



# The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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## Candidate slate set for elections

STAFF REPORT

**HOLLYWOOD** — Sixteen candidates will vie for office in the Seminole Tribe of Florida's upcoming regular election.

On election day - May 12, 2025, - registered voters will cast votes in their reservation races to determine who will represent the Big Cypress, Brighton and Hollywood reservations on the Tribal Council and Seminole Tribe of Florida Inc.'s Board of Directors.

The names of candidates, which include five incumbents, were announced April 24, one day after the final list was confirmed during a special joint meeting with the Tribal Council and Board.

Incumbents seeking reelection are Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Hollywood Councilman Christopher Osceola, Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers, and Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge.

Rep. Arledge is the only candidate for the Brighton Board seat; the other five races have multiple candidates. Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall is the only current representative not on the candidate list.

The seats of Tribal Council Chairman and Board President, held by Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and President Holly Tiger, respectively, are not up for election this year.

◆ See ELECTION on page 9A

## Thousands attend Gathering of Nations, Miss Indian World

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.** — The 42nd annual Gathering of Nations attracted thousands of spectators, dancers and drummers from around Indian Country and beyond April 24-26 at EXPO New Mexico in Albuquerque.

An integral part of the GON was the Miss Indian World pageant, which kicked off with the talent competition April 24. The pageant had 23 contestants this year, including two from the Seminole Tribe of Florida: Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas and former Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie. It was the first time the tribe had more than one contestant in the contest.

During the talent competition, Thomas displayed three of her paintings and described the Seminole Tribe's clan system depicted in them. Billie chose storytelling as her talent and told the story of the good-hearted and the evil spirit.

During GON, the contestants participated in four Grand Entries, two horse parades, competed in public speaking and dance contests and finally participated in the crowning of a new MIW.

"This was an experience I never thought I'd ever have," Thomas said. "I love being with all the girls and getting to know them. I found new besties and new friends. I'm doing this for my people and my family, I want to win that title for them."

The contestants were divided into small groups. Thomas and Billie were in separate groups, so they didn't spend a lot of time together. But they were both glad to have another tribal member nearby.



Beverly Bidney

Former Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie, third from left, and current Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, third from right, participate in the Miss Indian World pageant at Gathering of Nations on April 24 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

"She's my piece of home," Thomas said. "I was nervous coming in, but now I'm more confident. Everyone is so encouraging. It's a warm feeling you get when everyone is cheering for you, it's the best feeling."

Since this was Billie's second time competing for the MIW crown, she had a

seasoned perspective.

"I love this feeling of being around Native girls who want to represent their tribes, it's a feeling of unity," Billie said.

After the competition last year, Billie was left with so much joy and happiness that she decided to do it again.

"I was eligible, so I thought why not?" she said. "It's an exciting thing, being able to learn about other cultures and traditions. If it wasn't for this competition, I wouldn't know that we have so many similarities."

◆ See GATHERING on page 6A

## Native Learning Center receives visit from U.S. HUD Secretary

BY CALVIN TIGER  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Scott Turner toured the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Native Learning Center in Hollywood on April 10. The tour was led by Georgette Smith, Native Learning Center Executive Director, and Kyle Doney, Native Learning Center Deputy Director. Turner visited the center and watched a brief slideshow about what it does.

The visit marked Turner's first trip to a Native American tribe as Secretary.

"I am very impressed, and I'm encouraged," Turner said. "There's a great intentionality here to take care of the tribal

nations from housing to home, to financial literacy, to training this generation and the next. And so that's very encouraging to me as a steward of HUD to see that the resources that are being used here are very deliberate and detailed, and I'm so happy that I came."

Turner is a former state representative from Texas. He graduated from the University of Illinois and played in the NFL before he embarked on a political career. In November 2024, he was nominated by then President-elect Donald Trump to lead HUD.

"I thought it was very successful," Smith said about the visit. "His enthusiasm just makes us feel that positive outcomes for the future of Indian Country's housing programs are definitely something that he's going to prioritize, so we are very happy

about that."

"It was a great to see a strong interest in Indian Country in HUD overall, so we're very thankful and we really appreciate Secretary Turner's visit," Doney said.

At the end of the tour, Doney gave Turner a sweetgrass basket made by Mary Sally Osceola. It was donated by Doney and Jojo Osceola.

The NLC helps Indian Country by providing in-person and webinar training opportunities and technical assistance for Native Americans, tribes and others working within Indian Country in areas such as affordable housing, financial literacy, promoting self-sufficiency and more.

◆ See HUD on page 5A



Calvin Tiger

Kyle Doney, left, and Georgette Smith greet U.S. HUD Secretary Scott Turner on April 10 at the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Native Learning Center in Hollywood.



Tatum Mitchell

The Aztec Dancers perform on stage during an Earth Day celebration April 17 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

## 'Earth Day the Native Way' celebrates nature, Seminole culture

BY TATUM MITCHELL  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — "Earth Day the Native Way" kicked off on a sunny, slightly breezy day at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Reservation April 17 with vendors, workshops and performances to celebrate nature with the community.

Museum director Gordon Wareham said the idea started about four years ago,

and along with celebrating Earth, they want to celebrate their place in nature and how Seminole beliefs and traditions fit into that.

"From that idea, from that celebration, it just kept on growing and growing and growing, until we got a lot of schools wanting to come out here and participate. We got a lot of interest in coming out," Wareham said.

◆ See NATIVE WAY on page 4A



# Native American Hall of Fame announces class of 2025

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**OKLAHOMA CITY** — The National Native American Hall of Fame announced April 25 its class of 2025. Six individuals who have made outstanding contributions to Indian Country will be inducted into the hall Nov. 1 at OKANA Resort and Hotel in Oklahoma City.

The inductees are:

**W. Ron Allen**  
**Jamestown S'Skallam Tribe**

Throughout his career Chairman Allen has demonstrated strong leadership, uncanny wisdom, and a genuine commitment to improve the lives of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples across the United States. He maintains a vigilant watch on Washington, D.C. to make sure that actions which could potentially affect tribal sovereignty and self-governance are protected and advanced by Federal laws, regulations, and court decisions. He has staunchly defended and rigorously supports all the promises made whether by treaty, Congressional acts, and the judicial or executive branches of the United States government.

**Ross Anderson**  
**Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes, and Mescalero/Chiricahua Apache**

In 2001 Anderson was the first Native American to ever place in the Pro Speed Skiing World Championships. In 2006 Anderson solidified the title of being, “the fastest skier in American history” when he established the fastest speed ever recorded in the Western Hemisphere at 154.06 mph. In 2024 Anderson was the first Native American to be inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame, the Colorado Snowsports Hall of Fame, and the Ski New Mexico Hall of Fame for the Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Notah Begay III**  
**Navajo**

Notah Begay III is a renowned golfer and celebrated sports educator. He has achieved numerous accolades throughout his career including one of Golf Magazine’s Innovators of the Year in 2009 and one of the Top 100 Sports Educators globally. Notah’s achievements include representing the U.S. in the prestigious Walker Cup and Presidents Cup and winning four PGA Tour tournaments. His commitment to youth sports is evident through the NB3 Foundation and the establishment of the Notah Begay III Junior Golf National Championship.

**Dwight Birdwell**  
**Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma**

Specialist Five Dwight W. Birdwell was awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor by President Biden on July 5, 2022, for his extraordinary valor and fearless actions during the Tet Offensive in Vietnam on Jan. 31, 1968. Birdwell’s unwavering courage and selfless dedication while serving with C Troop, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division exemplify the highest ideals of military service.

**Deb Haaland**  
**Laguna Pueblo**

Deb Haaland made history in 2021 by becoming the first Native American to serve as the United States Secretary of the Interior. Haaland has shattered barriers throughout her career, paving the way for future generations. From running her own business to serving as a tribal administrator at San Felipe Pueblo, she has been a resolute advocate for her community. She was the first woman elected to the Laguna Development Corporation Board of Directors and oversaw the operations of one of the largest tribal gaming enterprises in New Mexico, championing environmentally friendly business practices. Haaland is currently campaigning to become the Governor of New Mexico.

**Lynn Valbuena**  
**Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation**

Valbuena has served in various leadership roles in the tribal government for 50 years. Starting as the Tribe’s first housing commissioner, in 2024, she rose to become the Chairwoman for her sixth term after holding multiple officer positions on the Tribal Council. Her influence extends beyond the Tribe, with active involvement in various regional, state, and national organizations. Valbuena is a trailblazer for women in leadership, advocating for them to pursue executive positions. As the Chairwoman of the Tribal Alliance of Sovereign Indian Nations (TASIN), Valbuena continues to make a significant impact in the realm of Tribal affairs.

For more information about tickets and sponsorships, visit [nativehalloffame.org](http://nativehalloffame.org) or contact CEO James Parker Shield at [james@nativehalloffame.org](mailto:james@nativehalloffame.org).

# More than 150 kids participate in Take Your Child to Work Day

BY CALVIN TIGER  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — The Seminole Tribe’s annual Take Your Child To Work Day took place again at tribal headquarters in Hollywood on April 24. The event was organized by the Human Resources Department. Multiple departments collaborated and offered activities and presentations for more than 150 students from ages 6 to 18, many with parents who work in the headquarters building or elsewhere in the tribe.

Departments that participated included Human Resources, Public Works, Seminole Police, Fire Rescue, Emergency Management, Information Technology, Culture, Education, Seminole Media Productions, Recreation, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki

Museum, and Advocacy and Guardianship. The students learned about the tribe through activities such as animal experience, story time, flute playing, “Tied by Trust” friendship bracelets, Minecraft voiceover, CPR education, fire extinguisher simulation, hose cone knockdown, augmented reality, cultural demonstrations, and DIY aromatherapy. Lunch was also provided for the students and staff.

“The Human Resources Department is proud to have hosted such a fun and meaningful experience and extend our gratitude to everyone that came out, giving of their time and talents. We look forward to continuing this tradition annually,” said Laurell Battiste, Human Resources’ special project coordinator.



Calvin Tiger

Hali Garcia gives a culture presentation of tribal arts and crafts assisted by Ruby Billie, center, and Macy Williams, right, during the Take Your Child to Work Day event April 24 at tribal headquarters.



Calvin Tiger

Health Educator Jasmine Tennie, left, discusses aromatherapy with Amy Branigan and daughter Ameliah Thomas at the Health table.



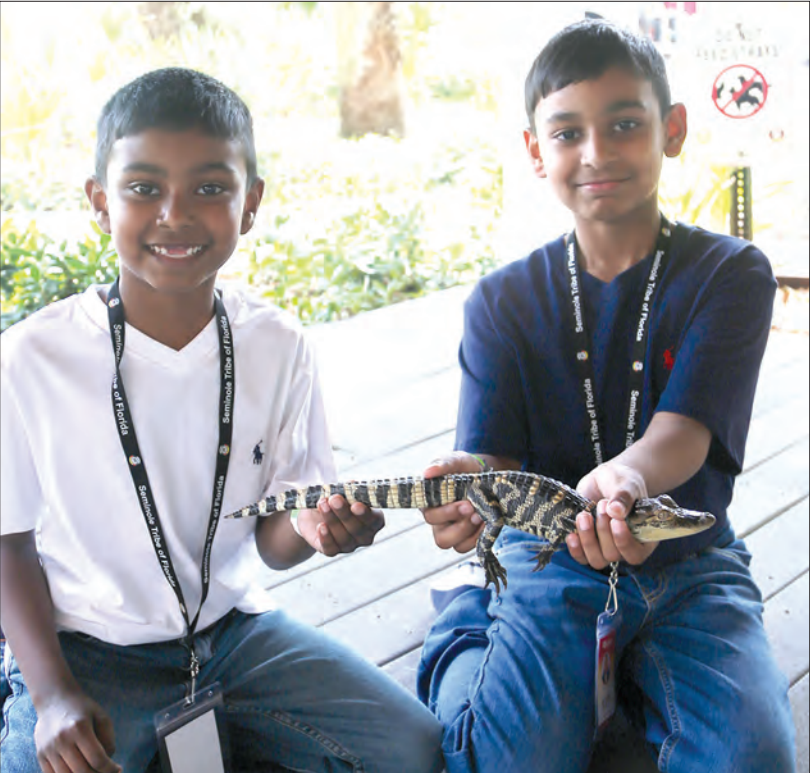
Calvin Tiger

Royce Ramos uses a Seminole Fire Rescue fire hose during the hose cone knockdown challenge assisted by Seminole Fire Rescue Firefighter Adel Diaz and Fire Rescue Lieutenant Elvis Hernandez at the Take Your Child to Work Day event.



Calvin Tiger

Ayla Freire plays the Minecraft voiceover activity assisted by SMP Video Production Manager Leigh Seldin.



Calvin Tiger

Brothers Dylan Yousuf, left, and Aiden Yousuf enjoy holding a baby alligator during the Take Your Child to Work Day event.



Calvin Tiger

Camila Pajon smiles while wearing a Seminole Fire Rescue firefighter's jacket at Take Your Child to Work Day.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Vesper Sanders, Dahlia Sanders and Braxton Osceola-Heart work together at a beadwork table during the Take Your Child to Work Day event.



Calvin Tiger

Kids take a group photo with Seminole Fire Rescue mascots Sparky and Fuego Bot.



# Community



## Elgin Jumper exhibition opens at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki

BY CALVIN TIGER  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum held an artist exhibition opening for Seminole Tribe of Florida artist Elgin Jumper on April 4. During the opening, a screening about Jumper's origins into art and poetry, "The Project," was aired for attendees. The short film also highlighted some of Jumper's various artwork pieces and poetry.

After the screening, Jumper and the attendees, including students from the Ahfachkee School, viewed the exhibition. Jumper explained the creative process he uses while creating his art. He spoke about his inspirations for certain pieces of art and why he likes using specific colors.

"Hopefully, they'll take what they've seen and be inspired by it," Jumper said. "Hopefully, maybe learn a little bit more about what I do as an artist, as a Seminole artist, hopefully some culture, some history, because I try to put that in as well, even though it's more of a modern kind of style, more of a contemporary kind of style."

The exhibition runs until May 30. For more information visit [ahtathiki.com](http://ahtathiki.com) or call 877-902-1113.



Elgin Jumper talks to students from the Ahfachkee School about his artwork April 4 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.



From left to right, Alice Osceola, Dr. Rona Olukolu and Elgin Jumper enjoy viewing one of Jumper's paintings.



Elgin Jumper stands in front of a display of his words and paintings at the museum. The exhibition runs until May 30.



Museum director Gordon Wareham and Elgin Jumper meet with students.

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# Festival of Indigenous Culture features music, dancing, more

**BY TATUM MITCHELL**  
Staff Reporter

**NAPLES** — The Festival of Indigenous Culture filled the Great Wolf Lodge with various musical performances, a fashion show, celebrity meet and greet, dancing, vendors, raffles and more on April 18 in Naples.

The Naples office team, led by Naples Council/Board liaison Brian Zepeda, has been putting together this festival for about four years now – each year growing more than the previous one. It was a day filled with Indigenous culture and was open to all to share culture and show that Indigenous people are a part of every aspect of society.

There was a meet and greet with actor Jeremiah Bitsui, who is known for his roles in “Breaking Bad”, “Better Call Saul”, “Yellowstone”, “American Primeval” and others. In addition to multiple vendors, hoop dancing, and canoe and basket demonstrations, there was a raffle of patchwork items and a fashion show featuring Lenora Roberts’ work.



Pedro Zepeda explains dugout canoes and presents various woodwork items.

Tatum Mitchell



Tatum Mitchell

Gordon “Ollie” Wareham plays the flute and tells stories at the Festival of Indigenous Culture on April 18 in Naples at the Great Wolf Lodge.



Tatum Mitchell

ShanDien LaRance hoop dances



Tatum Mitchell

Actor Jeremiah Bitsui points to a banner that highlights his acting credits.



Tatum Mitchell

A dancer and a sign welcome guests to the festival.



Tatum Mitchell

Randelle Osceola works at her basketry demonstration booth.

## ♦ NATIVE WAY From page 1A

“We call this: celebrate ‘Earth Day the Native Way.’ It’s not just coming out to celebrate Earth, but to bring those traditions of what makes a Seminole, what makes an Indigenous, and bring that knowledge and what we can share to the public. We want to have that cooperation, especially with surrounding communities,” Wareham said.

Students from surrounding areas and community members milled around food and arts and crafts vendors while workshops of dancing, beekeeping and other performances

took place. Wareham said the celebration brings generations of knowledge to young people, so they have those memories and takeaways from the event for years to come.

“This is a perfect day. [When] you have an outdoor event, you don’t know whether or not you’re going to have rain or what the elements are going to be,” Wareham said. “When the weather is perfect, and you know the rest of the world is looking at Florida like, ‘We want to be there.’ Yeah, you want to be here, this is where you want to be. This is the perfect day. ... To have an event outdoors, with the world looking, and us trying to teach what it means to be Indigenous, that’s my favorite part.”



Tatum Mitchell

From left to right, Azaliah Billie, Caleigh Osceola and Xylianna Gutierrez learn a dance from the Polynesian Proud dancers on April 17 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.



Tatum Mitchell

Billy Walker makes “swamp cabbage” out of the heart of a palm tree.



Tatum Mitchell

A Polynesian Proud dancer features a traditional Maori dance.



Tatum Mitchell

From left to right, John Henahan, Alicia Jordan and Maria Rivera cautiously check out a bug display.

# Big Cypress celebrates with spring festival



Tatum Mitchell

Kids sprint at the start of the Easter egg hunt at the Big Cypress Reservation's Spring Festival on April 12. Sponsored by the Big Cypress Council Office, the event also included music, food, contests, relay games and bounce houses, all making for a day full of fun at the rodeo grounds.



Tatum Mitchell

Nancy Schaffer takes a fast trip down a water slide.



Tatum Mitchell

Justice Jumper focuses while competing in an egg contest.



Tatum Mitchell

Amari Osceola fills up her basket with Easter eggs.



Tatum Mitchell  
Zehreiyah Owens plays in a sud machine activity.

More Easter event photos on reservations pages B4, B5





Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Principal Chief Michell Hicks, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians Chairman Talbert Cypress, Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben sign an accord April 18.

# Four tribes, including Seminole, Miccosukee, sign accord

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**HOLLYWOOD** — The leaders of four tribes in the Southeast U.S. signed an accord April 18 in a ballroom at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. In front of about 30 people, Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Miccosukee Tribe of Indians Chairman Talbert Cypress, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Principal Chief Michell Hicks and Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben sat next to each other at a small table and signed a document - referred to as the Accord of Nations - to create an organization that the leaders say will focus on important areas and interests shared by the four tribes, including economic development, culture and sovereignty. "Our shared histories and common struggles have made us stronger. This Accord is a testament to our resilience and a commitment to building a future that honors our past while securing the well-being of our people," Chairman Osceola said in a

statement. The accord contains a preamble and six articles. The first article reaffirms the tribes' shared friendship and values, including "...our common histories of steadfast resistance to forced removals from our homelands..." "This alliance strengthens our collective voice in advocating for the protection of our traditional lands and ways of life," said Chairman Cypress in a statement. "Together, we will continue to uphold our traditions and the sovereignty that our ancestors fought so hard to preserve." Article 2 mentions the tribes' commitment in solidarity "...to collaborate on issues affecting our cultural and political sovereignty, including economic development opportunities, protection and reclamation of sacred lands, and assertion of our hunting, fishing, and gathering rights..." "For generations, our Nations have stood together in the face of adversity, safeguarding our cultures, lands, and rights," Principal Chief Hicks said in a statement. "This Accord formalizes our historic ties and strengthens our commitment to protecting and advocating for our people today and into the future." In article 4, the tribes agree to carry out the work of the alliance without accepting funds from the U.S. government and state governments. The accord also deems meetings will be held at least twice annually. Still to come will be a variety of decisions, including how the organization will be comprised, its rules and a name. "The next meeting will be for the bylaws. [The signing] is the first step in creating this partnership accord," Chairman Osceola said after the signing. "This Accord represents a new era of cooperation, ensuring that we stand together to protect our sovereignty and uphold our responsibilities to future generations," Chief Ben said in a statement. In the late 1960s, the same four tribes formed the organization United Southeastern Tribes, which is now United South and Eastern Tribes (USET). The tribes said they will remain members of USET, which has grown to 33 tribes that stretch throughout the southeast, mid-Atlantic and northeast from Maine to Texas.



Kevin Johnson

After the signing, the tribal leaders gather for a photo. From left to right, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Principal Chief Michell Hicks, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians Chairman Talbert Cypress, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben and Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr.

♦ HUD  
From page 1A



Calvin Tiger

Kyle Doney and U.S. HUD Secretary Scott Turner look at a photo on the wall of the NLC.



Calvin Tiger

Kyle Doney presents a sweetgrass basket made by Mary Sally Osceola to Secretary Scott Turner.

## Senators introduce Tribal Energy Fairness Act

STAFF REPORT

U.S. senators introduced the Tribal Energy Fairness Act on March 27, and the goal of the bipartisan legislation is expanding Tribal energy access to federal programs, according to a press release. The senators who introduced the bill are Brian Schatz (D-Hawai'i), Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and John Curtis (R-Utah). "Tribes deserve a fair shot at energy development, particularly on their own lands," Senator Schatz said in a release. "This bipartisan bill will provide Tribes with the flexibility they need to access existing federal programs to lower costs, boost reliability, and strengthen their energy sovereignty." The bill aims to remove technical issues for tribes, like "double benefit restriction," this would allow tribes to utilize federal funds and loan guarantees to cover up to 100% of project costs. It would also eliminate the requirement that "tribes sub-grant Grid Resilience awards to utility providers and would eliminate the cost-share requirement, making it easier for Tribes to directly access

and benefit from resilience funding." The bill is supported by Tribal organizations and advocates working to expand access to energy resources in Native communities. "Unnecessary red tape and outdated restrictions are holding back access to energy development opportunities," Senator Curtis said. "By removing these bureaucratic barriers, our legislation levels the playing field for Tribal communities—ensuring fair access to programs that strengthen grid resilience and support other critical energy projects." The full text of the Tribal Energy Fairness Act is available at: [www.schatz.senate.gov/download/tribal-energy-fairness-act](http://www.schatz.senate.gov/download/tribal-energy-fairness-act) "Energy production has long been vital to the modern Navajo economy and sustaining in our energy economy requires investing in its future. By removing unnecessary restrictions and financial burdens, the Tribal Energy Fairness Act will help the Navajo Nation pursue energy projects that create jobs and strengthen our communities," said Buu Nygren, President of the Navajo Nation.



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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.

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◆ **GATHERING**  
From page 1A

Although she didn't see Thomas that often, they did check in with each other from time to time.

"I'm happy to be here again and do this with CeCe," Billie said. "And with Cheyenne [Kippenberger] here, there are more Seminoles here than anyone else."

Kippenberger, former MIW and Miss Florida Seminole, is a MIW committee member. She helped get people checked into the Grand Entry as they made their way onto the arena floor, did stage production and was part of the crowning ceremony.

"I do everything," Kippenberger said. "Whatever they need, I do."

During the Grand Entry on April 25, the announcer spoke as the dancers spiraled around the arena floor into an ever tighter mass of people dancing in colorful regalia.

"We promote this, it is our way of life," the announcer said. "We want to make a statement, we represent DEI."

Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), former U.S. Secretary of the Interior and current candidate for governor of New Mexico, spoke via video, where she welcomed everyone from other places.

"We dance and sing to honor our ancestors and represent who we are as Indigenous people," Haaland said. "We come from people who survived and persevered. What we have and who we are is something to be proud of. We are everywhere, we break barriers and strive to build better futures for those who come after us."

MIW contestants participated in a public speaking contest on Stage 49 April 25. The contestants pulled a question out of a basket, which they answered to the best of their abilities. Although some of the questions had nothing to do with culture, the girls managed to weave that important aspect of their lives into their answers.

Some of the questions were: If you were a cookie, what kind would you be? What celebrity has influenced you and why? If you were on the hunt, what would you be

hunting for? If you were the leader of your tribe, what is the first thing you would do?

Thomas brought the answer to the hunting question back to the Everglades and Seminole culture with her answer.

"If I was going to hunt, I'd choose the alligator and use it for all our needs," she said. "I'd go out to the swamp to wrestle one and bring it back to my family and camp."

Billie drew the question about which celebrity influences her. She cited Tia Wood, Cree and Salish, a pop singer-songwriter from Canada.

"Tia Wood, the singer," Billie said. "She inspires me and makes me feel more Native and I love listening to her."

Parents and family members of the contestants were not allowed to be with their daughters during the contest. They shared a hotel room, so they were together only at night.

Thomas lost her father last year, and her mother Cecilia Tommie wasn't sure about her daughter competing in MIW.

"She's having a great time, she's emotional about it," she said. "We cried together last night. I wasn't ready for this. It's a blessing and I'm glad she is putting herself out there. She's the one who likes to learn and experience new things. We are so proud of her, no matter what happens."

Thomas's siblings Conner and Camryn also attended the event. It was the family's first time at GON.

"It's fulfilling to have her doing this," Conner said. "Our family is a people family; the Princess pageant and this matches her. She is doing this for the tribe. Her mentality is to represent us, her family, and the Tribe. It makes me happy."

"She is doing amazing," Camryn said. "It's crazy that we are here. I thank God that we can experience this with her. She is staying true to herself and it's cool that we're getting to see her in her element. She is a social butterfly, I'm really proud of her."

Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola attended GON with her family and took a side trip to the Navajo School, where she learned about their traditional rug making process and met with the students. She also participated in the Grand Entries with other princesses from Indian Country.

"It's important for them [Navajo students] to learn things at a young age so



Beverly Bidney

Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, in front at right, with other Miss Indian World contestants in the Gathering of Nations Grand Entry on April 25.

they can carry it on," Osceola said. "The Grand Entry was really cool seeing everyone in their regalia. I love getting to meet royalty from around the country and see how similar we are. We are all from different areas, but we connect through our culture. I'll remember this for the rest of my life."

Immokalee seniors Marylou Alvarado, Rebecca Martinez, Frances Pelky and Connie Slavik went to GON and other locations near Albuquerque. The group went to Santa Fe where they toured the Santa Fe Museum of Indian Arts and Culture and to Sandia Peak, where they took a three mile hike on the snowcapped mountain.

The seniors were accompanied by elder services site manager Demi Garza and activity coordinator. Zakir Esparza. A dinner with Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola and

Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge capped off the trip.

"It's my first time here and I love it," Martinez said. "It's good to be with my people from different tribes, I feel like there is a connection."

It was also Marylou Alvarado's first time at GON.

"I went to boarding school in Oklahoma and attended pow wows then," Alvarado said. "I even participated in the dance with a blanket. This brings back a lot of memories of school."

"It's beautiful here and I'm enjoying it very much," Pelky said. "It's good to meet people from different nations and to get out of my own environment for a while."

During the final Grand Entry April 26, six drum groups set up in the center of the arena floor playing the songs together and created a powerful sound as thousands of dancers entered the floor and encircled the drums.

After the Grand Entry, the announcer introduced the Miss Indian World contestants and said they came "all the way from Alaska to the Seminoles in Florida and everywhere in between." The MIW committee all wore matching pink, sparkly patchwork skirts and denim jackets as they helped contestants, handed out the awards and, finally, the crown.

Miss Indian World 2025 is Dania Wahwasuck (Prairie Band of Potawatomi). First runner-up was Kegona Tenasco (Anishinabe), second runner-up was Niagara Rockbridge (Navajo) and Miss Congeniality was Analynn Olney (Yakama).

Wahwasuck won the best essay and best dancer honors. Best public speaker was Laney Lupe (White Mountain Apache), best interview was Niagara Rockbridge (Navajo), and best talent was Malene Avila Miller (Ute Tribe).



Beverly Bidney

Miss Indian World 2025 Dania Wahwasuck smiles after being crowned following the Grand Entry.



Beverly Bidney

Thomlynn Billie tells a story during the talent competition.



Beverly Bidney

Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola, center, participates in the Grand Entry with other royalty from around Indian Country.



Courtesy photo

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. hosted a dinner for Immokalee seniors at a BBQ restaurant in Albuquerque. From left to right are Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, Marylou Alvarado, Frances Pelky, Demi Garza, Connie Slavik, Becky Martinez and Chairman Osceola.



Beverly Bidney

CeCe Thomas waves to the audience at Gathering of Nations.



Beverly Bidney

A fancy shawl dancer gives it her all during the dance competition



David Diaz/SMP

The Osceola Brothers perform on Stage 49 at Gathering of Nations. From left to right are Cameron on lead guitar, Sheldon on drums and Tyson on bass guitar.



Beverly Bidney

A drum group sings during the Grand Entry.



# First Hard Rock Hotel in Canada opens

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

Canada has its first Hard Rock Hotel. Hard Rock Hotel London – in southern Ontario about 120 miles from Detroit – opened April 16 as a part of an entertainment complex known as 100 Kellogg Lane. The site is a former Kellogg’s cereal factory which produced Frosted Flakes, Corn Flakes and Raisin Bran.

The entertainment complex features Canada’s largest indoor adventure park known as The Factory, a children’s museum, and dining and beverage venues.

The 164-room hotel offers a variety of rooms. Family-style guestrooms include separate rooms with bunk beds. Other rooms include luxurious rockstar and terrace suites.

Hotel amenities include an indoor/outdoor pool, Sessions restaurant, Hard Rock GMT lobby bar, a 1913 speakeasy and a Hard Rock Shop. Memorabilia pays tribute to Canada’s famed musicians, including Shania Twain and Gord Downie. The entrance features a 32-foot-high sculptural metallic guitar which was handcrafted in

London.

John Rees, Hard Rock International senior vice president of hotels, was among the officials who attended opening day.

“I was so pleased to join the local team to celebrate the first-ever Canadian Hard Rock Hotel, where music, entertainment and hospitality will come together to create truly unforgettable guest experiences,” Rees said in a press release.

The London hotel won’t be Hard Rock’s only hotel in Canada – or Ontario – for very long.

A date has yet to be announced for the 2025 opening of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Ottawa in Canada’s capital city, but the property is holding hiring events in April and May to fill casino and hotel positions. According to media reports, more than 600 positions are available.

Since 2017, Hard Rock has handled operations of Rideau Carleton Casino, where the new and expanded venue is being built. Rideau also features live harness horse racing.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida is the parent entity of Hard Rock International.



A rendering of the front entrance at the Hard Rock Hotel London Ontario.



The hotel's family suites feature separate rooms, including kid-friendly bunk beds.

# Jim Allen receives lifetime achievement honor

STAFF REPORT

Jim Allen, chairman of Hard Rock International (HRI) and Hard Rock Digital and chief executive officer of Seminole Gaming, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 28th annual East Coast Gaming Congress (ECGC) on April 16 at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City. ECGC is the longest running gaming conference in the United States.

“This recognition is a testament to the hard-working team at Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming, whose dedication and passion have driven our success,” Allen said in a statement. “I extend my deepest gratitude to the Seminole Tribe of Florida for their continued leadership and am proud of what we have accomplished from expanding our global footprint, to innovating in the gaming and hospitality industries, and forming incredible alliances with icons in entertainment and sports. This award inspires us to continue pushing boundaries and setting new standards of



Jim Allen

excellence. Thank you to the East Coast Gaming Congress for this incredible honor.”

Since 2001, Allen has been responsible for the tribe’s gaming, hospitality and entertainment operations. Allen helped lead

the tribe’s acquisition of HRI in 2007 and has overseen the company’s growth which now includes venues in nearly 80 countries spanning more than 300 locations including Hard Rock cafes, hotels, casinos, Rock Shops and live music venues, and more than 60,000 system-wide employees.

Hard Rock is involved in supporting several areas such as women empowerment, breast cancer research and awareness, and the battle against human trafficking.

Additionally, Hard Rock has expanded its presence in the sports industry with its naming rights agreement for Hard Rock Stadium in Miami and partnerships with the Miami Formula 1 Grand Prix, Oracle Red Bull Racing, soccer star Lionel Messi, NASCAR star Dale Earnhardt Jr., and others, as well as the creation of Hard Rock Digital, an online sportsbook, retail sportsbook and internet gaming platform.

Hard Rock Stadium will host World Cup soccer games in 2026. Allen serves on the Miami Host Committee board of directors for the event.

# Hard Rock recognizes Earth Hour

FROM PRESS RELEASE

On March 22, Hard Rock International casinos, hotels and cafes worldwide celebrated Earth Hour 2025. Earth Hour is a global movement created by World Wildlife Fund that encourages countries, businesses, individuals and iconic landmarks around the world to take action to protect nature. More than 130 Hard Rock properties filled the time with guest activities free of electricity, to reinforce the importance of prioritizing sustainability and reducing energy consumption, while connecting guests to mother nature through all five senses.

Activities included nature-inspired dinners, live acoustic music performances, community cleanups, tree planting events and additional activities.

Highlights from around the world include:

- Hard Rock Hotel Riviera Maya celebrated Earth Hour by hosting an eco-tour, community cleanup and golf cart upcycle contest. The property also offered guests the chance to reconnect with nature through yoga and hiking.
- Hard Rock Hotel Desaru Coast hosted ‘Echoes of the Wild,’ an immersive rainforest experience to celebrate nature visually and bio-acoustically. Renowned naturalist Irshad Mobarak held a powerful session around protecting Desaru’s wildlife. In addition, the property upcycled old team member uniforms into denim backpacks, for proceeds to go towards a stingless beehive.
- Hard Rock Hotel Vallarta team members headed to the beach to clear pollution before participating in a sandcastle building contest, children’s arts & crafts, s’ mores and acoustic candlelit concert.
- Hard Rock Hotel Bali treated guests to a ‘Dine in the Dark’ experience accompanied by live acoustic music, as well



Hard Rock

Hard Rock Hotel Riviera Maya in Mexico organized a community clean up as part of its Earth Hour activities.

as an unforgettable turtle release, mangrove planting and children’s recycling activities.

- Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Punta Cana commemorated the occasion by organizing a beach cleanup, planting greenery with children in the ROXITY Kid’s Club and hosting pool relay races, with 1,298 guests participating.

For more information about Hard Rock’s Save The Planet commitment, partnership with Ocean Conservancy and other CSR efforts, visit [www.hardrock.com/living-our-mottos.aspx](http://www.hardrock.com/living-our-mottos.aspx).

# Expansion plans on horizon for Hard Rock Sacramento

STAFF REPORT

According to several media reports, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sacramento at Fire Mountain is eyeing a multi-billion-dollar expansion for a sports and entertainment zone.

“So we’ve begun the preliminary due diligence over the last 18 months to try to design and develop what we believe are the right concepts to bring here to northern California that don’t

really exist in the region, really not anywhere in the state or the west coast,” Mark BIRTHA, president of Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Sacramento, told the CBS News station in Sacramento.

The property opened in 2022 as a partnership between the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Hard Rock International and Enterprise Rancheria tribe. Last fall, Enterprise Rancheria entered into an agreement to purchase about 350 acres of land adjacent to the current property.

Fox40 reported that the

expansion plans include “a festival entertainment district, rodeo space, sports and resort programming, retail, dining, walking paths, and possible stadium and fairground areas” and that officials put the cost between \$2 billion and \$4 billion with construction perhaps beginning as soon as 2026.

A few months ago, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sacramento at Fire Mountain earned the No. 1 spot in Newsweek’s top 10 readers’ choice for best casinos with live entertainment in the U.S.

# Jeff Ross to perform one-man shows at several Hard Rock venues

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Hard Rock announced April 22 that its live venues nationwide will be the exclusive stages for comedy fans to see Emmy-nominated comedian Jeff Ross, internationally known as “The Roastmaster General”, and his new one-man show, Jeff Ross: Take A Banana For The Ride, before heading to Broadway.

Hot off the record-breaking success of his Emmy-nominated “GROAT (Greatest Roast of All Time): Tom Brady” for Netflix, Ross offers audiences a strikingly rare insight into his life with Take A Banana For The Ride, a comedic experience about life and human resilience. Named for his beloved grandfather’s practical and loving travel advice, this exhilaratingly intimate one-man show offers a

peeled back look into the heart and soul of America’s Roastmaster – but don’t expect to get away unskewered.

“Ever since my Aunt Bess took me to see Jackie Mason on Broadway when I was young, I’ve daydreamed about performing my own classy and uncensored one-man show,” Ross said in a press release. “I’m honored and excited by the opportunity to share my origin story of how I became the Roastmaster General! This new show is designed to be a cathartic experience shared with others – I encourage you to bring friends that you care about, people that might be going through tough times. I will shake them out of it with an evening of uncensored jokes, uplifting stories, songs and even some live roasting of the bravest volunteers.”

Jeff Ross: Take A Banana For The Ride will play in eight cities

across the country this summer:

- Bristol, Va. - Friday, June 27
- Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol
- Cincinnati, Ohio - Saturday, June 28
- Hard Rock Casino Cincinnati
- Gary, Ind. - Friday, July 11,
- Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana
- Rockford, IL - Saturday, July 12,
- Hard Rock Casino Rockford
- Atlantic City, NJ - Friday, July 18, and Saturday, July 19,
- Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City
- Tampa, Fla. - Thursday, July 24,
- Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa
- Orlando, Fla.- Friday, July 25,
- Hard Rock Live Orlando
- Hollywood, Fla.- Sunday, July 27,
- Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood

Go to [roastmastergeneral.com](http://roastmastergeneral.com) for ticket information.

68<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
**SEMINOLE  
PRINCESS PAGEANT**  
2025

SAT., JULY 26, 2025 | 7:00 PM  
**HOLLYWOOD EXECUTIVE  
BUILDING AUDITORIUM**

FOR AN APPLICATION OR  
QUESTIONS, PLEASE EMAIL:  
[STOFFPRINCESS@SEMTRIBE.COM](mailto:STOFFPRINCESS@SEMTRIBE.COM)

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS:  
JULY 9, 2025 | 5:00 PM  
**NO EXCEPTIONS**



**COMMUNITY DINNER | JULY 26 @ 4:00PM**





# Investigations in ink: A 19th-Century document goes under the microscope

BY MARIA DMITRIEVA  
Conservator  
and  
BY TARA BACKHOUSE  
Curator

**BIG CYPRESS** — At the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki’s conservation laboratory, we use different tools, equipment, and technologies to facilitate professional scientific investigations before any conservation treatments are performed. These include things such as light microscopy, chemical analysis, and physical testing, and pH testing. One of most common methods we use is the Dino Lite microscope. Last month we shared an example of how this scientific tool gave us information about a black and white photograph.

The same microscope was also recently used to determine crucial characters of an aged document such as the type of paper used for a historical handwritten document and the condition of the inscriptions penned in iron-gall ink. Iron-gall ink is made with iron salts and tannic acids, and was the most common type of ink used from the 14th to 19th centuries. Macro images helped us discover that it was machine-made rag paper with a low percentage of wood pulp. The text in the iron-gall ink was in good condition,

showing some fading but no bleeding; the paper under the inscriptions had no signs of burning.

The document itself contains a list of events that occurred between 1823-1835. The events relate to the Seminole people and their allies in the decade preceding the second part of the Seminole War. There is no author’s name on the page, and it was originally found within very large group of papers from Ohio, dated approximately 1808-1855 and was purchased from an auction house.

The document notes several key historical events including treaties and acts of aggression. One specific example mentions the Black Seminole Leader, Abraham, a former slave known for his important role in the second part of the Seminole War, and his involvement as an interpreter in the Treaty of Payne’s Landing. During this time he was cheated out of payment by the US Indian Agent who negotiated the deal.

The insights from these investigations allow us to tailor treatment methods to meet each material’s unique requirements. In this case, we introduced wetting processes coupled with chemical ink reduction to reduce further possible loss of text.

The primary goal of conservation professionals is stated in the Code of Ethics

and Guidelines for Practice of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works. It sets forth the principles that guide conservation professionals and others who are involved in the care of cultural property. Adherence to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice is a matter of personal responsibility of a conservator and certainly is a requirement of ATTK museum society.

Here we have shown the one safe method we use to investigate historic objects in the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. If you’d like to see more in person, just call 863-902-1113 to schedule a tour of the conservation lab at the museum.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum  
The iron-gall strokes (in circle) demonstrate the good condition of the inscriptions on the entire handwritten document (in rectangle).



# Powwows stamps dedicated

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.** — The U.S. Postal Service on April 25 dedicated its Powwows: Celebrating Native American Culture stamps during a ceremony at the largest powwow in the country, the Gathering of Nations, with more than 100,000 attendees.

"The Postal Service takes great pride in our stamps and the unique opportunity they offer to tell the story of America. That's why we're thrilled to be a part of this celebration of Native American music, dance and culture," Steven W. Monteith, the organization's chief customer and marketing officer and executive vice president, said in a press release. "We hope they inspire a deeper appreciation of Native American culture and influence all who see them."

"It's a huge honor to be able to show the face of powwow culture to the world and take an art form like painting, with such historic ideas embedded in it, and transform it into a stamp," Mateo Romero, Southern Keres Cochiti Pueblo tribal member and Powwows stamp artist, said in the release. "The colors, movement and celebratory nature of this work point to a human condition of joy, ceremony, spirituality, culture and rebirth."

Additional participants at the ceremony were Royale Dá, master of ceremonies and KOAT-TV news anchor; the Native American Women Warriors Honor Guard; Kansas Begaye, a Native American recording artist; and Antonio Alcalá, a USPS art director and the stamp designer.

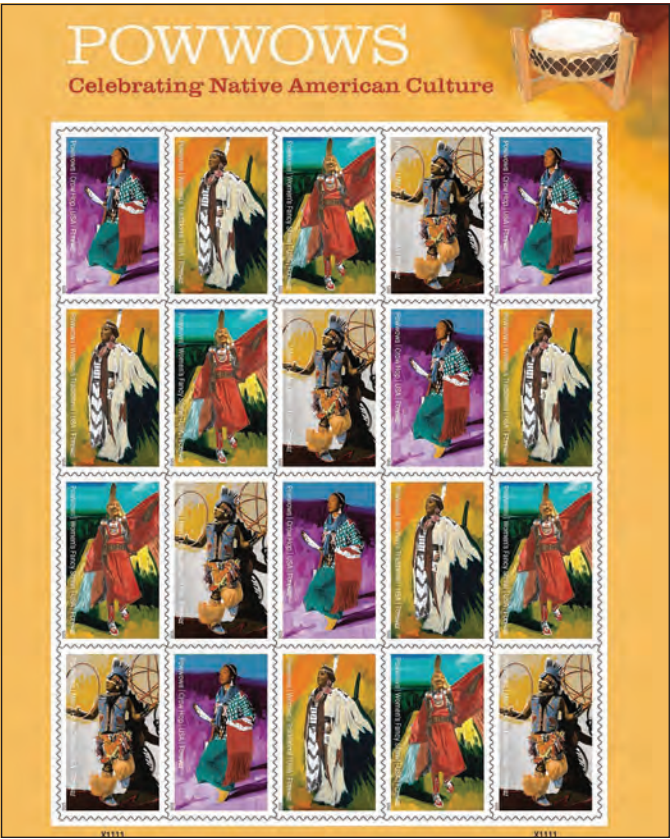
The four stamps in a pane of 20 showcase

original paintings of Native American dancers by Cochiti Pueblo artist Mateo Romero. The artist took photographs of the dancers in their traditional clothing while performing and then painted on top of the images. He used thick, brightly colored brushstrokes to create the abstract expressionistic images gracing the stamps.

The pane features:

- A young Indigenous woman in a red dress performing the Crow Hop. She has a red cloth draped over her arm and is pictured in front of a vibrant blue and purple background.
- A Native woman dressed in brown, ecru and white regalia performing the Women's Traditional dance with a vivid orange, yellow and green background.
- A Women's Fancy Shawl dancer wearing a fringed cape that resembles the wing of a bird, against a background of turquoise, azure and gold. The main portion of the cape or "wing" is a brilliant scarlet while the yellow, blue and orange fringe suggests the bird's feathers.
- A Men's Hoop dancer holding multiple hoops in both hands with one foot poised in mid-air. He is dressed in a decorated blue vest with a matching headdress; a fringed, multicolored breechcloth; and blue moccasins embellished with tan fur and beads.

The words "POWWOWS," the name of each dance shown on a stamp, "USA," and "FOREVER" run vertically down the



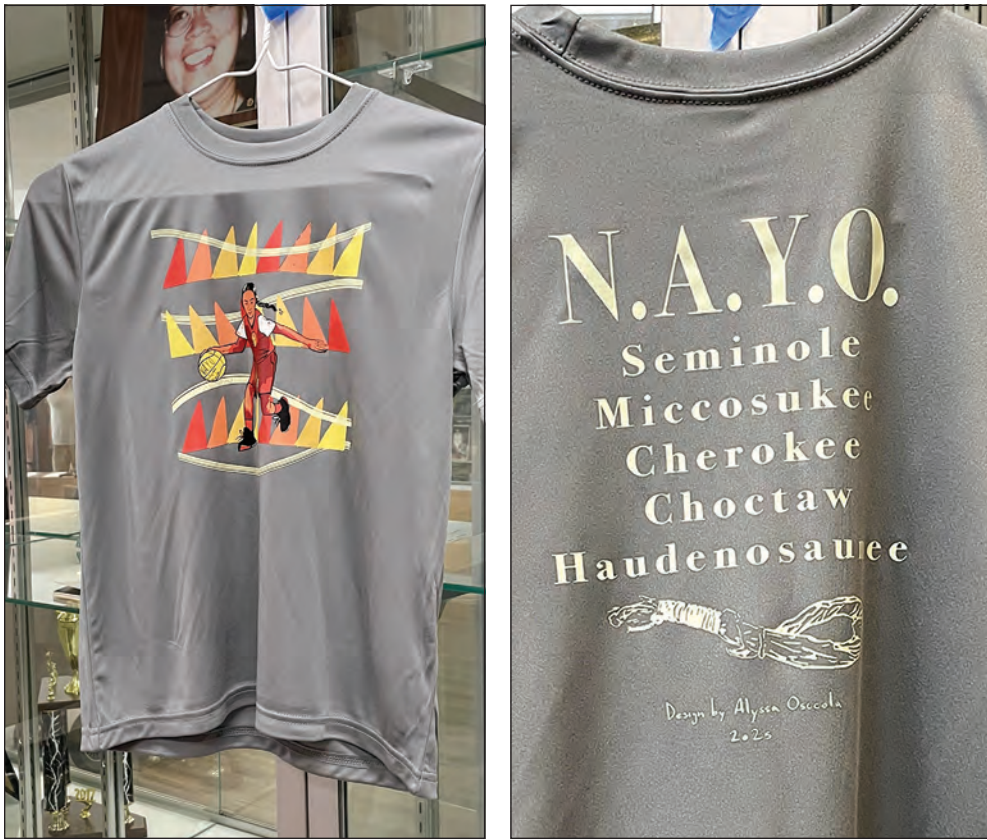
The pane of 20 Powwow stamps show Native Americans performing the Women's Traditional Dance, Crow Hop Dance, Men's Hoop Dance and Women's Fancy Shawl Dance.

left side of each stamp. The header for the stamp pane reads "POWWOWS Celebrating Native American Culture." A large powwow drum with tan leather stitching is on the top right side of the selvage. The drum sits on a large wooden frame.

The Powwows: Celebrating Native American Culture stamps are being issued as Forever stamps.

A video about the stamps is on the Postal Service's Facebook page.

# Seminole artist designs NAYO shirts



Kevin Johnson (2)

Seminole artist Alyssa Osceola designed this year's T-shirts for the NAYO youth basketball tournament that was held April 17-19 on the Big Cypress and Hollywood reservations. The annual tournament features Seminole, Miccosukee, Cherokee, Choctaw and Haudenosaunee players.

May 2025

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

When you sit down at the dinner table for a meal, you probably don't spare too much thought on the dinnerware you eat off. If your dinnerware is an uncommon color, however, you might stop for a moment to admire it. This could be the case if your meal was served on an eye-catching seafoam green piece of Fire-King jadeite glassware. This month's artifact, collected on the Brighton Reservation, is a shard of what we believe was once a piece of Fire-King jadeite.

Fire-King jadeite was a line of glassware produced by the company Anchor-Hocking beginning in the 1940s. They were not the originators of jadeite glassware, however.





THPO

Country Living

To learn more about all the incredible artifacts within our collection, please visit the THPO website at [www.stofthpo.com](http://www.stofthpo.com).

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - MAY 2025

THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT

**"It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation."**

PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON  
DECEMBER 6, 1830

**"In Florida I was born. In Florida I will die. In Florida my bones shall bleach."**

ABIAKA, AKA SAM JONES (PANTHER CLAN)  
CIRCA 1830



The Treaty of Moultrie Creek was one of the multitude of treaties that the United States broke with the passage of the Indian Removal Act. A priority of President Andrew Jackson, who had led the fight against the Seminole during much of the War to this point, the act called for the deportation of all Indigenous people east of the Mississippi River to federally claimed land in the west.

The Act was both written and portrayed by its proponents as being done with the best interests of Native people at heart, offering land for land to end the treaties and grant them a home "better suited to their ways." In reality, as most in America knew, the intention was to take possession of the all remaining land held by Natives, at gunpoint if necessary. The called the policy removal, but the goal was ethnic cleansing.

The Act was quickly challenged by Native nations and their allies who called on the array of treaties signed with the US government. Jackson ignored these treaties, and agents forced new negotiations. Fraud, bribery, and the threat of violence were used to get signatures. Under the Jackson administration the US military every nation they could across the Mississippi. Over 60,000 people were forced to march west, and over 13,000 people died along the way on what became known as the Trail of Tears.

Florida would prove to be a different challenge for the Army. Throughout the South, most Tribal land existed in increasingly smaller enclaves surrounded by American power. The Seminole, however, controlled effectively the majority of Florida, most of it land that Americans were completely unfamiliar with. The Seminole refused to leave. Leaders saw the fates of the other Tribes and the buildup of American forces, and prepared for open war once more.

To see more Seminole History Stories, please visit the THPO website at [www.stofthpo.com](http://www.stofthpo.com)

**Pictured:** The partial text for the Indian Removal Act, Senate bill 102, February 22nd, 1830.





# Health

## Online cooking show, lifestyle blog encourage Indigenous ingredients in everyday meals

BY ANNA EHRRICK  
Cronkite News (Phoenix, Ariz.)

**PHOENIX** — Since she was 3 years old, Mariah Gladstone says, she has had a passion for food.

After graduating from high school in northwest Montana, she studied environmental engineering at Columbia University in New York. During summers, she returned to her Blackfeet Nation home where she realized how disconnected Indigenous communities were from their traditional food systems.

“After I graduated college, I would take vacation days from my real world job to go to food sovereignty conferences,” said Gladstone, who is Blackfeet and Cherokee. “At one of those conferences, I said, ‘Someone really needs to start a cooking show about Indigenous foods. I think I’m just going to do that.’”

Indigikitchen was born. The online cooking show is a combination of content on YouTube as well as recipes shared on its website. The foods contain Native ingredients like berries, corn, squash and wild rice.

Food sovereignty is a concept coined in 1996 by La Via Campesina, a global movement of farmers that recognizes the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods.

On her website, Gladstone emphasizes the importance of the recipes for Indigenous people.

“I want to connect people with information about sustainable harvesting methods, planting knowledge, sustainable hunting and, of course, the recipes and the food that are ways of using our ancestral knowledge in our modern lives,” she said.

Gladstone spreads this knowledge by working with Native farmers and fishermen in the hopes that it not only restores their businesses, but the land management and traditional ecologies.

While based in Montana, Indigikitchen has made its way across the country. Gladstone is a popular speaker with groups in the Southwest and the Great Lakes region who hire her for educational lectures, cooking classes and school residencies. Gladstone also has ties to Canada, where she has formed relationships with other nations in the Blackfoot Confederacy.

These connections have motivated Gladstone to continue her work with Indigikitchen, and she said she’s grateful to use a tool like social media in order to reach the right audiences.

“Indian Country is small and Facebook is a digital telegraph, so it has a way of reaching a lot of communities very quickly where everyone shares my recipes and utilizes them,” she said. “The more people I see using those recipes, the bigger difference it makes to support Native producers as well as healthy nutrition in our communities.”

Among the recipes on her website are Three Sisters Soup, which uses corn, beans and squash; pemmican, a mixture of dry buffalo meat, dried cranberries and blueberries and grass-fed beef tallow; sunflower maple cookies; and mesquite blue combread.

Connecting Indigenous people with the

food they ate before European foods were introduced into their diets is a movement gaining popularity. According to the National Indian Council on Aging, Native foods included seeds, nuts, corn, beans, chile, squash, wild fruits and greens, herbs, fish and game.

People like Gladstone call these “pre-contact foods,” and they emphasize the importance for Indigenous people to celebrate their food culture and improve their health by returning to a more traditional diet.

That is especially important for the Navajo Nation, which the USDA classifies as a “food desert.” There are only 14 grocery stores for a land mass of 29,000 square miles, forcing people to travel a long way to buy nutritious foods.

Another Native food and lifestyle blogger who promotes Diné, or Navajo, recipes is Alana Yazzie. On her website, thefancynavajo.com, she posts recipes for blue corn waffles, sumac berry smoothies and blue corn oatmeal from her cookbook, “The Modern Navajo Kitchen.”

On her Instagram, which has 29,000 followers, she encourages others to embrace their Indigenous culture through recipes, fashion and gardening.

She started her website in 2014 with a goal of showing easy ways to blend Indigenous ingredients into everyday dishes.

“There’s a bit of art to it because you can’t just throw things in without knowing the food science around it, but it’s not too difficult,” she said.

Yazzie, who was born in New Mexico, said she previously stocked up on ingredients like blue corn when she “went home to Navajo land.” She lives in Phoenix now and finds it easier to buy items online because of the growing number of Native small businesses that offer local ingredients.

Since her cookbook was published in October 2024, Yazzie has stayed busy with cooking events and demonstrations. “That’s really my passion,” she said. “I want people to implement these recipes into their daily life so that we can continue our traditions.”

In September, Indigikitchen’s Gladstone will be speaking at the Flagstaff Festival of Science at the invitation of Kelly Saganey, who is Diné, or Navajo, and a festival board member.

Gladstone will talk about Indigenous ecological stewardship, the cultural significance of Native foods and bridging Indigenous and Western science.

Saganey said she found Gladstone through the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance’s Instagram account and believed it would be beneficial to have a member of the Indigenous community with a science background be a featured speaker at the 10-day festival.

“Since our community in Flagstaff has a high Native American population, I just want the little kids out there to be able to see a scientist with a Native background. And I think it’s also cool that if you go for a degree in the STEM field, you don’t have to work at a big corporation. You can do what Mariah did with Indigikitchen and start your own project,” she said.

The Flagstaff Festival of Science begins Sept. 19, and Gladstone will be the first Indigenous keynote speaker that evening.



Tatum Mitchell

A group of participants and organizers show plenty of enthusiasm at the community Walk for Child Abuse Prevention on April 10 in Hollywood.

## Community walk promotes child abuse prevention awareness

BY TATUM MITCHELL  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — Members of the community and employees filled the street with blue April 10 to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month during the community walk, which was organized by the advocacy program.

The guardianship and advocacy department and health education department set up booths and handed out goodies, like wind wheels, healthy snacks and bracelets. The walk concluded with an ice cream social.

Shamika Beasley, assistant director for the advocacy program, said she has a motto that all children deserve to be loved and nurtured and live in a safe home.

“This event is important because, unfortunately, in the field that I work in – which is child welfare – that doesn’t happen for all children,” she said. “So, we want to make sure that within the tribal community, we’re spreading awareness of how important it is to pour into your children. But not only that, to recognize signs of abuse.”

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month,



Tatum Mitchell

From left to right, Renata Arantes, Lourdemay Auguste, Alexandra Ellis and Kavita Marajh on April 10 at the Child Abuse Prevention Month Community Walk on the Hollywood Reservation.

and Beasley said a goal of the event is to raise awareness about the subject and prevention steps. Multiple departments and community members attended.



Tatum Mitchell

From left to right, Taishmarie Ramos Soto, Luis Viveros, Shayla Brown and Briunte Adams get ready for the community walk.

## Seminole Tribe serves as host sponsor for NICWA conference

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Tribe of Florida was the host sponsor for the National Indian Child Welfare Association’s 43rd Protecting Our Children conference March 30 through April 2 in Orlando.

The conference addressed tribal child welfare and well-being issues. It featured more than a dozen speakers – including President Holly Tiger – and 2,000 attendees. The sponsorship from the tribe helped NICWA provide speakers, workshops and learning opportunities, according to a press release.

“Protecting our children is not just an act of compassion; it is an affirmation of our tribe’s resilience and commitment to the well-being of future generations,” Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. said in a press release. “As sponsors of the NICWA’s 43rd Annual Protecting Our Children Conference, the Seminole Tribe of Florida stands firm in our dedication to safeguard the spiritual, physical, and emotional health of Native children. Together, we are paving a path of strength and safety for them, guided by the wisdom of our ancestors and the unwavering spirit of our communities.”



NICWA

President Holly Tiger talks to Sarah Kastelic, executive director of NICWA, at the NICWA conference.

### ◆ ELECTION From page 1A

The candidates for Tribal Council and Board of Directors are (in alphabetical order):

**Tribal Council Representative for Big Cypress Reservation**  
Mariann Billie  
Wesley Garcia  
Manuel Tiger

**Tribal Council Representative for Brighton Reservation**  
Helene Buster  
Larry Howard

**Tribal Council Representative for Hollywood Reservation**  
Christopher Osceola  
Francine Osceola  
Raymond Stewart Jr.  
Krystle Young

**Board Representative for Big Cypress Reservation**  
Carradine Billie  
Nadine Bowers  
Pauletta Bowers

**Board Representative for Brighton Reservation**  
Bryan Arledge

**Board Representative for Hollywood Reservation**  
Wilson Bowers  
Erica Deitz  
O’Hara Tommie



# SEMINOLE SCENES



**JACKETS FOR PEARL JAM:** Pearl Jam kicked off its 2025 tour on April 24 and April 26 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood's Hard Rock Live. Members of the band were given Seminole traditional patchwork jackets and had a photo with President Holly Tiger, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, far right, and O.B. Osceola II, far left. Pearl Jam was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2017.



**TERRIER TALK:** Moore Haven High School student-athletes, including Thaddeus Johns, second from left, and Tahniah Billie, far right, speak to incoming sixth-graders in April during an event that provided an overview of activities and athletics offered at the school. Johns and Billie are multi-sport student-athletes.



**TREE-MENDOUS FUN:** Brysen Billie smiles from a tree branch at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's Earth Day celebration April 17 on the Big Cypress Reservation.



**HAPPY HARD ROCK:** Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi had several reasons to celebrate April 22 as it won multiple Covey Awards, including "Favorite Casino." Organized by Coast Observer Magazine, the awards recognize the Mississippi Gulf Coast's "best of the best" in a variety of categories, including gaming, entertainment and dining. The property also won for "Best Casino Players Club," "Best Nightclub on the Coast" (Live Remix), "Best Casino Tournaments," and "Favorite Casino Live Music Venue" (Center Bar).



**TRIBAL SUPPORT:** A Seminole Tribe of Florida banner hangs from a fence at Sugarland Park in Clewiston as Big Cypress Recreation's Dirt Kings youth baseball team warms up prior to its game in the Clewiston Little League. Leonard Herrera tosses a ball with coach Marcus Thompson.



**TASTY TREATS:** Long lines of customers showed how popular the Three J's ice cream and smoothies truck was at the NAYO basketball tournament on Easter weekend. While games were being played inside, food vendors set up on the ball fields behind the Howard Tiger Recreation Center in Hollywood. Three J's is owned and operated by Jaryaca Baker.

**A GRAND NIGHT:** Elon University junior Aubee Billie, from the Brighton Reservation, performed in Elon Music Theatre's "Grand Night," a two-night show that was held in late March with performances directed, choreographed, music directed, arranged and performed by the music theatre students. Billie was listed in the cast of five of the performances. Her bio in the program read: "Che hun tah mo! Aubee is so excited to perform in Grand Night! Recently making her Off-Broadway debut, she is thrilled to be back at Elon, pursuing her passion for musical theatre and studying the craft she loves. She extends her heartfelt gratitude to the audience for supporting Elon's Performing Arts and invites you to witness the dedication and hard work of her and her peers come to life on stage. Enjoy the show—Shonabisha!" Elon University is a private, four-year college located in Elon, North Carolina.



**HOLLYWOOD HAPPENINGS:** The Estates portion of the Hollywood Reservation continues to be busy with construction of new buildings. Here's a look on April 22. At left is the new preschool. At right, across the street from the preschool, site work continues for construction of the new senior center.



# NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

## Native American group creates free online resource for tribal water law information and updates

A Native American law group has launched a free online resource to help tribal nations obtain legal information about their water rights. This comes at a time when tribes face increasing water challenges.

Securing the proper legal documents to protect their water rights often takes time and money that tribes can't afford.

That's why the Native American Rights Fund's Tribal Water Institute created The Headwaters Report. The report breaks down the ins and outs of tribal water law, updates what's going on in the courts and Congress, and highlights what water issues are on the horizon.

Daniel Cordalis, a staff attorney with the Colorado-based group, said some tribes will pay third-party firms thousands of dollars a month to provide them with that information.

"And it's information every tribe should have," he continued. "And the cost is a barrier to getting this kind of information for a lot of tribal nations, and it shouldn't be one. I think it lifts the whole tribal communities up if they're able to have the same information."

Cordalis said safeguarding tribal waters is increasingly important in the West, where drought is shrinking tribes' water supplies, wildfires are damaging their watersheds, and population booms are straining water resources.

"We believe that this work is as important as any for tribes to maintain communities and to build economies and to support their own tribal sovereignty in the coming years," Coradalis added.

- Mountain West News Bureau

## Chippewa leader gives State of the Tribes address at the Wisconsin Capitol

Feather-adorned ceremonial banners graced the Wisconsin State Assembly chambers March 17 as the state's tribal leaders gathered for the annual State of the Tribes address.

The speech was given by Thomas Fowler, the tribal chair of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin.

The tribe is headquartered in Burnett County, in northwest Wisconsin.

Fowler began his remarks by thanking Native American military veterans. He also said his tribe recently started determining membership by lineal descent, rather than blood quantum.

"This decision to remove blood quantum requirements for enrollment ensures our sovereignty continues on forever," he said.

Fowler said the memory of Indian boarding schools, designed in the late 19th century to separate Native children from families and assimilate them into American culture, is still alive in tribal communities.

"The loss of our language and identity throughout our families in Indian Country is immense," he said.

As a response to that loss, he said "many of our relatives" turned to "self-destructive activities" like drugs and violence.

He asked lawmakers to "help propel" a pending federal bill that would establish a national Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools.

After Fowler's speech, the assembly passed three bills related to Native issues — one allowing Native students to attend graduation ceremonies in tribal regalia, one making it easier for tribal governments to access vital records and one requiring school districts to report to the state how many of its students are enrolled members of a tribe.

Fowler also discussed high rates of drug overdoses on Indian reservations.

"Overdoses have nearly wiped out a generation of our tribal nations' mothers and fathers," he said.

"From treating pain and inflammation to addressing spiritual maladies, the deep knowledge of medicinal plants — including cannabis — were passed down through generations," Fowler said of tribal traditions.

Fowler said legalizing medical marijuana could help "move people off highly addictive drugs."

Some tribes have seen overdose deaths go down in recent months.

- Wisconsin Public Radio

## In a first, California tribe may freely burn its ancestral lands

In California, a state increasingly beset by devastating wildfires, the Karuk Tribe will be able to freely set controlled burns, helping to clear the dense underbrush that fuels larger and more destructive fires.

Before Europeans arrived to the region, the Karuk would undertake some 7,000 burns each year on their lands along the Klamath River in northern California. Burns could be applied to a single tree or spread across many acres, and were administered ceremonially and to shape the landscape.

The need for such burns is clear, tribal official Bill Tripp told The Los Angeles Times: "One: You don't have major wildfire threats because everything around you is burned regularly. Two: Most of the plants and animals that we depend on in the ecosystem are actually fire-dependent species."

Until recently, tribes would need to secure permits for cultural burns, but a law passed last year allows federally recognized tribes to forge agreements with the state that allow them to administer burns without prior approval. This week the Karuk became the first tribe to reach such an agreement.

Controlled burns are "a real big part of our cultural identity and who we are," tribal official Aja Conrad recently told Boise State

Public Radio. "It's about how to steward this place. It's about actively, physically tending to this place and rebuilding these sacred relationships."

- Yale E360 (New Haven, Conn.)

## 25-year-old woman becomes Manitoba First Nation's youngest ever chief

A 25-year-old law student has become a Manitoba First Nation's youngest ever chief and the first woman elected to the role.

Tréchelle Bunn was named chief of Birdtail Sioux Dakota First Nation—a community about 130 kilometres northwest of Brandon. She handily beat her opponent with nearly 69 per cent of the vote in the April 10 election.

"It was definitely surreal for the first couple of days, but I think I hit the ground running," Chief Bunn told CTV News Winnipeg in a phone interview.

Bunn is a third-year law student at the University of Manitoba.

She decided to run for the position after being approached by community members and elders.

"It was definitely something I had anticipated later in life. I didn't think my community would call upon me so quickly or at such a young age," she said. "It was a great honour just to be asked and approached."

She was elected weeks after ending her term as the Southern Chief's Organization's youth chief —an experience that gave her a front-row seat to the types of everyday governance and decision-making that are now a part of her daily life.

Bunn has pledged to offer greater transparency and accountability during her four-year term after hearing a desire from constituents to be more involved in decision-making.

"They want to have their voices heard," she said.

"I think bringing back some things that may seem kind of more simplistic, like monthly band meetings and community meetings and gatherings, I think will be really beneficial going forward to uniting our community," she said.

The nation's kindergarten to Grade 12 school is set to transition into the Manitoba First Nations School System. Bunn wants to be involved with the changeover, making sure the community's young people get the education they need to achieve their dreams.

Overall, her goal is to inspire positive change by helping her community to realize its full potential.

"For so long, we've been defined by a lot of negative stereotypes and statistics. I think that a lot of issues can be overcome with empowering our people to believe in themselves and to really recognize their own abilities," she said.

- CTV News (Canada)

## Court denies intervenors in Scotts Valley Gaming Case

**HELENA, Mont.** — Legislators deliberated a bill April 9 that proponents say will provide a much-needed definition and framework for consultation between the state and tribal governments, while opponents say it will add cumbersome government regulations to state agencies.

Senate Bill 379, sponsored by Sen. Susan Webber, D-Browning, would require all state agencies to have a written consultation policy, a definition of consultation, and an employee designated as a tribal liaison. Webber said during her work with the Interim State Tribal Relations Committee, she repeatedly heard that the lack of a concrete definition of tribal consultation is leading to misunderstandings and a lack of follow-through on state policies that require tribal input.

"We just kept seeing over and over that we had an issue on what the definition of tribal consultation is on both sides. It's not just state or tribal, but this is building a relationship," Webber said.

But Sean Steinbach, representing Sun Mountain Lumber and the Montana Logging Association, said the policy could hinder the ability for state agencies to make timely decisions on environmental issues.

"The language is vague and sets unclear expectations that could lead to costly disagreements over whether consultation was sufficient or whether agreement should have been achieved, all while delaying or halting critical forest management projects," Steinbach said.

SB 379 passed the Senate with a 27-21 vote before the hearing in the House State Administration Committee on April 9.

- MissoulaCurrent (Montana)

## Shoshone-Paiute Tribes announces plans for casino between Boise, Mountain Home

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes are developing their first resort and casino along Interstate 84 halfway between Boise and Mountain Home.

For decades, the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes were the only tribe in Idaho without gaming revenue. But the proposed resort and casino is estimated to generate tens of millions of dollars annually for Idaho's economy and create thousands of regional jobs. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes also plan to share 5% of their net gaming revenues to support local schools and education programs.

Shoshone-Paiute Chairman Brian Mason said in a press release he dreams of a future where tribal members have the resources, education, health care and employment opportunities they need to

sustain their families and preserve their culture.

"Today, we have no meaningful economic opportunities and our community is facing some heavy challenges because of it," Mason said. "We want to solve our own problems and provide for our people. Tribal gaming will allow us to make these dreams into a reality."

The tribes are partnering with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, who has successfully run gaming operations in North Idaho for more than 30 years.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe is providing a large upfront investment to help with the permitting and development process, and once it is built, the Tribe will enter into a management contract with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to help sustain the casino.

Coeur d'Alene Chairman Chief Allan said the tribe is honored to help its "brothers and sisters" secure the same benefits they have experienced from gaming.

"When I was growing up, many tribal members lived in poverty and could not find jobs," Allan said in the press release. "Today, we have a state-of-the-art medical center, ample employment for tribal members and can financially support every tribal member who wants to earn a college degree. None of this would be possible without tribal gaming."

Tribal gaming already contributes more than \$1.4 billion of annual economic activity to the state, over \$47 million in annual tax revenue and it sustains 12,500 Idaho jobs, according to a press release from the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes.

The Duck Valley Indian Reservation spans about 450 square miles in the southwest corner of Idaho, half split into parts of Nevada.

The tribes, according to the press release, face high rates of suicide and unemployment, and given its isolated location in the high desert, the Shoshone-Paiute community struggles to provide emergency services to its members.

Medical emergencies require lifesaving air transportation to Boise, which takes at least 45 minutes. A typical 911 call can take two hours to be answered because there are no tribal law enforcement officers exclusively dedicated to serving Duck Valley. Education funding is another major issue, and the school cannot attract enough certified teachers because of limited housing and other resources in the area, according to the press release

"The challenges we face daily are not insurmountable. We simply need resources to invest in long-term solutions for our people," Mason said. "Gaming will give us the tools we need to strengthen our community, grow our infrastructure and provide more opportunities to our youth for generations to come."

The planned location is where the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes used to live, hunt and care for the natural resources. The planned casino will include gaming machines, luxury hotel rooms, a spa, entertainment center and fine dining options.

To build this project on tribal land outside of the reservation, the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes will follow the established process set out by the U.S. Department of the Interior and plan to submit their initial application later this year.

- Idaho Capital Sun

## Colorado bill grants Ute tribes free state park access, excludes others

**DENVER, Colo.** — A bipartisan bill advancing through the Colorado Legislature would grant enrolled members of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe free access to more than 40 state parks, sparking both support and disappointment among the Native American community.

House Bill 25-1163 is described by its Democratic sponsor, Rep. Katie Stewart, as "an effort to reduce barriers for the people with the most connection to the land" by bill sponsor Rep. Katie Stewart. It aims to address historical injustices.

"This proposal is an effort to further support the reconnection of the two tribal communities with these ancestral homelands," Rep. Stewart said while the bill was being heard in committee.

The legislation emerged from consultations between lawmakers, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and the Department of Natural Resources, focusing specifically on the two federally recognized Ute tribes in Colorado. The bill sponsors also worked directly with the Colorado Ute Tribes to create the legislation and engage the community through tools like a survey.

"The Ute people are the oldest, continuous residents of what is now known as the state of Colorado and have significant historical and cultural ties to the majority of the land within the state," Stewart said.

However, the bill's limited scope has generated mixed feelings among members of the dozens of other tribes with historical connections to Colorado who are excluded.

"Colorado is home to a lot of, many different tribes, not just the Ute people," said Lewis TalIBull, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes excluded from the bill. "At the same time, it was like mixed feelings because not everybody was going to have access to those parks."

For TalIBull, the legislation reinforces the land being stolen and taken away from them.

"There is nothing that is going to justify the past unless they are going to stop gatekeeping to these Native people who should have sovereign rights," he said.

Republican Rep. Rick Taggart, the bill's co-sponsor, acknowledged the concerns during a committee hearing as well.

"I think you know that there was some

disappointment with tribal nations with some significant historic and ancestral ties to Colorado," Taggart said. "But we also know there has to be a starting point."

Taggart cited budget constraints as the primary reason for the bill's limited scope, noting that CPW would absorb the costs for this initial step.

- 9News (Denver, Colorado)

## New book shows generational impact of Native American boarding schools through a Wisconsin family

The legacy of America's support for forcing Native American children into boarding schools for a century has left lasting scars in Wisconsin to this day.

The author of a new book, "Medicine River: A Story of Survival and the Legacy of Indian Boarding Schools," shares how the trauma of the schools can be carried down through generations. These schools saw neglect and abuse all across the country and in Wisconsin.

Mary Annette Pember is a national correspondent for ICT News. She's a citizen of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. In her latest book, she shares the story of her mother, Bernice Rabideaux, who in 1930 attended St. Mary's Catholic Indian Boarding School in Ashland County. Rabideaux was just 5 years old at the time and wouldn't see her mother again for two years.

"We may in many ways represent one of the most incredible survival stories, both culturally and physically, of mankind," Pember said recently on WPR's "Wisconsin Today."

"Native people have survived. We're incredibly scrappy people, and we have been able to make do with what we had and even flourish," she said. "Some of these words fail to really paint an adequate picture of how we have gone on and how we have ultimately thrived. I think we can serve as an inspiration for a lot of people."

Nearly 1,000 Indigenous children died at American boarding schools throughout their use, according to an investigation released last year by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

(For more about the book, go to wpr.org.)

- Wisconsin Public Radio

## Rappahannock Tribe acquires nearly 1,000 acres along its namesake river in Virginia

On April 16, the Rappahannock Tribe announced it acquired the largest amount of its ancestral lands to date with the transfer of nearly 1,000 acres from The Conservation Fund, to be preserved in perpetuity under easement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Virginia Board of Historic Resources.

All but a sliver of the four-mile stretch of shoreline that makes up Fones Cliffs, a cultural and ecological treasure that is the location of the tribe's historic homeland, is now protected. The area is the habitat of one of the largest concentrations of nesting bald eagles along the Atlantic coast.

"Tribal citizens will once again, after 350 years of being separated from their mother, the Rappahannock River, have unimpeded opportunities to practice life-sustaining traditions," said Patricia Morris, the Rappahannock Tribe's marketing coordinator, via email. "Hunting, fishing, and ceremonies can resume on the lands where their ancestors are buried."

The tribe will co-steward the land with the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, whose goal is to protect 20,000 acres of wetlands and its associated uplands along the Rappahannock River and its major tributaries.

"We're just real thrilled that this property is back in the hands of the people that will care for it best," said Heather Richards, The Conservation Fund's vice president for the Mid-Atlantic Region.

The preservation of an additional 1,000 acres will add to what is a "...very significant contiguous block of land that's now managed for wildlife and native habitat, and that in and of itself is remarkable just in terms of the size of it and also the uniqueness of the cliffs," said Richards.

The Rappahannock people's roots stretch back centuries before Virginia was first colonized by Europeans, and research has confirmed their presence on the ancient lands surrounding Fones Cliffs.

"Before colonization, limited archeological and historical evidence suggests people were in the river valley 10,000 years ago," said Morris. "Captain John Smith found at least forty-three densely populated communities, indicating rich if unknown history."

The Rappahannock people's way of life was "centered around the river – fishing, oysters, hunting, agriculture, pottery, basket weaving, fish traps, and netting – all of which was based on the natural resources of the river," Morris said.

When colonization and development displaced the tribe, forcing them inland, "it was miles away from the tribe's life-sustaining practices," Morris said. "The spiritual connection to the river was lost, devastating the culture and changing the history of the tribe's struggle to survive."

The tribe's return to the river is the culmination of years of effort to acquire the land, which Morris said "felt a lot like climbing a mountain while carrying a moon-sized shopping bag of moving parts and pieces."

The land transfer marks the second major acquisition of land by the tribe along the Rappahannock River in recent years. In 2022, the tribe celebrated its rematriation to

465 acres of land bordering the waterway.

The Rappahannock Tribe will now have opportunities to expand its Return to the River program, which trains tribal youth in traditional river knowledge and practices.

The tribe is also planning to build a small visitors' center on the newly acquired land, new pow wow grounds, walking trails and public education and recreation opportunities through a grant from the American Environmental Restoration Initiative and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

- Virginia Mercury

## NM governor pocket vetoes Native cultural schools bill due to accountability concerns

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham pocket vetoed a bill introduced this session to establish Native cultural schools through a pilot program, the second time such a bill failed to make it through a recent session.

Sen. Benny Shendo Jr. (D-Jemez Pueblo) originally introduced the State-Tribal Education Compact Schools Act in 2023 to allow pueblos, tribes and nations to enter into compacts with the New Mexico Public Education Department and establish Native language and cultural schools. The 2023 bill died in committee, but this year, Senate Bill 13 found a lot of support.

SB13 was amended to limit the compacts to five schools under five-year pilot programs. It passed unanimously by both the House of Representatives and the Senate, but Lujan Grisham failed to act on it by the April 11 deadline.

"The governor supports innovative approaches to Indigenous education; however, there were concerns about the bill exempting compact schools from accountability requirements without adequate implementation structure," a spokesperson for the governor's office told Source NM in an email. "The governor has directed PED to work closely with tribal governments, including Jemez Pueblo, to develop solutions that honor tribal sovereignty while ensuring quality education for all New Mexico students."

The bill would have made state-tribal compact schools exempt from state statutes and rules pertaining to curriculum and school evaluation requirements and would instead have required the schools to rely on the terms of the compact as determined between the petitioning tribe, nation or pueblo and the PED.

Shendo told Source NM that he was disappointed with the outcome, but said he was notified the pocket veto might occur. He added that he thought the concern was over the compact schools receiving state funds based on the public school funding formula — the method of calculating how much money each public school district receives based on how many students they have, the needs of the students and other factors.

"Our schools are going to be very small because we only have so many tribes," Shendo told Source.

He said he plans to work with the governor's office and the PED during the interim to streamline the language in the bill and address concerns so it might be one of the governor's priorities for the 2026 30-day legislative session.

"Us as Indian tribes, we're not going anywhere. We can wait another year, we've been here a long time," Shendo said. "We're in it for the longhaul."

- Source NM (Santa Fe, New Mexico)

## Tribes, North Dakota partner to update 30-year-old textbooks on Native history

Revised textbooks on the five Native American tribes that share land with North Dakota will be ready in time for next school year.

For about three decades, the books went without updates due to a lack of funding, said Lucy Fredericks, director of Indian and multicultural education for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

In 2023, the agency began work on editing the books with the help of federal grant money.

The revision process was a joint effort among the Department of Public Instruction, the five tribes, higher education institutions across the state and other educational and cultural organizations.

"We wouldn't be able to get it done without our partnerships," Fredericks said at [an April 10] reception at United Tribes Technical College celebrating the books' completion.

The Indigenous Education Coalition — a group that included some of the series' original authors — and Sacred Pipe Resource Center took the lead on revising the text, according to a project timeline provided by the Department of Public Instruction. They fielded input from tribal colleges, tribal education and historic preservation offices as well as other groups. Updates included incorporating more recent historical events into the textbooks.

"Really, at the heart of this is Indigenous peoples telling their own stories," said Sashay Schettler, assistant director for Indian and multicultural education at the Department of Public Instruction.

The six-part series includes one introductory textbook and books focusing on each of the five tribes — including an all-new book on the history and culture of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate.

- North Dakota Monitor



# SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



MAY 1  
PITBULL



MAY 2  
KYGO



MAY 6  
PRIMUS, PUSCIFER  
AND A PERFECT CIRCLE



MAY 9  
TEDDY SWIMS



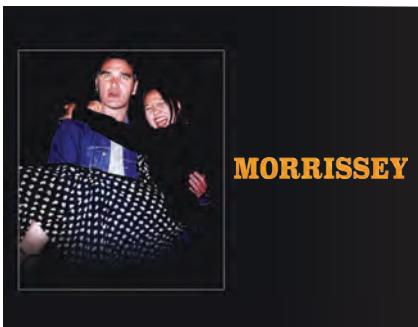
MAY 11  
CAMILA



MAY 12  
IDAN AMEDI



MAY 15  
HAUSER



MAY 17  
MORRISSEY



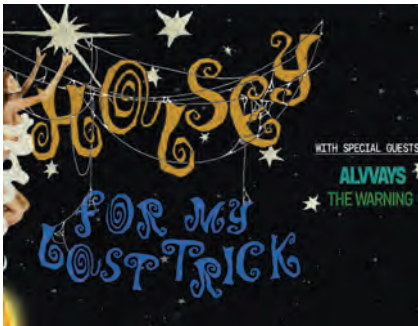
MAY 22  
RON WHITE



MAY 23  
JAY SHETTY



MAY 24  
SUNIDHI  
CHAUHAN



MAY 25  
HALSEY



MAY 29  
LAUREN DAIGLE



MAY 30  
STYX



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# Education



## PECS Culture Days offers lessons beyond the classroom

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — Reading, writing and arithmetic are essential subjects for a well-rounded education, but at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School, Seminole culture is just as important.

The school's annual Culture Days, from March 25-April 1, showed students of all ages how to keep Seminole traditions alive through a day of hands-on work and fun in the culture camp on campus.

Third and fourth graders began their day in camp April 1 with a prayer circle led by Jade Osceola. Then it was off to a host of activities.

Single gender activities included girls making fry bread for Indian tacos they served for lunch and boys learning to carve using a bar of soap.

All the students listened as Everett Osceola told a series of Seminole legend stories, which have been passed down orally through the generations. They also went



Beverly Bidney  
Third grader Jaden Micco shows his winning bingo card during a game of language bingo at PECS Culture Days.



Beverly Bidney  
Students prepare their raw fry bread for the frying pan during Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's Culture Days.

fishing and canoed on the pond, played Creek language bingo, threw tomahawks, skillets, did archery and competed in some fun obstacle course games.

"We want them to learn the language and traditions and want to learn more," said

Culture teacher Janelle Leitner. "The hardest thing is trying to teach it in this technological world. I can't just give them an app. Ours is still curriculum based; we create it and give it to them. Hopefully, they will want to come back to it. It shouldn't all be left to the

Immersion kids to carry this on, we all need to participate in that. I have hope."

The students spoke enthusiastically about their favorite parts of the day, which included the prayer circle, serving lunch, learning about their culture, reliving the past

and hearing the legend stories.

♦ See CULTURE on page 3A

## Brighton hosts Earth Day event

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — The Environmental Protection Office (EPO) honored the planet April 22 with an Earth Day event that included information on what individuals can do to protect the Earth.

Held in Tucker Ridge on the Brighton Reservation, the event participants included kindergarten through second grade students from Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School in Brighton and middle school students from the Ahfachkee School in Big Cypress.

The interactive program included Earth-friendly activities and demonstrations presented by EPO staff. Joseph John, EPO community engagement officer, worked with Debbie Carter, EPO administrative services manager, and Paul Backhouse, EPO senior director, to bring the event to Brighton. In recent years, it had been held at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

"We wanted to have it here in this wide open space," John said. "I wanted people to see the nature that exists on the reservations that we are trying to protect in the face of climate change."

Carter has worked for the tribe since 1978 and was the first employee of the Environmental Resources Management Department, now the EPO, when it was founded in 1988 as the water department. She said Brighton had an Earth Day event about 10 years ago at the rodeo arena, but then it moved to Big Cypress.

"People always asked me why we don't have it here anymore," Carter said. "So I

worked with Paul [Backhouse] and JJ [John] to put it together. The kids love it and we hope to have it here every year for the kids."

The students remained engaged as they went from one fun learning opportunity to the next one. Activities were varied and included painting pots and planting seeds in them and coloring pictures of the Earth to learning about which native plants butterflies eat to survive and thrive. Students also made sun prints by putting flowers, leaves and weeds under glass on photographic paper for a few minutes until the sun created a image.

They saw a real Cara Cara nest and learned about the materials the birds used in it, which included twigs, wires and even a couple of cell phone chargers. EPO biological technician Mandy D'Andrea explained how she watched the birds go into abandoned cars and take the man-made items out to use in their nest.

The students were fascinated with the rate water drains from the earth through grass, rocks and sand. Spoiler alert, water drains slowest through sand. At the water quality station, they learned how certain types of algae, plants, gravel and sand can filter the water. EPO employees demonstrated by pouring dirty water through a beaker filled with those elements and students watched it come out clear.

"We have to take care of the land because it has taken care of us for so long" John said. "It's good for environmental health, mental health and physical health. I want to preserve the space for my future children and grandchildren."



Beverly Bidney  
PECS kindergarten students look in the trees for signs of birds or their nests during Brighton's Earth Day event April 22.



Beverly Bidney  
PECS second grader Maelynn Tommie poses with the milkweed plant to bring home and plant. The flowers of the milkweed are the only things monarch butterflies will eat.



Beverly Bidney  
Jessica Trois, EPO ecological monitoring specialist, uses photos to explain to a group of PECS students how the department checks water quality around the reservations.



Beverly Bidney  
In center, Ahfachkee middle school student Bella Quintanilloa paints strawberries on a pot to plant seeds in during the Earth Day event in Brighton.



Beverly Bidney  
PECS kindergarten students watch intently as dirty water is filtered through natural substances including soil, stones, algae and plant material.



# Brighton students build chickee over spring break

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

A group of Brighton students made good use of their time during spring break March 17-21 by helping to build a chickee at the Brighton Cultural Center Complex.

Before they began building the chickee, Johnnie Jones, community culture advisor, used a model chickee to show the boys the essential elements of a chickee, how to square it off and build it.

“We wanted to give them the experience to learn about chickee building,” said Diane Smith, Brighton community culture manager. “Some of them may never build one again but now they have an idea of how they are built.”

The 6-by-30-foot chickee shades the sign of the complex and took a couple of days to complete. Moses Billie, of Big Cypress, donated his time and materials for the project.

While the boys were working, girls made them a hearty lunch of Indian Stew with fry bread and vegetables.

Students who participated were Theodore, Miguel, Manny and Amalia Estrada, Charlie and Kulipa Julian, Demahni and Melanie Bonilla, Mayan Macias, Chance Madrigal and Kowi Osceola. Adult helpers were Joseph John, Joyce Jumper, Amos Moses Billie Jr. and his crew and the Brighton Community Culture staff.



Culture staff, adult helpers and students pose by the new chickee they built in front of the Brighton Cultural Center Complex in March.

Courtesy photo

## Superheroes at Hollywood Preschool



Calvin Tiger

As part of the Advocacy Program's annual Child Abuse Prevention Week, students and staff at the Hollywood Preschool had a chance to dress up as superheroes April 9. The week was part of the annual Child Abuse Awareness Prevention Month in April. From left to right are Advocacy and Guardianship and Hollywood Preschool team Reyvana Gardener, Novalee Mumby, Amaru Ladron DeGuevara, Deandra Thomas, Tonya Gibson, Lakisha Davis, Bibi Abdul and Vanessa Golaub.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Advocacy and Guardianship Administrative Assistant Novalee Mumby, Amaru Ladron DeGuevara, Myles Baxley, Kyzen Osceola, Advocacy and Guardianship Supervisor Deandra Thomas, Melody Jamieson, Reign Hincapie, Carson Dixon, and Advocacy and Guardianship Child Advocate Vanessa Golaub.

## Indigenous YouTube channel debuts

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Vision Maker Media announced in April the debut of its iNative Shorts for Kids YouTube channel, which brings Indigenous education, like language and history, to students through short videos.

The YouTube channel videos are led by an animated Frankie the Hawk and are designed for ages 6-12. Frankie the Hawk teaches students interactively about Native languages, food history, ways of life, veterans and more.

“For generations, Indigenous knowledge

worldwide has influenced science, governance, agriculture, and storytelling. Today - through Vision Maker Media's films by and about Native Americans - this knowledge is shared with learners of all ages in classrooms, libraries, and museums,” according to a press release.

For more information visit [visionmakermedia.org/inative/](http://visionmakermedia.org/inative/).

## Easter eggs, bunny highlight Ahfachkee event



Calvin Tiger

Colin Ricketts, left, and Cassius Billie take a family photo with the Easter bunny after Cassius received the Principal's Gold Honor Roll Award for straight A's at the Ahfachkee School.



Calvin Tiger

Students and staff at Ahfachkee School join the Easter bunny after the school's egg hunt. From left to right are Renee Barry, Kealon Cypress, Lorraine Jumper, Equoni Cypress, Ziana Osceola, Neka Cortez, Nuria Suarez, Zendaya Quintana and Harleigh Grasshopper.

Calvin Tiger

From left to right, students and staff, Zion Osceola, Jakolby Bear, Brooke Kabot, Jayce Billie, Mae'lee Cummings-Ashman, Nalanie Bear-Rodriguez, Kion Tommie, Brenda Hummingbird and Audriana Brown pose with the Easter bunny.



Calvin Tiger

Students weren't the only ones who enjoyed Easter egg hunting; Ahfachkee staff conducts its own dash for the eggs.



◆ **CULTURE**  
From page 1B

“We want them to know where their elders come from,” said Culture teacher Suraiya Smith. “Respect our women, we are the ones feeding you, and respect the land and the teachers. Hopefully, one day one of them will come take our job. The most important thing we want them to learn is respect.”

“We do this so they can learn and pass it on,” said Culture teacher Jimi Lu Jamison. “Once the elders and we are gone, it’s up to them.”



Beverly Bidney  
Culture teacher Janelle Leitner, center, enjoys a moment with students Lily Coleman and Kaillin Coleman during the PECS Culture Day.



Beverly Bidney  
Lewis Gopher Jr. shows third grade boys how to carve using a knife and a bar of soap. As they grow up, the boys will graduate to using a sharper knife and real wood.



Beverly Bidney  
Girls wait their turn to add their bread to the pan.



Beverly Bidney  
Students learn to work together to move wood slats as they work to get to the finish line first.



Beverly Bidney (2)  
Above, a teacher rides with students in each canoe as the kids learn to control the vessels. At right, girls serve lunch to the boys.



# Career fair features education opportunities, tribalwide departments

**STAFF REPORT**

**HOLLYWOOD** — A career fair brought booths from the Environmental Resources Department to Human Resources to Tribal Community Development. With about 30 exhibitors, some colleges or education-related, students, community members and tribal employees filtered around the Howard Tiger Recreation Center

on the Hollywood Reservation on April 23. Firefighters taught students how to do CPR and handed out kiddie firefighter hats. The Environmental Resources Department had a demonstration of how water can be naturally filtered. Many booths had handouts and opportunities to spin a wheel for a prize. There was a raffle near the end of the fair. The fair was organized by the Education Department.



Tatum Mitchell  
The Education Department at career fair on April 23 at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center.



Tatum Mitchell  
Victoria Osceola Benard, left, learns CPR from Seminole Fire Rescue's Natalia Whiteshield.



Tatum Mitchell  
From left to right, Andrew Mason, Darlie Tellet, Shannon Edwards, Brianna Webster, Donald Smathers from Tribal Community Development at the career fair.



Congratulation Amelia Mae Cypress  
Love Mom, Dad and Family



# Tribe celebrates Easter

## Lakeland/Tampa

**LAKELAND** — The Lakeland community gathered April 18 for the annual Easter event on the reservation. Dressed in Easter pastels and patchwork, everyone of every age raced to collect as many colorful eggs as their baskets or bags could hold. After a barbeque lunch, the community enjoyed playing corn hole, throwing axes, raffles and other fun activities. The day ended with a catered dinner.



Meadow Foret, 16 months, brings an egg to her father Peter Foret during the Lakeland Easter egg hunt.



Above, Talia Frank paints a ceramic bunny during the Lakeland Easter celebration April 18. At right, hundreds of eggs get picked up by kids.



## Immokalee



America Ramirez holds her granddaughter Miracle Martinez as they enjoy the Easter event.



The Garcia family, including Ealynn, Alani and Adriella, enjoy time with the Easter Bunny.



Hayleigh Rodriguez, Alayna Ortega, Aria Sigurani, Diane Yzaguirre, Talia Osceola and Judessah Gustave takeoff running to compete in an Easter egg during the Immokalee Reservation's Easter event April 12.



Yaha Billie, 6, zips down the water slide.



Athena Sigurani practices picking up rocks like on an Easter egg hunt



Hayleigh Rodriguez wins lots of stuffed animals from playing games at the event.



Judessah Gustave and Zarra Hames enjoy eating nachos at the event.



# Tribe celebrates Easter

## Hollywood

**HOLLYWOOD** — The ball field on the Hollywood Reservation was full of spring-like colors April 10 for the annual Easter egg hunt hosted by the Hollywood Board Office.

Dozens of eager youngsters with baskets and bags in hand sprinted on the field with

eggs in their sight, picking up as many of the treats as they could fit. For one girl, when there was no more space in her basket and her hands were full of eggs, too, she decided to tuck one under her chin.

The field was festively decorated with plantings and haystacks.

The kids also had a chance to meet the Easter bunny, whose popularity was evident with numerous hugs. They also had an opportunity to meet and hold live bunnies and chicks and see and feed other farm animals set up in gated areas.



Children get ready to start their hunt for Easter eggs April 10 on the Hollywood Reservation.

Mayli Tommie



Mayli Tommie (2)

Hugs and photos with the Easter bunny were a big part of the event.



Mayli Tommie (2)

Above, bunny rabbits and chicks check out the reservation during the event. At left, Destiny Diaz cradles a rabbit.

## Call for artists ends May 16

### FROM PRESS RELEASE

The National Indian Child Welfare Association has an opportunity for Native artists to showcase their talents in support of its 2026 Protecting Our Children Conference in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Submissions

are due May 16, 2025.

The selected artist will be awarded a cash prize of \$2,000 for the use of their work in promotional materials for our 2026 conference. Artists also may receive a free arts and crafts vendor booth at the conference as long as they notify NICWA

by November 2025.

Seminole Tribe of Florida artist Erica Deitz was the 2022 winner with her “Homecoming” artwork.

For more information go to [nicwa.org](http://nicwa.org).

## Canadian Gaming Summit to be held in June

### FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Canadian Gaming Summit (CGS), an annual conference and exhibition for gaming and sports betting industries from across Canada and beyond, will be held

June 17-19 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in Toronto, Ontario.

The summit will reflect the changing face of the industry, with a conference agenda and exhibitors that encompass both the newer sports betting sector and the

more established casino gaming and lottery verticals, according to a press release.

The event brings together more than 3,000 industry professionals across all of Canada and beyond. For more information visit [sbcevents.com](http://sbcevents.com).

## Four Prose Poems

### BY ELGIN JUMPER

*Poet’s Note: In this issue of The Seminole Tribune, I’ve submitted four new prose poems. First started in France by Charles Baudelaire, in the mid-1800s, and other poets such as, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stephane Mallarme, the prose poem does away with linebreaks, meter, and suchlike, and therefore, is written very much in the style of prose, with paragraphs and sentences, instead of lines. The rhythms, imagery, alliterations, figurative language, and metaphors remain, however, creating an extraordinary poetic effect. Prose poems are concise, intermingling poetry and prose, making for a rich combination of form and content. Indeed I have several prose poems in “Nightfall” (2006), my first poetry collection. Consequently I now contribute four new prose poems.*

### Radiance

Hear me when I say, she’s a beautiful poem. She’s philosophical photography, and on stormy days, she wears colorful hoop earrings, while solving the intricacies of the night, arriving at a deeper understanding. And when she speaks, it enriches the venerated philosophers, heretofore, languishing by the incredible sea, reflecting always on right and wrong. Ah, but in the moments of ancient utterances, I am filled with questions about her. She is well-pleased because of it. She bestows a Song of Sacred Fire, in aromatic patchwork array, as she is, offering insights into the origins of the universe, her long black hair descending, cascading. Even so, her philosophy remains abstract, much like her paintings, with raging storms, and endless wrath, quite seemingly, which, at long last, becomes assuaged and flies away. She smiles and casts a tender glance, for the offspring of her thoughts are wide-ranging, deep and profound. Near Orion stars, she prays in a soft voice. But be that as it may, even in the warmth of sawgrass sunsets, she remains a mystery, radiant and breathtaking.

### Such as the Poets Speak of

Embark upon a great expedition, such as the Poets speak of, “on your imaginary forces work,” let’s say, danger and adventure conspire in the works, in a trackless wilderness, ah, think and see, if you please. In one felled swoop, then, brought to fruition. Wonders beheld and the heights of deepest feelings experienced. Recorded by accompanying scribes and poets, the expedition moved with speed and surprise, yon’, formidable forces outfitted in purple-gold, and yet behold! Unfold the remarkable story in all it’s righteous glory! When the world was young. Therefore set your thoughts for high on ten years hence, how they weathered the perils, took to the offensive, even when outnumbered, and golden eagles soared above, a good omen to the mighty host! And they grew to cherish the wondrous lands. Yet they perceived themselves forlorn when the foulest of weather followed. And the battles roared! The sky was cracked and the earth was made to tremble. They could see and hear it all, the orange-red sky, and the boom of thunder! “Fare thee well,” the leader cried. “Fare thee well, brave soldier. Fare thee well, Oh, Earth and Sky, Sun and Moon, for the colors fly in the afternoon.” But the tales and poems were heard by many, who ventured out to the stars their hearts heavy, conveying plenty. Thus the great story was at an end, all told, the journey long, harrowing, and recalled forever in Story and Song.



Elgin Jumper

“Four Prose Poems” by Elgin Jumper.

### Prose Poem Dream

Where is the myth that explains the Creation of the Everglades? Where is the Golden Door? For the sawgrass has brilliant poetry baked into it by the Sun, the Sun! I tell you. But Moonlight tolerates the Stars so . . . Yet you’ll find poems ensconced in the details of mighty rivers, and upon the dark watery shores. It’s presence emanates out. And it progresses from that conflict, that Never-ending Verse, so yes, walk within paintings, if you like, at the museums and studios at night, and immerse in color, in the Verse of the Universe. Converse. Live, I mean, really live in the Soundscapes of Earth tones, and landscape greens. Smile into light rain, and the scents of forest and clearing. Your first words spoke of Poetry, remember? Harken back to that. Embrace it. For Wildflowers, at dawn, are created by battalions of little poets, jotting down volumes of tiny enchanting poems. And that, my friend, is a beautiful thing.

### Everglades Landscape

Sometimes I feel like an ancient otter, I mean, if they had otters back in ancient times. Oh, maybe they did, who knows? Perhaps I had a Summer home near Lake Okeechobee, purchased from a shady realtor of the time, and where I’d spend the days writing prose poems, in my lakeside sanctuary, to the approaching Fall. I’d be young again, too, yep, brand-new, and wearing red high-top Converse, “Cons” as they say, tailor-made all around, in Hollywood town, donning long black hair, even in the Summertime. My deep blue corduroys and Aerosmith concert shirt, the absolute talk of the inland sea. I’d ride my bmx bike into the sun, a time or two, too, jump a wall, if I could. Just to feel the warmth of your smile. I’d walk my little mixed-breed dog in a gated-community, check out yard sales, and buy second-hand 8-track tapes, and place them up to my ear, like a seashell. Ah, good times, good times. I’d flourish in my tea room, playing mahjong, and admiring the Post-Impressionistic paintings on the walls, which, in time, dissolve away, leaving only glistening stars and prodigious galaxies. For prose poems are like little dreams, you see, beckoning you to enter, so that we may wax poetic, all the while, to the virtues of a Summer day.

All prose poems written by Elgin Jumper, Hollywood Rez, late-April, 2025

## UNITY names Earth ambassadors

### FROM PRESS RELEASE

**MESA, Ariz.** — In celebration of Earth Day, United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNI-TY) announced April 22 the 2025-26 class of UNITY Earth Ambassadors. The environmental stewardship and leadership program, which began in the 1990s, provides Native American youth with training sessions and informational workshops to increase their knowledge of environmental issues affecting Indian Country.

“Our newest class of Earth Ambassadors shares a special commitment to protecting

Ramirez, 22 – Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Oklahoma.

- Marla Mesarina, 19 – Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe & Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Minnesota.
- McKaylin Peters, 23 – Menominee Indian Tribe, Wisconsin.
- Neepa Hyde, 14 – Shinnecock Nation, Minnesota.
- Nizhoni Deschene, 17 – Navajo Nation & Turtle Mountain Chippewa, Maryland.
- Vydell Willie, 18 – Navajo Nation, Arizona.





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# Sports



With her parents Mona and Preston next to her, Preslynn Baker holds the paperwork she signed to attend Earlham College, where she'll play volleyball and softball. A signing ceremony for Baker was held April 25 in the Glades County Auditorium.

Kevin Johnson



Kevin Johnson

Photo montages of Preslynn Baker were posted on fences at her senior night game April 16.

## Bowler Allie Williams earns conference honor

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Tribe's Allie Williams wrapped up her third season on the Ottawa University bowling team March 7.

Williams, a junior, finished 104th out of 182 bowlers at the Intercollegiate Singles women's sectional qualifier in Fort Worth, Texas.

In six games, Williams' best score came in the fourth game with a 213. Her total of 1,064 was the third best score on Ottawa.

After the season, Williams earned an All-Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference scholar-athlete award for the 2024-25 season.

Before attending Ottawa in Kansas, Williams starred on state championship teams at Neshoba Central in Mississippi. She is the daughter of Brandi and Gavin Williams.



Ottawa University

Allie Williams holds her scholar-athlete award.

## Preslynn Baker signs with Indiana college

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**MOORE HAVEN** — Terriers had plenty of tears April 25 as the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Preslynn Baker made her college decision.

With her parents at her side and four white volleyballs in front of her — each bearing the logo of her final potential college destinations — Baker picked up the ball that will take the Moore Haven High School standout to Earlham College, an NCAA Division III school in Richmond, Indiana.

The signing ceremony at Glades County Auditorium on the school campus was filled with emotion as tears flowed from the eyes of Baker, her parents Mona and Preston, her sister Jaryaca, teammates, coaches and school staff. Baker, who is the youngest of nine siblings, was so overwhelmed with emotion that she had her friend, teammate and fellow tribal member Tahniah Billie read her speech.

In the speech, Baker — through Billie — thanked her family, including her parents who have been her coaches in softball and volleyball at the youth and high school levels. She also thanked her other coaches, teammates and friends.

In an interview before her senior night game April 16, Baker recalled being about 5 years old and attending Jaryaca's senior night as a softball player for Okeechobee High School. Jaryaca, who is 13 years older than Preslynn, also had a signing ceremony, went on to play softball in college and now has children.

Preslynn said one reason she wanted to play sports in college is to continue to be a role model for her nieces and nephews.

"Since the oldest — Coco — was born, I've always wanted to be the best I can be for him, and then more kept coming. So I'm like I'll keep doing it for all of them," she said.

Baker selected Earlham over Allen University, Millennia Atlantic University and Warner University.

Baker, a three-sport athlete throughout her Terrier career and at Native American tournaments, will play volleyball and softball at Earlham. She'll bring versatility, having played setter, outside hitter and



Kevin Johnson

Preslynn Baker's teammates join her and her parents at the signing ceremony.

right-side hitter in volleyball, and pitcher, first baseman, third baseman and outfield in softball.

Last fall, she helped lead the Terriers to their best volleyball season ever with a 17-3 record and a trip to the state semifinals. She also played basketball at Moore Haven.

In softball, Baker has been a standout pitcher since she started playing for the Terriers. She is a clean up batter who has crushed home runs, usually leaving no doubt as to whether the ball is going to go over the fence or not.

First impressions made a big impression on Baker during her visit to Earlham as she enjoyed touring the campus and meeting

players from the volleyball and softball teams.

"It's very nice, very beautiful. It has all four seasons, which I'm excited about," Baker said. "I loved the girls; they were so sweet, so welcoming. It was a nice visit. I knew once I got there and I met the girls, this is where I'm going."

Earlham is in eastern Indiana — right on the border of Ohio — between Indianapolis and Dayton.

Baker's career interest is to be a sports trainer for on the pro level. She already has a head start on her college academics. She will graduate May 2 with an associate's degree from Florida SouthWestern State College

through a studies program offered at the high school. Three weeks later she will graduate with her high school classmates, and then, later this summer, she'll leave her home on the Brighton Reservation and head to the Midwest to begin her Earlham career.

"I'm excited about meeting new people," she said.

Before she signed the paperwork at the ceremony, a few of her teammates, former coaches — including Dallas Nunez — school staff and her sister Jaryaca came up on stage and spoke about how much Baker has meant to them and how much she will be missed. In keeping with the evening's theme, tears came from just about every speaker.



Kevin Johnson

Preslynn Baker is surrounded by her teammates and gifts during Moore Haven's senior night ceremony April 16. Baker is the team's only senior from the class of 2025.



Courtesy image

Ollie Balentine is on the track and field team at Sagemont Prep in Weston. Balentine, a seventh grader, competed in the girls long jump at a middle school meet April 23 in Coral Springs. She had a jump of 3.16 meters.



# Seminole teams compete in Battle of the Nations

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

A 3,000-mile cross country trip proved to be worth every mile for the Seminole men's team in the Battle of the Nations basketball tournament.

The all-Native tournament was held April 5-7 in Spokane, Washington. Out of 64 men's teams, the Seminoles compiled a 7-2 record and finished fourth.

The Seminoles won their first two games, but lost the third game, which forced them to keep winning in the losers' bracket in order to stay alive. They did just that, reeling off five straight wins in the losers' bracket before being ousted with a loss to Comanche.

Players on the Seminoles were Ethan

Cypress, Duelle Gore, Channon Frye, Jerome Wilcox, Bryce Osceola, Hunter Osceola, Xavier Osceola and Eric "Doug" Sanders.

The tournament is six years old. This year marked the debut of a women's division, which featured 32 teams, including the Seminole's Native Soldiers team. Native Soldiers was knocked out with losses to Leech Lake and Oglala Lakota.

The team consisted of six players: Alicia Fudge, Skyla Osceola, Tasha Osceola, Analyse Stockton, Shae Pierce and Krystle Young.

Umatilla defeated Navajo (Mitchell) to win the women's championship. Turtle Mountain Chippewa won the men's championship game against Comanche.



The Native Soldiers team at the Battle of Nations is, from left to right, Shae Pierce, Alicia Fudge, Skyla Osceola, Analyse Stockton, Krystle Young and Tasha Osceola. The child is Sky Hope Osceola.



Native Soldiers' Tasha Osceola guards an opponent at the Battle of the Nations tournament in Spokane, Washington.



Duelle Gore takes a jump shot for the Seminoles at the Battle of the Nations.



The Seminoles went 7-2 and finished fourth in the men's division at the Battle of the Nations.



Ethan Cypress takes a 3-point shot for the Seminoles.

# Big Cypress teams play big role in Clewiston Little League

STAFF REPORT

**HOLLYWOOD** — Three teams from the Big Cypress Recreation Department were in action April 22 at Sugarland Park in Clewiston. The Diamond Divas, Little Giants and Dirt Kings play in the Clewiston

Little League and are coached by Recreation staff members.

The Little Giants are the youngest team and play in T-ball for ages 4 to 6. The Diamond Divas (softball) and Dirt Kings (baseball) feature ages 7 and 8, and they face pitches from pitching machines.



Little Giants' batter Newton Shaffer keeps his eyes on the ball.



Kai Vasquez gets ready at third base for the Little Giants.



Zihnellie Burney, from the Little Giants, tags out a baserunner on the third base line.



Justice Jumper takes a solid swing for the Diamond Divas.



Marhz Edwards scores a run for the Little Giants.



Diamond Divas shortstop Shayln Koenes fields a groundball in the softball game.



Dirt Kings second baseman Lashawn Pascal, left, and first baseman Koba Taylor make a play on a groundball.



The Dirt Kings are, from left to right, kneeling Thomas Koenes, Lashawn Pascal, Harvey Bowers-Billie and Myles Hall. Standing, from left to right, coach James Toombs (JT), Leonard Osceola, Chance Frank, Cassius Billie, Koba Taylor, Nikolai Shaffer and coach Marcus Thompson.





Vince Billie competes in disc golf at the Hollywood Recreation Earth Day sports events April 22.



The group of competitors on Earth Day.

# Hollywood Recreation hosts senior sports tournament to celebrate Earth Day

BY TATUM MITCHELL  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — To celebrate Earth Day and get a little competitive, the Hollywood Recreation Department hosted a tournament-style day of sports for the elders

of the community. The morning kicked off with snacks and refreshments, and then Kenny Bayon, Recreation fitness specialist, walked the group through the different event stations on April 22 at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center Airnasium.

Once competition got under way, the participants filtered from station to station having some fun in the sun with about 10 sports. The day concluded with a barbeque lunch, raffle of various plants and Earth Day-themed bingo.

## Earth Day sports tournament results

### Cornhole

- Women  
1st Shirley Clay  
2nd Juanita Osceola  
3rd Loretta Micco
- Men  
1st Eric Osceola  
2nd Patrick Doctor  
3rd Charlie Tiger

### Disc Golf

- Women  
1st Laura Clay  
2nd Rosetta Rhodd  
3rd Loretta Micco
- Men  
1st Vince Billie  
2nd Paul Buster  
3rd Adam Osceola

### Bullseye Throw

- Women  
1st Rosetta Rhodd  
2nd Dora Tiger  
3rd Loretta Micco
- Men  
1st Charlie Tiger  
2nd Eric Osceola  
3rd Paul Buster

### Basketball

- Women  
1st Shirley Clay  
2nd Loretta Micco  
3rd Laura Clay
- Men  
1st Eric Osceola  
2nd Vince Billie  
3rd Patrick Doctor

### Horseshoes

- Women  
1st Shirley Clay  
2nd Dora Tiger  
3rd Laura Clay

- Men  
1st Peter Billie  
2nd Charlie Tiger  
3rd Paul Buster

### Bowling

- Women  
1st Laura Clay  
2nd Dorothy Tommie  
3rd Barbara Osceola
- Men  
1st Adam Osceola  
2nd Charlie Tiger  
3rd Peter Billie

### Target Toss

- Women  
1st Dorothy Tommie  
2nd Juanita Osceola

### Ladderball

- Women  
1st Dorothy Tommie  
2nd Juanita Osceola



Charlie Tiger tosses a horseshoe as Patrick Doctor watches.



Regina Thinn celebrates a winning round of bingo on April 22 during the Earth Day event at the gymnasium on the Hollywood Reservation.



Hollywood Recreation's Kenny Bayon presents the plants and trees available to choose from for those who had winning raffle tickets.



Cowbone and his guitar at the event.





Kevin Johnson

Thirteen Seminoles were part of the Moore Haven versus Okeechobee high school varsity softball game April 14 at Ollie Jones Memorial Park on the Brighton Reservation. From left to right are Charisma Micco, Tehya Nunez, Preslynn Baker, Daliyah Nunez, Teena Maree Covarrubias, Dyani Kayda, Truley Osceola, Melaine Bonilla, Joleyne Nunez, Kiera Snell, Tahnia Billie, Alyssa Madrigal and Adeline Garcia.

# High school softball comes to Brighton

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**BRIGHTON** — A varsity high school softball game between Moore Haven and Okeechobee served as a “homecoming” for many players from the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

In front of about 130 spectators April 14, Okeechobee enjoyed a big night at the plate as the Brahmans defeated Moore Haven, 15-2, in five innings under the lights at Ollie Jones Memorial Park on the Brighton Reservation, where several of the players live and/or attended Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School.

Thirteen tribal players from the teams gathered for a group photo before it was “game on,” however, the game almost didn’t get started.

A scheduling snafu with the umpires left the teams scrambling to find replacements. Although they didn’t have umpire attire, Corey Coleman and Mitchell Runkles came to the rescue. Crawford called balls and strikes behind the plate while Runkles handled the bases.

Okeechobee is a Class 4A school; smaller Moore Haven, is a Rural Class school.

Okeechobee was led by Joleyne Nunez,

who delivered five RBIs and two hits, including a bases loaded hard-hit single up the middle that opened the scoring and ignited a seven-run second inning.

Melaine Bonilla drilled a two-run double into the left-center gap in the third to give Okeechobee an 11-0 lead.

In the fourth, Tehya Nunez hammered an RBI single for Okeechobee.

The young Terriers were led by Preslynn Baker – the team’s only senior – who blasted a no-doubt-about-it home run over the left field fence in the third. Moore Haven also received two hits from Teena Maree Covarrubias.

In addition to the prominent presence of tribal member players, the head coaches on both sides - Moore Haven’s Preston Baker and Okeechobee’s Mary Huff - are also from the tribe. Having given birth just days earlier, Huff attended the game but did not coach; Danny Bonilla served as the substitute head coach for the Brahmans.

Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven’s Truley Osceola makes contact with a powerful swing.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee shortstop Melaine Bonilla fires the ball to first base for an out.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee’s Tehya Nunez makes solid contact during an at-bat against Moore Haven.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee baserunner Alyssa Madrigal takes a lead off first, which is handled by Moore Haven’s Preslynn Baker. Okeechobee coach Danny Bonilla is the coach at first.

## Young Moore Haven shows signs of improvement

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**BELLE GLADE** — A glance at the infielders for the Moore Haven High School baseball team is all that is needed to see how young the Terriers are this season.

Middle schoolers were at second and third base and behind the plate when the team visited Glades Day on April 11. The Terriers have just three seniors.

Despite its youth, Moore Haven has shown glimpses of a potentially bright future, such as a 3-0 start to the season with wins against Sheridan Christian, Glades Central and Pahokee.

“We started off pretty hot and we hit a little road block for a little bit. That’s because we’re young and we’re limited on pitchers at this point,” Moore Haven coach Nathan Simmons said after his team’s 9-4 loss to Glades Day.

The season ended April 15 with a loss



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven’s Thaddeus Johns delivers a pitch against Glades Day on April 11 in Belle Glade.

to Fort Meade in a district playoff game. The Terriers finished with a 7-11 record. It was their most wins in a season since 2019, according to stats on MaxPreps.

“I’m happy. We’re going through growing pains as a young team, but they’re definitely evolving and improving,” Simmons said.

Seminole descendent Thaddeus Johns has played a big role in the team’s improvement. In addition to being one of the team’s top hitters (.349 batting average) and fastest runners (team-high 24 steals), Johns is also the No. 1 pitcher on a staff that is thin

on experience. Johns, a right-hander, was on the mound a lot more than anyone else.

“He’s definitely been a workhorse for us,” Simmons said.

Johns is a junior, so he’ll have one more year to play. Tribal member and sophomore Tim Urbina has two years left. He’s an outfielder who didn’t see a lot of playing time this season, but he always contributes. He scored three runs and drove in three.

“We always love when Tim gets in,” Simmons said.



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Moore Haven pitcher Thaddeus Johns, coach Nathan Simmons and outfielder Tim Urbina.



# Celebrity athletes make appearances at Hard Rock

STAFF REPORT

Three-time NASCAR Cup Champion and 2015 Daytona 500 winner Joey Logano signed autographs for fans during an appearance April 12 at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol in Virginia. The following day Logano finished 24th in the NASCAR race at Bristol Motor Speedway.

Meanwhile, on March 20, former NBA guard Spudd Webb helped NCAA fans enjoy a night of March Madness with an appearance at Hard Rock Casino Rockford in Illinois. The 5-foot-6 Webb is one of the shortest players to ever play in the NBA.



NASCAR star driver Joey Logano meets fans at Hard Rock Bristol in Virginia on April 12.



Former NBA player Spudd Webb has a ball at Hard Rock Casino Rockford in March.

# Hard Rock partners with Dale Earnhardt Jr.

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**HOLLYWOOD** — Hard Rock International welcomed NASCAR Hall of Famer Dale Earnhardt Jr. on April 2 as a brand ambassador to its roster of legendary athlete partners. The partnership will bring exclusive collaborations and limited-time offers to NASCAR fans while they watch the 2025 season.

“Hard Rock is such a historic and iconic brand,” Earnhardt, a two-time Daytona 500 winner, said in a press release. “I have always been a huge fan of music, so the vibes and attention to detail that Hard Rock puts into its locations is incredible to me. They have something for everyone – music, food, drinks, casino games and sports betting. I’m excited to partner with them and the opportunities we have to do some really fun things together.”

“As a leader consistently delivering entertaining experiences across live music, gaming and sports to guests, Hard Rock is honored to have Dale Earnhardt Jr. as part of our team,” Keith Sheldon, president of Entertainment and Brand at Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming, said in the release. “Together we will celebrate the spirit of car racing at our properties across the globe through exciting new menu items, apparel and more.”

NASCAR fans dining at Hard Rock Cafes can now enjoy Earnhardt’s favorite dishes exclusively on race days.

Two apparel collections will be available to Earnhardt’s fans and Hard Rock collectors, including a T-shirt and zip-up sweatshirt. Additional items coming in June include a T-shirt, hat and hoodie featuring a new design. Find them at Hard Rock Cafes in Atlanta, Hollywood, FL, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Miami, Myrtle Beach, Nashville, New York, Orlando, Pigeon Forge, Philadelphia, San Francisco and San Antonio or shop. [hardrock.com](http://hardrock.com).

Through the partnership, NASCAR fans will have the opportunity to engage with Earnhardt via Hard Rock Bet, which has already hosted a sweepstakes at Daytona International Speedway and will offer additional ‘money can’t buy’ experiences for its players to meet the Hall of Fame driver. Fans can also follow along with Earnhardt’s sports betting picks on the Hard Rock Bet app and view exclusive video content on @HardRockBet channels.

Additionally, later this spring, Hard Rock Games will debut the free-to-play Full Throttle with Dale Earnhardt Jr. slot game on the Hard Rock Neverland Casino and Jackpot Planet apps. This high-octane game will put players in the driver’s seat, with their race car gaining speed with each win.



A Dale Earnhardt Jr. Hard Rock T-shirt.

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# NABI holds benefit golf tournament

STAFF REPORT

The Native American Basketball Invitational, featuring 2,000 Native American youth, will be held July 22-26 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Before 3-point shots are launched, tee shots were launched at the 12th annual NABI Founders Golf Classic on April 7 at Whirlwind Golf Club in nearby Chandler, Arizona.

Money raised by the golf tournament helps fund the NABI College Scholarship Fund and the Meadowlark Lemon Legacy Foundation (MLFF). This fall MLFF will partner with NABI for free NABI camps for ages 8 to 14 in the metro Phoenix area and on tribal lands.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida has been a longtime major supporter of NABI, which was founded in 2003. Seminole teams have been a big part of the tournament; this year's Florida teams include Rez Ballers and Unconquered on the boys side, and Native Soldiers in the girls division.

As part of the tournament, a college and career field will be held July 22 at Phoenix College.

NABI is the largest all-Native tournament in the country for high school players.



Participants in the NABI golf tournament included pro golfer Gabby Barker from the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe.



A sign thanking the Seminole Tribe of Florida for its support of NABI is placed at the golf tournament in Arizona.

## Chairman of the Greens tournament raises money for charities



From left to right, Steve Tooshkenig, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Nat Moore enjoy their time at the Chairman of the Greens tournament.



Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. speaks at the sixth annual Chairman of the Greens Charity Golf Tournament Jan. 31 at Jacaranda Golf Course in Plantation. The tournament raises money for Breakthrough T1D, a nonprofit type 1 diabetes research and advocacy organization; and the Boys & Girls Club of Broward County - Thomas D. Stephanis Club. Behind Chairman Osceola are representatives from some of the tournament's sponsors.

STAFF REPORT

**PLANTATION** — A high turnout and low scores highlighted the sixth annual Chairman of the Greens Charity Golf Tournament on Jan. 31 in Plantation.

The tournament raises money for Breakthrough T1D (formerly the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation) and the Boys & Girls Club of Broward County - Thomas D. Stephanis Club.

Hosted by the office of Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., the shotgun-style tournament featured about 50 foursomes

split over the two courses at Jacaranda Golf Club. Several teams broke 60, including three that shot the lowest rounds of 53. One of those low teams included former Miami Dolphin star Nat Moore, who played with Paul Everett, Jimmy Hobales and Steve Komarc. They won first place on the West Course.

On the East Course, the team of Jeff Fife, Jose Gonzalez, David Hill and Derek Valdo finished first with a 53.

Elrod Bowers and Steve Tooshkenig teamed up to shoot 54, which was good enough for second place.

Closest-to-the-pin winners were Tyler

Palmatary, Matt Fitzgerald and Carol Giddens. The big hitter winners for longest drives went to Ben McDorman, Jimmy Hobales and Roxy Curtis.

After the final putts dropped, Chairman Osceola spoke to the golfers about the importance of the tournament. He thanked those involved in organizing, sponsoring and playing in it, and stressed that the big winners were the two nonprofit organizations.

Golfers enjoyed lunch and bid on dozens of auction items, including autographed memorabilia from star athletes such as Lionel Messi, Dan Marino and Udonis Haslem.

## Pemayetv Emahakv students go egg hunting



PECS students run to get their eggs in the school's Easter egg hunt April 16.



With baskets in hand, Mrs. Tillis's class gets ready to sort through the eggs they found.



Irena Bradley holds the one golden egg of the hunt, which had \$1 inside.



Ave Severe, left, and Cayson Beard get their eggs in order, counting to be sure they did not go over the 20-egg per student limit.

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