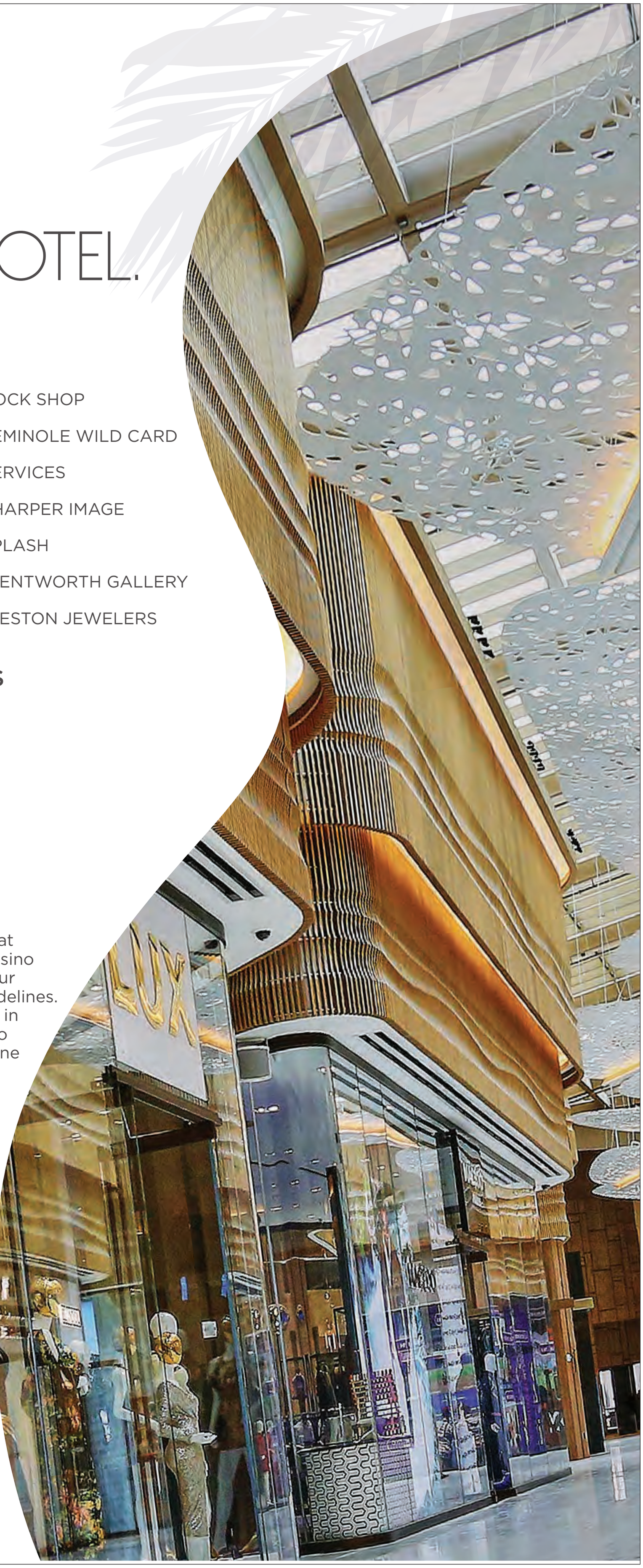


Education

FGCU among recipients of Native American Agriculture Fund's $15M grant

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

FORT MYERS — Indian Country organizations nationwide are the beneficiaries of a $15 million grant from the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF).

The NAAF investment, which was announced Sept. 14, directly benefits 270 Tribal nations in 28 states and provides access to credit for more than 2,300 Native American farmers and ranchers.

The money, granted to 101 Tribal governments, organizations, community development financial institutions, traditional foods projects and educational organizations, will help facilitate 112 projects with an aim to build a stronger food system in Indian Country.

Florida Gulf Coast University is on the list of grantees in the educational organization category and will receive approximately $400,000, which it will use for its agribusiness program and scholarships for Native Americans. FGCU President Dr. Mike Martin believes there haven't been enough Native American students in higher education.

FGCU started its Center for Agribusiness in 2018 as a resource for the agriculture industry in Southwest Florida. The agribusiness minor offers students the knowledge to support all the business functions across the industry.

"I hope the students will be the next generation of agriculture managers and leaders," Martin said. "The Southwest Florida agriculture business is invisible to most people driving along I-75, but it is economically important. Hopefully we can raise awareness and create some future leaders."

The center's advisory board includes several current and former leaders in agriculture businesses.

Nearly all of the 101 grant recipients are in states west of the Mississippi River; FGCU is the lone recipient in Florida. In addition to FGCU, 10 other recipients were awarded money in the educational organization category, including the University of Arizona and several Tribal-related colleges, such as Diné College in Arizona, Nebraska Indian Community College, and Sitting Bull College in North Dakota.

The specifics of NAAF's grant allocation are:

·$4.8 million to Community Development Financial Institutions for 15 projects

· $3.2 million to 501(c)3 Organizations for 40 projects

· $2 million to Tribal Governments for 22 projects

· $2 million to Educational Organizations for 11 projects

· $3 million for 24 Traditional Foods, Advocacy and Agriculture Extension projects.

"[This] investment reflects the values of the Native American Agriculture Fund," Jim Laducer (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa), Chair of the NAAF Board of Trustees, said in a statement. "Through the 112 grants awarded [Sept. 14], we are investing in our producers, our tribes, our communities and our future. The impact of this investment will grow our Native American foodways for generations to come."

According to NAAF, it is the largest philanthropic organization devoted solely to serving the Native American farming and ranching community. It provides grants to eligible organizations for business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and advocacy services to support Native farmers and ranchers.

"Our mission at the Native American Agriculture Fund is to make grants to sustainably build Tribal food economies. This $15 million investment will not only grow our economies, it will ensure that our Native food systems rebuild stronger than ever through the pandemic," said Janie Hipp (Chickasaw), CEO of NAAF.

Florida State University's homecoming delayed until spring 2021

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Chalk up another casualty of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic: Florida State University's homecoming festivities, which the Seminole Tribe's princesses always play a significant role.

The FSU Alumni Association announced that homecoming, originally set for Nov. 9-14, has been rescheduled for spring 2021.

There will be no homecoming football game this season, but other traditional homecoming events such as the parade, the crowning of the Chief and Princess and alumni events will be held. Specific dates will be announced at a later time.

The 50-yard line crowning of the university's royalty, done by Seminole princesses, won't happen this fall as it usually does, but Miss Florida Seminole Durante Blais-Billie is looking forward to returning to the university in the spring and seeing the celebration of its alumni.

"The most heart-warming part of the event for me is how the university, no matter how big, still feels like a tight-knit family that is welcoming everyone back," said Blais-Billie, who is serving an extra year as Miss Florida Seminole along with Jr. Miss Aubee Billie due to the cancellation of this year's Princess Pageant.

Blais-Billie expects there to be many changes for homecoming, including crowd size and event schedules, but is confident everyone involved will be aware of protecting not just FSU, but the Tallahassee community.

During the pandemic, Blais-Billie has been dedicated to a project called Two-Spirit Tuesdays, in which she and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Aubee Billie, along with weekly contributors including Miccosukee tribal member Houston Cypress, advocate for Two-Spirit affirmation through education and calls to action.

"My appearances since March have been entirely virtual," she said. "I'm thankful I am still able to share the culture of my tribe online and collaborate with people dedicated to Indigenous healing. It means everything to still be able to connect with tribal members through groups like the Future Indigenous Leaders of South Florida."

Aubee Billie is used to the upheavals of the pandemic, but she has learned to take things in stride during this unprecedented year.

"I don't know what to expect and I don't think anyone really knows," said Billie, a senior at The Kings Academy in West Palm Beach. "It will be a little weird, that's a given. But we have to keep going with the changes in this chaotic time."

Kevin Johnson

For several years the Seminole Tribe's princesses, such as Jr. Miss Aubee Billie in 2019, have crowned Florida State University's winning royalty at halftime of the homecoming football game, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic there will be no homecoming game this year. Homecoming activities have been pushed to the spring.

Since the pandemic began, Billie's role as Seminole royalty has moved online to social media where she tries to reach out to people through various apps and sites.

"It's been a learning process," she said. "I miss seeing people in our community and talking to people about who this little Tribe is. It's been very interesting."

The pandemic even compelled Billie's brother Eecho to postpone joining the Navy for the time being, possibly for a few more months. She understands all the changes, including at her school, are to keep people safe.

"If we didn't have technology, I don't know what we would be doing," she said. "Social interaction has been cut off, but we can still communicate."

FSU put out a statement explaining its decision on homecoming: Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the top priority of Florida State and the Alumni Association has been, and continues to be, the health of its alumni, students, staff and faculty. Over the past few months, administrators have developed guidelines that provide a healthier and safer campus environment, including limitations on large gatherings. In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the difficult decision was made to postpone this year's homecoming events.

"Homecoming is one of Florida State's most cherished traditions," said FSU President John Thrasher. "Although we won't be able to gather this fall, we hope to welcome friends and alumni back to campus and celebrate everything we love about FSU with students, faculty and staff this spring — one of the most beautiful times of year in Tallahassee."

CSSS offers virtual learning strategies during webinar

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The Center for Student Success and Services (CSSS) shared tips, strategies and resources for virtual learning success during a webinar Sept. 9 for parents and community members.

Since the coronavirus has changed the look and feel of education, a panel from the CSSS staff, Ahfachkee School, Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School, Center for Behavioral Health (CBH), Tribal preschool and tutoring program discussed the challenges of attending school online.

"We recognize the curve ball of the pandemic," said Morgan Griffin, CSSS academic outreach advisor. "We are here to support you during virtual learning and the rest of the school year."

A focus of the webinar was the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) which helps to develop resilience in students and builds a nurturing environment in which they can thrive. The process helps individuals set and maintain goals, build relationships, learn to solve problems and other skills that are necessary from childhood through adulthood.

"SEL gives us strategies and tools to manage strong emotions and make responsible decisions," said Brittany Henry, CBH AWARE mental wellness program manager. "Students with those skills have positive self-esteem, good coping mechanisms and a lower likelihood of substance abuse. It plays a tremendous role in positive mental health."

The webinar touched on a host of ways to adjust to virtual learning. Practicing mindfulness, taking time to focus on the present and be aware of the surroundings can help quiet the "chatter in the mind, which can lead to frantic thoughts," Henry said.

She said SEL "brain breaks" along with exercise can help focus the mind so students and adults can get through the day. One activity is an active body scan. With eyes closed, become aware of every part of the body starting with the toes and slowly reaching the top of the head.

"Feel the external things on your body," Henry said. "Listen for sounds, be aware of smells, feel your stomach rumbling, feel your heartbeat. It helps us focus on the moment and it brings down anxiety. It's a way to train ourselves to shut our brains down. It helps children in this anxiety-ridden time."

Free resources for other SEL games and activities can be found on the CSSS website at csss.semtribe.com.

The panel addressed issues parents may encounter, including what to do when a young child is expected to sit at the computer for hours without a break. Solutions included reaching out to teachers for alternatives, using paper and pencil instead of the computer screen, standing up at the computer as opposed to always sitting, getting a large exercise ball to sit on, take a walk outside and just move around.

"Maybe the child needs more exercise," said Valerie Whiteside, Ahfachkee teacher coordinator. "Take a walk in the evening and play with family members."

Other suggestions include doing deep belly breathing, using squeeze balls, carving out time for other mindful activities and especially establishing a routine.

"I believe brain breaks are important," said Stephanie Tedders, PECS middle school instructional coach. "Sitting still can be punishing for kids."

"Use a timer," added Shavonna Daniels, CSSS K-12 program manager. "It gives them something to look forward to and work toward."

Henry said there are plenty of teachable moments at home and encouraged parents to compliment their children on a job well done.

"If they need a breather, allow them to take one," she said. "Give them small activities they can look forward to. If they get frustrated, help them through it by helping them identify their emotions. Have them write three positive things about themselves."

Tracy Downing, PECS principal, is pleased with the way PECS' virtual school is going so far.

"We have a 92% attendance rate every day," Downing said. "Our parents are educational partners with us. They are real troopers and we appreciate them."

Michael Giacchino, CSSS director, emphasized one of the department's missions.

"We are here to assist you," Giacchino said. "We are looking forward to a good school year regardless of the situation."

Courtesy photo

In some spare time during the pandemic, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Aubee Billie raised a pair of pigs. They were found and rescued in the wild as babies, so small at the time that they needed to be bottle-fed.

Grants awarded to tribal colleges for Head Start, Early Head Start

FROM PRESS RELEASE

In September, the Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) awarded $4 million to six Tribal college and university Head Start (TCU-HS) partnership programs. This funding will be used to increase the number of qualified education staff working in American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

"Educators who possess child development knowledge and relationship competencies, and who are culturally and linguistically responsive to the children and families they serve, play a critical role in supporting the infants, toddlers and preschoolers most impacted by inequality," said Dr. Deborah Bergeron, director of the Office of Head Start.

In FY 2019, Head Start provided funding to 154 American Indian tribal governments or consortia grantees that served over 23,000 children and their families. AIAN programs experience challenges employing staff who have both early childhood education credentials as well as representative cultural and language knowledge. Currently, 23 percent of teachers in AIAN preschool classrooms need to obtain degrees and 33 percent of Early Head Start teachers in AIAN programs need to acquire at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. An even larger number of preschool teacher assistants need to enroll in a program to earn the minimum credential requirement. Geographic barriers, lack of child care, and lack of internet access are among the challenges faced by AIAN Head Start staff needing to meet credential requirements.

The awardees are:

- Navajo Technical College
- Salish Kootenai College
- Stone Child College Corporation
- Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College
- White Earth Tribal and Community College
- Cankdeska Cikana Community College.

‘Positive’ education program for parenting picks up $700,000

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

A unique curriculum designed to support parenting among Native peoples has received a new funding boost.

The “Positive Indian Parenting” program recently secured $700,000 in grant money from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for American Indian and Alaska Native parents.

The funds will be distributed over three years to support a pilot evaluation study on PIP – which was developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association.

The new grant will help stakeholders to understand the impact the PIP curriculum has toward the goals of child and adult wellbeing. “… [W]ith an ultimate goal to establish PIP as an evidence-based practice under the Family First Prevention Services Act.”

The Family First legislation of 2018 overhauled federal child welfare financing.

The support comes on the heels of a $100,000 grant from DDCF to NICWA for planning and design of the pilot study. The pilot study is meant as the next step toward a future national-level study.

Strong reputation

NICWA said in a statement that PIP has been used across Indian Country and First Nations in Canada for more than 30 years. It is based on a broad review of literature on traditional Native parenting practices, consultation with cultural experts, and Native community oral traditions about child rearing and child development.

In addition, NICWA said thousands of parents and caregivers have been trained using PIP, and it has a strong reputation among communities, practitioners and policymakers as a “culturally specific curriculum to improve the wellbeing of Native children and families.”

NICWA

Terry Cross (Seneca) is the senior advisor and founder at NICWA.

One of NICWA’s key goals with the curriculum is to prevent childhood abuse and neglect. “… [A]nd therefore to prevent the placement of Native children in foster care.”

For the next three years, the pilot study will be conducted along with the nonprofit Child Trends, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe of Washington State, Seattle’s Casey Family Programs and DDCF.

“The traditional teachings included in PIP provided strengths to Native families for centuries, but they were nearly lost before being compiled into this curriculum,” Terry Cross (Seneca) said.

Cross is a curriculum author and the senior advisor and founder at NICWA.

“While it has been recognized as a cultural best practice for decades, I’m pleased that the effectiveness of our work can now be tested,” he said.

Other Native leaders also reacted positively to the new funding.

“Restorative parenting practices build strength in our communities and our children. With teachings from our Elders, in conjunction with the PIP curriculum, we are resilient and thriving families using our traditions and building our future generations,” Debbie Hassler, vice chair of the Cowlitz Tribal Council, said in a statement.

Deana Around Him (Cherokee Nation) said there is not a lot of curriculum designed for Native peoples that has been evaluated to meet evidence criteria for federal funding.

She is a senior research scientist at Child Trends and the co-principal investigator for the PIP pilot study.

“This study is important because the new data will allow us to build upon decades of practice-based evidence and trust that Native communities have built for PIP,” Around Him said in a statement. “By expanding the evidence base for PIP, we hope to improve access to new sources of funding and the culturally relevant parenting skills at the core of the curriculum.”

More information is at nicwa.org.

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students of the month - August 2020

Book about Native American dispossession up for national award

BY LEE SHEARER
OnlineAthens.com

A University of Georgia history professor’s book is in the running to win one of the country’s top literary prizes.

Claudio Saunt’s “Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory” is one of 10 books longlisted for the 2020 National Book Award for Nonfiction.

Publishers sent the National Book Foundation more than 600 nominations for the award this year. Five finalists are to be revealed Oct. 6, and the winner named in November.

Saunt faces tough competition, including books such as Pulitzer Prize winner Isabel Wilkerson’s “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents,” about the United States’ hidden caste system; “The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X” by Les and Tamara Payne; and Jill Lepore’s “If Then: How the Simulmatics Corporation Invented the Future,” about a failed Cold War precursor of the computer modeling, data mining and predictive analytics that are so much a part of life today.

Saunt, a native of San Francisco, has been a faculty member in the UGA department of history since 1998. He has been the head of the department and now holds the title of Richard B. Russell professor in American history. He is also co-director of the university’s Center for Virtual History and associate director of UGA’s Institute of Native American Studies.

“Unworthy Republic,” his fourth book, is a “haunting story of racialized cruelty and greed,” according to reviewer Caitlin Fitz of The Atlantic, and “one of the most important books published on U.S. history in recent years,” according to Sven Beckert, Laird professor of history at Harvard University.

It tells the story of the forcible removal of Native Americans from the Southern states in the first part of the 19th century under the Indian Removal Act, a policy pushed by Northern bankers and Southern cotton planters as well as President Andrew Jackson.

The result was millions of acres of land owned by Native Americans being taken away from them and put into the hands of white land speculators. Much of it became the cotton plantations run with slave labor that were foundation of the economy in Southern states.

Many Natives were forced to pay for their own removal, Saunt told Georgia Public Broadcasting’s Virginia Prescott in a recent Atlanta History Center “Virtual Author Talk.”

Poring over records that no one might have looked at for a century or more, he found among other revelations detailed records of the invoices federal bill collectors sent, charging Native Americans for things such as postage and horse feed for Indian agents.By the 1860 census, there was not one Native person listed as living in Alabama, he said.

Before expulsion — the famous “Trail of Tears” was just one part of it — Natives owned about half the land of Alabama, two-thirds of what would become Mississippi and about a fifth of Georgia, Saunt found.

This article appears on OnlineAthens.com.

UCLA Law receives $15M donation to boost Native American law and policy

FROM UCLA NEWSROOM

UCLA School of Law has received a $15 million donation from the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria to advance the study and practice of Native American law. The gift is the largest-ever contribution that a tribe has made to a law school and one of the biggest in history from a tribe to a university. The funds will be dedicated to scholarships for Native American and other students interested in pursuing careers as tribal legal advocates.

The gift will create the Graton Scholars program at UCLA Law’s Native Nations Law and Policy Center. Graton Scholars will be among the best and brightest Native students and others interested in pursuing careers as tribal advocates. Each year, they will receive full-tuition scholarships that will cover all three years of law school at UCLA Law, which is well established as the nation’s premier law school for Indian law.

“This is one of the largest gifts to support scholarships in UCLA history, and we are incredibly grateful to the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria for this visionary investment, which bolsters our university’s longtime commitment to service in Indian country and the success of Native people everywhere,” said UCLA Chancellor Gene Block. “This gift allows us to recruit the very best candidates to pursue their legal education at UCLA and prepare for careers as impactful advocates for Native Nations.”

The announcement of the gift, which is also among the largest contributions to the law school in its seven-decade history, came just days before the 53rd annual California Native American Day is celebrated, on Sept. 25.

“Tribal law is a cornerstone of Native Americans’ quest for equality and inclusion within the U.S. justice system,” said Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Tribal Chairman Greg Sarris, who received his undergraduate degree from UCLA and returned to teach English for more than a decade. “UCLA’s commitment to educating and preparing the next generation of tribal legal advocates is personally known to me, as an alumnus and former UCLA professor. We hope this gift will begin the drive for equity for our people in our native land. It’s particularly fitting that our announcement coincides with this Friday’s California Native American Day, which celebrates and honors the historic and cultural contributions by California Native Americans.”

‘Gather’ film showcases revitalization of Native food sovereignty

BY MONICA WHITEPIGEON
Native News Online

For anyone interested in learning more about the importance of food sovereignty, the production of culturally-appropriate foods through ethically sustainable practices, the recently released film “Gather” is an ideal introduction.

The 74-minute documentary focuses on the diverse aspects and common obstacles tribal nations have had to overcome to reclaim their food sovereignty rights. Throughout the feature, the audience is introduced to three protagonists from a variety of Indigenous backgrounds, including chef and nutritional recovery clinic owner Nephi Craig (White Mountain Apache Nation), environmental activists Ancestral Guard from the Yurok Nation, and aspiring scientist Elsie Dubray (Cheyenne River Sioux Nation).

The film starts with a message of hope as master forager Twila Cassadore (San Carlos Apache) and her granddaughter gather ingredients from their ancestral lands in Arizona.

“It’s just about reconnecting people to who they are, and it starts off small. It’s like planting that little seed,” said Cassadore in the film.

Produced by First Nations Film Development Institute, “Aquaman” star Jason Momoa and filmmaker Sterlin Harjo (Seminole, Muskogee), “Gather” showcases how the history of colonialism detrimentally affected Native food systems as well as its correlation to mental well-being. The film touches on the lack of accessibility to healthier and culturally-significant food options, such as the diminishment of Klamath River’s salmon population in Northern California and the near extinction of bison populations.

“If my research can do anything, I don’t want it to prove what’s already known. I just want it to help people get back to the way that it’s meant to be,” said Dubray about her research in the health and cultural benefits of grass-fed buffalo in South Dakota.

Film director Sanjay Rawal (Food Chains) examines the intrusiveness of colonialism and trauma associated with it while still offering hope by featuring Natives who are combating food deserts and long-term genocide.

In the documentary, Chef Craig spoke to an audience of young farmers to educate and discuss Indigenous food systems.

“Seventy percent of all foods consumed around the world today originated by Indigenous peoples of the Americas. And that’s some of the information that we want to instill in our own people,” said Craig.

Released this past summer, “Gather” is receiving high acclaim and was recently chosen as a critic’s pick by The New York Times. Common Sense Media, a nonprofit media reviewer, gave the film 4 out of 5 and praised it as “a thought-provoking documentary that offers a glimmer of hope for positive change, not only for Indigenous people, but also for a world seemingly on the brink of environmental catastrophe.”

For featured activist, Samuel Gensaw (Yurok), passing along cultural knowledge and showing respect for wildlife will help in the recovery process for future generations.

“The industrial revolution is over. Now, if we want to survive, if we want to carry on life on Earth, we need to be a part of the restorative revolution,” Gensaw said.

The film’s website offers options to arrange screenings for virtual audiences along with post-screening Zoom discussions. Streaming options are available on multiple platforms such as iTunes, Amazon Prime and Vimeo-on-Demand.

This article appears on nativenewsonline.net.

Courtesy photo

The film poster for ‘Gather,’ which explores the importance of Native food sovereignty.

Native conference addresses challenges of tourism during pandemic

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Cultural tourism is helping to pave the way to economic recovery for Native American tribes, as was clearly demonstrated during the 22nd annual American Indian Tourism Conference.

About 800 attendees participated in the virtual conference. Held online Sept. 14-18, the theme of the conference was "One Country, Many Nations." The five days of sessions revealed similarities in the challenges facing each tribe due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The conference was a great way to get people together to talk about how the pandemic affected cultural tourism in North America," said Paul Backhouse, senior director of the Seminole Tribe's Heritage and Environment Resources Office. "We aren't any different than anyone else; we have all been affected by it."

The opening session featured keynote speaker Amber Torres, chairwoman of the Walker River Paiute Tribe located about 100 miles southeast of Reno, Nevada. The reservation consists of about 325,000 acres in a high desert river valley, used mostly for grazing and some ranching, surrounded by mountains, desert lakes and marshland.

The tribe has 2,300 members, about 1,200 live on the reservation. It is 40 miles from the nearest grocery store and 100 miles from the nearest hospital.

"We are a small tribe located in the great basin of northern Nevada," Torres said. "The past seven months have been the most trying times tribes have faced with the virus and lives at stake. We have fared better than most by taking fast action and making hard decisions to ensure compliance to protect our community, children and elders."

The tribe closed the reservation to all non-residents, including members who lived off the reservation. It shut all non-essential businesses. It opened a community store so residents would have access to produce, meat and other grocery items.

But the biggest hit the tribe took was closing the Weber Reservoir, its main tourist attraction and one of its largest forms of revenue. Fishing, camping, off road recreation and other activities are popular at the reservoir. The tribe hired staff to monitor it day and night, but outsiders defied the closure order and damaged signs and some areas.

"It was very disheartening," Torres said. "They feel it is their right to access our land whenever. Entering our reservation is a privilege, not a right and needs to be respected. The almighty dollar isn't the most important thing now."

Like many tribes that depend on tourism, the Walker River Paiute are looking for innovative ways to market its attractions online.

"We need to be prepared for everything because we are a second thought to the federal government," Torres said. "We have to be sustainable, take care of our own and continue to stay resilient. Our people's lives depend on it."

Adapting to the pandemic

Other sessions also focused on resilience and practical guidance. Before Covid-19, tribal tourism was a promising approach to sustaining economic development, access to basic services and responsibly manage resources. During the pandemic, tribes have been opening cautiously since government assistance protocols are not necessarily adapted to Indigenous communities, according to Seleni Matus, executive director of the International Institute of Tourism at George Washington University.

"Indigenous communities celebrate their resilience and are remembering how much they have overcome through history," said Matus. "It is time bring back that resilience. It's clear we are in very different times now and the playbook that once existed isn't fully applicable now."

Diversifying products and services during the pandemic is important to attracting visitors.

"If you are a tourism enterprise, your world has been turned upside down over the last six months," said Anna Barrera, a research scholar at GWU's International Institute of Tourism.

Travelers are staying closer to home, so local and regional residents will likely be the majority of visitors. Barrera suggested adjusting to that reality by marketing to that demographic. If large groups are the norm, think about featuring activities and tours for small and family groups.

"We need to understand the new customer," said Talia Salem, of The Urban Nomad, a tourism consulting firm. "People need a break that won't make them more nervous. Marry health and safety with the visitor experience. Shift to live virtual tourism. Artisans, chefs and storytellers are taking their in-person tours and turning them into a live online experience."

Native architecture

During a session on how Native architectural design engages visitors, JohnPaul Jones (Oklahoma Choctaw/Cherokee) discussed how he incorporates Native values into his designs. Jones designed the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., and other cultural centers including the Santa Ynez Chumash Cultural Center.

Jones spoke about huge murals of Native Americans in Seattle, which attract people from all over.

"It's all about identity," Jones said. "As Native people, we have woven our lives into the non-native world for more than 500 years. It's time to reestablish our own identity. You can do it through tourism and activism. Stand inside your indigenous ways and not in some other tourist effort. Native tourism can really benefit and strengthen the community."

U.S. Congresswoman Deb Haaland address

"I'm pleased that today many Native American entrepreneurs and professionals are experiencing a renaissance and sharing their work with the world," said U.S. Congresswoman Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), representative from New Mexico's First Congressional District. "Poverty and unemployment are nearly triple the national average. We can grow jobs through Native American businesses, but often resources aren't available to Native communities, especially during the Covid shutdown and lack of broadband access."

As a young single mother, Haaland started and ran a salsa company, but found limited access to resources for Native communities. Those barriers compelled her in 2019 to introduce the Native American Business Incubators Program Act, which will increase access to capital through the Department of the Interior for business development and growth in Native communities. The bill passed the House of Representatives and the Senate and is awaiting the President's signature to become law.

"Tribal tourism is key to financial prosperity on tribal lands and spills over to agriculture, food, artisan works, wildlife preservation and self-determination," Haaland said. "Financial tools and tax barriers are fundamental issues we need to work on in Congress. We need to move to uplift business in small sectors, especially Native tourism."

International visitors

Planning for the return of international visitors entails more than just printing brochures and hoping for the best. Tribes must tell a compelling story and establish partnerships with other tourist destinations in the region.

"Pre-pandemic we all wished we had more time to do the things we couldn't get to," said Lisa Weigt, principal, Destinations by Design in Oklahoma, who thinks international tourists may come back in mid-2021. "Establish partnerships with someone who offers your same level of service. You want to give visitors more than one attraction per destination and partnerships do that."

"You can cooperate with your competition in the international arena," added Julie Heizer, deputy director of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Travel and Tourism Office. "You can't go it alone unless you are one of those really big guns, like Las Vegas or New York City."

Know your markets and how they want to travel, Weigt advised.

"It's foolhardy to think someone is going to travel from overseas just to come to your destination," said Tony Lyle, VP of tourism development, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority. "They are coming to experience different parts of the U.S. They don't have much time; they like to be given ideas."

Lyle suggested reaching out to state tourism offices and local convention and visitors bureaus, who promote destinations together.

"They are all hungry for content and information," he said. "If you don't tell them, they won't know about you. People want more than just the iconic American destinations. It's worked really well for us."

Tour operators are another efficient way to reach the international market, as are familiarization tours for the media.

"We have a lot of things for them (reporters) to do and they write articles," said Sharon Calcote, director of the Louisiana Office of Tourism, Louisiana Byways. "We find articles are a great way to drive traffic, even better than advertising."

Tourism from the lens of a tribal leader

Fawn Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians and former president of the Quinault Indian Nation, shared her perspective on tourism, climate and leadership.

"We are facing apocalyptic challenges including a firestorm of political, social and economic upheaval," she said. "While it is so dark and uncertain, one thing is for certain: we have each other, our traditions and the spiritual dimension of our being. No matter where you go in Indian Country you can hear that drumbeat, the heartbeat of who we are today."

Sharp believes the country is being tested and that ancient values can rise above the political fray.

"We need to be the leaders our ancestors hoped we would be," she said. "This time is gifted to us; we are born, ready and prepared for this moment. This year has exposed what we have known for centuries; we knew there was a day of reckoning coming. This country so desperately needs the values we hold as Native people. How we handle this moment is the gift we will give to future generations and leaders."

Millions of sockeye salmon used to crowd the Quinault River, but a few years ago there were only a few. The Quinault Tribe had to close the fisheries. Sharp flew over the source of the river, the Anderson glacier, and saw only a mudpile. She became a fervent climate change advocate.

Sharp attended a meeting at the United Nations to talk to potential partners outside of the U.S. about opening up traditional ceremonies, songs and dances to attract tourism.

"In that moment, I realized the value and the role of tourism," she said. "It was an opportunity to take the best of North America and share it with the world. What a powerful industry this is."

Sharp has met with Congressional leaders and said they realize the imbalanced economy in tribal nations. She made it clear they need to uphold their trust responsibility and respect sovereignty, instead of continuing to oppress tribes.

"I believe we have political leverage now and the whole world sees how exposed and vulnerable we are economically," Sharp said. "Tourism is one of those pieces that if we can grow, develop and support, will be the factor that sees us through this crisis."

Casinos and Culture

During the pandemic, tribal gaming nationwide has reported a collective loss of nearly 300,000 jobs and an economic loss of $4.4 billion. As casinos begin to reopen, the new normal of safety measures for guests and employees have been implemented. Some leaders in the industry see this as the right time to redefine their marketing efforts.

Laura Stensgar, CEO of the Coeur d'Alene Casino in Idaho, outlined what they have done since the pandemic began in March. The casino, its resort and golf course usually have about 900 employees and 850 in the off-season.

"Gaming is an effective tool to generate jobs for tribal members and revenue for tribal social programs," Stensgar said. "We have been able to provide for our people. We are a tribe with a casino, not a casino with a tribe."

Cultural arts are incorporated into the resort's design with murals, sculpture and beadwork prominently displayed.

"We have a beautiful story and we want to share it," Stensgar said. "But we are careful with how much we share. There is a fine line about how much to share about our traditions; we consulted with our elders."

The casino's cultural tourism program has been a success since its inception about four years ago. Activities include kayak and canoe tours, an Indian cliff hike, bicycle and boat tours, a silver mine tour, moccasin workshop, eagle aviary tour, the last battle tour and an authentic cultural dinner with drum and dancers. The program results in longer guest stays at the resort and it attracts new groups.

"Cultural tours have worked out very well for us, it brings in regional and international tourists," Stensgar said. "As a casino resort, we want a return on our investment but it's also great PR to share culture."

Stensgar said it was surreal and sad to walk through the empty casino and parking lot after it closed in March. She knows how important the revenue is to the tribe. The tribal council established a task force and looked at ways to open safely; they reviewed the CDC guidelines, the Wynn Resorts protocols and their own health center experts. They reopened May 1 with a mask mandate and other safety measures.

"People want to get out," Stensgar said. "We are social people and it's hard to stay confined. As tribal people, we have always persevered and adjusted to our environment."

Casino gaming also drives the business of tourism at the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. About 10 years ago the tribe began a strategic investment in cultural tourism and invested in historic and cultural assets. Today they have six museums, 5,000 pieces of Cherokee art and more than 100 programs per year located on more than 66,000 acres in the eastern Oklahoma foothills of the Ozark mountains.

"Visitors get a glimpse of the Cherokee story," said Travis Owens, director of Cultural Tourism and Community Relations at Cherokee Nation Businesses. "The idea was to build a hub; we have a high density of cultural sites near our capital of Tahlequah."

In March, all those sites closed and they are figuring out how to operate in a Covid world. The casinos opened in June and the culture programs in August. A mask mandate is in place along with health screening, temperature checks, strict social distancing and cleaning protocols across all properties.

"People have an understanding of masks; we made it part of our advertising," Owens said. "We want to keep visitors safe. We also created virtual tour experiences with 3D scans. All are available on our website."

Tribal destinations have shown resilience during the pandemic, by using virtual or smaller in-person tours, as they strive to retain important tourism revenue.

Carrie Dilley, visitor services and development manager at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress, attended the conference and was impressed with the 'outside the museum/attraction mindset.'

"I really enjoyed how they were able to weave in discussion on job development and sustainability," Dilley said. "I enjoyed learning how other Tribes capitalize on their own tourism ventures and also hearing about shared challenges."

screenshots (2)

The pandemic's impact on Native American casinos, such as the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's casino in Idaho, left, and cultural tourism were among items discussed at the American Indian Tourism Conference.

From urban campuses to reservations, Native American students feel Covid-19's reach

BY MATT HOFFMAN
Billings (Mont.) Gazette

Johnny Talawyma was ready to stride across the stage to receive his bachelors degree diploma last spring.

It's been a long journey for the 38-year-old Montana State University Billings student who grew up on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. He wanted a chance not only to celebrate himself, but to set an example for younger people in his tribe.

Covid-19 changed that, like it has so many other things. Graduation seems almost distant now for Talawyma. His uncle died after contracting Covid-19. Other relatives battled severe symptoms. Talawyma himself contracted the disease and recovered.

Native American students already face barriers in the pursuit of higher education. As Covid-19 has disproportionately sickened and killed Native Americans, Talawyma and other students have worked to maintain the communities they have, both on campus and on the reservation.

As he's continued to work toward a master's degree, Talawyma is also trying to care for family members. When he visits the reservation, he loads up with supplies for them like cold medicine and tissues.

Shannon Birdinground is Talawyma's niece, a fellow student, and a Northern Cheyenne tribal member. Both are part of an urban American Indian population that often has strong ties to reservations while living in predominantly white cities. They've experienced the Covid-19 pandemic through both lenses.

Birdinground recalls reading about the risk to Native Americans early in the pandemic.

"People were saying, Native Americans were at higher risk, I saw so many comments on social media saying, how?"

Joe McGeshick is MSUB's tribal liaison and a Native American Studies instructor. He gave a daily lecture over the past week as part of campus events for Native American Week, "Covid-19 in Indian Country."

It went far beyond the sterility of the daily map updates from state health officials, which show alarmingly high case figures in counties like Big Horn, Rosebud and Roosevelt. The map doesn't plot reservations.

It's a "virgin soil epidemic," he said, something that has ravaged American Indian tribes since European explorers landed in what they thought was a New World.

Death toll estimates from European diseases range between 90% and 50% of the original human inhabitants of the Americas, who had no immunity to smallpox, influenza strains and other diseases.

The western institutions that followed European settlement to control disease — hospitals, vaccinations, public health measures — have never served Native Americans as well as whites, McGeshick said.

It's not so much that the pandemic created inequities; it exposed them.

He highlighted entrenched disparities in housing, health care, and transportation that have all contributed to the pandemic's severity on reservations.

Even access to water is variable, though more reliable than desert communities like the Navajo Reservation. McGeshick showed photos from a water hauling station on the Fort Peck Reservation, where he grew up.

"One of the best mitigation efforts is, wash your hands. We take that for granted," he said.

Indian Health Service facilities are often distrusted and inadequate, he said, and require long trips from some parts of reservations.

"Even if you do have symptoms, even if you do come down with Covid, where are you going to go, what are you going to do?" he said.

Advice about isolation and social distancing flies in the face of communal traditions.

"We live constantly by each other, close to each other, with each other," said McGeshick.

McGeshick grew up on the Fort Peck Reservation, with his eight siblings in a one bedroom house. When he talks about structural challenges on reservations that make it difficult to control Covid-19, he's lived it.

"You can't self-isolate if you don't have the room," he said.

The new sweat lodge at MSUB's Native American Achievement center was used 15 times before Covid-19 restrictions shut it down. The center itself had to close for two weeks already this year.

The U.S. has wide achievement gaps between white and Native American students. Montana's universities are no different. Native American students are less likely to enroll in universities or graduate.

One of the largest challenges is culture shock. Talawyma, a self-described "reservation boy coming to the city," was overwhelmed by Billings and the campus environment at first.

He'd had an early crack at college, attending a small school in Kansas. He developed substance use problems, which derailed his education. He's now clean and works as an addiction counselor, and spent two years at Chief Dull Knife College in Lame Deer before attending MSUB.

✦ See COVID-19 on page 6B

Six feature and episodic fellows selected for 2020 Sundance Institute Indigenous Intensive

SUNDANCE INSTITUTE'S INDIGENOUS PROGRAM

LOS ANGELES — A new group of six Indigenous storytellers participated in August in the Sundance Institute Indigenous Intensive. Presented by WarnerMedia 150, the Intensive was held digitally on Sundance Co//ab, the Sundance Institute's digital learning platform.

The weeklong program focused on launching the development process of the storytellers' projects under the guidance of acclaimed International Creative Advisors and Sundance Institute's Indigenous Program, headed by N. Bird Runningwater (Cheyenne/Mescalero Apache).

"We were excited to create a new support model in our program to work more deeply with a new generation of artists on their Feature Film and Episodic projects," Runningwater said. "We hope to expand our community's work in these forms and beyond while continuing to nurture their exceptional and distinct voices."

"The August intensive was amazing," said 2020 Feature Fellow Erin Lau (Kanaka Maoli). "I've had the pleasure of working with many wonderful people in this industry; however, every time I have the opportunity to take part in one of Sundance's Indigenous programs, it renews my spirit like nothing else."

"I feel incredibly honored to be included alongside these other talented Indigenous artists," said 2020 Episodic Fellow Blake Pickens (Chickasaw Nation). "As a comedian, it's tough during this time of COVID where there are no stages to perform on. But being able to develop a project in a space made for us gave me a platform to work on my comedy and hone my craft. Bird and his team are amazing, and I'm forever grateful for all of their support."

"There's a shorthand and an understanding between us — it's difficult to put into words how deeply it fills my soul to create and dream with other Indigenous artists," added Lau. "The program helped me to raise the quality of my work, but also to stay rooted in who I am and the responsibilities I carry as a Native Hawaiian woman."

2020 Feature Fellows:
Erin Lau (Kanaka Maoli)
Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (Blackfoot/Sámi)
Erica Tremblay (Seneca-Cayuga/Wyandotte Nations)

2020 Episodic Fellows:
Jonny Cournoyer (Rosebud Sioux–Sicangu Lakota)
Blake Pickens (Chickasaw Nation)
Shaandiin Tome (Diné Nation)

2020 Creative Advisors:
Michelle Latimer (Métis/Algonquin)
Sally Riley (Wiradjuri Nation)
Heather Rae
Effie Brown
Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Muscogee Creek)
Sierra Ornales (Diné Nation).

About Sundance Institute's Indigenous Program

The Indigenous Program champions Indigenous independent storytelling artists through residency labs, fellowships, public programming, and a year-round continuum of creative, financial, and tactical support. The Program conducts outreach and education to identify a new generation of Indigenous voices, connecting them with opportunities to develop their storytelling projects, and bringing them and their work back to Indigenous lands. At its core, the Program seeks to inspire self-determination among Indigenous filmmakers and communities by centering Indigenous people in telling their own stories.

The Sundance Institute Indigenous Program is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Oneida Indian Nation, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Nia Tero Foundation, SAGindie, Indigenous Screen Office, New Zealand Film Commission, Jenifer and Jeffrey Westphal, Indigenous Media Initiatives, Felix Culpa, Sarah Luther, Susan Shilliday, and an anonymous donor.

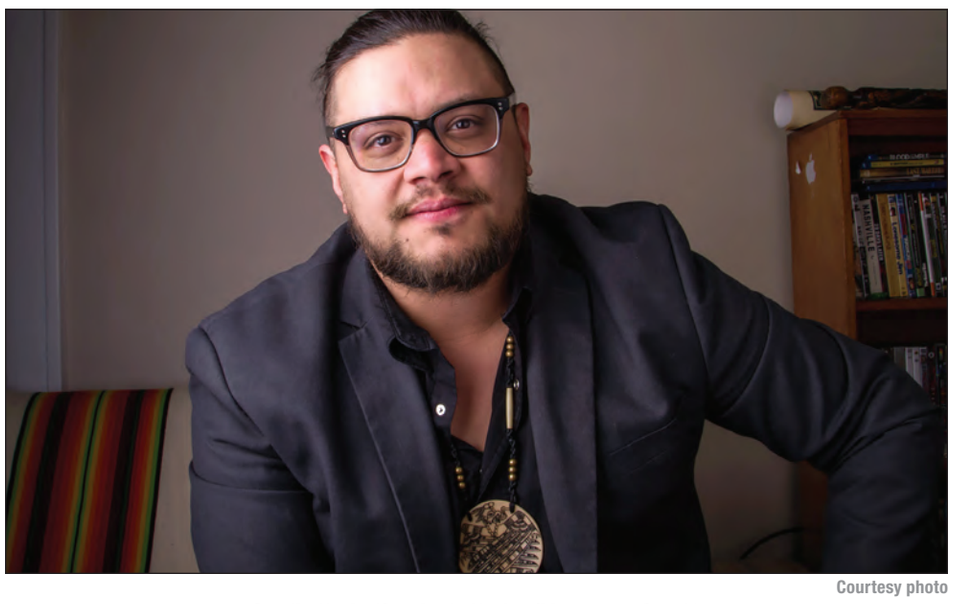
To find out more about opportunities for Indigenous storytellers, visit sundance.org/programs/indigenous-program

About Sundance Institute

In 1981, Robert Redford founded Sundance Institute to foster independence and provide a safe harbor for risk-taking new voices. In the organization's inaugural year, 15 emerging filmmakers were invited to Sundance Resort in the mountains of Utah to develop their original independent projects with mentorship from leading writers, directors, and actors.

Courtesy photo

Erin Lau (Kanaka Maoli)



Courtesy photo

Sterlin Harjo (Seminole Nation/Muscogee Creek)

Courtesy photo

Shaandiin Tome (Diné Nation)

Ground broken for veterans memorial honoring American Indians, Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

A memorial in California honoring American Indian, Alaska Native and Pacific Islander veterans is one step closer to becoming reality.

Organizers held a groundbreaking ceremony Sept. 25, which was also California Native American Day.

A memorial statue built by sculptor A. Thomas Schomberg, famous for creating the bronze Rocky Balboa statue from the movie "Rocky," is set to be installed on a site at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside.

"Today is California Native American Day and there is no better way to honor American Indian Veterans than with this groundbreaking ceremony," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie said at the ceremony. "More Native Americans per capita serve our country than any other demographic. This memorial will honor their sacrifice and service in the United States military."

Organizers said this is the VA's first major monument honoring American Indian, Alaska Native and Pacific Islander veterans.

The memorial consists of a plaza and walkway centered around the statue, known as "The Gift." The twice life-sized bronze statue represents an American Indian cloaked in an American Flag. It stands 12-feet tall and weighs 1.5 tons. The memorial is intended to honor fallen heroes and living veterans, as well as educate the public about the military contributions of American Indians.

Construction on the memorial is expected to be completed in the next two years. The memorial is being paid for with funds raised by the Riverside National Cemetery Support Committee along with substantial funding from Southern California tribes.

"While this memorial honors American Indian, Alaska Native and Pacific Islander veterans from across the nation, it is a great honor that it is being installed here in Southern California at the Riverside National Cemetery," said Ken Ramirez, chairman of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, one of the major contributors to the project. "With so many tribes here in the Inland Empire and San Diego County, it is sure to become a revered destination for many proud Americans who understand the significant contribution that Native Americans had in armed conflicts."

To learn more about the American Indian Veterans Memorial, contact Riverside National Cemetery Executive Director Peter Young at (951) 653-8417 or visit www.facebook.com/NatCemRiverside.

Michael Campbell, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

A groundbreaking ceremony was held Sept. 25 in Riverside, California, at the site of a memorial that will honor American Indian, Alaska Native and Pacific Islander veterans.

(Right) Michael Campbell, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; (below) courtesy rendering

At right, this statue, built by sculptor A. Thomas Schomberg, will be the focal point of the memorial being built in Riverside, California, that honors American Indian, Alaska Native and Pacific Islander veterans. Schomberg is the sculptor who made the Rocky Balboa statue in Philadelphia. Below, a rendering of the American Indian Veterans Memorial.

Sports

Okeechobee's Carriss Johns rushes for TD in first high school game

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee High School freshman running back Carriss Johns has plenty of reasons to smile after the Brahmans defeated Moore Haven, 32-6, on Sept. 11. Johns scored a touchdown in his first game.

MOORE HAVEN — Carriss Johns didn't waste any time to make an impact for the Okeechobee High School football team.

After providing plenty of effective blocks out of the backfield throughout the night, Johns capped a memorable debut in his first high school game by scoring the first time he touched the ball. Johns, a starting freshman running back, rushed for a 6-yard touchdown in the Brahmans' 32-6 season opening night victory against host Moore Haven on Sept. 11.

"It felt great. It felt amazing," said Johns, who is the son of Seminole tribal member Stephanie Johns.

Johns' touchdown came with 7:42 left in the fourth quarter and gave Okeechobee a commanding 26-6 lead. He took the handoff and showed impressive speed to the right side as he eluded defenders on his way to the end zone.

Okeechobee coach Ty Smith wasn't surprised by what he saw, having been a coach on an Okeechobee youth football team that included his son and Johns.

"I knew what kind of dynamic player he is," Smith said. "It was the other (Okeechobee High) coaches who never got a chance to see him play. He made a quick impact for us, immediately. The other coaches, as we went into our (preseason) meetings, said this kid is really the truth. I said 'yes, he is.'"

Scoring a touchdown wasn't the only aspect of Johns' game that impressed Smith in the win against Moore Haven. The 5-foot-8, 165-pounder did a solid job without the ball.

"He blocked very well," Smith said. "I'm happy for that. For him being a 13-year-old freshman and to play the way he did tonight, we're just looking forward to him throughout the rest of his career and playing that way and stepping his game up."

Despite his age, Johns also brings a leadership aspect to the squad.

"He's a natural leader," Smith said. "Even at the age he is at – he'll be 14 soon – and him being a freshman, you hear his mouth in practice and you hear him saying 'we've got to get this going…"

Johns said facing some Moore Haven players who are former schoolmates of his from Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School – where he attended before transferring to another school – provided an extra boost.

"It felt like I had to be more competitive, that I had more of an urge to win. I'm friendly with all of them," he said.

Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee running back Carriss Johns (1) blocks Moore Haven linebacker Ramone Baker.

Kevin Johnson

Brothers Ramone Baker (9) and Pherian Baker (65) take the field for the Moore Haven High football team in its opener Sept. 11 against Okeechobee.

Tribe/PECS connections prevalent on Moore Haven High football team

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — In recent years, the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School, on the Brighton Reservation, has served as a feeder of sorts for the Moore Haven High School football program.

A big reason – or three big reasons – Moore Haven surged to prominence in recent seasons as one of Florida's best small school success stories were three massive Native American linemen who came out of PECS. But the days of the offensive line being filled by giants Conner Thomas and Andrew Fish, both of whom graduated two years ago, and Robert Harris, who graduated in the spring, are gone. They took a lot of size – about a combined 1,000 pounds – with them.

PECS is still well represented on this year's edition of the Terriers with five graduates on the squad, including the Seminole Tribe's Ramone Baker, Pherian Baker and Jaytron Baker, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma's Donovan Harris, and Wyatt Hines, the son of Seminole tribal member and former Moore Haven player Marvin Hines.

Most of the group saw varsity time last season, but now they're a year older and with plenty of holes to fill due to graduation, they'll be counted on even more so this season.

In the season opener, versatile Ramone Baker saw the most playing time of the group. An agile 6-foot-1, Baker possesses the foot speed and size that can help on both sides of the ball. He played outside linebacker all night, saw action at fullback and played on special teams. He helped pave the way on rushes and even took a handful of handoffs, which included a few strong runs on the team's only scoring drive of the night in the third quarter.

Moore Haven coach Brent Burnside described Baker as a "a naturally bigger, physical kid. Still raw with football talent. Will be able to help us in multiple ways."

At 6-foot, 305 pounds, Baker's younger brother Pherian brings size to the line. He didn't see a lot of playing time against Okeechobee, but he's only a sophomore.

Kevin Johnson

At 6-foot-2, 230 pounds, tight end Jaytron Baker (18) brings size to Moore Haven's offense.

"He has the tools to help us on both the offensive and defensive lines and gives us depth at those positions," Burnside said.

Although not a brother of Ramone and Pherian, Jaytron Baker also brings much needed size to the team. He's a solid 6-foot-2, 230 pound tight end and outside linebacker who provided blocking that paved the way for the team's only touchdown. He also adds toughness that he's garnered from years of competition in another physically-demanding sport: bull riding.

"Another big, physical kid," Burnside said. "He has the ability to play some effective tight end for us and will be a factor on the defensive side once he gets more experience."

Donovan Harris, a 6-foot-1, 220-pound senior linebacker, wasn't in uniform against Okeechobee. He's a force on the basketball court for the Terriers and has the potential to do the same on the football field, likely in a defensive role.

"He has a genuine passion for the game [and] is another one that will help us at multiple spots," Burnside said.

After spending his freshman season in a backup role last year, Wyatt Hines had his first career start at quarterback against Okeechobee. The offense didn't take to the air too often as it tried to establish a running attack. Hines encountered several high snaps – some he snagged and some went over his head..

Burnside said the 6-foot-1, 165-pound Hines, who also handled punting duties, is still developing and has plenty of potential.

"We're hoping to bring him along to have a successful future with us," he said.

✦ See MOORE HAVEN on page 6B

FGCU athletics to hold fundraiser and auction

FROM PRESS RELEASE

FORT MYERS — To help offset the financial impact of COVID-19, the FGCU Department of Athletics announced today the launch of The Sustaining Flight Fundraiser and Auction (www.fgcuathletics.com/sustainingflight). The fundraising campaign will help mitigate operational revenue loss and the additional expenses incurred as a result of COVID-19 protocols. All funds raised during the campaign will go to support areas that directly impact student-athletes.

In lieu of hosting the annual Night at the Nest gala this year, one of FGCU's most successful fundraising events, the department will be hosting a virtual, online auction from Nov. 30 through Dec. 4. Fans and supporters will be able to bid on exclusive memorabilia, trip packages, unique event experiences and more.

The spring cancellation of events, including March Madness, the postponement of fall athletics events, decreased capacity in Alico Arena due to the CDC social distancing guidelines, and the increased costs involved with COVID-19 testing, along with other safety implementations has presented an unprecedented budget deficit in excess of $2 million.

"At this critical juncture, we are asking for the continued tremendous support of FGCU Athletics by the Southwest Florida Community and beyond," Associate Athletics Director for Advancement Graham Diemer said. "The challenges presented by the pandemic and the pivot that we had to make to the virtual space for the auction are speed bumps. However, the investments made by our donors, corporate sponsors and auction item donors and bidders, will help ensure that our student-athletes experience opportunities and experiences to be successful in competition, the classroom and as future community leaders."

For more information or to make a gift, contact Associate AD for Development Graham Diemer at 239-590-7117 or gdiemer@fgcu.edu.

Kevin Johnson

Sophomore quarterback Wyatt Hines gets ready to take a snap as Moore Haven began its 2020 season Sept. 11 at home against Okeechobee.

Brady Keeper, from from Pimicikamak Cree Nation, re-signs with Florida Panthers

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

SUNRISE — Brady Keeper will remain a member of the Florida Panthers organization for his second professional season.

Keeper, a rugged 6-foot-2, 210-pound defenseman from the Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Manitoba, Canada, re-signed with the Panthers on Aug. 31. The one-year contract comes after Keeper spent his rookie pro season with Florida's American Hockey League affiliate in Massachusetts. Keeper, 24, put up solid numbers with 6 goals, 12 assists and a team-high 108 penalty minutes in 61 games with the Springfield Thunderbirds.

He appeared in one game this season for the Panthers, which came in game 2 of their Stanley Cup qualifying round series against the New York Islanders in early August. Keeper didn't play again in the series, but he made a favorable impression on Panthers coach Joel Quenneville.

"I thought he had a good game today," Panthers coach Joel Quenneville said after game 2 in a story on NHL.com. "I thought he had an excellent (exhibition) game against (the Tampa Bay Lightning), and he had a real good training camp. I think that was why he earned his spot."

Keeper played his amateur hockey with the OCN Blizzard, a team in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League that was founded by the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. Keeper went on to play two seasons with the University of Maine. He left after the 2018-19 season and signed with the Panthers. He immediately made his NHL debut with the Panthers, appearing in one regular season game in March 2019.

He scored his first pro goal in October 2019 with Springfield.

Springfield Thunderbirds

Brady Keeper

Florida Panthers/NHL

Brady Keeper, of the Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Canada, appears in an NHL game with the Florida Panthers. Keeper re-signed with the team Aug. 31 for a one-year contract.

Iroquois Nationals lacrosse team to compete in 2022 World Games after initial exclusion

BY KA'NHEHSÍ:IO DEER
CBC News

The Iroquois Nationals, which represent the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in international field lacrosse, will be among eight men's lacrosse teams competing in the 2022 World Games after they were originally excluded.

"We're very pleased that we will be competing," said Leo Nolan, executive director of the organization that oversees the team and its development group.

"Without us, it would have been a very different kind of tournament."

The 11th edition of the World Games will be held in Birmingham, Ala., in July 2022, and it will be the first time men's lacrosse will be included in the games.

The Iroquois Nationals team was originally told they were ineligible to compete under International Olympic Committee rules. It is unclear what would have prevented the team from competing under those rules.

The team is made up of athletes from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which includes the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora nations.

The Haudenosaunee invented lacrosse. They call it a medicine game as a gift from the Creator, to be played for his enjoyment and for healing.

"We're the originators of the game," said Nolan. "The Creator gave us this game and a part of the responsibility is to share the game with others."

After an international movement of support was sparked for the team, with many other organizations working to try to find a solution, World Lacrosse announced on Sept. 7 the Iroquois Nationals are now among the teams invited to compete.

"It's been a long road for the Iroquois Nationals. We've had some hurdles to go over and this most recent one, we're just glad the right thing is being done," said David Bray, a member of the team's board of directors.

"It's been an inspiration to see the world lacrosse community, the world Indigenous community, all stand behind us to get to this point again. We look forward to continuing our efforts on the field."

The Iroquois Nationals, Australia, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Japan and the United States are the eight teams competing.

World Lacrosse said the teams were finalized after the International World Games Association confirmed that the Iroquois Nationals were eligible to compete, no objections were received from the Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Lacrosse Association, United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee or U.S. Lacrosse, as well as a decision by Ireland Lacrosse to voluntarily withdraw from the tournament.

"This is a very good day, and outcome, for the sport of lacrosse," said World Lacrosse President Sue Redfern.

"We have arrived at an outcome that will create a true showcase for lacrosse at the World Games 2022 in Birmingham. This was achieved by our organizations coming together, listening carefully and working constructively to reach a shared goal."

'It was the right thing to do'

Last week, Ireland Lacrosse voluntarily vacated its men's senior national team's position in the World Games 2022 to ensure there would be no barriers to the Iroquois Nationals entry to the tournament. The association said it was "the right thing to do."

Ireland finished 12th in the 2018 men's world championship.

"We recognized that there was a problem with us going and with the Iroquois being number three in the world and not being deemed eligible for this event," said Catherine Conway, communications director for Ireland Lacrosse and assistant coach for the women's senior national team.

"We felt really strongly that just putting another graphic on social media saying we support the Iroquois was not the appropriate thing to do because talk is cheap. We very much felt that action was necessary."

Nolan said "it was the right thing to do for lacrosse in general."

"We are certainly very thankful and have a great amount of respect for Ireland," he said.

The top eight eligible women's lacrosse teams invited to the World Games will be based upon final placement in the 2021 World Lacrosse Women's World Championship, which takes place in Maryland next summer.

The women's team representing the Haudenosaunee Confederacy will now be eligible for selection.

Change.org

After initially being left out, the Iroquois Nationals men's lacrosse team has received a bid to play in the 2022 World Games in Birmingham, Alabama.

MOORE HAVEN
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As for the entire squad, Burnside will be looking for improvement throughout the season. The team is coming off yet another winning season – its fifth in a row – having gone 7-6 with a pair of playoff victories in 2019. The Terriers have reached regional finals two of the past three years.

"Expectations will always remain the same," Burnside said. "It may take us a bit longer to get going as we were out a spring and got started late this year. We lost 16 seniors from last year's team and a bunch of holes will need to be filled by some younger guys who will need to step up."

Due to the upheaval in high school athletics caused by the pandemic, the Terriers are looking at an abbreviated schedule. As of late September, the team only had five games on its schedule, but Burnside anticipates adjustments will be made along the way.

In the past few years, some PECS students have played for Moore Haven's middle school team, but due to low numbers there is no team this year.

"We are hoping to have enough next season and are looking into possibly joining a conference," Burnside said. "We have pulled up a couple of eighth-graders and are allowing our middle schoolers to practice with the varsity. We have the luxury of being able to do so because the middle and high school's share a building."

Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven gets ready to take the field to start the 2020 season Sept. 11 against Okeechobee.

COVID-19
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For too many students, college feels like "fighting your way through what we would call a white man's world," Birdinground said.

Finding a sense of community at MSUB was critical for both, and the Native American Achievement Center served as a hub; Talawyma became president of the school's All-Nations club.

The spring shutdowns and abrupt transition to online-only learning disrupted life for students across the U.S.

Some of what the Center usually does to aid students has been compromised during the pandemic. In-person powwows have been shut down this summer and fall, and other events have been canceled. But the All-Nations group still plans to hold a Halloween celebration with outdoor activities and safety measures. It gives students a chance to bring their wider families to campus.

McGeshick hopes to do more outreach with local Native American high school students. Visits from a local drum group have been canceled, but he believes the university has a chance to encourage Billings students to stay close to home for college.

Birdinground gets frustrated driving through Lame Deer. Tribes, including the Northern Cheyenne, have issued some of the most restrictive Covid-19 prevention rules in the nation. But she sees some people living their lives unchanged, especially those who are homeless or struggle with substance abuse.

That's not unique to reservations; people across Montana and the U.S. have flouted rules like mask mandates. But with the underlying factors that can fan the spread of disease, such behavior can have sharp consequences.

The mix of rules in different communities also sends mixed messages.

"What do you say, when you're Native? White guys, they get to go everywhere," McGeshick said.

Both Birdinground and Talawyma were unhappy with how the pandemic has been handled on the Northern Cheyenne reservation by local officials and federal leaders. They continue to worry about the health of family members, about the cultural traditions that connected people and act that way," he said — "even if we don't believe the science, even if we believe that the moon has been made out of cheese."

Ultimately, dealing with the pandemic will require cooperation and joint solutions, McGeshick said.

"We have to look at each other as a

This article is from the Billings (Mont.) Gazette. It appears on missoulian.com.

CONNECTIVITY
From page 2A

Connectivity in the traditional and cultural sense for tribal communities – like my own – is everything: kinship and social bonds create the foundation for community. In a technological sense, connectivity or internet access is everything: broadband facilitates communications and transactions vital to homes and businesses.

Tara Katuk Sweeney, an Iñupiat citizen of the Native Village of Barrow and the Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, has served as assistant secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior since June 2018. She also serves as a member of the Operation Lady Justice Task Force established by President Donald Trump's Nov. 26, 2019, executive order on supporting and protecting Native American women and children. This article originally appeared in The Cherokee Phoenix.