

The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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Clark County approves Guitar Hotel in Vegas

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Clark County commissioners voted unanimously March 22 to allow Hard Rock International (HRI) to build its iconic Guitar Hotel on the grounds of the Mirage Hotel & Casino on the Las Vegas Strip. The hotel would replace the Mirage's well-known volcano attraction.

The vote cleared the way for a 600 room, 660-foot tall Guitar Hotel along Las Vegas Boulevard. The project is expected to look very similar to the Guitar Hotel at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood (Florida), which is 450-feet tall with 638 rooms.

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

An expected feature of the Las Vegas project, like the one in Hollywood, would be six high-powered light beams projected thousands of feet in the sky that mimic the strings on an imaginary guitar neck.

HRI representative Jennifer Lazovich told commissioners the high-rise would be built "right where the existing volcano is" and indicated the company plans to "modernize and theme" the rest of the property to match the Guitar Hotel, according to a report in the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

♦ See VEGAS on page 7A

Cattle drive continues generational legacies in Big Cypress

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Cattlewomen have always been an important part of the Seminole Tribe of Florida's cattle program. The 25th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive and Rodeo honored two esteemed Big Cypress cattlewomen.

The late Esther Buster was memorialized and Mary Jene Koenes served as the honorary trail boss at the event March 25.

Four Cypress brothers were among the original settlers of the Big Cypress reservation: Charlie, Futch, Wilson and Whitney. Koenes explained that almost everyone in Big Cypress is descended from them.

"Six generations come from them," Koenes said. "Junior Cypress was from Whitney. Charlie was my great-great-grandfather. So we are one big family here."

An honorary trail boss usually leads a cattle drive, but Koenes chose to ride in comfort on the Billie Swamp Safari swamp buggy. Members of her large family joined her including some of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Together, they filled the buggy.

"I am a third generation cattle owner," Koenes said. "My daughter, Toi, will be the fourth generation."

Big Cypress cattle foreman Andre Jumper, on horseback and with the help of his three dogs, moved the group of about 18 cattle from the spillway on West Boundary Road to the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena on Josie Billie Highway.



On horseback, Big Cypress cattle foreman Andre Jumper drives the cattle from the spillway to the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena during the 25th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive on the Big Cypress Reservation on March 25. In the swamp buggy are honorary trail boss and cattle woman Mary Jene Koenes and her family.

♦ See CATTLE DRIVE on page 5A



At center, Okeechobee Mayor Dowling Watford and Emma Brown cut the ribbon at the opening of Brown & Company Realty on March 23.

Emma Brown opens real estate company

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

OKEECHOBEE — Emma Johns Brown cut the ribbon on her new real estate business, Brown & Company Realty, on March 23 in Okeechobee.

The business was a longtime coming since Brown worked at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School for many years. Fifteen years ago, she took a class in real estate because she thought one day she might want to pursue it. "When Covid came, I took the [real estate] test," said Brown, who is a tribal member. "I got my broker's license and went out on my own in September."

Brown & Company Realty focuses on agricultural and ranch land as well as residential. Brown is familiar with agricultural land as a cattle owner, but she

also worked in the real estate industry at another group with the same focus.

With six Realtors working at the company, Brown said they have grown faster than she expected, for which she is thankful. She believes building successful relationships will create a successful business.

"It's a fulfilling industry because of the relationships you get to build," she said. "We all like meeting people, getting out into the community and fostering relationships."

Brown is a member of the Okeechobee Main Street organization, the Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce, More 2 Life Church and the Okeechobee Cattlewomen's Association. She still has a herd of about 100 cattle in Martin County and is a substitute teacher at PECS.

"My heart is still there," Brown said.

"My passion is being around those kids."

Employees and community members gathered on the porch of the Brown & Company Realty office for the official ribbon cutting. The staff includes Realtors Travis Brown, Patty Hanifen, Lydia Bolin, Bud Neese, Aaron Hall and Matt Stokes.

The ribbon was cut by Brown and Okeechobee Mayor Dowling Watford, followed by a luncheon for community members.

Brown & Company Realty is licensed in the entire state and has had sales in a variety of areas ranging from Gainesville to Palm Beach to Fort Myers to Hendry County.

Brown & Company Realty is located at 221 NE Park St. in Okeechobee. For more information call (863) 824-2231 or visit brownandcompanyrealty.org.

Kyle Doney recognized with '40 Under 40' award

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) has recognized the Seminole Tribe's Kyle Doney as one of its Native American "40 under 40" award recipients for 2023.

The award was created 14 years ago to acknowledge those between 18-and-39 years old who dedicate considerable time and effort to their tribal communities and beyond.

Doney, 39, has held various roles at the tribe throughout the years. He's been the deputy executive director of the Native Learning Center since 2011, but started working for the tribe in 2007 as an information technology technician.

"One of the most important things that anyone would need to know about Kyle is his level of professionalism," Georgette Palmer Smith (Kiowa/Choctaw), the executive director of the Native Learning Center, said in her letter of recommendation to NCAIED. "Kyle is honest, friendly, and a natural leader. His ability to look beyond the minutia of daily tasks to see the bigger picture and what it means to be of service to Indian Country is obvious after working with him for the past 12 years."

Doney has served in other tribal positions as well. In 2013, he was selected for the STOF election board committee, and from 2014 to 2018, he served on the board of directors of the Florida Governors Council on Indian Affairs. Since 2017, he's served on the council of trustees for the United National Indian Tribal Youth organization. He's also served as secretary of the tribe's Gaming Commission since 2017.

Doney graduated in 2007 from Florida State University with a degree in political science. Since then, he's been a very active FSU alumni and supporter. He's also a fervent sports fan who is closely tied to the FSU football program.

Doney was selected in 2008 by then-FSU president T.K. Wetherell to the FSU Alumni Association's national board of directors, and in 2013 he was recognized as an FSU Alumni Association "circle of



Kyle Doney

gold" recipient. In 2017, then-FSU president John Thrasher selected Doney to serve on the president's advisory panel on university namings and recognitions. Most recently, in 2020, Doney was selected to serve on the president's task force on antiracism, equity and inclusion.

"Kyle is a proud Florida State University graduate who has served countless hours for the university in a myriad of ways," Julie Decker, president and CEO of the FSU Alumni Association, said in her letter of recommendation to NCAIED. "Kyle represents his community with grace, loyalty, and pride as he brings visibility to our institution and heritage. Everyone is proud to know him and work with him. I have never seen him turn away from an opportunity to be a part of our community."

Doney continued his formal education after graduating from FSU. In 2012, he graduated from the FBI Miami Citizens Academy, and in 2020 he earned a master of legal studies in Indigenous peoples law from the University of Oklahoma. The "40 under 40" awards ceremony is scheduled to take place April 4 at the Caesars Palace Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. NCAIED is a nonprofit that assists tribes in business and economic development. More is at ncaied.org.

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Visit the Tribune's website for news throughout the month at seminoletribune.org

Editorial

Approval of the Willow Project is a slap in the face to Native communities everywhere

• Krystal Two Bulls

When the March 13 decision by the Biden administration, caving to oil giant ConocoPhillips, is just another example of empty campaign promises that will assuredly result in climate chaos hitting our homes sooner, rather than later. This deal will hand over a large swath of Alaska's North Slope for drilling, easily becoming the largest proposed oil drilling on U.S. public land and the biggest oil field in Alaska in decades.

I cannot help but reflect on Biden's campaign promise of 'no new drilling on federal lands,' and wonder if he and I simply have a different understanding of what the word "no" means. Can we make sure that we are truly moving towards a green and renewable economy? Apparently, no, this administration seems committed to false solutions that continue to sacrifice Indigenous Peoples relationship to land.

We have watched colonizers invade our lands for hundreds of years and what has remained clear is that they will override our sovereignty at all costs, to feed their insatiable appetite for greed. The Willow

project, like all big oil and gas projects, is environmental destruction operating under the guise of economic opportunity. Touted as an 'economic boon' for Alaska, we have to ask ourselves, at what cost? Furthermore, why is this a choice that only Indigenous Peoples are being forced to make and blamed for? How long until an administration actually follows through on climate solutions with some teeth, and start biting wealthy corporations rather than sacrificing our Indigenous communities?

As if written in a sarcastic skit for late night television, the Willow Project comes with a myriad of complex countermeasures to ensure the project can happen at all and to counteract the imminent carbon belching that will come from this area. For example, "chilling tubes" are needed to be implemented in an attempt to preserve the remaining permafrost that is rapidly melting. Alaska is warming 4 times faster than the rest of the country, a direct result of carbon emission projects such as the Willow Project. As the drilling platforms release roughly 9.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year, it is incomprehensible that this project was approved.

On top of the three drilling platforms

they will construct "hundreds of miles of roads and pipelines, airstrips, a gravel mine and a large processing facility on near-pristine tundra and wetlands in the reserve." Each one of these mechanisms is just compounding a problem that the current administration has vowed to address.

We have seen how oil and gas giants, like Enbridge, utilize police as their own private security forces and walk away when inevitable environmental fallout occurs. We have seen them imprison our people for doing nothing more than standing on their own property. Instead of continuing to bow to the whims and wishes of corporate giants, we must hold all administrations accountable when they continue to invest in climate change accelerating projects, versus investing in the green path we all need. The Willow Project may have been given the green light, but rest assured: Indigenous communities everywhere aren't backing down when it comes to protecting the land and water.

Krystal Two Bulls (Oglala Lakota and Northern Cheyenne) is co-executive director of Honor the Earth.

Tribe stays connected to latest Miami archaeological dig

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

An ongoing archaeological dig in the Brickell area of Miami – at a site known as 444 Brickell – has remained on the radar of Native American activists and the staff of the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) and the Heritage and Environment Resources Office (HERO) at the Seminole Tribe.

The excavation in the city's downtown corridor has been in process for more than a year in order to make way for a three tower residential high-rise development on 4-acres by developer Related Group. A slew of artifacts, including human remains, have been unearthed and date from thousands of years ago when the Seminole Tribe's ancestors lived along the mouth of the Miami River and throughout the area.

"The artifacts that are coming out are significant and important to the history and archeological record of Florida," Paul Backhouse, HERO senior director, said. "It's more important to the Seminole Tribe because it punctuates its place. It underscores the history of the tribe. It shows such density of occupation. That's the real story here. Miami was a city before it was Miami."

Activists Robert Rosa of the American Indian Movement of Florida and Miccosukee tribal member Betty Osceola want the city of Miami to halt activity at the site and preserve it in a similar way to the adjacent Miami Circle – a 2.2-acre archaeological site that also contained artifacts and human remains. It was discovered after apartments were demolished in 1998 to make way for a residential high-rise. The site was eventually protected from development and is now a waterfront park and National Historic Landmark.

While it's possible that 444 Brickell could also be preserved in some way, there are many bureaucratic, legal and jurisdictional issues that would have to be resolved first. Miami's historical preservation program recently asked the city to investigate granting the site legal protection.

'Significant, important'

Meanwhile, representatives of the Related Group said in a statement that its intention is to "meticulously excavate the site and document any findings," as well as comply with any requirements, such as

when human remains are discovered. Under Florida law, the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes must be notified and consulted when ancestral human remains are found in order to supervise their relocation, if necessary.

"The tribe doesn't have the authority to say 'you can't excavate or you can't build here,'" Tina Osceola, THPO director, said. "These are multimillion dollar developments – there are very little rights that the tribe or anyone has. We don't get to dictate many aspects."

Osceola, who spends much of her time on repatriation issues, said the tribe has stayed abreast of the excavation and has visited the site.

"THPO has been involved since the beginning. It's a long and drawn out process," she said. "All we can do is to make sure the ancestors at that location are treated as the law requires. Sometimes it gets very frustrating when you see an important site like that excavated."

Osceola and Backhouse said state officials have been "very cooperative" with the tribe thus far.

Osceola said she also understands why Native activists are pushing for complete preservation of the site.

"Any grassroots movement from the community has value – it tells those in government where the moral and ethical barometer is," she said. "The public feels this place is important and we agree with them 100% – as a tribal member, that place is significant and very important."

Osceola added that academic institutions have been "fighting over" who gets to study what is excavated at the site.

"The real question is not whether that site should be excavated, but who gets to excavate and who gets to study it? Because that means they can own that story and it becomes that history," she said.

"Who is writing the past?" Backhouse added. "Academics are losing the ability to control the narrative of the past, a colonial narrative up to this point. That's what's playing on this as well. They're being lured by what's shiny and new."

Phase three of excavation is underway at the site. Miami's historic and environmental preservation board is scheduled to discuss the matter at a public meeting April 4. Representatives of the Related Group are expected to make a presentation at the meeting.

THPO still on guard, but hopeful on repatriation efforts

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

FORT MYERS — Tina Osceola spoke to members of the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society on March 15 at the IMAG History and Science Center in Fort Myers, where she described what repatriation of ancestors means to the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the work being done by the tribe's Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

"When we speak about ancestors, it is very purposeful," said Osceola, THPO director. "We are defining ourselves and telling our own story. Tribal archeology is different because we don't forget the human side of it. The emotional side of repatriation is the most important thing we do."

THPO archaeologists dig holes on trust land before anything can be built. If human remains are found, they are left undisturbed and building cannot commence on the site. To date, THPO has dug more than 50,000 holes, which are all kept in a data base along with maps, artifacts and conversations with Elders.

Osceola was raised to believe the Calusas were her relatives and said they talk about and sing Calusa songs in their language.

"Archeology supports the story I was told my entire life," she said. "The most

important work we do is to correct the wrongs of the past and to put our ancestors back where they belong."

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington, D.C., has nearly 1,500 remains and funerary objects in its collection that Osceola and her team have been working to get back since 2019. NMNH says the remains are culturally unidentifiable, so they aren't required to return them.

Osceola, THPO collections manager Domonique deBeaubien and THPO senior bioarchaeologist Samantha Wade have been working to reclaim those ancestors.

"I get to work with a team who knowingly are going to be beating their heads against a wall," Osceola said. "One of the important things we do is the advancement of tribal sovereignty. Seminole traditions and culture are firmly planted in tribal sovereignty and has become a part of who we are. THPO is responsible for defining and advancing that concept."

"It is a long hard road that we fight every day," Wade said. "It's a lot of getting our hands dirty and making sure people know we are still fighting this fight every day."

deBeaubien is on the NAGPRA review committee (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act). She doesn't understand why the remains are

viewed as artifacts for research.

"Maybe when these people in power retire they will be replaced by people who have worked with tribes and understand Indigenous culture," deBeaubien said.

The tribe's "No More Stolen Ancestors" campaign, which started in 2019 to raise awareness of remains in museums and at universities across the nation, has been deemed successful.

"The Smithsonian learned that having a media campaign against them by the Seminole Tribe of Florida is something you don't want," deBeaubien said.

Osceola always wanted a tribal consultation consisting of tribal leadership meeting with Smithsonian leadership to deal with the issue of repatriation; that finally happened in December 2022 when the director of the NMNH, Kirk Johnson, attended a three-day meeting with the tribe.

"For the first time I feel hopeful," Osceola said. "We visited Marco Island and had some hard discussions about funerary objects. We are actually sitting across the table from someone who wants to talk about them. I felt like we were heard and seen. Tribal consultation isn't easy, but it's about doing this together and righting the wrongs of the past."



Miccosukee tribal member Betty Osceola, center, gathered with other activists near the site March 19 to bring attention to the excavation at the 444 Brickell site.

100 years ago - The birth of Betty Mae Jumper

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The 100th anniversary of the birth of Betty Mae Jumper, one of the Seminole Tribe's most accomplished leaders, is April 27.

The legacy of Jumper's life is evident throughout the tribe, including in the pages of the Seminole Tribune, which she cofounded.

Born in a camp in Indiantown on April 27, 1923, Jumper grew up around cattle and was a third generation cattle owner. In 1945, she became the first Seminole to graduate high school. After earning a degree in nursing, she became a nurse and helped to bring modern medicine to the tribe. The Betty Mae Jumper Medical Center on the Hollywood Reservation is a testament to her impact on the tribe.

In 1967, Jumper became the first female elected as chairwoman of the Seminole Tribe, or any other tribe in North America. She led Tribal Council from 1967 to 1971.

Some of her other accomplishments include cofounding the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) and being appointed by President Richard Nixon to the National Congress on Indian Opportunity. She was inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame and earned a lifetime achievement award from the Native American Journalists



Betty Mae Jumper was born April 27, 1923.

Association. She also received an honorary degree from Florida State University and was named one of USA Today's 100 Florida Women of the Century. Her portrait is painted on a 45-by-60-foot mural in Tallahassee along with two other influential Floridian women.

Jumper died Jan. 14, 2011, at age 88, but her memory and legacy lives on in the lives of her children and their families and the tribe.



Betty Mae Jumper talks to a group of children in this undated photo.

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Postmaster: Please send address changes to: The Seminole Tribune, 6365 Taft St., Suite 1003, Hollywood, FL 33024

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

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

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

Staff Reporter: Damon Scott, ext. 10704
DamonScott@semtribe.com

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

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

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Community



Will Latchford retires after decades at tribe

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Will Latchford said he clearly remembers the day in 1994 when he drove from Clearwater to Hollywood to interview with the Seminole Tribe to become an officer in the Seminole Police Department (SPD). He was 21-years-old, already graduated from the police academy and volunteering with his father's police department, when he began to send out job applications to law enforcement agencies across Florida.

After waking up in the predawn hours to make it to a 10 a.m. interview, his vehicle broke down in Sunrise and needed a new alternator. He called to let SPD know the situation, and they said if he arrived before 5 p.m. he could still interview. Latchford made it at 3:30 p.m. and it would change the course of his life.

The next day he had another interview lined up several hours north in Panama City, but the tribe offered him the job that morning. "One of the things I was engrained with by my family is when someone gives you an opportunity, you embrace it," Latchford said. "I'd told myself that I'd take the first offer I got."

Two weeks later he'd begin a 26-year law enforcement career at the tribe. Latchford ascended from a rookie SPD officer to his current position as director of the Public Safety Department. He also spent two years at the Broward County Sheriff's Office from 2006 to 2008, before returning to the tribe as its police chief. He's been in law enforcement for 30 years in all — starting with the police academy at age 19.

Law enforcement runs in the family.

Latchford's father, Al Latchford, worked for the New York State Police and retired as a police chief for the city of Port Richey, Florida. His grandfather, George Latchford, worked for the New York City Police Department. Latchford's oldest son, Brady Osceola Latchford, is a deputy sheriff at the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office in Milton, Florida.

Latchford, 49, announced his retirement March 15, which becomes effective April 15. SPD police chief John Auer is expected to step in as the interim director of Public Safety until a permanent replacement is hired.

Seminole family

Latchford said he's ready to retire in order to spend more time with his family, which he admits might sound cliché — but in his case he says it's anything but.

Latchford and his wife of almost 25 years, tribal member Amy Osceola, have six children — four boys and two girls. Their first grandchild is also on the way. The oldest child is 23 and the youngest is 10.

"I looked at it as an opportunity for me to put time in for the kids," he said. "The three older boys are excelling to the point where we can't be any prouder — they live up north. The younger ones need me to be part of their life, not just at the end of the day, and then by the time they get up I'm already at work. So I'm not just passing in the night."

'Officer was everything'

Latchford's long career has given him a front row seat to the tribe's evolution. When he showed up for his first day of work in

1994, there were no handheld radios and he had to bring his own firearm. There wasn't a Fire-Rescue or Emergency Management department.

"The police officer was really everything," he said. "They were not only the police officer but they were the ambulance, too. We'd put people in the back of the police car and drive them to a hospital."

Latchford said the departments have improved so much that outside law enforcement agencies now look to the tribe as a model for what a Public Safety program can become.

"The organization has come so far," he said. "The resources when I started were minimal. The level of concierge service we now provide is what separates us from other agencies — it's what makes us special."

Latchford has had just about all the top tier law enforcement and public safety training and education one could acquire, including graduating from the FBI National Academy.

"To help use that training to grow Public Safety for the Seminole Tribe, not many people can say that," he said. "So when I walk out of here I can hold my head up high. The only thing anyone can ask of anybody is: 'when you leave are you leaving it better than where you found it?' I can confidently, without ego, say I'm leaving it better than the way I found it, and that was really my goal."



Damon Scott

Will Latchford in the lobby of his office at the Seminole Police Department in Hollywood on March 21.

Miccosukee Indian Village to host Earth Day festival

FROM PRESS RELEASE

As part of Earth Day festivities, the Eco Homies International Big Mamma Day will be held April 22 from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Miccosukee Indian Village.

Live music will be part of the event, including scheduled performances from

Seminoles Doc Native, Spencer Battiest and Aye Five and flute player Samuel Tommie. The Supervillains, Grindstone Sinners and the Jack Shealy Band are among the other scheduled performers.

The event is also scheduled to have celebrities from Tik Tok and "Swamp People," and Miccosukee and Seminole artisans and food vendors.

Guest speakers are scheduled to include Garrett Stuart (aka Captain Planet, biologist and social media sensation), Dr. David Vaughan (Plant A Million Corals Foundation, aka Dr. Coral, a leading pioneer in coral reef restoration, Betty Osceola (Indigenous environmental advocate featured in National Geographic film "Panther of the Panther" and PBS documentary "American Experience:

The Swamp," and Dr. Craig Van Der Heiden (Miccosukee Wildlife Department director).

The Indian Village is located at mile marker 36 on US 41 in Miami-Dade County. For more information visit eventbrite.com.

Courtesy photo
Samuel Tommie



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An exterior rendering of the forthcoming Trail government center.

TCD

Trail government center moves toward construction

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Officials in Tribal Community Development (TCD) say plans for the construction of a government center to serve the Seminole Tribe's Trail community has made significant progress. It's a project that has been years in the making, as plans have had to go through various assessments and approvals.

Harvey Rambarath, TCD's assistant director of Community Planning & Development, said Collier County officials and the National Park Service have recently approved the tribe's plans. The site in the Big Cypress National Preserve is located on private land that was purchased by the

tribe. It's located at 57257 Tamiami Trail in Ochopee.

Rambarath said staff is now working on a contract to complete the design and permitting of the project so it can move on to the construction phase.

There are about 100 tribal members who live along the Tamiami Trail west of Miami. Although a government office has been operating about 30 miles away in a strip mall at 14680 SW 8th Street in Miami, led by Trail's Tribal Council liaison Caryn Billie, access to most services has typically meant a trip to the Big Cypress or Hollywood reservations. In addition, many of the Trail community's homes are located in hurricane vulnerable areas. The new building would contain multipurpose rooms that can be used

as hurricane shelters.

Plans call for a 7,504-square-foot, two-story building on the almost two-acre site with 44 parking spaces. The first floor is to have a health services room, elder services room, gymnasium, multipurpose/hurricane shelter room, kitchen, break room, storage, and offices for Emergency Management and information technology personnel. The second floor would have administration offices, a culture room, and another multipurpose/hurricane shelter room.

Officials said the vast majority of the site's surrounding area is protected natural land. In addition, it is adjacent to vacant land and property owned by tribal members. Officials said a construction timeline would be forthcoming.



This site plan shows the property's 10-foot wetland buffer to the north, conserved wetlands to the east, and the building to be located at the property's south end.

TCD

Nick the Native releases new music

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Nick Zepeda, aka Nick the Native, has been writing songs since he was a child, when he would find a quiet space in his garage and write beats on his mother's laptop computer.

Since then, Zepeda, a Seminole who lives in Naples, has released two EP (extended play) albums and is about to release a third called "What Have We" in April.

"I write about the way everything around me is going," said Zepeda, 24. "The songs are the story of my outlook on life, society and other things, written in a unique way."

During the pandemic, Zepeda started writing songs every day. The result was "Eleven Over the Bridge," a seven song love story about how he met his wife. Zepeda connected with Nashville producer Joel Setien on the album. The EP was released in 2021 to online streaming services such as Apple Music, Spotify, YouTube, Pandora and others.

"Joel played every instrument and brought my vision to life," Zepeda said.

For his second EP, "Neaure," Zepeda brought in his longtime friend David Bonilla as a cowriter and to help with Zoom sessions with Setien. Zepeda describes the album as the story of love entering a new era and getting a fresh, new start.

Zepeda reached out to entertainment manager Michael Luna who was so impressed with the songs, he was able to get the debut of "Neaure" on the front page of Apple Music when it was released in July

2022. For his latest project – "What Have We" – Zepeda used California-based producer David D. Perez. Zepeda traveled to the West Coast for the production sessions.

"We met in college at Southeastern University in Lakeland," Zepeda said. "It was the first time we worked together. It was a great atmosphere and it couldn't have gone any better."

Over the years, Zepeda's music has evolved from pop/indy ("Eleven Over the Bridge") to pop with alternative influences ("Neaure") to alternative with moments of pop ("What Have We").

Zepeda doesn't play any instruments, but comes up with melodies and sings them into a recorder. Then he finds tracks online and adapts them to his songs. By the time the songs are produced, they are unique to his vision.

"The tracks are a starting point to get my gears turning," he said. "They are more of an inspiration."

Before he begins a new project, Zepeda knows exactly how he wants it to sound.

"I love being able to tell my story or whatever I'm feeling," he said. "It's fun to express myself and give something out to the world that you know people will enjoy. I want to do something fresh and expand the listeners' minds a little bit. Being Seminole, I also represent Native Americans. It's cool to show what Natives can do."

"What Have We" will be promoted on social media including on Zepeda's Instagram page "Nick the Native," YouTube and on streaming services in mid-April.



Nick Zepeda

Dennis Elliott

Hollywood seniors enjoy night out in Dania

HOLLYWOOD — A couple dozen of the tribe's Hollywood seniors gathered at Rodizio Grill in Dania Beach on March 7 for a dinner hosted by the office of Hollywood

Councilman Chris Osceola. Special projects coordinator Blake Osceola and special events coordinator Mercedes Osceola organized the event.



Patrick Doctor with his wife Anna.

Damon Scott



Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola (standing) greets Hollywood's seniors at a dinner in Dania Beach on March 7.

Damon Scott



Judy Baker, left, and Elsie Bowers.

Damon Scott



Wanda Bowers

Damon Scott



Dora Tiger, left, and Maggie Osceola.

Damon Scott

♦ CATTLE DRIVE From page 1A

Along the way, seasoned rodeo rider and cattle crew member Cat Tommie joined Jumper after the animals veered off-course and into the woods twice.

Koernes' daughter Toi Hernandez, son Dalton Koernes and grandson Donald Mathis got off the buggy and went on foot into the woods to help get the cattle back on the road. "They jumped out to help," Koernes said about her family. "It's just in them."

Between the humans, the horse and the dogs, the cattle complied and made it back on their way to the mid-point stop at Cory Wilcox's pasture for some water and a rest.

Participants in the cattle drive also had something to drink and a snack as they listened to a few words from Koernes and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie.

"I was born into the cattle program," Koernes said. "My grandfather was one of the original cattle owners. We used to watch the Elders work the cows on foot and when we were old enough, we worked them on foot, too."

Koernes got to see Morgan Smith, another original cattle owner, work the original government cows. Koernes has been in the cattle program for 35 years, but has been working cattle since she was a child.

"I've enjoyed this lifestyle," Koernes said. "I had to fight for where I'm at, but it's because of that that I'm here today."

Junior Cypress was the cattle foreman for a long time and passed it on to Jonah Cypress. Now Jumper is in charge and Koernes said she hopes he will grow old with the job.

"I want all these kids to have these experiences. It's a family undertaking," Koernes said. "My kids and grandchildren love being out in the pasture and I sure appreciate their help. We're blessed by the Lord and I have been his shepherd for all these years."

This was Councilwoman Billie's first time as a participant in the cattle drive. She is a descendant of Wilson Cypress.

"My uncle Paul is the cattle raiser," she said. "We're all family out here."

Esther Buster was one of the tribe's first cattlemen; Junior Cypress was her father. Esther's granddaughters, Sydnee and Darla



Beverly Bidney

Cattle foreman Andre Jumper and his hard working dogs keep the cattle together in a group during the cattle drive.

Cypress, participated in the cattle drive to honor her memory.

"She was real passionate about owning cattle and she wanted us to get involved," Sydnee Cypress said.

Esther's herd went to her three children: Eileen Cypress, Alvin Buster and Eric Cypress.

"She was very devoted to keeping the family legacy alive by being cattle owners," said Darla Cypress. "She was a huge inspiration in our lives with how dedicated she was and how strong of a woman she was. I'm thankful to be her granddaughter."

After the rest stop, the cattle drive proceeded to the rodeo arena for a barbeque and a kids rodeo.



Beverly Bidney

Jonah Cypress opens the cattle drive with a prayer on West Boundary Road in Big Cypress.



Beverly Bidney

Honorary trail boss Mary Jene Koernes, wearing purple shirt and sunglasses near the center, and her family members enjoy their perch in the Billie Swamp Safari swamp buggy for the Junior Cypress cattle drive March 25 in Big Cypress.

'Like a living scrapbook': 'My Powerful Hair' is a celebration of Native culture

NPR

"My Powerful Hair" is a new picture book that turns a painful truth about racism into a celebration of Native culture.

When Carole Lindstrom was a little girl growing up in Bellevue, Nebraska, she really wanted long hair. She would put the blanket she had as a baby on her head and, "pretend I had long hair, you know, swing it around," she laughs.

She couldn't understand why her mother wouldn't let her. "Every time it got a little bit long, she said, 'We have to cut it. It's too wild,'" Lindstrom remembers.

She says her mother didn't seem to have a good explanation. One clue was a black and white photograph that sat on top of the TV set — a picture of her grandmother and two great aunts. "They were wearing these white smocks and their hair was just really chopped short and they had bangs. They just didn't look right," says Lindstrom. "And I remember asking my mom about that picture...and my mom didn't really know much about it other than to say, 'Well, that was when grandma and your great aunts were sent to boarding school. Indian boarding school.'"

At Indian boarding schools, children were forbidden to speak their Native languages and forced to cut their hair, among other indignities.

As an adult, Lindstrom set out to find out more about her culture and learned the truth about hair. "The hair is such a big part of who we are and our identity," she says,

"It's like a living scrapbook."

In "My Powerful Hair," a little girl relates the events of her life with the length of her hair.

"When my baby brother was born, my hair touched my shoulders. The gift of welcoming him into the world is woven into my hair," Lindstrom wrote.

Lindstrom is Anishinaabe/Métis and an enrolled citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe.

Ten year old Talon Jerome, who lives on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, identifies with her new book. "Our hair is the source of our strength and power and memories," he says.

Talon and his mother, Cherona Jerome, are members of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe. Cherona teaches at Talon's school. She says books like "My Powerful Hair" are important for her students to read.

"It's a beautifully written story and very relatable to our own experiences," Jerome said.

"My mother was a boarding school survivor and I do recall pictures of her also with very, very short hair. Her and some of my aunts who went to boarding school also."

In the story, the young girl cuts her hair when her grandfather (Nimishoomis) dies. "I sent it into the spirit world with him so that he could have my energies," she said.

"[This] kind of brought back some memories of my grandmother's passing," said Jerome. "I also cut my hair...and it went with her in the grave. It's just a sign of mourning for us."

Jerome also relates to Lindstrom's

desire to teach children Native traditions. She says the hard truth is that her mother and grandparents' were taught to be, "ashamed of their culture. They they weren't allowed to be proud of it." She continues, "We're the generation that's teaching them our culture again."

Lindstrom says there was a time when publishers wouldn't even look at her stories about Indigenous culture. "So I was writing tooth fairy stories and all those things," she jokes. Then, she says, We Need Diverse Books came about. The campaign, launched in 2014, pushed for greater diversity in publishing. "And when that happened, the world kind of suddenly went 'click,'" she says.

A publisher snapped up her book "We Are Water Protectors." It won a Caldecott Medal and became a bestseller.

Lindstrom wishes the world had "clicked" sooner. She says she almost never saw children who looked like her in the books she read as a little girl. Those she did see, were depicted as savages. She says "My Powerful Hair" is her "gift" to children who look like her.

"I just want them...to see themselves in a positive way when they pick up a book. I didn't have that. It was always blonde hair, real light colored skin, not who I was when I was younger," she said. "I just didn't know where my people were."

Lindstrom says her mother died in 2015 without ever learning the power of her hair.

Advocacy & Guardianship seeks tribal foster parents

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Those who receive email announcements from the tribe may have noticed a recent one soliciting interest in foster parenting. The informational flyer — composed by the Advocacy & Guardianship Department (part of Health and Human Services) — asks those who are eligible to consider foster parenting as a way to give back to the tribal community.

Foster care is a temporary living situation for children whose parents cannot take care of them and whose need for care has come to the attention of authorities. While in foster care, children may live with relatives, foster families or in a group facility. Officials say about half of children who enter the foster care system will return to their parent or primary caretaker.

"We are making a plea to the tribal community, to ensure that the youth home is not over capacity," Winstera Young, the Advocacy program administrator, said.

The tribe has operated a youth home on the Big Cypress Reservation since 2015. As of press time, Young said there were 15 children living in the home. The tribe would like to see those children placed in homes, and when possible, eventually reunited with their parents.

Corey Renken, the therapeutic treatment supervisor at the youth home, said the youth home exists to create a safe and nurturing environment to help meet the needs of the children.

"The youth home wants to create a place where children can be themselves, learn new skills, play, and be within the community," Renken said.

Young said children are placed in foster care when the Florida Department

of Children and Families determines there is a safety risk that prevents them from remaining in the home. It includes children who have experienced unsafe conditions, abuse, neglect or have parents who are unable to care for them. A court could decide to return them to their home if it's determined to be safe.

The tribe's foster parenting program is open to tribal members only — whether a family, single parent, relative or non-relative of the child. Requirements include agreeing to provide "quality care ... sharing love [and] providing security and understanding."

Other requirements are a willingness to support reunification with birth parents, completion of a positive home assessment with adequate sleeping arrangements for the child or children, and providing an environment free of conditions that can be hazardous to children. Candidates must submit to a random drug screen and be free of all illegal substances, complete a criminal/abuse background check and have no convicted violent disqualifying offenses or verified abuse history.

For more information, contact the Advocacy & Guardianship Department at (954) 965-1338 for Hollywood; (863) 902-3200 for Big Cypress and Immokalee; (863) 763-4128 for Brighton; and (813) 246-3100 for Tampa.



Winstera Young

ICWA on the mind as Reno approaches

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) is making final preparations for its annual "Protecting Our Children" conference April 2-5. The in-person gathering is set to take place in Reno, Nevada, after three years of virtual events due to the pandemic.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians are the host sponsors of the conference.

"I think the most exciting news is that in our first in-person conference since 2019, we're breaking all our attendance records," Sarah Kastelic (Alutiiq), NICWA executive director, said.

Three weeks before the conference, Kastelic said there were 1,550 people who had registered. The conference typically attracts about 1,200 people.

The event always covers a wide swath of child welfare issues — there are 65 workshops scheduled — but this year the fate of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) will be one of the most pressing topics. ICWA states that in custody, adoption and foster care cases, Native American children should be placed with a member of their extended family, if possible. Otherwise, they should be placed with another member of their tribe. If neither scenario is possible, they should be placed with "other Indian families."

The conference features a "Protect ICWA Campaign" workshop April 4, which is to also be the focus at that evening's gala banquet. The closing plenary panel April 5 is to feature federal officials in the Administration of Children & Families

(part of the Health and Human Services Department) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, discussing their work on behalf of Native kids and families.

The U.S. Supreme Court is likely to render its ruling in the Haaland v. Brackeen case sometime this spring, after hearing oral arguments Nov. 9, 2022. The oral arguments, which lasted more than three hours, saw a debate about Congress' authority to enact ICWA, including the application and boundaries of the Indian Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution, and whether ICWA violates the Equal Protection Clause (whether ICWA is based upon the political status of Native people and tribes or a racial classification). The court also heard arguments about whether ICWA unlawfully commandeers state agencies' resources.

Kastelic said that while it's difficult to predict how the court will rule, the federal government and tribal defendants presented their arguments and responded to questions well.

"It was clear that a number of the justices were strongly pushing back against the plaintiffs' arguments that ICWA was unconstitutional, especially the more extreme arguments, like the claim that ICWA protections are based on race," Kastelic said.

No matter the ruling, Kastelic said the "Protect ICWA Campaign" is preparing resources for tribes and states on how to preserve ICWA's protections.

"Regardless of how the justices rule, together as ICWA advocates we will work to keep the spirit of ICWA alive by ensuring Native children are connected to their families, tribes, culture, and their sense of belonging," she said.

More information is at nicwa.org.



NICWA

This year's conference artwork, "Lifeway," is by North Dakota-based artist Shawna Fricke (Taos Pueblo/Paiute). Fricke said culture is represented through the northern baskets in the floral designs, the traditional dress, and the color scheme of the family. She said the brown tones on the woman represent Mother Earth and the blue on the children represents water and lifeways.

Seminole art exhibit opens at Ringling

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

SARASOTA — “Reclaiming Home: Contemporary Seminole Art,” a groundbreaking art exhibition of more than 100 pieces by contemporary Native American artists, including the work of seven members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, opened at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota on March 18.

Hundreds of art patrons turned out for the opening to view the art of Seminole Tribe of Florida artists Noah Billie, Wilson Bowers, Alyssa Osceola, Jessica Osceola, Brian Zepeda, Corinne Zepeda and Pedro Zepeda. Other artists in the show include Houston Cypress (Miccosukee) and Elisa Harkins (Cherokee/Muscogee [Creek]), C. Maxx Stevens (Seminole/Muscogee [Creek]), Tony Tiger (Sac and Fox/Seminole/Muscogee [Creek]), and Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie (Taskigi/Diné [Navajo]/Seminole).

“Thank you for allowing us to indigenize your space,” Corinne Zepeda said during the opening day ceremony. “Congratulations to all of our artists. We did it; we made it. I’m really proud of all of us.”

Families and friends of the artists also attended the opening.

“This is part of our strategic plan to get out of our comfort zone and off the reservation to tell our stories,” said Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum director Gordon Ollie Wareham. “For an institution like this to want to collaborate with us validates all the work we are doing. The expectation of our leadership and responsibility is paying off.”

This was the first time the Ringling has collaborated with Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki. The opening day celebration included a land acknowledgement and remarks from Ola Wlusek, curator of modern and contemporary art. Ringling executive director Steven High announced the acquisition of three ceramic portraits from Jessica Osceola, the first Seminole art in the museum’s collection.

“It’s good for the community,” Osceola said. “Ola elevated what Seminoles can do. This is a beautiful exhibition of arts, culture and identity.”

The artists mingled with guests in a large space dedicated to the exhibition. The show was comprised of paintings, patchwork, beadwork, bangle bags and sashes, wood carvings, a large dugout canoe, ceramic sculptures, video presentations, multimedia pieces, ceramics, skateboard decks and a

mural. “It’s incredible that I got a chance to share this before I even graduated college,” said Alyssa Osceola, who is on track to graduate from the Ringling College of Art and Design in May. “This is such a major exhibition at a major institution. I’m very proud and I’m glad my family is here to see it.”

“It’s really awesome that Indigenous artists are being recognized and acknowledged beyond the reservation walls,” said Allison Osceola, Alyssa’s cousin.

The late Noah Billie, who was a prolific artist and Vietnam War veteran, had about a dozen pieces in the show, many of which were loaned to the Ringling by Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki.

“He painted what he saw over there and did paintings of warriors,” said President Mitchell Cypress. “That’s something that he left that reminds us of him.”

Artists spent time in the exhibition space discussing their work with local guests and those from out of town. Some asked about the artists’ inspiration.

“I’m glad that people who wouldn’t normally view our work are able to see it on a large stage,” Zepeda said. “It’s the first show of its kind in Florida. Being able to educate others about our art and that we are still here is important.”

Natalie Sandy and Matt Spelich, from Los Angeles, were visiting family in Sarasota when they heard about the exhibit.

“It’s so cool to be able to connect with the artists and talk about their concepts,” Spelich said.

“It’s a really powerful show,” Sandy added.

Visitors spent about an hour taking in the artwork before attending a panel discussion by the artists, who discussed the inspiration for their art.

Jessica Osceola, who has a few ceramic relief sculptures in the exhibition, explained that she chose to work in clay because it can be so lifelike and can be manipulated to have fleshy, human qualities. She also talked about her patchwork piece — “Night at the Ringling” — which was inspired by Ca’ d’Zan, the Ringling’s 1920s-era mansion located on the museum grounds.

“It is a reflection of the fancy parties that went on there,” Osceola said. “I was inspired by the colors, richness and textures of the house. I used more rich, dark colors than I usually do; it’s very luxe.”

◆ See RINGLING on page 8A



Alongside fellow artists, Pedro Zepeda speaks to the audience at the opening of “Reclaiming Home: Contemporary Seminole Art” on March 18 at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota.

Beverly Bidney



Artist Wilson Bowers, center, answers questions about his work from two art enthusiasts during opening day.

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney

Artist Corinne Zepeda with two of her social justice inspired pieces, a beaded pandemic mask and a recycled jean jacket adorned with beads and acrylic.



Beverly Bidney

Guests look at paintings by Noah Billie.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right are Pedro Zepeda, Angelina Osceola, Karie Osceola, Brian Zepeda and Jessica Osceola. Pedro, Brian and Jessica are featured artists in the show.



Beverly Bidney

Artist Alyssa Osceola, fourth from left, is surrounded by family members at the exhibition opening.



Beverly Bidney

Gordon “Ollie” Wareham plays the traditional Native flute as the audience listens.

Classic Casino blossoms in Davie



Seminole Classic Casino/Facebook (2)

The Seminole Classic Casino was a major sponsor for the Town of Davie's 86th annual Orange Blossom Festival, Parade & Rodeo that was held Feb. 24-26 at Bamford Sports Complex. In addition to the parade and rodeo, the event featured rides, games, live music, vendors and food trucks. The first festival - known as the Orange Festival - was held in 1941 as a way to showcase Davie's farms, flower exhibits, groves and vegetables. Team members from the Classic Casino (above and below) marched in the parade and manned the casino's booths.



Hard Rock Digital, Playtech enter strategic partnership

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Playtech, a leading platform, content and services provider to the online gaming industry, announced a landmark strategic partnership with Hard Rock Digital ("HRD"), the exclusive, global vehicle for interactive gaming and sports betting for Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming.

Under the partnership, HRD will license a range of the company's proven technology solutions and iGaming content to deliver the authentic experience customers have come to expect across Hard Rock's global ecosystem of entertainment, hospitality and bricks and mortar casinos. In the U.S. and Canada, HRD's customers will enjoy a variety of Playtech's iGaming content offering including market leading slots, RNG and live dealer table games through HRD's existing proprietary platform and technology offering. These products will also be enjoyed outside of the U.S. and Canada where HRD will also have access to additional software and services solutions from Playtech including its IMS player management platform and certain ancillary services including operational, customer support, payment advisory and marketing services.

The Company will supply its products and services predominantly on a revenue share basis under long-term commercial

agreements.

Alongside these commercial arrangements, Playtech has also invested \$85 million in exchange for a low single digit percentage minority equity ownership stake in HRD.

The proceeds from Playtech's investment will predominantly be used to help fund HRD's continued global expansion. Hard Rock branded online and retail sports betting and iGaming is currently being operated in select U.S. states, as applicable, including Arizona, Indiana, Iowa, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee, and Virginia, with the expectation for additional launches in the future. HRD also plans to extend its online sportsbook and iGaming offerings to select international markets over the next several years.

"This partnership will act as an accelerator to Hard Rock Digital's planned strategic initiative to expand its online gaming offerings to international markets, becoming the first operator with a global omni-channel offering under a singular, irreplaceable brand," Jim Allen, Chairman of Hard Rock International and Chairman of the Board of HRD, said in a statement. "This announcement only reinforces our commitment to lead innovation in the gaming industry and expand the 'Hard Rock' experience worldwide. We look forward to providing an authentic, digital experience for Hard Rock's global fan base within a comprehensive, omni-channel offering."

'Beach' day at Coco Stage



Seminole Casino Coconut Creek

The West Coast sounds of the Beach Boys made it to the East Coast on March 2 when the Beach Boys played at Seminole Casino Coconut Creek's The Stage at Coco. The concert included Mike Love, left, and actor and musician John Stamos. Love, 82, co-founded the band in 1961.

Grupo Control, Los Tigrillos to play Immokalee

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — The Immokalee Eastern Chamber of Commerce will present Grupo Control y Los Tigrillos live in concert along with Inzenzible at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee on May 6 at 8 p.m., with doors opening at 7 p.m. Advance general admission tickets are on sale for \$39 and are available at moreinparadise.com. Attendees must be 21 years of age.

Specializing in norteño music, Grupo Control is a regional Mexican group based in Houston, who bill themselves as Los Reyes de la Cumbia (The Kings of Cumbia). Founded by Sergio Alberto Degollado (vocals, bass)

and José Guadalupe Degollado (vocals, bajo sexto) from El Control, Tamaulipas, Mexico, the group made its full-length album debut in 1999 with "Cumbias Sin Control." Since then, they have released eight other albums, with a series of regional Mexican chart hits including "Ella Es una Diosa," "Llueve Sobre Mojado," "Viva el Amor," and "Vuela Paloma."

Los Tigrillos formed in the early 1980s, making their debut with the release of a self-titled album in 1985, followed by 1987's "Mire Amigo" and 1988's "Tremenda Punalada."

Kelsea Ballerini, Hard Rock AC team up to stress importance of mental health

FROM PRESS RELEASE

ATLANTIC CITY — Prior to her sold-out crowd at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City on March 17, singer-songwriter Kelsea Ballerini accepted and presented a \$5,000 contribution to The Trevor Project before the show, as part of her ongoing advocacy and commitment to supporting mental health.

Hard Rock Atlantic City President George Goldhoff joined Ballerini to showcase the \$5,000 check and underscore the importance of mental health.

Ballerini's fundraising and support for mental health includes direct outreach to her millions of fans. In a video posted to Instagram, she calls on them to focus on their mental health.

"If you're anything like me, growing up, mental health was just not something that was casually talked about, and that takes a lot

of communication and community work to undo that stigma and to normalize mental health and to give a name to feelings and experiences that you've had throughout your life," said the singer, who captured public attention with her recent guest appearance on SNL. "I've been privileged and lucky in my life, which I have really shared more over the last few years. I've been lucky and privileged to have access to the tools that I've needed to heal. If you personally are going through something right now, I just want to tell you that you are perfect and you are not alone. Whatever it is, you will get through it and learn more about yourself from it, and I am just sending you love."

The Trevor Project is a nonprofit organization committed to "Saving Young LGBTQ Lives" through five key programs: crisis services, peer support, research, education and public awareness, and advocacy.



Hard Rock

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City President George Goldhoff, left, and singer-songwriter and mental health advocate Kelsea Ballerini present a \$5,000 contribution to The Trevor Project.

Casino to host Ukraine benefit poker tournament

FROM PRESS RELEASE

COCONUT CREEK — Seminole Casino Coconut Creek will host a Hard Rock Heals Foundation Charity Tournament, benefiting Ukraine relief efforts, April 8, at 11 a.m. in Coco Poker.

The tournament has a \$200 buy-in and will feature a \$10,000 guaranteed prize pool. Special guest appearances and bounties will also be featured.

The tournament is open to the public and registration will begin at 9 a.m.

"Our goal is to help thousands of Ukraine War victims, including Ukrainian children and families who have been injured, displaced or severely financially impacted, in addition to Ukrainians who have lost loved ones as a result of this terrible war, which has passed the one-year mark," Jim Allen, CEO of Seminole Gaming, Chairman of Hard Rock International and Chairman of Hard Rock Digital, said in a statement.

To help support victims of the war and for more information visit [Hard Rock Heals at hardrockheals.org/Ukraine](http://HardRockHeals.org/Ukraine) or call (954) 248-5965.

Hard Rock partners with Kenan Thompson for young stars search

FROM PRESS RELEASE

NEW YORK — Award-winning actor, comedian and producer Kenan Thompson announced March 23 his 13th annual Young Stars 360 national talent search. Co-created by executive producer Cherie Chiles-Buchanan of Simply C Productions and in partnership with Hard Rock International, Young Stars 360 will embark on a 12-city tour to discover and showcase extraordinary talents among youth aged 5 to 17. The series will allow young talent to highlight their special abilities, whether it be in performing arts, media, or entrepreneurship, in front of prominent network executives, influencers, and entertainment professionals.

"As someone who has been acting since my early teens, I enjoy facilitating opportunities for others to make their dreams come true while giving back to an industry that has given me so much," Thompson said in a statement.

The program empowers talented youth and their parents with a multi-tiered platform, designed to guide them through the nuances of the entertainment industry, enhance their portfolios, provide them with valuable industry insights, helping take their careers to the next level.

"Hard Rock has been nurturing the careers of artists and talent at its locations since its inception over 50 years ago," Keith Sheldon, Hard Rock president of Entertainment, said in a statement. "We are really excited to partner with Kenan and Cherie to launch the careers of the next generation of the entertainment industry."

The national talent search will kick off at the Hard Rock Cafe in New Orleans on April 1.

Other dates at Hard Rock Cafes are April 2 (Atlanta), April 8 (Philadelphia), April 8 (San Antonio), April 15 (Nashville), April 16 (Honolulu), April 22 (New York City), April 23 (Washington, D.C.), April 29 (Los Angeles), April 30 (Las Vegas), May 6 (Miami), May 7 (Chicago) and May 21 (New York City).

For more information visit YoungStars360.com.

VEGAS From page 1A

The Mirage would eventually transition to a Hard Rock-branded property. No firm timeline for construction of the Guitar Hotel or the rebranding of the Mirage has

been released.

The Review-Journal reported that when commissioners discussed the project and opened the hearing for public comments, no one stepped forward.

HRI announced its intention to acquire the operations of the Mirage

from MGM Resorts International in late 2021 in an almost \$1.1 billion cash deal. The deal was finalized in late 2022. Casino landlord Vici Properties owns the Mirage's real estate and has said its lease with HRI calls for initial annual rent of \$90 million.



Hard Rock

A rendering of the Guitar Hotel to be built on the Las Vegas Strip.

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SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA AH-TAH-THI-KI MUSEUM

A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum applies for reaccreditation

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Collections Manager

BIG CYPRESS — Did you know that the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum was the first tribally owned museum to be accredited by the national museum association, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM)? Your very own local museum earned this honor in 2009. Not long afterward, a second tribal museum was accredited in Alaska.

Now there are other similar museums seeking this honor, such as the Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum.

We are glad to have these museums as partners in excellence and to help them succeed in any way. But you might be wondering, what is accreditation and why do any museums, especially tribal ones, want it so much? This is how AAM defines it:

"Museum accreditation in the United States is a lengthy process whereby a museum is recognized as adhering to best standards in the field by the American Alliance of Museums in terms of budget, preservation, and conservation, among other criteria. Fewer than 10% of American museums are so accredited. One reason

for this is that, while institutions such as colleges and universities are overseen by the Department of Education, there is no government body, such as a Department of Art, Culture, and Technology, that would oversee museums and their accreditation."

Another reason that few museums are accredited is the difficulty involved. Not only is it a process that takes several years, it takes trained and dedicated staff who will take on challenges and not lose their focus. Policies, plans and procedures must be written. Museum staff and leadership have to be united in this goal. Daily work must be done with the highest professional standards in mind. But the rewards of this process are substantial. It's not just about the national honor, it is about being a better museum for our community. The museum believes that accreditation has increased our value and trust within the Seminole community and government. It shows we follow the highest professional standards in order to safeguard Seminole cultural heritage and to serve the tribe in many ways. Our rigorous standards protect the art, photographs, documents, oral histories and other historic heritage that we preserve for the tribal community and government. The museum protects over



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum (3)

For accreditation, high standards are needed for all parts of the museum, including the building and grounds; the exhibits; and the collections storage and management areas.

200,000 things in this way. Accreditation also supports tribal sovereignty by facilitating relationships with numerous institutions and organizations which then help share the Seminole story. In order to maintain our accredited status, we needed



to apply for reaccreditation after 15 years, which was earlier this month. The museum team worked hard during 2022 to complete the necessary application and submit it. Now that we have done that, we will wait for a reviewing time to visit and write a report. They are due to come this summer.

So if you would like to be involved, or even just learn about how our standards impact the past and the future, come on! We're also at (863) 902-1113 and museum@semtribe.com. Thank you and we look forward to your visit.

BC festival highlights importance of tribal matriarchs

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Indigenous Arts and Music Festival on March 4 and 5 featured music, art, food and fashion, but one of its main purposes was to honor tribal matriarchs.

Since March was Women's History Month, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie wanted to host a festival that would recognize and explore what it means to be a matriarch.

"We are a matriarchal society and we don't talk about them often," Councilwoman Billie said. "I wanted to give respect to our mothers and grandmothers. Being the first woman in this position in Big Cypress, I felt it was my duty to honor them."

The festival opened both days with Ahfachkee School students reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and a performance by the school band. Musicians who performed were One Way Sky, Fawnwood, Lyla June, Cornwallis, Snotty Nose Rez Kids, Aye Five, Carradine Billie, Spencer Battiest and Doc Native. Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition, a fashion show by Red Berry Woman and a panel discussion about matriarchs rounded out the activities.

Panel emcee Taylor Begay introduced panelists Lyla June (Diné, Cheyenne); Norma Flying Horse, aka Red Berry Woman, (Hidatsa, Dakota Sioux, Assiniboine, Crow Nation); Ruth Buffalo (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation); Ponca-We Victors (Ponca and Tohono O'odham tribes); and Tina Osceola (Seminole).

The panelists were asked what being a matriarch means to them. June believes men and women complement each other but neither is more important than the other.

"It's all about balance," said June, a musician, author and community organizer. "In Diné culture, we get our last names



Beverly Bidney

Lyla June entertains the crowd with original music at the Indigenous Arts and Music Festival.

from our mothers. We are matrilineal and matrifocal, but never at the expense of the fathers."

Flying Horse, a fashion designer, was told by her mother at a young age that she has two strikes against her — being a woman and being Native American.

"Being a matriarch means you are the boss, you have all the answers," Flying Horse said. "It's an honor to be a matriarch, the care giver, the one they come to when they need something. Every woman has to define it for herself. Working with tribal youth helps me fulfill my matriarchal duties."

Buffalo served as a member of the North Dakota House of Representatives. She was the first female Native American Democrat to be elected to the legislature. She told a story about how she had a chance to go out to dinner alone with then-U.S.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Norma Flying Horse, Ruth Buffalo and Ponca-We Victors participate in the panel discussion about matriarchs and the matriarchy at the Indigenous Arts and Music Festival on March 5 in Big Cypress.

Representative Deb Haaland before Haaland became Secretary of the Interior.

"After that dinner, I went back to Fargo and reached out to younger women and spent valuable one-on-one time with them," Buffalo said. "When I think of matriarchs, I think of those who have gone before us. It's a heavy load to carry, we have to make sure we take care of ourselves and stay true to our values. Be a voice for those who don't have the strength to speak."

Victors is also a politician and served in the Kansas House of Representatives from 2011 to 2023. She drew national attention when during a hearing on a bill that would deny in-state tuition to Kansas high school graduates who were undocumented immigrants, she said, "I think it's funny Mr. Kobach, because when you mention illegal immigrant, I think of all of you."



Beverly Bidney

Holly Tiger, left, and Virginia Osceola are surrounded by Seminole patchwork for sale in Osceola's booth at the festival.

◆ See FESTIVAL on page 4B

◆ RINGLING From page 6A

Osceola's patchwork on the skirt resembles a ball gown's shape. It was inspired by circus tents, stripes, pinwheels and Seminole designs which were adapted for the skirt.

Pedro Zepeda talked about cultural etiquette and protocol of who is allowed to make certain items and when.

"Non-Natives don't tend to think about that," said Zepeda, who carves wood into sculptures and canoes. "For a lot of traditional Native artists, etiquette and protocol is a big part of it. They aren't just objects, they are carriers of culture, stories and language."

He also talked about cultural proprietary knowledge.

"What parts of our culture do we want to share with the outside world?" Zepeda said. "Some things we hold sacred to us because so much has been taken from us."

Brian Zepeda creates bandolier bags and sashes that sometimes reflect pop culture. He described his best piece as a bandolier bag he made for his son, who wore it and showed it to the audience.

"Most Eastern tribes made bandolier bags," Zepeda said. "Native Americans across North America traded with Europeans for beads, needles, wool, sewing machines and metal tools. We adapted them to our creative processes."

Corinne Zepeda describes her work

as "radical stitching." One of her pieces is a pandemic mask beaded with a red hand symbolic of murdered and missing Indigenous women and a Black Lives Matter fist.

"It's a little bit of activism, civic issues and social justice," she said. "I was always taught to speak my mind and follow my heart. During the pandemic I felt a sense of community with the Black Lives Matter issue. We face a lot of things they face."

Alyssa Osceola spoke about her paintings, a series of portraits of Seminole women, including Polly Parker. There is only one photograph of Polly Parker, who escaped in the Florida Panhandle while being sent from Egmont Key to Oklahoma. She said the photo was probably taken in the early 1900s when she was an old woman.

"The painting is a fictional depiction," Osceola said. "She was probably in her 30s or 40s when she escaped so I imagined what she would have looked like. The painting is life-sized to address the viewer directly."

"Reclaiming Home: Contemporary Seminole Art" runs through Sept. 4 at the Ringling Museum, located at 5401 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota.

Beverly Bidney

Jessica Osceola's patchwork skirt and cape, titled "Night at the Ringling," were inspired by the past glamour at the Ringling home on the museum grounds. The traditional patchwork was given a more glamorous spin with richer colors.



Health



Hard Rock spotlights female artists, boosts health initiatives

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock International (HRI) used Women’s History Month in March as a launching pad to celebrate women musicians and to raise awareness and funds for women’s health initiatives.

A “Rock Women’s Health” kickoff event was held at the Hard Rock Cafe inside the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood on Feb. 28. The event featured a performance by Jordin Sparks, a multiplatinum recording artist who was the youngest contestant to win American Idol in 2007 at age 17.

Hard Rock Cafes were expected to host 120 performances by female artists throughout March at its locations across the globe. As part of the initiative, HRI joined forces with its own Hard Rock Heals Foundation, Women Who Rock and Gibson Gives to raise funds for the Magee-Women’s Research Institute & Foundation.

“Historically, women’s health has been ignored, it is understudied and underfunded,” Stephanie Piimauna, senior vice president and chief diversity and inclusion officer for Seminole Hard Rock, said in her remarks at the event. “It wasn’t until the 1990s that women were even included in medical research, which exposed the disparities between sex and gender differences. We must do better.”

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-based Magee is one of the country’s largest organizations dedicated to women’s health research. It studies reproductive biology, breast and gynecologic cancers, infectious diseases, Covid-19 therapies, HIV prevention, obstetric care for those with substance abuse disorders, and postpartum depression.

Piimauna added that for musicians, female representation could also use a boost. “As an organization whose core is music, we must keep in mind that only 19% of [music] festival lineups are made up of women. Again, we must do better,” she said.

Throughout the month, Hard Rock said it would donate a portion of its proceeds from limited edition merchandise, specialty food and beverage items, and concerts to Magee.

‘Women in Leadership’

At an event focused on women, Tracy Bradford, the president of Seminole Hard Rock Support Services and cofounder of the “Women in Leadership” program, used the occasion to announce an international expansion of the program.

“Women in Leadership” is an education and career mentorship program that takes place between junior and senior executives at HRI and Seminole Gaming. It began in



Jordin Sparks performs at the “Rock Women’s Health” event Feb. 28 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.



From left to right are Anibal Fernandez, senior vice president of Hard Rock’s cafe division; Jordin Sparks; Stephanie Piimauna, senior vice president and chief diversity and inclusion officer for Seminole Hard Rock; and Tracy Bradford, president of Seminole Hard Rock Support Services and cofounder of the “Women in Leadership” program.

2016 and 1,000 employees have participated so far. Bradford said the program would launch sometime this year at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Ottawa (Canada) property and at Hard Rock Cafe locations throughout Europe.

She said Seminole Hard Rock already

exceeds the industry standard of 22% for women’s representation in leadership roles.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida is the parent entity of HRI and Seminole Gaming. More is at hardrock.com and theseminolecasinos.com.

Tribe hosts events for Child Abuse Awareness Month

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Tribe has prepared for a number of events across the reservations to mark Child Abuse Awareness Month in April. The Advocacy & Guardianship Department has also released a list of tips for the tribal community to help prevent child abuse.

The following is a list of tribalwide events hosted by the Advocacy program. The events are intended for the entire community, and some are designed to appeal especially to tribal youth and preschoolers.

- April 10: To “kick-off” to child abuse prevention blue ribbon week, participants are encouraged to wear their favorite shoes, or “kicks.”

- April 11: To “team up” against child abuse, participants are encouraged to wear their favorite sports team jersey or shirt.

- April 12: Participants are encouraged to “be a hero” against child abuse by wearing their favorite superhero apparel.

- April 13: Participants can “put a cap” on child abuse, by wearing your favorite, crazy hat.

The week culminates April 14 with the 8th annual “Child Abuse Awareness Community Walk & Ice Cream Social” in Hollywood, Big Cypress, Brighton, Immokalee and Lakeland. Participants are encouraged to wear their favorite shade of blue. The walks begin at 3 p.m. at various locations on the reservations.

For the April 12 “be a hero” day, the Advocacy program is scheduled to visit the tribe’s preschools while wearing superhero outfits. They will read books and sing songs with the children. In addition, the Advocacy

program is scheduled to visit the children housed in the youth home on the Big Cypress Reservation on April 22.

The following are the tips the Advocacy program released for the tribal community.

- Be a good neighbor: If you see a young child unsupervised outside, stop and help. Do your part to ensure the child is safe and with an appropriate caregiver.

- Be a support to others: Being a parent isn’t easy. Offer to babysit so parents can run errands, take a time out or simply spend time together.

- Be an active community member.
- Help out and be a positive parental support to others.

- Mentor a new parent, provide guidance and encouragement.

- Promote respect and listen to others who may be in need.

- Start a parent support group: Sometimes it helps to have someone to talk to who has been where you are. Know you’re not alone. Build a supportive network for you and your family.

- Learn the signs of child abuse and neglect: Withdrawal from friends or usual activities; changes in behaviors (aggression, anger, hyperactivity); changes in school performance; depression, anxiety or unusual fears and sudden loss of self-confidence; sleep problems and nightmares; an apparent lack of supervision and risky behaviors; rebellious or defiant behaviors; and self-harm or attempted suicide.

For more information about any of the tribalwide activities, contact the Advocacy program at (954) 965-1338. The Florida child abuse hotline is (800) 962-2873.



File photo

Center for Behavioral Health staff participate in a child abuse awareness community walk in 2018.

Tribal health conference to be held in Alaska

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The National Tribal Health Conference will be held May 1 through May 5 at the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage, Alaska.

The conference will focus on American Indian and Alaska Native health policy and public health. Programs include tribal listening and consultation sessions, hands-

on training opportunities, plenary sessions and workshops that will cover a variety of timely topics, such as funding for Indian Health, the business of medicine, health equity, Tribal public health, behavioral health, environmental health, and climate change

Focus areas are on Native youth, tribal veterans, and elders. There will also be fitness and culture events and an awards

gala. For more information visit www.nihb.org

Patrice Kunesh to lead HHS Native American program

VOICE OF AMERICA

The U.S. Senate on March 8 confirmed Patrice H. Kunesh as commissioner of the Health and Human Service Department’s Administration for Native Americans (ANA).

Kunesh, who is of Standing Rock Lakota descent, is a nationally recognized attorney and policy advocate. She was nominated by

President Joe Biden nine months ago.

“I am deeply honored to be confirmed for this opportunity to serve Native peoples in this role,” Kunesh said. “I am so inspired by this administration’s abiding respect for Native governance and cultural integrity.”

The ANA was established in 1974 to promote self-sufficiency for Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Hawaiian Native tribes and to reduce dependency



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

RICHARD CASTILLO
FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY
WWW.CASTILLOLAWOFFICES.COM

SEMINOLE SCENES



Hard Rock

FUNDRAISING SUCCESS: The American Cancer Society was a big winner at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood in March. The organization received a \$1 million check thanks to Seminole Gaming and Hard Rock fundraising efforts during their Pinktober campaign. Tribal member Nancy Frank, a 20-year cancer survivor, left, and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard participated in the check presentation ceremony. "We're grateful to Councilman Larry Howard, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Nancy Frank, Seminole Gaming, and Hard Rock for meeting with the American Cancer Society at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino - Hollywood, FL earlier this week to help us end cancer as we know it, for everyone!" the American Cancer Society Florida posted on Facebook.



Kevin Johnson

HAPPY WORKERS: From left to right, Anyiah Baker, Jana Johnson and Brshiya Williams work at the concession stand during the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School baseball game against Osceola Middle School on March 21.



Kevin Johnson

UPLIFTING: Zihnellie Cortez gets a big lift from Neka Cortez as they take the field for the Big Cypress Recreation team in the Clewiston T-ball league March 20.



Beverly Bidney

FESTIVAL SIGHTS: Tony Osceola and daughters Hapahnee Osceola, center, and Sally Osceola enjoy the Indigenous Arts and Music Festival in Big Cypress on March 5.



Beverly Bidney (3)

SPLISH SPLASH: Above, cousins Josephine (left) and Ty Billie give a triple thumbs up to the Big Cypress Recreation Department's spring break camp field trip to Sun Splash water park in Cape Coral on March 24. At right, Allie Billie tries to make her way across the "pond." At left, Recreation aide Tehya Howard expertly speeds down the water slide at the park.



Kevin Johnson

ON ITS WAY: In preparation for the construction of the new Seminole Hotel Casino Brighton, land has been cleared on Reservation Road. The project, which includes a 38,000-square foot casino and 100-room hotel, is expected to be completed in 2024.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Legislation introduced to protect 2nd Amendment rights of Native Americans

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Mary Pelota, who is Yupik, and U.S. Sen. Markwayne Mullin, a Cherokee Nation citizen, introduced legislation March 22 to protect tribal citizens' rights to buy, keep and bear arms.

Peltola (D-AK) partnered with South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson to introduce the bipartisan Tribal Firearms Access Act in the House of Representatives. Mullin (R-OK) and South Dakota Republican Mike Rounds introduced the companion legislation in the Senate.

The proposed legislation, which Johnson introduced with Mullin's support in the previous Congress, would make it easier for Native Americans living on tribal lands to buy firearms. If enacted into law, the bill would list tribal governments as eligible entities to issue identification documents for the purposes of transferring ownership of a firearm.

"Tribal citizens, and all law-abiding Americans, have a fundamental right to keep and bear arms," Mullin said in a statement. "For too long, a lapse in existing law has prohibited Tribal members from using their Tribal government-issued ID to lawfully purchase firearms. Our commonsense legislation corrects this unconstitutional infringement."

The bill is being backed by a number of Republican House members, including Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), co-chair of the Native American Caucus. The bill is endorsed by the National Rifle Association (NRA), the National Native American Law Enforcement Association and other gun-rights advocacy organizations.

"In Alaska, firearms are an essential tool for subsistence and self-defense alike," Peltola said in a statement. "Tribal identification cards are already valid for a variety of uses, including boarding planes and accessing federal buildings and banks across the nation. This bill would extend this parity to include the Second Amendment Rights of Tribal members. It is past time that Tribal sovereignty is recognized in this regard, and I look forward to working with Rep. Johnson on this essential legislation."

- Native News Online

FBI investigates rehab scams targeting Indigenous community

PHOENIX, Ariz. — The FBI is investigating scams by fake rehab groups that target the Indigenous community, offering substance-abuse recovery or mental-health services at pop-up facilities to rake in government money, FBI officials say.

Bogus organizers defraud the government out of money meant to help people at their most vulnerable, Phoenix FBI Agent Kevin Smith said. The fraud starts when scammers scout potential victims by going to places as varied as flea markets and medical centers — even to Navajo Nation lands. They then offer to take people to a facility for help. Instead, people are taken to short-term rental, "sober living," homes in the Phoenix area. But they do not receive the help that is promised.

Smith, by email, said he is unsure of the total number of cases, adding that the investigation is ongoing.

The FBI said in a statement that people may be intoxicated or "offered alcohol" on the drive to a home. "Later, they have no idea where they are or how they got there," the statement said. "The individuals then have difficulty finding a way home. The circumstances have led to a number of missing persons reports being received by local law enforcement agencies."

The situation, first reported in The Arizona Republic, has led to Native Americans reaching out to tribal leadership, according to its website, azcentral.com.

The targets are told to sign paperwork to take advantage of the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, the state's Medicaid agency for low-income residents. Under AHCCCS's American Indian Health Program, health care providers can receive funding, including coverage for behavioral health care services, the FBI said.

The FBI statement says "organizers allegedly tell the tenants that they have to change their identification cards (driver's license, etc.) to Arizona to obtain Arizona Medicaid benefits."

Special Agent Antoinette Ferrari said the fraud is a federal crime against members of Indigenous communities.

"They are being taken off reservations and exploited," Ferrari said.

Ferrari also said state health officials should be diligent when they review documents for funding, to better detect possible fraud. AHCCCS officials did not return requests for comment.

Smith said that the fraud happened intermittently in 2020 and picked up again in 2022, but it's unclear how organized it really is. Smith didn't characterize the number of cases.

According to 12 News, the Navajo Police Department also has been investigating the situation, looking into at least 60 cases in Tuba City as of December.

- Cronkite News/Arizona PBS

VA change will lower home loan rates for some Native American vets

Native Americans using a special Veterans Affairs home loan program will see their interest rates slashed by more than half as part of a new initiative to make housing more affordable for them.

The move is only expected to affect

a few hundred veterans over the next few years. But it represents the latest in a series of outreach efforts by VA officials to disenfranchised groups of veterans and specifically to Native Americans, whose unique status has sometimes caused difficulties in obtaining department benefits.

In January, department leaders proposed a new rule to waive medical copayments for American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. Last November, the department unveiled a new partnership between VA and the Indian Health Service to explore ways to increase health care access and quality for the same group. VA's Native American Direct Loan program in fiscal 2022 covered 520 loans totaling almost \$83 million. About 1,200 individuals have participated in the program since it was launched in 1992. The program is open to Native American veterans and veterans married to Native Americans who did not serve. The department currently has agreements with 111 Native American tribes of the 574 federally recognized tribes across the country, and hopes to expand that number in coming years.

Under the changes announced March 22, new participants in the direct loan program will see their rate decreased from the current 6% to 2.5% for properties on trust land overseen by federally recognized tribes. The lower rate on a \$200,000 home can save property owners nearly \$5,000 a year. VA officials said the 2.5% rate will be guaranteed for all new buyers until at least March 2025.

Individuals already participating in the program with an interest rate of 3.5% or higher will have the opportunity to refinance their loans to the lower rate.

"Native American veterans are now able to more affordably buy, build, and improve homes on trust land," John Bell III, executive director of the VA Loan Guaranty Service, said in a statement.

Native Americans who buy homes outside of tribe land are not eligible for the program, but can use traditional VA home loans for those purchases.

More information on the program is available through the VA's program hotline at 888-349-7541 or through the department's web site.

- Militarytimes.com

Supreme Court wrestles with questions over the Navajo Nation's water rights

On March 20, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in a case that could alter the already intense battle over water rights in the parched American Southwest.

For more than 20 years, the Navajo Nation has fought for access to water from the lower Colorado River, which flows directly alongside the reservation's northwestern border.

The Navajo Nation reservation stretches across 27,000 square miles in Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. Almost a third of the 170,000 people who live there do not have access to clean, reliable drinking water, the tribe says.

Thousands who live without running water must drive for miles to refill barrels and jugs to haul water home for drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning. Others rely on unregulated wells.

But the issue of access to the Colorado River is extremely contentious.

A decades-long drought, exacerbated by climate change, has created the driest conditions that the American Southwest has seen in centuries. The region's water supply is dwindling as its population and agricultural output have boomed.

The river, which provides water for 40 million people across the entire Southwest, is already overtapped. The seven states that rely on the river have long been embroiled in litigation over the body of water. Recently, they have struggled to reach an agreement on how to cut back on their water use.

But the Navajo Nation says it has not been able to fully represent its own interests in disputes over water. Instead, they say they've been blocked in court by the U.S. federal government, which says it represents tribal interests in water disputes.

The tribe's claim stems from federal policies that forcibly relocated tribes and their citizens westward and onto reservations, including the Navajo Treaty of 1868, said Heather Tanana, a law professor at the University of Utah.

"When they established these reservations, that came with the promise that those lands would be permanent homelands for the tribe and their people," said Tanana, who is a citizen of Navajo Nation. "And I think everyone would agree you can't have a homeland of any kind without water."

Both the tribe and the U.S. government agree that Indian reservations, including the Navajo Nation, have a right to water.

Now, the Supreme Court must decide how far the federal government's responsibilities go in reserving that right.

"Is the federal government the trustee and the Navajo Nation the beneficiary, such that ordinary trust law principles can be applied?" said Gregory Ablavsky, who specializes in federal Indian law at Stanford Law School. Ordinarily, he explained, a beneficiary can sue a trustee for mismanaging the trust — in this case, water.

Sympathy for the tribe's position came from Justice Neil Gorsuch, a frequent supporter of Native rights who has often split from his fellow conservatives on cases involving Indian treaties.

"Could I bring a good breach-of-contract claim for someone who promised me a permanent home, the right to conduct agriculture and raise animals if it turns out it's the Sahara Desert?" Gorsuch asked during Monday's oral arguments. (No, the

government's lawyer replied.)

The U.S. has argued that a broad ruling in favor of the Navajo Nation could force the federal government to conduct an assessment of the tribe's water needs and build water supply infrastructure. Those responsibilities belong to the tribe, the government says.

"Just as the 1868 treaty didn't impose on the United States a duty to build roads or bridges, or to harvest timber, or to mine coal, the 1868 treaty didn't impose on the United States a duty to construct pipelines, pumps or wells to deliver water," said Frederick Liu, an assistant to the solicitor general, addressing the court.

Several of the court's conservatives, including Justices Samuel Alito and Brett Kavanaugh, appeared sensitive to that concern during Monday's hearing, which prompted assurances from Shay Dvoretzky, the attorney arguing on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

"The government hypothesizes a parade of horrors where the government would have to be building pipelines across miles and miles and miles of territory," Dvoretzky said. "We're not talking about anything like that."

States that rely on the Colorado River — including Arizona, California and Nevada — also oppose the tribe's efforts, saying that diverting water to the reservation would come at the expense of their states' populations and economies.

A favorable ruling would not immediately solve the tribe's water access issues, experts said. But it would allow the tribe's legal efforts around the Colorado River and other waterways to move forward.

"There isn't enough water. But that doesn't mean that the Navajo Nation does not have valid rights that should be enforced, that they should have the ability to develop their water and then play on the same level with every other stakeholder in the basin," said Tanana of the University of Utah.

- NPR

First Nation becomes first in B.C. to sign agreement asserting rights over child welfare

The Splatsin First Nation became the first Indigenous community in British Columbia, Canada, to take control of its child-welfare system under new federal and provincial legislation during a ceremony in Enderby on March 24.

After prayers, drummers and the personal stories of those who were removed from their families by the provincial child-welfare system, Splatsin Kukpi7 (Chief) Doug Thomas signed a co-ordination agreement with Patty Hajdu, federal minister of Indigenous services, and Mitzi Dean, B.C.'s minister of children and family development.

After the ceremony, Thomas told Postmedia News that the agreement paves the way for other Indigenous communities in B.C. to establish their own child-welfare systems, following decades in which Indigenous children were removed from their family and culture.

The Splatsin First Nation has already been exercising jurisdiction over child-welfare cases in its community under a bylaw passed in 1980, but Friday's agreement enshrines those rights into federal and provincial law.

"The main goal of our program is to ensure that the Sixties Scoop and residential school situation doesn't occur again," said Thomas, referring to the era in which Indigenous children were removed from their families en masse and placed into foster homes that were divorced from their culture.

Last year, B.C. became the first province in Canada to legally recognize the right of Indigenous communities to have control over their own child and family welfare services. The changes follow similar federal legislation — the Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families — that came into force in 2020 aimed at reducing barriers for Indigenous communities that want to create and manage their own child welfare agencies.

Splatsin is the fifth First Nation in Canada to officially take over responsibility for delivering child and family welfare services. Currently, 38 Indigenous communities have told Indigenous Services Canada that they would like to assert jurisdiction in these cases.

The reforms are aimed at reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child-welfare system, where 68 per cent of children in care are Indigenous even though they make up less than 10 per cent of the B.C. population.

Dean called the agreement "inspiring for all other Nations in the rest of the province." Several other First Nations in B.C. are close to signing their own agreements, she said.

"The co-ordination agreements are really very much about being led by the Indigenous community and how they want to serve and teach and take care of their children and youth and what role, if any, they want the provincial government to take," Dean said.

The key principle of the co-ordination agreements, Hajdu said, "is that the communities develop their own laws, their own code about how to protect families and ultimately keep children safe."

There may be cases, Hajdu said, where Indigenous children who have been placed with foster families outside of their culture can be brought back home and cared for within the community.

Splatsin's child-welfare system includes seven social workers who enter into voluntary care agreements for families who need assistance, Thomas said.

"So if parents are going down the road of alcohol or drug addiction ... and that poses a risk to the health of the children, we

can call (the parents) in and say, you need to work on yourselves and in the meantime, we will take your children into care for three months or two months," said Thomas, whose mother, Ethel Thomas, a residential school survivor, is one of the community's social workers.

The children are placed into foster care in their community, often with extended family, until they can safely return to their family.

The Splatsin's child-welfare system is rooted in the philosophy that it takes a community to raise a child and that children thrive when kept in their community, Thomas said.

Adam Olsen, a B.C. Green MLA and a member of the Tsartlip First Nation, said as more Indigenous communities take control of child welfare, he expects to eventually see a much smaller Ministry of Children and Family Development.

"The reason for (the ministry) to exist has been basically to institutionalize large numbers of Indigenous children and families and it's a remnant of our grotesque history of interrupting and disrupting Indigenous children and their parents and families," Olsen said.

The agreement will transfer \$136.2 million in federal funds to Splatsin over the next 10 years to support their delivery of child and family services grounded in their culture. The agreement lays out the co-ordination of services, the delivery of emergency services, mechanisms for First Nations children to exercise their rights, and the financial framework for delivering the child-welfare services.

Each Indigenous community negotiates directly with the federal and provincial governments on how much money it needs to operate the services. That funding can be used to hire social workers, build child welfare offices or deliver child and family programs.

A new Indigenous child welfare director at the Ministry of Children and Family Development, a position which has not yet been filled, will assist Indigenous communities in reaching co-ordination agreements and developing their own child welfare system. The new system also allows for information sharing and consent agreements between the province and Indigenous governments.

Before the changes came into effect in November, the B.C. government was not allowed to hand over child-welfare cases to an Indigenous government.

- Vancouver Sun

Arizona AG partners with Tribal Council to create training program on human trafficking

As a way to address the unique challenges Indigenous communities face concerning human trafficking, the Arizona Attorney General's Office has entered into a partnership with the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA) to launch a first-of-its-kind "Train the Trainer" program.

The program is geared toward developing a curriculum to create awareness and prevention resources on human trafficking and missing and murdered Indigenous People in tribal communities across Arizona.

"In the fight against human trafficking, the two most important components are education and awareness," Rachelle Lumpp, the anti-human trafficking program manager at the AGO, told the Arizona Mirror. "The more people we can educate about what (human trafficking) looks like, the safer our communities are gonna be."

The partnership between the AG's Office and ITCA involves developing a culturally appropriate training program that will be available to all 22 tribes in Arizona.

"Tribes have elevated the issues of human trafficking and missing or murdered Indigenous People to my office, and I plan to address these issues directly," Attorney General Kris Mayes said. "Our goal will be to increase awareness to help with prevention of human trafficking and move toward healing."

The training program will focus on awareness and set the foundation for prevention. The program will be free to tribal communities across the state, including schools and businesses.

"We value this partnership with the Office of the Attorney General because we feel supported in our effort to protect our communities," said Inter Tribal Council of Arizona Executive Director Maria Dagher. "Working with Attorney General Mayes will bring added resources and expertise that is rarely available to tribes."

According to the AG's Office, Arizona's geographic position easily facilitates travel between points in California, Las Vegas, and Mexico, which can draw tourists. Those same factors are also appealing to traffickers.

Lumpp said the AG has offered prevention resources and presentations about human trafficking for nearly 10 years, but there have never been resources geared specifically toward Indigenous communities.

Lumpp said her office had nothing that dealt with the specific and unique cultural issues or jurisdictional issues that tribes have in Arizona.

"We kind of saw a need for that to be specific and tailored to those communities," she said. Through the curriculum, the AG's Office intends to train trainers in tribal communities who can go into their communities and teach about the anti-human trafficking program.

"This is a very important issue in their own communities," Lumpp said. These trainers will become experts in the subject matter, which will help them identify the people who will benefit most from the resources.

"We're hoping to train members from all 22 federally recognized tribes here in Arizona," Lumpp said. They intend to develop a comprehensive curriculum that will train people within Indigenous communities interested in becoming trainers for their own community.

- Arizona Mirror

Peterson Zah, former Navajo chairman and president, dies at 85

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Peterson Zah, who served as the Navajo Nation chairman and president, died at Fort Defiance Hospital on March 7.

Zah was born on Dec. 2, 1937, to Henry and Mae Zah in Low Mountain, Arizona.

He attended school at Phoenix Indian School and later attended Arizona State University, where he got his bachelor's degree in education in 1963.

Zah became chairman of the Navajo Nation Council from 1981 until 1987, after which he continued to use his education to help fundraise for the Navajo Education and Scholarship Foundation further, pursuing his interest in the education realm for Navajo and Native American people.

In 1990, Zah was named the first president of the Navajo Nation, shifting from the Council governing system to one similar to the United States, with a president leaving behind a significant footprint in the hearts of many Navajo people.

"He's a once-in-a-lifetime leader, very personable. There are leaders that lead and leaders who lead and have followers that listen and have respect, he was influential, and he was well known across Indian Country," a family friend told the Navajo Times Tuesday night. "Anytime a new U.S. president is elected, no matter what party, they called him (Peterson Zah) on Native American affairs for his advice, position, and guidance. Other elected officials have to call U.S. presidents to meet with them, and U.S. presidents requested to meet with him, that is the first time in history."

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren said, "I think of Peterson Zah. He was one of the very first big-time leaders and getting to meet an actual living president and chairman. He was the first chairman I met."

"When I think of Peterson Zah, I think legendary Permanent Trust Fund," Nygren said Tuesday night from Washington, D.C. "He was big on education. He was big on everything that he built his career around was for the future, whether it was the ASU construction program that I graduated from, whether it was everything that was related to education. And the way he spoke too was always so elegant — he didn't have to speak fast, he didn't have to speak fancy Navajo — he was like really just strong and to the point."

In 1995, Zah was succeeded by the late Albert Hale and left to become a special advisor to the president of ASU for American Indian Affairs. Hale passed on Feb. 2, 2021.

Throughout Zah's life, he emphasized pushing tribal youth to attend and finish school. Zah led the race to increase retention rates at ASU from 43 to 78%, also doubling the school's Native population.

Residing in Window Rock with his wife and three kids, Zah ran into complications with Stage IV cancer. He spent his last days at Tsehootsoo Medical Center in Fort Defiance.

- Navajo Times

Special Olympics Michigan, Gun Lake Casino, and the Gun Lake Tribe announce new partnership

Special Olympics Michigan, Gun Lake Casino, and the Gun Lake Tribe have announced a new state-wide partnership. The partnership includes a \$2.5 million sponsorship agreement from Gun Lake Casino and Gun Lake Tribe to support the Unified Sports & Inclusion Center in Grand Rapids.

The Unified Sports & Inclusion Center is the largest Special Olympics training facility in the world. It is also the premiere facility for all Special Olympics Michigan athletes to train and compete.

"This partnership with Special Olympics Michigan is a natural extension of Gun Lake Tribe's commitment to building an inclusive community," said Gun Lake Tribe Chairman Bob Peters. "We are proud to join forces with such a powerful movement and help manifest its mission within the Unified Sports and Inclusion Center — a world first!"

- Fox17 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Maine's tribes get federal windfall to preserve history

Maine and its Native tribes will have more money this year to keep history alive.

The Maine State Historic Preservation Commission and four tribal communities will get \$1.3 million, 30 percent more than last year, from the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Fund.

The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians will use the funds to create a new tribal museum. This is the second time the tribe received historic preservation funding. Construction is slated to take place later this spring with the hopes of finishing the project before next winter.

The money will also help hire a Maliseet tribal historic preservation officer.

- Bangor (Maine) Daily News

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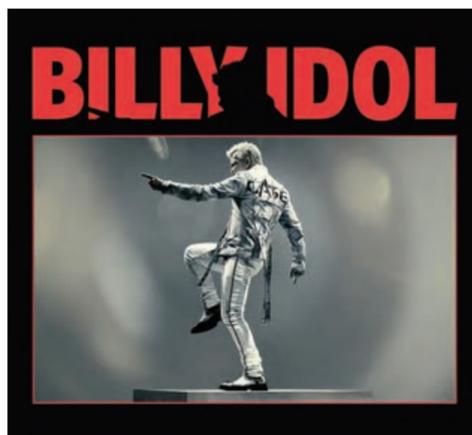
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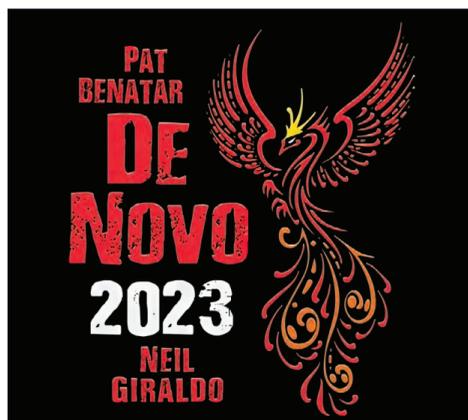
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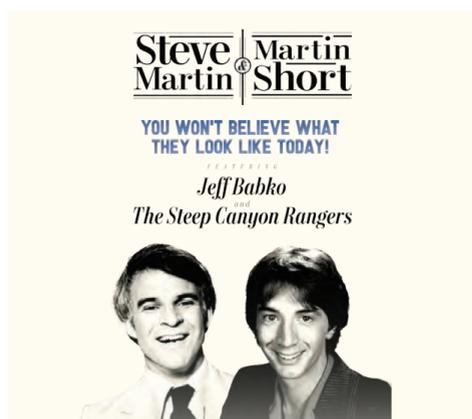
APR 15
KATT WILLIAMS



APR 18
BILLY IDOL



APR 29
PAT BENATAR & NEIL GIRALDO



APR 30
STEVE MARTIN & MARTIN SHORT



MAY 11
ONEREPUBLIC

Education



B

Alaska students enjoy cultural exchange, fun in Big Cypress

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — A group of students and staff from the Chenega Community School in the Native village of Chenega, Alaska, experienced Seminole hospitality and culture during a visit to the Big Cypress Reservation on March 6.

Chenega is a small pre-K through 12th grade school whose students are a mix of Indigenous, Thai and white. The Chenega Tribe (part of the Alutiiq tribal family) has lived in Alaska's Prince William Sound for thousands of years.

The day began with a tour of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, led by museum educator Van Samuels, followed by a gathering around the campfire near the museum's entrance. Marcella Billie, the museum's assistant director, welcomed the visitors and a handful of Ahfachkee School students who arrived with principal Philip Baer.

Abena Robinson, a museum education coordinator, organized the day's events.

"Our hope is that the exchange of ideas, practices and knowledge will empower you and give you a deeper commitment to your identity, and hopefully create lifelong friendships," Billie said.

Joey Cross, a Native Youth Olympics coach at the school, demonstrated the different athletic moves that are typical of an NYO competition with his students.

"The Seminole Tribe is very welcoming," Cross said at the end of the day. "We Alaskans and Seminoles have many similarities. I have no idea when we'll be back in Florida, but when we are, one of our first stops will be with the Seminoles."

Before departing the museum, the visitors were given museum gifts and certificates, and Chenega School staff gave Ahfachkee School students T-shirts. The group then went to the Ahfachkee School for lunch and visited the school's garden. The visitors also received T-shirts from the Ahfachkee School. The group was then treated to fry bread and sofkee under a chickee.



Joey Cross, a Native Youth Olympics coach, demonstrates the arm pull challenge with two Chenega youngsters.

"The [Seminole] culture reminded me a lot of my own culture. The way the people hunted, the way they dressed, their food — it was very reminiscent of Thai culture," Henry Meyer, 15, said. "The highlight of the museum tour was the guide we had. He was incredibly nice and super friendly. He didn't talk too much and didn't spend ages on every little thing, which I appreciate."

Twelve-year-old Charles Michener gave the Ahfachkee School visit "five stars." Toward the end of the day, the students and staff were treated to a swamp buggy ride, replete with a friendly encounter by two ostriches.

"The experience as a whole was educational and felt welcoming," Rosalinda Jimmie, an Ahfachkee School student, said. "I could feel the love and passion for the things Chenega does and how they are just there for each other. It made me happy of how interested they were in our school and community as I feel they could relate."



Van Samuels, an Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum educator, talks about Seminole culture in front of the exhibit "A Fish Out Of Water."



Ahfachkee School principal Philip Baer, right, gives a fist bump to Wright Kashevarof, who is being held by his mother Melonie Kashevarof.



A pair of curious ostriches step up to the swamp buggy to say hello.



STEAM instructors Allison Lewis, left, Pieter De Wolf, center, and Marra Sirianna, seated, use a water quality model to show Pemayetv Emahkv Charter School students how sand filters, and water filtration and treatment work March 10 at the school.

PECS students study STEAM

BY CALVIN TIGER
Reporter/Intern

BRIGHTON — Students at Pemayetv Emahkv Charter School received a visit by instructors from the Jacobs Professional Services firm March 10. Jacobs, which primarily focuses on engineering, construction and science, taught STEAM activities to students in the second, third and fourth grades.

STEAM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. Activities included city planning and resiliency, where to build specific infrastructure and how to prepare for natural weather events.

Another activity focused on the importance of water quality. The instructors assembled a water quality testing model which showed the students how sand filters, and water treatment and filtration work.

"We are here today to work with the kids and provide them with some educational opportunities with hands on activities in science and engineering and give them some experiences they might not normally see," said Tricia Shuler, Jacobs' STEAM lead for Florida and Puerto Rico.

One goal of the activities was to help students identify potential careers that could lead them to work for the tribe someday.



Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, left, talks to PECS students during an activity about city planning and resiliency by STEAM instructors Tricia Shuler, center, and Jason Bird.

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard watched the students participate in the activities.

◆ See STEAM on page 3B

Ahfachkee School hosts first career day

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — Students at the Ahfachkee School on the Big Cypress Reservation got a taste of careers the Seminole Tribe has to offer at a career day event March 15. It's the first time the school has hosted a career day.

Kerlande Patterson, the Tribal Professional Development supervisor in the Education Department, organized the event with Ahfachkee staff. She said the idea for a career day was to get students thinking about job possibilities early on in their school years. Ahfachkee School is a tribally run,

K-12 school.

Patterson invited representatives from several tribal departments to participate in the event. Students rotated between classrooms to listen to presentations and engage with department representatives.

Those participating included the Public Works Department, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, the Seminole Police Department, the Emergency Management Department, the Environmental Resource Management Department, Seminole Gaming, the Center for Behavioral Health, Seminole Fire Rescue, the Health and Human Services Department and more.

Patterson said she hopes to organize

more such events in the future.

Meanwhile, Tribal Professional Development is accepting applications for the Education Department's summer work experience program (SWEP). SWEP runs from June 12 to Aug. 4. The program is designed for students who are 14-to-24 years old and can work 20-to-32 hours a week, depending on the department and program. The positions are paid.

Other programs administered by TPD include the Work Experience Program (WEP) and the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP).

◆ See CAREER on page 3B



Emergency Management Department coordinator and tribal member Rollie Gilliam III, second from right, and Emergency Management director Paul Downing (Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township), far right, introduce Ahfachkee School students in Sheri-Ann Armentano's fourth grade class to the tribe's mobile command vehicle March 15.

Seminole history, culture celebrated at PECS

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — A typical school curriculum doesn't usually include chasing and catching piglets, racing against peers while dragging palm fans, creating an alligator from a bar of soap or learning to make fry bread over an open fire.

But at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School in Brighton, culture day is an annual event that celebrates the Seminole Tribe of Florida's culture and history. On March 22, students from pre-K to third grade did all of the above and had a blast while learning about their heritage.

PECS's daily culture classes include language, history, arts and crafts and there are some hands-on activities in the school's culture camp, but culture day is the only time during the year students spend an entire day

with their hands and minds immersed in the culture.

"Our school was founded with the purpose of revitalizing the language and experiencing the culture and history of the Seminole Tribe," said principal Tracy Downing. "This cultural experience is something that won't be seen in any other school anywhere."

Students and teachers weren't the only ones who attended culture day; community members showed up to help.

"We want them to have fun and get to know some of the adults in the community and to feel safe asking them questions," said immersion teacher Jade Osceola. "The students have some prior knowledge, we keep the language and vocabulary consistent in class. But we haven't had [culture day] in three years for this age level. Only the older kids had it last year."

After a challenging morning of learning

about alligators from Billy Walker and his 9 year old son Jonah and the rest of the activities, the group paused for a snack of fry bread with jam or honey. In traditional Seminole fashion, the females served the males first. There is an important reason for the separation of duties at camp.

"Men help women in the camp, so they get to eat first," said culture teacher Mollie Jolly. "They gather and chop the wood, get the fire going and make sure there is plenty of wood to keep the fire going. The men also do the hunting and fishing."

The carving station was filled with little boys, bars of Irish Spring soap, butter knives and adults helping them turn the soap into an alligator head. Parent Joe Osceola led the group. He told the boys not to rush through it, to take their time and remember that each stroke is important to the final object.

"Every year they are so excited, some tell me they are carving at home and that their

dad got them a knife," Osceola said. "We want them not to do it just here, but to do it at home. My grandfather carved at home all the time and I learned from him. By introducing it young, it gives them confidence."

"I came today to help because it was the way I was raised," said parent Darren Osceola. "The younger they can be exposed to the traditions, the better they pick them up."

The Creek language is an important part of the culture and was used throughout the day at all of the activities, even during a game of duck, duck, goose. The kids sat in a circle and one ran around tagging friends while saying "fuco, fuco, svsakwv," which is pronounced fucho, fucho, shashakwa.

After lunch, Osceola gathered the second and third graders together to give them the word of the day.

"Magash," she said. "It means 'say it' for vocabulary words. A lot of Creek will be

spoken today, so let's work really hard to use our language and words."

She drilled them with a few words, told them how to say them in Creek and then said "magash" and they all repeated the words.

The older students participated in their own age appropriate culture days. On March 23, the fourth, fifth and sixth graders got a little closer to the cooking fire, used sharper knives to carve and scaled fish. The boys threw tomahawks and learned archery while the girls made a sour orange drink and tried to master a traditional Seminole hairstyle. They all participated in fan and pole races.

In addition, on March 24 the seventh and eighth graders cleaned and scaled fish, cut swamp cabbage, butchered a hog, ground corn for sofkee and cooked turtles on the open fire.

"What a tremendous experience this is for the students," Downing said.



Beverly Bidney
Volunteer helper Lewis Gopher Jr. helps second grader James Billie learn to carve a bar of soap into an alligator head.



Beverly Bidney
As a safety precaution, at right, culture immersion teacher Jade Osceola guides this second grader's fry bread into the hot oil over the open fire to cook during the PECS culture day on March 22.



Beverly Bidney
Second grader Maycen Buck concentrates as he carves a bar of soap during PECS culture day.



Beverly Bidney
Students try to catch a piglet at the PECS culture day.



Beverly Bidney
Kindergarten student Maelynn Tommie participates in the fan race.

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Love of reading, tribe's children inspire library staff

STAFF REPORT

In recognition of National Library Week, which takes place April 23-29, Padmini Dukharan, the tribalwide library program supervisor, asked library staff to write about their work and interactions with the tribe's children.

The following are submissions from Dinorah M. Johns, a library catalog processor on the Brighton Reservation; Claudia Doctor, a library assistant on the Big Cypress Reservation; and Cecelia Vickers, a library assistant on the Hollywood Reservation. The responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Dinorah M. Johns

"My name is Dinorah, but everyone knows me as Dino. I am going on my eighth year as a full-time employee at the Billy Osceola Memorial Library, located on the Brighton Reservation. I am responsible for cataloging all of your favorite books. I am here to serve the Seminole communities with love and compassion for all and to help foster a love of reading.

It is my hope to inspire our youth to read and learn about their history, learn new

vocabulary, and to grow in order to teach others about the importance of reading and acquiring new knowledge. Reading will take you to more places than you can ever imagine. It is true what they say, 'readers are leaders.'

Your community libraries house a great deal of Native American history books to include a wealth of literature on the Seminole Tribe and so much more. Your community library is more than just books. We also offer a host of technology to help you meet your learning goals. Technology access is free, but does require a library card. In addition, we offer a monthly calendar, which keeps the community informed of all events and activities. Please come by to see us to pick up your library card and get an opportunity to travel to new and exotic places, without ever leaving your comfy chair."

My favorite quote: "I have found the most valuable thing in my wallet is my library card. Priceless." – Laura Bush

Cecelia C. Doctor

"Hello, my name is Claudia C. Doctor and I've been the library assistant at the Willie Frank Memorial Library in Big Cypress for 30 years. One main reason I enjoy working at the library is the interaction and impact I

have with children. Being a library assistant, it builds a unique sense of comfort for the community and molds young readers. As the popular quote stated, 'readers are leaders.'"

Cecelia Vickers

"Hello, my name is Cecelia Vickers and I've been a library assistant at the Dorothy Scott Osceola Memorial Library on the Hollywood Reservation for six years. One of the main reasons I love working at the library is the interaction that I have with the children. Story time is my favorite. Bringing a book to life for a child and watching their eyes light up is the best. Gifting the love of reading to a child is for a lifetime.

It's wonderful when a child returns to the library remembering the stories read to them when they were in preschool, laughing and reflecting on the storyline. It's even better when they request to have their very own library card to check out books they are interested in. Most of all I love working in the library because it helps build community and is a place to connect, learn and grow."

For more information, go to seminoleeducation.com.



Dinorah M. Johns



Claudia C. Doctor



Cecelia Vickers

STEAM From page 1B

"I think it's a very educational thing for our kids, looking for the future of our workforce," Councilman Howard said.

Lee Zepeda, executive director of administration, who worked previously as a teacher, praised the Jacobs instructors.

"They are doing a great job of keeping the kids engaged," he said.

Derek Koger, Tribal Community Development executive director, helped facilitate the STEAM event.

"Our goal is to educate as many tribal members as possible about STEAM and make them aware of the opportunities that are available in these fields," he said.

Calvin Tiger

STEAM instructor Pieter De Wolf creates activities for PECS students to show the importance of water quality.



CAREER From page 1B

The SWEP application deadline is May 12. Contact student and professional

development success coach Kajir "Kai" Harriott at (954) 993-6445 or kajirharriott@seminoleeducation.com for more information, or go to seminoleeducation.com.



Damon Scott

From left to right, students Tito Orozco, Liam Stockton, Zoey Cypress and Tayton Osceola sit inside the tribe's mobile command vehicle to learn about some of its high-tech features.



Damon Scott

From left to right are Emergency Management Department coordinator Rollie Gilliam III, Angelina Green, Zielah Cantu and Emergency Management director Paul Downing. Gilliam and Downing showed students some of the capabilities of the mobile command vehicle.



Damon Scott

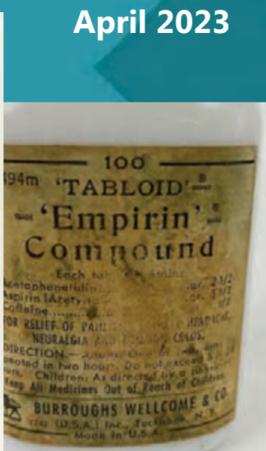
Zielah Cantu examines a satchel made from an animal pelt during a demonstration and discussion by representatives of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

April 2023



THPO



This month we are highlighting an artifact that originated in London and found its way onto the Brighton Reservation. At first glance, the plain clear glass might have been overlooked at a campsite or in someone's medicine cabinet. The vintage shape and the letters that are embossed on the bottom indicate that it was manufactured by the Burroughs Wellcome & Co. in the 1940s. This was not just any ordinary company; it was known for conducting groundbreaking research and for shaping the pharmaceutical industry during the Gilded Age. Utilizing a machine originally manufactured to crush graphite

into finely powdered lead for pencils, Silas M. Burroughs was able to crush and compress medication into standardized dosages in pill form. Burroughs and Sir Henry Wellcome went into business in London and by 1912 the company expanded into Tuckahoe, New York. The duo manufactured a machine that worked faster and was able to produce 600 pills a minute, giving Burroughs Wellcome and Co. an edge over its competitors. The bottle, manufactured by the company contained Empirin which was mainly used for pain management, fevers, and headaches.

Empirin's active ingredients were caffeine, aspirin, and phenacetin. Phenacetin, a common analgesic, was removed in the early 1980s when it was found to have negative side effects and replaced with acetaminophen. This historic bottle held pills that were created using the phenacetin ingredient. Other pharmaceuticals that needed to be reformulated included Excedrin and Anacin. One notable death caused by the ingredient was of the aviator Howard Hughes who suffered from kidney failure that was attributed to his excessive use of phenacetin ([Wayback Machine \(archive.org\)](http://Wayback Machine (archive.org))) He died in 1976, just a few years before the FDA banned the ingredient.

References:
Cohn, Victor. "FDA to Ban a Widely Used Painkiller." *Washington Post*. August 9, 1980.
Larson, Frances. *An Infinity of Things: How Sir Henry Wellcome Collected the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
The ad is from 1939 in London and the vintage Empirin label is from a bottle manufactured and filled in Tuckahoe, NY.



SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - APRIL 2023 THE ANCESTORS' CANOE

In November of 2019, Park Ranger Tom Watson found a canoe washed up on the shore of Egmont Key, a small island in the mouth of Tampa Bay. While remnants of canoes left behind by the Seminole are not uncommon, this one proved to be a much different case. When Pedro Zepeda, a Tribal member and canoe crafter, examined the cypress frame he identified traditional techniques used in its making that are still taught today. However the canoe is over 18 feet long, from one end to where it is broken off, and could have been much longer. The size, along with a circular notch in the frame that could have been placement for a mast, showed that it was meant for deep waters such as the Gulf of Mexico and the broader Caribbean. This would place the Egmont canoe as having been crafted over 500 years ago!

A piece of the canoe was sent for carbon dating, and determined that the canoe was made around the year 1410, plus or minus twenty years. In that time there was regular travel between the indigenous people of Florida, those along the Gulf Coast, and into the Caribbean. Canoes like the one found on Egmont Key were the sea-going part of a much broader network that tied indigenous America together in communication, trade, politics, and sometimes war.

The marine network came to an end not long after the arrival of colonizing powers in the Caribbean. Conquistadores who conquered one community could then learn of others it traded with, giving the invaders new targets. When Spain conquered Cuba, Taino refugees fled to the Calusa and Tocobaga towns in canoes much like this. It would be the last sea voyage for most of them, as the Spanish Caribbean became too dangerous to travel.

The Egmont Canoe is a legacy of the Ancestors of the Seminole people, an example of the societies and people who called Florida and the waters around it home.

TO LEARN MORE

About the Egmont Canoe: seminoletribune.org/hugely-significant-canoe-found-at-egmont-key/
About the history of Egmont Key: stoftppo.com/egmont-key/

Visit the Tribal Historic Preservation Office website at stoftppo.com or use the QR code for more Seminole history resources



Boys & Girls Clubs showcase art skills



From left to right at the Big Cypress Boys & Girls Club art show reception are Wordretta Gibson, BC BGC assistant manager; Shonayeh Tommie, BC BGC youth member; Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers; Mercedes Ramirez, BC BGC counselor; and Vera Herrera, BC BGC manager. Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie also stopped by. The BC President's Office sent a tray of cookies for the youth.



Big Cypress Boys & Girls Club members Allie Billie, left, and Aubrilee Billie, right, join BGC alumni Aujua Williams to show some of their art.



Big Cypress Boys & Girls Club members enjoy treats during the art show.



The art of Joshua Baker, 5, left, and Julian Castro, 7, at the Hollywood Boys & Girls Club.



Hollywood Boys & Girls Club counselor Kierra Adams, standing, keeps the students entertained and engaged during the art function.



From right to left is the art of Vesper Sanders, 9, Dahlia Sanders, 12, and Micah Lanier, 9, at the Hollywood Boys & Girls Club.



The art of Daveny Osceola, 13, left, and Marlena Olson, 7, at the Hollywood Boys & Girls Club art show reception.

◆ FESTIVAL From page 8A

"The women in my family were very strong and taught me how to be strong," Victors said. "They prepared me for a leadership role as a legislator, where I learned I deserved to have a voice, too. My older brothers look to me for advice; my mom said it's because we are the givers of life and are held up on a pedestal because we give life." Tina Osceola, director of the Seminole Tribe's Tribal Historic Preservation Office,

lamented that people learn about Seminoles from books that non-Seminoles have written. "A matriarch knows who her family is and understands why that's important," Osceola said. "It's about where we come from and that this is our land. From a THPO perspective, it's about telling our story on our terms and not accepting what others say about us." Councilwoman Billie said she hopes to make the festival an annual event in Big Cypress.



Cypress Billie, aka Cornwallis, performs his original songs at the BC Indigenous Arts and Music Festival on March 4.



From left to right, Lyla June, Ponca-We Victors, Norma Flying Horse, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Ruth Buffalo and Tina Osceola gather after their panel discussion on the meaning of matriarchs.



Attendees at the festival enjoy the entertainment in the shade of the stage.



The Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition keeps the rapt attention of the crowd as the gator and the wrestler mix it up in the shallow pool.

'Poet's Story'

BY ELGIN JUMPER

Editor's note: This is part II of "Poet's Story." Part I appeared in the Feb. 28 Seminole Tribune.

Author's note: The mixed media collage corresponds with the short story that it accompanies. The piece has gesso, acrylic and oil paint, gouache, sharpie marker, macron pens, magazine clippings, gloss medium, and canvas paper on canvas, with lines by famous poets. It's the most text in any piece that I've ever used before.

And I initially wrote, "Poet's Story" around a year and a half ago, as a short script under a different title. Since then I've wanted to adapt it to the short story format. Thank goodness, that task has worked out! The story is some of my own story, I should say, which actually took place in 2006, and after that. And yet I've updated it to the time period we now live in, among other changes.

I have no regrets whatsoever of taking up art and poetry on a full-time basis. Thank you.

Next morning at the Education Office, he sat daydreaming of art and poetry. He had already notified the woman behind the counter that he was there and was presently waiting to be called back to Director Sparrow's office. He had tried flipping through a People Magazine, just to pass the time, but soon found himself mulling over the details of his meeting too much. The administrative assistant ambled back in at last and said, "If you'll just follow me, sir." Which tore him away from art and poetry daydreams.

Director Sparrow was finishing up with a call, as Byron entered the office. He was immediately directed to take a seat. Byron studied the office, taking in the Southwestern style ceramics in display cases up against the walls. He took note of the awards on a bookshelf and on the walls. The Director bid goodbye to her caller and turned her attention to Byron.

Director Sparrow said, "Well, Mr. Pinetree, I've received reports on your art and poetry. And I've spoken with Miss Johanna Jewel. Now, what we're planning is an open mic night, which will be mobile, meaning it'll be able to move from reservation to reservation. Perhaps every other month. This'll be a first for the reservation communities. Would that be something you'd be interested in hosting?" She looked closely at Byron's reaction, attempting gage a response.

"Byron, please, I insist," he said, "Thank you so much. Wow, that is so awesome! Yes, I would love that! Thank you for considering me. So what are we talking, timeline, I mean?"

"Well, we'd like to move on this soon, like in two, three weeks. Oh, I've even discussed this with The Storyteller as well. Works with Culture, I believe - Glowing reports. I must say, your reputation precedes you, Byron. I've read your poems in the tribal paper, too. Fantastic!"

"Thank you."
"Mmm-hmm. So, at any rate, what do you say? Are you in? Can we count on you? Truth be told, it seems to me like you're headed in that direction already."

"Oh, absolutely," Byron confirmed. "Where do I sign?" They chuckled. It was such a wonderful meeting, emboldening.

He walked out of the office building into a light rain. There was a fast-moving jetplane overhead, dragging clamorous sound behind it. He rode his war-pony of a bike. He was already getting ideas for the open mic. They were coming. But he was also receiving mixed-emotions about the whole thing! Such was the routine. Something good, heartening, and then, yonder comes the inner conflicts, the despairing thoughts and feelings. Bombardments of negativity.

He bicycled to The Storyteller's house on the rez near the tribal office. The rain was just letting up, but the warm sun was an ongoing concern, as always. A short time later, Byron rode up to the Storyteller's pale yellow home. There was a hedge in front along the fenceline, possibly to camouflage the small, ceramic gnome that was golfing in the colorful flower bed.

Byron thought: Well, The Storyteller's fondness for the "interesting" hasn't faded in the least. Byron stood his bike in the open-air garage, took his backpack down. He walked up the concrete path lined by a huge rock and small palm. He noticed a little dwarf embracing and peeking around a small palm with a sign that read: "Treehugger." He knocked at the front door.

"There he is, Mister Poet Man!" The Storyteller jested, as he answered the door. "Byron! Sure is great to see you again!"

Byron said, "Hi, likewise, likewise, I'm sure. The Education lady said she spoke with you, something about an Open Mic?"

"Yes, yes, without a doubt. I say give a try, son. Onward and upward. With this, you see, you're making a mark, making a name for yourself . . . Simultaneously at the same time! heh-heh." The Storyteller motioned Byron inside. He placed a bookmark on a page he was reading and put the book away on the shelf attached to his writing desk. "Let's sit and talk about this." They settled in at the dining-table. "Have you heard about The Gathering of Nations this year?" The Storyteller asked. "Promises to be amazing."

There was a glistening chandelier as one of the main players on the stage of the dining-room. The walls were adorned with southwestern art, and Seminole art. Some paintings - reproductions - looked like Remington had painted them. He also had several bronze table-top sculptures perched on bookshelves. There was a large wooden table with wooden chairs guarding it. They sipped tea and talked.

Byron kidded, "You know this is going to be cutting into my slacking and solitude times, right?"

"Seek a life of vibrance, young man," The Storyteller advised. "If that means something like this, well then, so be it. That's true progress. But first you'll need to build self-confidence."

"It does gnaw at me," Byron confided, "And then again, I might just be overthinking it . . . But I don't know, I just don't know." He took a sip of tea.

"Find your courage, son, that self-same courage I've seen so many times in you. At times it'll seem like a thousand things'll go wrong, but believe me, once you get up there, once you start speaking, all that pesky nervousness just goes out the window."

Byron sighed. "And how am I supposed to host without any experience?"

"This is South Florida, son. And you've got three weeks. You talk about cutting into slacking and solitude time. On the contrary. I would say you have your work cut out for you. They've got open mics around, I'm pretty sure of it. So it's go time!"

Byron was psyched at present! The Storyteller had definitely given him good words to contemplate. It was a blueprint on how to move forward, what it was. So he took those words to heart. He called Johanna and they planned to meet at her place that evening, which was near the old clinic grounds. Together they would strategize this poetry dream out.

Towards evening, when the orange western light of the sun was just fading away for the day, Byron made his way to Johanna's house, which wasn't that far from his. The street lights were blinking on, they were signaling regards to the lyrical night sky. One revolution of the cruiser wheel at a time. Plan it out and execute it!

Byron knocked at Johanna's door and was let in. He smelled rich coffee. They sat on her living-room sofa, a black leather piece sectional that went well with her coffee table, end tables, lamps, and large-screen tv. Byron noted the Seminole still life paintings on the walls, painted in her spare time by Johanna herself. It was splendid living-room decor, Byron observed. They drank coffee and sometimes nibbled at snacks.

"Alright, Byron," Johanna began, "I went online, as you asked, and there's a poet who puts on an open mic in Deerfield Beach, a coffee house there on the shores. The Deerfield Beach Coffee House. I say we get over there for his next one. Some others, too, North Miami, near the Museum of Contemporary Art, uh, Fort Lauderdale . . . but I say, let's attend this first one in Deerfield, you might even consider reading. Just kinda putting it out there, B, out into the Cosmos, in case you want to. Totally your call. I look forward to hearing your poems, Byron. I love poetry!"

"Thanks, I appreciate that," Byron stated. "I still can't fathom me hosting anything. This is all so new to me - I mean, Bigtime."

She said, "My uncle, The Storyteller, as you know, is so in your corner on this. You rocked it with the poems you read me. You're gonna do just fine. I know you can do it."

"Johanna, I'm horrendous, please. Thank you all the same. I'm grateful for you. But I've got a long ways to go before I get to where some of the others are. Don't get me wrong, I'm taking notes all the time. Copious notes."

♦ See POET'S STORY on page 6C



Calvin Tiger

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard hands out candy to the crowd during the Chalo Nitka parade March 4 in Moore Haven. The annual festival brings together Glades County with several events, including contests, music, rodeo, a 5K run and fishing tournament. The festival started in 1948 as a way to celebrate the paving of Main Street in Moore Haven. Chalo Nitka means "big bass" in the Seminole Creek language.

Chalo Nitka parade features Seminoles



Calvin Tiger

Sandy Billie Jr. greets the crowd in his traditional garb and rifle at the Chalo Nitka parade.



Calvin Tiger

Martha Tommie and her granddaughter Diamond Tommie ride in a chickee float on the parade route.

Students earn service hours while helping Hollywood community

BY CALVIN TIGER
Reporter/Intern

HOLLYWOOD — High school students earned community service hours March 21 by filling Easter eggs for the Easter egg hunt in Hollywood.

Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall and her assistant Tiffany Frank organized the event for the students to help them attain community service hours required to graduate. Rep. McCall said she also wanted to help the students feel more comfortable with participating in community events.

"It gives them a sense of accomplishment," she said.

"I'm happy to know that the kids will be happy to open the eggs that are filled with candy," said high school student Draven Osceola-Hahn.

The Easter egg hunt was scheduled to be held March 30 on the Hollywood ball field.



Calvin Tiger

High school students work at a table in the Seminole Estates clubhouse preparing Easter eggs.



Calvin Tiger

High school student Draven Osceola-Hahn, left, and Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall help with the Easter egg candy preparations.



Elgin Jumper

"4 Nightfall Poems," a mixed media poetry collage by Elgin Jumper.

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Sports



Thomas University freshman Ava Nunez was batting close to .300 at the end of March.

Jennifer Coleman/Thomas University

Thomas University softball glad to have Ava Nunez

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MIAMI GARDENS — Jessica Sanders was alerted to keep an eye on Ava Nunez as a potential future player for the Thomas University softball head coach.

“Great kid, gotta have her,” was the suggestion Sanders received from Ron Lane, Nunez’s travel team coach.

When Nunez and her parents, Rhonda and Mondo, visited Thomas — a small college in southern Georgia — Sanders immediately knew what Lane was talking about.

One visit was all it took to convince Sanders that Nunez would be a valuable addition to the team.

I was like, “I’ve got to have her,” Sanders said.

Much to Sanders’ delight, Nunez, a Seminole tribal member and former four-year standout for Immokalee High School, picked Thomas.

Nunez has quickly established herself as a key player in her rookie year. She’s mostly played third base, but has also pitched in six games. As of March 27, she was sixth on the team in batting with a .296 average that

included 16 hits, 11 RBIs and one home run in 25 games.

If there is such a thing as freshman jitters, Nunez has avoided it.

“Ava has been an amazing addition to our team,” Sanders said March 17 in between Thomas’ doubleheader against St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens.

Playing 100 miles from her hometown allowed Nunez to play in front of several family members. In addition to her parents, her brother Jonathan, uncle Roger and a few nephews watched as the teams split the games.

Nunez started the first game at third base. After leading off the second inning with a clean single to left field, she scored the team’s second run in a 3-0 victory.

Other highlights in Nunez’s season include scoring four runs in the second game on opening day, hitting safely in six of seven games in a stretch between February and March, and belting her first collegiate home run, a two-run shot Feb. 25 at Middle Georgia State.

Another memorable moment for Nunez came March 14 when Thomas hosted Haskell Indian Nations University for two games.

“It was really cool to play them,” said Nunez, who went 2-for-4 with one RBI and one run scored in the first game. Thomas won both games.

Nunez said the transition from high school and travel ball to college ball has been helped by a warm welcome from her teammates.

“They would always invite me and my roommates out to go eat with them, or go to the mall and stuff like that. I really appreciate that they made those efforts because it helped me adjust a lot quicker,” Nunez said.

Nunez is also a fan of the school’s small student-to-teacher ratio. She is majoring in education with hopes of returning to Immokalee to teach.

“I hope to graduate with my masters in education and come back to Immokalee and teach at the elementary school that I attended as a little girl,” she said. “It would mean a lot to me to be able to give back to my community by teaching our next generation.”

Nunez and Thomas are scheduled to be back in Miami Gardens April 14-15 to face Florida Memorial University.

Thomas’ regular season wraps up April 28.

Although she admitted it’s been tough to be away from her close-knit family, Nunez has become part of another family.

“I really like the school and the coaches and the girls,” Nunez said. “We’re all really close.”



Ava Nunez handles third base duties during a game this season.

Jennifer Coleman/Thomas University



Courtesy photo

Ava Nunez’s nephews were among the family members who watched her play against St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens on March 17. With Nunez, from left to right, are Aaron Rodriguez, Jayce Rodriguez and Jonathan Rodriguez Jr.

Anna Harmon, relay teammates finish second in national championship

STAFF REPORT

The Mesa (Arizona) Community College women’s track and field distance medley relay team, which includes the Seminole Tribe’s Anna Harmon, finished in second place March 4 at the National Junior College Athletic Association Indoor Championships in Topeka, Kansas.

Comprised of Harmon, Kate Brockman,

Diane Ondobo and Taylor Jacobs, the team set a school record with a time of 12:12.32.

On the same day, Harmon ran a personal best 3:03.15 in the preliminaries in the 1000 meter run.

The following day, Harmon finished sixth in the 1000 with a time of 3:09.09. She ran the mile and finished in fifth place with a personal best 5:13.14.



Mesa Community College

Anna Harmon, upper right, and her Mesa Community College relay teammates celebrate their runner-up finish at the NJCAA National Indoor Championships.

Tyler Hiatt sets Sioux Falls record

STAFF REPORT

University of Sioux Falls (South Dakota) sophomore track and field athlete Tyler Hiatt placed third in the men’s weight throw finals at the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference Indoor Track and Field Championship in February. Hiatt set a

school record with his career best throw of 18.52 meters.

The meet was held Feb. 25-26 at Myers Field House in Mankato, Minnesota.

Hiatt is the son of Seminole tribal member Stephanie Hiatt and the grandson of the late Stephen Bowers.

Hiatt is majoring in business administration and accounting.



Tyler Hiatt

University of Sioux Falls



Kevin Johnson



Kevin Johnson

The Brighton Recreation T-ball team goes through the handshake line following their game March 20 in Clewiston.

Lorraine Jumper sprints from second to third base during the T-ball league game.

Big Cypress T-ball team a big hit in Clewiston

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

CLEWISTON — Whether the 4-to-6 year-olds on the Big Cypress Recreation T-ball team grow into high school baseball or softball players remains to be seen. Check back in about a decade. For now, the kids don't have to worry about pitching or umpires or scoreboards.

"They're pretty much learning the basics. Learning how to throw, how to catch," said BC Recreation aide Carlton Banks, who coaches the team along with Recreation's Marcus Thompson and Kevin McNac.

The BC trio guided their players in the second game of the season in the Clewiston Youth Baseball League on March 20. Seven of the 14 players registered with the team played in the game. Each player smacked balls off of a tee and ran the bases. Defensively, the coaches are in the field with their players to provide guidance when needed, such as where to throw the ball and positioning.

All the players are from the reservation. The team practices three times a week.

Regardless if it's a game or practice, Banks said he wants to make sure the kids enjoy it.

"Learning while having fun," he said.



Kevin Johnson

Big Cypress Recreation's Marcus Thompson provides batting instructions at the plate.



Kevin Johnson

Zihnellie Cortez enjoys his sprint down the first base line after getting a hit.



Kevin Johnson

Neka Cortez attempts to catch the ball before it hits the ground.



Kevin Johnson

Lenard Osceola scores a run in the first inning.



Kevin Johnson

Ayzlanna Gutierrez follows through after making solid contact at the plate.



Kevin Johnson

Austin Billie gets ready to deliver a big hit.

Chobee 15s win March Madness gold

STAFF REPORT

The Chobee 15s volleyball team made a perfect run through the AAU March Madness Bash held March 25-26 in Deerfield Beach. Chobee, which includes Seminoles Alyssa Madrigal and Preslynn Baker (Baker did not play in the tournament), roared through its first four matches without losing a set.

The sweeps came against Miami Wave, Legacy, MSVC and Pure Energy.

The final two matches were Chobee's toughest, but they dominated the decisive third sets.

Chobee beat Tribe (25-19, 24-26, 15-6) and Miami Hype (23-25, 25-21 and 15-4) to capture the gold. Nine teams were in the division.

Courtesy photo

The Chobee 15s celebrate after winning the AAU March Madness Bash in Deerfield Beach. Top row, from left to right, are coach LiAnn Whipple, Tatiana Flores, Daniela Sanchez, Jadyne Jeune, Lindy Harwas and Alyssa Madrigal. Bottom row, left to right, are Jenessa Arana and Emma Pereira.



Elle Thomas stars for IRSC in Brighton game

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

FORT PIERCE — For the second year in a row, the Indian River State College softball team played a game on the Brighton Reservation. This year's game — which was held March 11 — carried extra significance. It marked a homecoming for IRSC freshman infielder Elle Thomas, who grew up on the reservation and played middle school softball on the same field that IRSC hosted St. Thomas University's JV team.

"It was pretty cool. I loved it. I always practice there," Thomas said.

Not that Thomas's hot bat needed an extra boost, but the return to her home turf proved to be beneficial at the plate. Thomas was the star in her own backyard as she

went 2-for-3 with a double and four RBIs to lead IRSC to a 16-1 win with her family and many relatives in attendance. She also scored one run and stole one base.

IRSC coach Dale Atkinson said his players look forward to the Brighton game.

"The atmosphere is always great," he said. "We get a good crowd there. It makes the kids enthusiastic because we get a lot of people there to watch us play."

The spectators included two former IRSC softball stars: Mary Huff and Kelley Smiley. Huff, a tribal member, helped Thomas land at IRSC.

"In my sophomore year, she reached out to coach Dale and told him that I would be a good fit for them. She put in a good word for me," Thomas said.

Thomas has wanted to play for IRSC



Former Indian River State College softball stars Mary Huff, kneeling left, and Kelley Smiley, kneeling right, joined their former team when it played a game at the Brighton Reservation on March 11. This year's IRSC team includes Brighton's Elle Thomas, who is to the immediate left of Smiley.



Kevin Johnson

Elle Thomas fires a throw during warm-ups before IRSC's game against Eastern Florida State College on March 22 in Fort Pierce.

ever since she was at Okeechobee High School. Not only is she playing for IRSC, but she's excelling, too. In fact, as of late March, she had the team's highest batting average at .611 with 11 hits in 18 at-bats and six RBIs.

"She's a freshman and she hasn't played as much as she probably would have liked, but she's done really, really well," Atkinson said. "She's got a great batting average, she

works really hard in practice every day. Really good kid."

Thomas, daughter of Laverne and Jason Thomas, comes from an athletic family. All of her siblings have played sports, including older brother Layton, who played baseball at Florida SouthWestern College, and younger sister Lexi, who plays softball for Okeechobee High School varsity.

Thomas said she would like to finish her

two years at IRSC and then move on to a four-year college. She's majoring in business and would like to follow in her parents' footsteps and own her own business.

As for softball, Thomas is no doubt making the most of her opportunities.

"I'm a freshman, so I don't get to play too much, but I do get my chances and I've been doing pretty well with my chances," she said.



Kevin Johnson

Elle Thomas and her teammates get ready to face Eastern Florida State College.

Season ends on sour note for NSU women

STAFF REPORT

DAVIE — The Nova Southeastern University men's basketball team capped an undefeated season by winning the NCAA Division II championship in March. The women's team didn't match that type of success, although the Sharks were among the top teams in their conference and the

nation for most of the season.

In late January, NSU was 18-2, but the team struggled down the stretch, losing five in a row to end the season with a 21-9 record.

The Sharks featured the Native American trio of Skylia Osceola (Seminole Tribe) and twin sisters Kyannah Grant (Navajo/Choctaw) and Kyannah Grant (Navajo/Choctaw).

Osceola, from the Hollywood

Reservation, appeared in 23 games and averaged 10 minutes. She scored 51 points, which included 10 3-pointers. She also had 24 assists, four steals and 21 rebounds.

She scored a season-high nine points twice; first against St. Augustine's in November and then against Tampa in

January.

Kyannah and Kyarah finished in the top five on the team in several categories.

Kyannah was fourth in scoring with 7.2 points per game; Kyarah was fifth with 6.9.

Kyannah was second on the team in rebounds (120), assists (77) and steals (39).

Kyarah scored in double figures nine times while Kyannah hit double digits 10 times, including 20 points in a season-ending loss to Eckerd in the first round of the Division II tournament.



Kevin Johnson

Nova Southeastern University's Skylia Osceola passes the ball to Kyannah Grant during a Sunshine State Conference quarterfinal Feb. 28 in Davie.



Kevin Johnson

Nova Southeastern University's bench watches a 3-point shot by Kyannah Grant against Florida Southern College in a Sunshine State Conference quarterfinal Feb. 28 in Davie. Florida Southern won 69-67. Grant led NSU with 15 points.

Early in season, PECS baseball shows encouraging signs

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BRIGHTON — The Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School baseball team trailed by 10 runs entering the final inning against Osceola Middle School on March 21. Instead of quickly and quietly exiting with a loss, PECS turned its final at-bats into a rally full of determination. Although the four-run rally fell well short of overtaking Osceola, it at least provided encouraging signs that PECS is on the right path.

"I felt we finally settled in a little bit at the end," said PECS coach Harry Tewksbury. "We found some confidence at the plate. We did some good things on the bases."

Liam Berry provided the spark in the final inning by beating a throw to first for an infield single. After walks to Case Prescott and Jeremy Urbina, Logan French came through with a two-run single. A few batters later Brody Riley kept the good vibes going by smacking a two-run, bases loaded double. PECS' rally eventually fizzled out as

Osceola departed with a 12-6 win.

Building confidence is a big part of Tewksbury's goals for the team this season. Very little baseball has been played at PECS in the past six or seven years. The last time PECS fielded a team was in 2020 and even then it was only for three games before the pandemic shut down school activities. The program was dormant for a few years before 2020. Needless to say, the club doesn't have a lot of experience, but Tewksbury said progress is being made.

"I'm hoping that they'll be better than when we started, and I'm seeing that now," Tewksbury said. "I'm hoping we can develop a work ethic and get better and carry that confidence forward."

The team has 12 players. They opened the season with a close loss. The setback against Osceola was PECS' second game.

"They've gotten better. From the first day to right now, we're a lot better than we were," Tewksbury said.



Kevin Johnson

PECS infielder Liam Berry gets ready to field a grounder during a game against Osceola Middle School on March 21 in Brighton.



Kevin Johnson

PECS' Brodie Riley scores a run in the final inning against Osceola Middle School.



Kevin Johnson

PECS' Case Prescott rounds third base and heads for home as he and coach Harry Tewksbury keep an eye on the ball.



Kevin Johnson (2)

At left, Logan French makes contact on a low pitch. Above, Timothy Urbina reacts on his way back to the dugout.

Doctor brothers celebrate birthdays, athletics

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — A birthday party was held for Patrick Doctor, 65, and his brother Ronnie Doctor, 78, at the Seminole Estates clubhouse March 17. In addition to the celebration, the brothers' athletic achievements and awards throughout the years were on display.

Ronnie Doctor spent a lot of time pursuing golf, pool, bowling and alligator wrestling. Younger brother, Patrick, focused on running, weight lifting, and basketball. Over the years, Patrick has participated in running events that have taken him to places such as Miami and Oklahoma, where he finished in first place.

Patrick still remains active by running and staying involved in annual walks and senior runs. One of the reasons he stays physically fit is to "feel better and think better."



Calvin Tiger

Ronnie Doctor, left, and Patrick Doctor hold awards for some of their athletic achievements. A party was held March 17 for both brothers at Seminole Estates clubhouse.



Calvin Tiger

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, left, and President Mitchell Cypress, right, make an appearance to wish Ronnie and Patrick Doctor a happy birthday.



Ryun Alarcon/SMP

Troy Stubbs shows off his catch March 22, the first of two days in the Hollywood Council Office's deep sea fishing charter experience for the Hollywood Reservation and off-reservation residents in Broward County. The first day was an afternoon adventure while the second day featured a morning departure.



Ryun Alarcon/SMP

Anna Ruidiaz holds up her catch.

Deep sea success



Ryun Alarcon/SMP

With fish in hand, Talia Rodriguez enjoys her successful time on the water.



Ryun Alarcon/SMP

Anglers fill both sides of the charter boat.



Ryun Alarcon/SMP

Mercedes Osceola, Hollywood Council special events coordinator, and Sonja Buck get ready to go aboard.

Ahnie Jumper places 4th in Davie

STAFF REPORT

Ahnie Jumper, from the Big Cypress Reservation, finished in the money in the Davie Breakaway Roping event Feb. 25. Jumper's time of 5.8 seconds was good

enough for fourth place. Kelsey Mabry won the event with a time of 2.7 seconds. The event is part of the PRCA's Southeastern Circuit.

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Hard Rock's Mirage to offer prime seating for Las Vegas F1 race

STAFF REPORT

Hard Rock International has joined the roster of presenting partners for the Formula 1 Heineken Silver Las Vegas Grand Prix. During the Las Vegas Grand Prix, the current Mirage Hotel & Casino, now operated by HRI, will offer a prime vantage spot to view the race.

As a partner, Hard Rock will have its own grandstand structure to seat up to 3,000 spectators adjacent to the Las Vegas Strip. Tickets went on sale March 24.

HRI's involvement in the race expands its reach into F1.

"We are very excited to partner with Las Vegas Grand Prix. Inc. and to create one-of-a-kind experiences for our fans and guests alike at the inaugural race," Keith Sheldon, HRI president of entertainment, said in a statement. "From our involvement with the Formula 1 Miami Grand Prix and as an official team partner of Oracle Red Bull Racing, we're thrilled to continue to grow our involvement in the sport and know first-hand what it will take to plan and execute an extraordinary race experience in the sports and entertainment capital of the world."

In December 2022, HRI assumed operations of the Mirage Hotel &

Casino after receiving regulatory approval from the Nevada Gaming Commission. Plans call for the 3,044-room casino resort to continue to operate as the Mirage until the building is renovated into a Hard Rock Hotel & Casino with plans to build a guitar-shaped hotel.

Hard Rock is involved in the Crypto.com Miami Grand Prix, ranging from Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood serving as the official kickoff party site for last year's race, to offering a beach club experience and music stage at the

race. The Miami race will be held May 5 to May 7 at Hard Rock Stadium. Also, last year HRI and Oracle Red Bull Racing formed a partnership that made HRI an official team and viewing partner. Hard Rock's logo was added to Oracle Red Bull Racing cars.

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Jake Corriveau

The Hollywood Council Office hosted a "Spring Break Bash" on March 17, the start of the spring vacation week in Broward County schools. At left, attendees take a break from the pool at Seminole Estates. Above, Kenna Osceola (left) and Daveny Osceola-Hahn enjoy their shaved ice.

Spring break fun in Hollywood



Jake Corriveau

A mobile video gaming van was among the attractions for kids at the bash.



Jake Corriveau

It wasn't snow, but several inches of white foam made for a fun place for kids to soak up the suds.

NHL team signs patch agreement with Muckleshoot Indian Tribe

FROM NHL.COM

In October 2019, leaders from the Seattle Kraken, Oak View Group and Muckleshoot Indian Tribal Council in Washington gathered at then-unnamed, still-under-construction Climate Pledge Arena to bless the ground. The arena lies on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish people. As Muckleshoot Tribe members performed a blessing song in the Southern Lushootseed language, 72 temporary steel columns supported the arena's landmark roof so workers could continue excavating 600,000 cubic yards of dirt day and night. Four years later, the Kraken and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe furthered their commitment to each other, acknowledging the past and celebrating the important

contributions the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe make to the region. The team, Climate Pledge Arena and Muckleshoot announced a multi-year partnership Feb. 22. The tribe will be the Seattle Kraken's first-ever jersey patch partner and become the first Indian tribe to hold this honor in the NHL. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe logo will be placed on the right chest of both the Seattle Kraken home and away jerseys, among the top-sellers in the NHL, gaining awareness among millions of fans across myriad content platforms across North America and the globe. The patch's circular design includes an earthen lighter brown base with snow-covered Mt. Rainer rising about a sky-blue backdrop. The occasion was marked Wednesday with an on-ice event at Kraken Community Iceplex with Seattle alternate captain Jordan

Eberle speaking on behalf of his teammates alongside dignitaries from the Kraken and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and performers from the Muckleshoot Tribal School Performing Arts Group. "This joyful day brings with it a sense of hope, that our young people will see themselves represented by the team in the heart of Seattle and around the country with our Tribe's logo on the front of every Kraken jersey," said Muckleshoot Tribal Chairman Jaison Elkins. Muckleshoot leaders praised the Kraken and Climate Pledge Arena for engaging with Indigenous communities across several fronts from "day one," ranging from a summer 2019 listening session with 30 Indigenous leaders and tribal members to commissioning Indigenous artists to create pieces for both Kraken Community

Iceplex and Climate Pledge Arena, to a land-acknowledgment video that plays before every home game. As part of the partnership, a multi-sport court will be built on the Reservation, and the Kraken will create programs to increase access for Indigenous youth. Fan favorite and Kraken center Morgan Geekie recently visited a tribal school as the kids took part in a floor hockey class. "It goes all the way back to that listening session and arena blessing back in 2019," said Donny Stevenson, vice chairman of Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. "That laid the groundwork for the Kraken being involved in a way that, frankly, wasn't a requirement [of the separate casino sponsorship agreement]." NHL.com



The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe patch is on a Seattle Kraken uniform.

◆ POET'S STORY From page 5B

"So we're set then?" Johanna inquired. "Deerfield? This weekend?" "We is set!" Byron verified. And so, Byron and Johanna met the Saturday afternoon of that weekend. Byron complimented Johanna on how beautiful she looked. He peered anxiously about, after he spoke, not used to expressing such sincerity in the open. They had an early dinner at a fine restaurant in Fort Lauderdale. They discussed poetry over superb steaks, and hot coffee and cool soda. He saw a angelic sculpture as they were leaving. He thought: Such a fine fine evening. Then they took '95 east to the coast. The Deerfield Open Mic was magnificent! They made it to their seats just as the first poet was going on. Ringo, (his stage name) the poet/host called the initial reader, "The Sacrificial Poet." This poet had a wonderful opening poem about dreams of giving up his day job, and going it full-time as a poet. Byron and Johanna were equally moved by it. Eleven poets touched the stage that night, Byron included. They sipped tropical juices and immersed themselves in poetry dreams, soaking it all in. Towards the conclusion, Byron and Johanna had a moment to speak with the poet/host. "... Yes, these first times are really tough," Byron divulged. "I couldn't tell you who was watching and listening, heh-heh. I hardly looked up from the poems, as you could well see." "Don't sweat it, my friend," Ringo urged, shaking his head. "I think everyone experiences something like that. The trick is to keep at it. Stick to it. Keep up with the Open Mics, the readings. Whenever you can get to em. And practice, practice, practice." Byron smiled and nodded, then he glanced at his watch. Just past 10PM. They soon left The Deerfield Coffee House. They rode south enthralled by the poetry of city lights and the energy of the night. For the next two weeks, Byron and

Johanna worked double-time getting Byron ready. Johanna arranged several pop-up readings at the Education Department, for the employees. Director Sparrow, Johanna and The Storyteller were in attendance, of course. Wherever they could meet to read, they did just that. Byron took it upon himself to set up his own readings at different locations on the reservation. He held one at the baseball field right on the diamond after a practice session. He managed to pull several readings together under an old oak tree. Construction workers at a nearby site came to see what the spur-of-the-moment gatherings were all about. They had gone back to work afterwards with poetry on their hearts and minds. And all the efforts were gaining favorable responses. The news was fast-spreading on social media and Byron's cellphone was "blowin up" all the time! Johanna offered to assist him with the surplus of cellphone activity, for which Byron was unacquainted. Byron was reading in Deerfield, in Fort Lauderdale, in North Miami, and once in Naples, at an old playhouse run by an open-minded theatre company, who, after hearing his story, gave him the opportunity to open for a play. Then Byron got the idea to read at a Seminole village that doubled as a tourist attraction, with Seminole culture, food, arts and crafts, and critters on hand. They asked him back! That one had been a shining success! And yet, the time had crept up, like a Seminole warrior, drawing ever-near. They came from far away to the first Seminole Open Mic Night, held at the tribal museum on the Hollywood reservation. Near the Guitar Hotel. Byron and Johanna greeted every attendee at the door. Planners had opened up the event to tribal members, as well as, tribal employees. There was a first come, first served list, which had to be signed in order to read. Director Sparrow and The Storyteller sipped coffee and chatted in the first row of seats. There was a senior with a guitar and storytelling songs from the Naples area. He was the first to participate. Not as a sacrifice, mind, but as a starter. There was a young girl from the Big Cypress rez, who

read two original compositions. They were powerful, poetic. It was a splendid turnout! Photos and posts went up on the internet. The crowd was treated to nine outstanding performances, renditions, and readings, a few favorites even memorized for the occasion. Following the readings, during refreshment time, The Storyteller asked, "So are you excited?" Byron answered, "Are you kidding? This is wonderful! Great turnout!" "Director Sparrow did such a fine job promoting the event, too." The Storyteller said. He nodded, while Johanna and Johanna smiled, grateful. Johanna placed a hand on Byron's shoulder. "Stellar job. We must thank her." "They're already talking about the next one." The Storyteller said. "Spread your wings and fly, young Seminole man." Johanna poeticized, stretching out the pause for effect. "It starts with a whisper, you see, with

the flutter of wings, and yet, it weeps to be heard." Byron responded with, "Ah, a challenge... Okay, so I'm gonna try this one from mem'ry, it's one of mine. Here goes: I am no longer the very picture of sorrow. No, for a page has been turned. A new sun has arisen. The light of Hope shines on with dreams of flight and song, and if, in the thunderous whisper tears of happiness flow - often I'll take your hand. Often you'll take mine - and we'll dream this dream together,

walking throughout the world, in our dreams of many colors." The wondrous applause for Byron and Johanna was the crowning touch of the evening! *Seminole artist and writer Elgin Jumper is a contributor to the Seminole Tribune*

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