



Busy May for
Seminole veterans
COMMUNITY 6A



Ahfachkee's class of
'26 graduates
EDUCATION 1B



Ila Trueblood,
Oxbridge win 2A title
SPORTS 1C

The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered www.seminoletribune.org • Free

Volume I • Number 6

June 2026

Tribal community unites for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — In remembrance of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR), Durante Blais-Billie and Dr. Tomasina Chupco led the second annual walk of prayer for justice, unity, and remembrance. Every first week of May, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Week of Action is a sacred call to honor MMIW, girls, and two-spirit (LGBTQI+ identifying) relatives by uplifting their names, stories, and spirits.

For decades, American Indians and Alaska Natives have experienced violence, murder, and abduction—this epidemic of underreported crimes continues at an alarmingly disproportionate rate today, according to the U.S. Department of Interior and Indian Affairs.

For American Indian and Alaska Native women, four in five have experienced violence in their lifetime according to the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC). This includes sexual violence, physical intimate partner violence, and stalking, making murder the third leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women according to the Urban Indian Health Institute.

◆ See MMIR on page 5A

Seminole graduates from Moore Haven High School

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — Hundreds of family members and friends filled the bleachers on the home side of Joe Brown Stadium and dozens more sat or stood near the track to see Moore Haven High School hand out diplomas to its class of 2026 on the morning of May 22.

More than a dozen tribal members and descendants from the Seminole Tribe of Florida were among the 73 graduates, including 2026 class president Tahnia Billie, who provided welcoming remarks, and Shakur Williams, who was the final student to receive a diploma, which were awarded by Glades County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Alice Beth Barfield.

"As class president for the past three years, I have had the privilege of watching this class grow into something truly special," Billie told her class and the audience. "We entered high school as nervous freshmen trying to figure out where our classes were, wondering if we would fit in, and hoping we could survive the next four years."

She described her class as full of students who are determined, talented, creative and resilient.

"We learned that success is not about being perfect; it is about persevering," said Billie, a former Jr. Miss Florida Seminole who plans on attending Tallahassee State College.

After the ceremony, Laylah Billie echoed Tahnia Billie's sentiments about the class.

"They're wonderful. They're kind, they're smart and they're intelligent," she said.



Kevin Johnson

Tahniah Billie, president of the Moore Haven High School class of 2026, provides welcoming remarks to the audience at the graduation ceremony May 22.

The class sat in chairs on the football field facing the stands, and heard from classmates Daniela Arroyo (salutatorian) and Addison Ridgill (valedictorian). In a touching moment about halfway through the ceremony, the graduates got up from their

seats and handed yellow roses to those who have been a significant part of their life and/or education.

At the end of the ceremony, Principal Samuel Thomas presented the class and the new graduates tossed their caps and

celebrated amid a shower of confetti.

◆ See MOORE HAVEN on page 4B

Hollywood recreation fields get major makeover

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — The two ballfields on the Hollywood Reservation are getting a makeover.

Located behind the Howard Tiger Recreation Center, the complex's grandstands, dugouts and restrooms were removed in late April by work crews using excavators. By May 1, only piles of twisted metal and other debris remained, and that, too, was soon gone.

Two completely new natural grass

ballfields, grandstands, dugouts and fencing are part of the project. The property will also receive new scoreboards, lighting and restrooms.

The existing walking/running track, which goes around the perimeter of the fields, will be upgraded to shock absorbing running material.

The outdoor airnasium, home to a basketball court, will receive new light fixtures, sun screening and PA system. The nearby outdoor pool will receive new fencing.

As part of a new grand entrance, the plaza between the main ballpark grandstand,

the Classic gymnasium and the recreation center will have new decorative pavers installed.

The ballfields project is the latest area of the reservation that is under construction. Work continues on the Estates side of the reservation for a new senior center, addition to the Betty Mae Jumper Medical Center and a new community center.

◆ See BALLFIELDS on page 4A



Calvin Tiger

An excavator tears down the dugout on the first base side of the main Hollywood ballfield next to the airnasium April 28 as part of a major project to replace the fields and facilities with new ones.

Tina Osceola gives keynote at Preserve Florida conference

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

ST. PETERSBURG — The Seminole Tribe of Florida's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Tina Osceola delivered the keynote address at the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation's Preserve Florida conference in St. Petersburg May 14.

In her address, Osceola discussed the tribe's efforts at historic preservation, repatriation of remains of tribal ancestors, Everglades restoration and tribal sovereignty.

"Historic preservation and the work that we do within the environment are cornerstones of tribal sovereignty for the Seminole Tribe of Florida," said Osceola, who is also the tribe's executive director of Operations. "The one thing that drives everything we do is the trauma of the Indian Removal Act. When we visit Egmont Key, from our perspective, it is a concentration camp. For tribal people, remembering where you come from is directly tied to tribal sovereignty."

In 2026, the U.S. is celebrating its 250th anniversary, but in the realm of preservation work Osceola said that is like yesterday. She said Seminoles should never forget the pain of the past caused by the Indian Removal Act.

"If we forget about it, we are forgetting about where we come from and the struggle," Osceola said. "The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is the [Tribal Historic Preservation Office] sister department, and they are out there telling our story, collecting our artifacts and archives and bringing them back to the tribe."

THPO also started the No More Stolen Ancestors campaign to get ancestral remains back from institutions, including the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act [NAGPRA] requires federal agencies and institutions to return ancestral remains, funerary objects, sacred and cultural objects to their rightful descendants.

The NAGPRA law specifically exempts the Smithsonian Institution.

"They were left to their own devices to create their own policies to repatriate,"



Beverly Bidney

Tina Osceola speaks at the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation's Preserve Florida conference in St. Petersburg May 14.

Osceola said. "We had about 1,500 ancestors on the shelves at the National Museum of Natural History and we were getting blocked at every effort we made to get our ancestors back."

A movement toward ethical archeology and collections started to build a foundation for tribes to reclaim their ancestors, but the NMNH told the tribe that it had to prove affiliation with the remains and direct lineage through DNA. Osceola said the tribe wouldn't do that and, instead, started the No More Stolen Ancestors campaign.

Osceola and the THPO repatriation team met with NMNH director Kirk Johnson in Washington, D.C., in 2019. She said everything changed for the better after the meeting.

◆ See CONFERENCE on page 5B

Editorial

Carlisle cemetery case reopens questions of burial, repatriation and justice

• Levi Rickert

In December 2023, I visited the campus of the former Carlisle Indian Industrial School, located within the grounds of the U.S. Army's historic Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania. The barracks, which date back to the Revolutionary War, are now home to the U.S. Army War College, where military leaders including Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gen. George S. Patton and Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf studied.

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School operated for 39 years, from 1879 to 1918. It closed in 1918 when the U.S. Army needed the Carlisle Barracks during World War I.

The school housed about 7,800 Native American children from more than 140 tribal nations, including children from as far away as Alaska. Native students were subjected to a system of forced assimilation that combined Western-style education, militaristic discipline and hard labor. They were forced to cut their hair, adopt English names, stop speaking their tribal languages and convert to Christianity. Many endured physical and emotional abuse.

While Carlisle was in operation, nearly 200 children from 59 different tribes died there. Many died from diseases, poor living conditions or abuse and were buried at the school, according to Volume I of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report. The report was authored by then-Interior Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland (Bay Mills Indian Community).

At the end of my tour of Carlisle, I visited the cemetery where Native students are buried. Walking through the cemetery and seeing the military-style white headstones of Native American children — buried far from their tribal homes — was overwhelming. The headstones listed tribal affiliations, dates and, in some cases, names.

Two of the names are those of Winnebago students Samuel Gilbert, who died a month after arriving at Carlisle in 1895 at age 19, and Edward Hensley, who died four years later at age 17.

The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska wants the remains of Samuel and Edward returned to their homelands.

On Jan. 17, 2024, the tribe filed a lawsuit, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska v. Department of the Army, against the U.S. Army and other federal agencies and officials. The lawsuit seeks enforcement of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, to repatriate the remains of Samuel and Edward, who were taken from their homelands more than a century ago and never returned.

The tribe argues that it has clear legal rights under NAGPRA and continues to advocate for full enforcement of the law. Native American Rights Fund (NARF) staff attorney Beth Wright said the tribe has long supported NAGPRA and remains committed

to defending its rights under the statute. The Winnebago Tribe is represented in the case by its general counsel, NARF, Danelle Smith of Big Fire Law & Policy Group LLP and Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC.

The U.S. Army refused, claiming NAGPRA does not apply to students buried at Carlisle. A U.S. district court dismissed the case, but the Winnebago Tribe appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

[In May], the 4th Circuit issued a landmark decision vacating the lower court's dismissal and allowing the case to proceed under NAGPRA.

The appeals court held that the law applies to Native remains held in federal burial contexts, rejecting the government's argument that such graves fall outside the statute's protections. The court found that the remains qualify as part of a "holding or collection" and emphasized that Congress intended NAGPRA to remedy historic injustices involving the unauthorized possession of Native remains. Judge Pamela Harris wrote that the statute clearly supports repatriation in circumstances such as this.

The 4th Circuit also noted that there is no indication in the record that the families of Samuel and Edward were informed of their deaths or burials, nor any indication that the tribe was notified. The ruling reinforces tribal sovereignty and expands the interpretation of NAGPRA beyond museums to Native remains held in federal custody. The case now returns to district court for further proceedings related to repatriation and burial.

"A gravestone at Carlisle Cemetery marks Edward's remains, though it misspells the name of his tribe as 'Winnebaloo,'" Judge Harris wrote for the majority. "Another marks Samuel's remains, spelling Winnebago instead as 'Winchaga.'"

The gravestones were wrong, and the U.S. Army was wrong. It is long overdue for those wrongs to be corrected.

As I walked through the Carlisle cemetery in 2023, I kept thinking about how far these children were from home. It is time for them to be returned to their tribal homelands.

Thayék gde nwendëmen – We are all related.

This opinion appears on nativenewsonline.net. Levi "Calm Before the Storm" Rickert (Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation) is the founder, publisher and editor of Native News Online. Rickert was awarded Best Column 2021 Native Media Award for the print/online category by the Native American Journalists Association. He serves on the advisory board of the Multicultural Media Correspondents Association. He can be reached at levi@nativenewsonline.net.

Native series applauds tribal filmmakers

STAFF REPORT

"First Peoples, First Stories," a new short film series celebrating emerging filmmakers from tribal communities, premiered on May 1 on PBS.

Produced by alumni from Vision Maker Media's Creative Shorts Fellowship, the short films highlight young Native storytellers sharing cultural stories about their lives, experiences, and tribal communities—perspectives rooted in both contemporary and traditional life across urban and rural

communities.

The premiere for the short film series kicked off its first season with features of "Buffalo Spirit," "Four Nights and a Fire," "Iina," and "The Love for the Game." Each episode features a set of short films; the series will continue with new episodes each spring and fall.

"First Peoples, First Stories" is available to stream on pbs.org and the free PBS App, available on iPhone, Android, Apple TV, Android TV, Roku, and Vizio.

Standing Rock pipeline protest anniversary festival set for September

BY SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Climate activists and Indigenous and cultural leaders will join A-list celebrities and musicians for a festival and conference Sept. 16-18 on the Standing Rock Reservation to mark the 10th anniversary of the Dakota Access Pipeline protests.

"People of the Sun" is a ticketed celebration organizers aim to hold each year near Cannonball, North Dakota, the site of what became a massive encampment of opponents to the pipeline. The camp drew visitors from across the globe and inspired a host of environmental and community activism in the years that followed.

The protesters opposed the crude oil pipeline over concerns about possible leaks and water supply contamination.

The phrase "water is life," popularized by the protest, has become shorthand for environmental concerns by those opposed to natural resource extraction projects in and outside of South Dakota.

On May 26, opponents to a Black Hills uranium exploration project placed a sign that read "water is life" on a chair in the venue of a Hot Springs permit hearing.

The lineup for the inaugural "People of the Sun" event includes actors Mark Ruffalo and Shailene Woodley, the latter of whom was arrested at the protest camp in 2016, as well as the band Mumford and Sons, and Taboo, of the Black Eyed Peas.

The event is a presentation of Indigenized Energy – a Native American-led, nonprofit solar energy company that got its start in 2017, in the wake of the protests.

Department of Conservation - mosquito control program

BY RACHEL SANCHEZ (EPO) AND CRAIG VAN DER HEIDEN (DOC)

Caring for our environment and protecting our Native lands is a responsibility we all share. These lands carry cultural, historical, and ecological significance, and safeguarding them ensures they can continue to sustain future generations. The Department of Conservation is committed to this mission by adopting practices that honor the natural world while protecting the health and comfort of our community.

One major focus of the Department's environmental efforts is the Mosquito Control Program. Mosquito control is important for public health and quality of life, yet it traditionally relies on chemicals that can be harmful to the environment. By shifting to safer, greener alternatives, the Department aims to limit its ecological footprint while still providing reliable mosquito management throughout the community.

To support this goal, the program is now incorporating a new line of botanical and low impact products. These updated treatments are designed to reduce chemical usage by up to 80%—a significant step toward sustainability—while still delivering strong mosquito control. This shift ensures that mosquito management remains effective without compromising the plants, wildlife, and natural areas that surround us.

One of the new botanical products being introduced contains carefully

selected, naturally derived ingredients including soybean oil, citronella oil, clove oil, and lemongrass oil. These ingredients work together to both eliminate existing mosquitoes and repel new ones in public areas and residential neighborhoods. The product remains effective for up to one week and contains no EPA monitored chemicals that pose risks to the environment. As an added benefit, the spray leaves behind a clean, fresh scent that many community members will find pleasant.

Changes are also being made to aerial and ground based spraying operations. In the coming months, the Department will transition to new formulas that contain lower amounts of active ingredients. These products require less than one ounce per acre and use a natural orange ester—derived from citrus—to reduce reliance on traditional chemicals. If you notice a gentle orange or citrus aroma during spraying, there is no need for concern; the scent is completely natural. This major reduction in chemical components is intentional and designed to safeguard crops, pasturelands, and native habitats while still keeping mosquito populations under control.

The Department of Conservation will continue to explore and adopt additional environmentally friendly products and methods as part of its long term plan. Protecting the community and protecting the environment do not have to be competing goals, and this program reflects the commitment to achieving both.

Community involvement also plays



an essential role in reducing mosquito populations. Residents can help by removing standing water from everyday items such as buckets, trash cans, flowerpots, toys, tires, and any other outdoor containers. Even small amounts of stagnant water can become breeding sites for mosquitoes, contributing to larger population spikes across neighborhoods. Taking a few minutes each week to empty or cover these containers can make a meaningful difference.

When combined with the Department's new botanical products and low impact spraying strategies, these simple community actions form a powerful approach to controlling mosquitoes in a way that is healthier for people, wildlife, and the land. Together, we can support a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable environment for all.

Round up pythons for prizes

BY JOE ANDREOLI AND JON PINKAS
Department of Conservation

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has officially launched its 2026 Python Round Up, an effort aimed at reducing the number of invasive Burmese pythons across Big Cypress Reservation. Running now through June 30, the Round Up invites Tribal Members to compete for prizes while helping protect native wildlife from one of the region's most destructive predators.

Participants will be eligible for awards in three categories: the longest python, the heaviest python, and the most pythons removed. While the competition promises friendly rivalry and valuable prizes, DOC officials emphasize that every python collected has a direct and positive impact on the reservation's natural ecosystem.

Burmese pythons, an invasive species

with no natural predators in South Florida, are known for their wide ranging diets and impressive jaw flexibility. DOC biologists have documented rodents, rabbits, raccoons, wading birds, and even spotted skunks in the digestive tracts of snakes removed from the Big Cypress area. With the ability to grow to massive sizes and consume nearly anything they can fit into their mouths, these snakes pose a significant threat to native wildlife populations.

Since DOC began its removal program in January 2025, staff have cleared a combined 83 yards and 827 pounds of Burmese pythons from the reservation. The work reached a new intensity in April 2026, when DOC teams surveyed 96 miles of canals, levees, and roads in search of the elusive predators. On one survey, staff extracted a 13 foot 3 inch, 118 pound female from an old irrigation pipe. Evidence of old eggs in the surrounding debris suggests the snake was preparing to lay a clutch—potentially up to 100 eggs.

Female Burmese pythons are fiercely protective mothers. They guard their nests and generate heat through a process known as "shivering thermogenesis," warming their eggs to ensure proper development. While hatchlings face many threats early in life, large adult pythons can become dominant predators, rivaling the American alligator in strength and impact.

DOC officials say this



"Big snake! Big snake!" were the words from DOC Biological Technician Kenny Descheene when he first spotted a Burmese python enter an old irrigation pipe during a python survey on April 20. DOC Staff waded across a ditch to begin extracting the snake from its shelter.

is precisely why community involvement is essential.

"The more eyes we have on the landscape, the better chance we have of staying ahead of the python population," said DOC Invasive Wildlife Biologist Jon Pinkas. "Every python removed is a win for the native species that belong here."

Tribal Members interested in joining the 2026 Python Round Up can register by emailing DOCSTAFF@semtribe.com. Sightings can also be reported by calling or texting Jon Pinkas at (863) 441 5484.

With community support, DOC hopes to continue reducing the presence of Burmese pythons and protect the wildlife heritage of Big Cypress Reservation for generations to come.



After wading back across the ditch with the captured Burmese python, DOC staff place the snake in a pillowcase to transport back to the office for measuring.



DOC staff weigh the captured Burmese python. She measured 13 feet 3 inches in total length and weighed 118 pounds. A big win for the native wildlife living in Big Cypress Reservation.

PYTHON ROUND UP

MAY 1 – JUNE 30

PRIZES FOR

LONGEST - HEAVIEST - MOST CAUGHT

Must be a Tribal Member to Compete

Must have Attended a Python Training to Compete

EMAIL TO REGISTER DOCSTAFF@semtribe.com

Invasive Species Biologist – Jonathan Pinkas (863) 441-5484



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Community



Immokalee Seminole Charities holds first food distribution

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — The Immokalee Seminole Charities fed about 200 families April 30 during its inaugural food distribution, held at the John Jimmie rodeo grounds on the Immokalee Reservation.

Jimmy Wayne Holdiness created the charities after speaking at President Holly Tiger's Seminole Hearts Denim and Diamonds Gala in August 2025, a charity event that raised money for community nonprofit organizations. Holdiness said he was inspired by her.

"She is a good friend and we have lively debates," Holdiness said. "I couldn't have started this without her. I needed a little kick and someone to point me in the right direction. She was a big help in starting the charity."

ISC, a Florida nonprofit corporation, was born from a place of profound loss and love. After his son Justin died in 2014,

Holdiness founded an annual memorial golf tournament in Justin's name. Over the years the tournament became a source of healing, connection and inspiration, which sparked a new idea: to transform it into a force for good. And so, Immokalee Seminole Charities was created.

Its mission statement is to make a lasting impact in the lives of those who need it most. ISC's first project was a donation to the Big Cypress group home in December 2025, which helped purchase new furniture and fund extracurricular activities including a trip to a theme park.

ISC is partners with the Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida and The Village 1, Inc., which is run by Gloria and Eddie Redd Sr., of Clewiston.

Vehicles began to line up on the rodeo grounds hours before the distribution was scheduled to begin. Brenda Holdiness and Gloria Redd went to each car to determine how many families were represented in the vehicle and how many family members were

in each household.

By the time the Harry Chapin truck stocked with food and water arrived around 11 a.m., the cars had formed a long line in the field by the rodeo arena. The large, refrigerated truck was filled with boxes of five-pound bags of chicken legs, about 600 pounds of eggs, 2,400 pounds of potatoes and butternut squash and three pallets filled with cases of bottled water.

Jimmy Wayne Holdiness and Eddie Redd Sr. helped unload the truck and organize the contents for easy loading into the vehicles.

"I grew up in Immokalee. We used to be the poor people here," Holdiness said. "Now I can give back to the others in the community."

"I went to high school with Jimmy and we've been friends ever since," Redd said.

Although most people arrived by car for the distribution, two women and a child walked to the rodeo grounds. Holdiness gave them breakfast tacos made by his wife Brenda, enough food for the two families and asked them to wait under the shade of a chickee. He told them someone would drive them home after the distribution ended.

"We want to do this every other week to start and then go to weekly distributions," Holdiness said. "As part of the agency partner program, Harry Chapin Food Bank brings the food, we identify the need and donate it to the community."

Harry Chapin Food Bank is the

largest hunger-relief nonprofit in Southwest Florida, according to its website. Its Agency Partner Program helps feed those in high need throughout the region and provides the partners with about 70% of their food inventory.

The tribe gave ISC permission to use the grounds and provided table and chairs. Holdiness was grateful for Councilwoman Mariann Billie's support.

"I never would have started this if not for Holly," Holdiness said. "I went to school with some of these folks and some are from other countries. I wish I could give more. I want to give, give, give."

Distributions were scheduled to be held May 14 and May 28, where they expected to feed up to 300 families. The next distributions will be held June 11 and June 25.



Beverly Bidney
Jimmy Wayne Holdiness distributes food to women who walked to Immokalee for the distribution.



Beverly Bidney
Brenda Holdiness, left, and Gloria Redd prepare to distribute eggs, vegetables, chicken and bottled water to the long line of cars waiting for the distribution to begin.



Beverly Bidney
Jimmy Wayne Holdiness, founder of Immokalee Seminole Charities, and Eddie Redd Jr., of The Village 1, Inc., at the first food distribution in Immokalee April 30.

69TH ANNUAL SEMINOLE PRINCESS PAGEANT 2026

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HOLLYWOOD EXECUTIVE BUILDING AUDITORIUM

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◆ BALLFIELDS
From page 1A



Calvin Tiger

Grandstands on the third base side of the main ballfield on the Hollywood Reservation are torn down April 28.



TCD (2)

Above, a rendering of the plaza with new pavers, and below, a rendering of one of the new ballfields.



Students, community receive close-up look at how Public Works operates

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Roaming between booths at the Brighton Water Plant, Pemaeyt Emahakv Charter School preschoolers, students from Moore Haven Middle-High School and Okeechobee High School, and community members learned the ins and outs of the work that the Public Works Department does for the Seminole Tribe.

As part of National Public Works Week, the department opened its doors May 20. The event has grown since it first started a decade ago.

“This is our biggest event yet,” said Public Works Assistant Director of Operations Juan Mata. “This is the first year Chairman Marcellus Osceola is joining us... We’re grateful to see the community come out to learn more about Public Works projects.”

Employees from participating companies such as Jacobs, SunBelt, and C.C. Control Corporation led interactive learning sessions for the students. Activities



Daniella Hakim

Ryker Miller volunteers to drill in plumbing demonstration.

involving rotameters and pressure gauges, pipes and drills, side-loader garbage trucks, and drones gave students a firsthand look at the work being carried out across the Seminole Tribe of Florida reservations.

“Our favorite so far has to be the drone demonstration,” said Jose Velasco, a student at Okeechobee High School.

Derek Koger, Tribal Community Development’s executive director, and Chairman Osceola welcomed visitors to the informational fair.

“These sponsors and participants are here because we trust them and they trust us,” Chairman Osceola said. “Thank you for coming out and seeing what we have to offer and what the companies we work with have to offer. Some of these topics you may be interested in or may not know. Take the chance and ask questions.”

By the end of the day, each student’s bag brimmed with freebies. Additionally, each received a list of the fair’s sponsors and participants, where the objective was to get every staff member’s signature in exchange for raffle tickets.



Daniella Hakim

Okeechobee High School students ask Edwin Feliciano, left, of C.C. Control Corp., about its control panel’s flow meter for water flow.



Daniella Hakim

Tribal Community Development Exec. Director Derek Koger, left, was joined by Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. in welcoming students to the fair.



Daniella Hakim

Tribal Community Development staff demonstrate the workings of a trash truck grapple loader. Students watch as a water bucket full of rubber ducks is hoisted with little to no spillage.

DeSantis signs bill barring regulations on chickees

STAFF REPORT

On April 30, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed House Bill (HB) 929, prohibiting local government regulations over chickees.

Made from palmetto and cypress trees, Chickees are open-sided, thatched-roof structures that historically came about in a need for fast and efficient shelter. They became

a necessary and popular architectural style throughout the Seminole Wars, according to Carrie Dilley in “Thatched Roofs and Open Sides: The Architecture of Chickees and Their Changing Role in Seminole Society,” published by the University Press of Florida.

The measure (HB 929) prohibits counties and municipalities from preventing tribal members of the Miccosukee Tribe of

Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida from constructing chickees.

According to the Florida Senate, the code exempts certain chickees from the Florida Fire Prevention Code. While electrical, plumbing, or non-wood features are not incorporated into chickees, the bill exempts non-wood fasteners such as nails, screws, and bolts, and electrical or plumbing

features in accordance with a building permit for the incorporation of said features.

The bill was introduced by Florida State Representatives Nan Cobb and Richard Gentry and filed in December 2025. The ordinance will take effect starting July 1, 2026.

Hard Rock Tampa offers Father’s Day specials

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TAMPA — Several restaurants at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa will have Father’s Day specials June 21. Council Oak Steaks & Seafood, Cipresso, Fresh Harvest Buffet, The Rez Grill, and Rise Kitchen and Deli have special offerings. Reservations for Cipresso, The Rez Grill and Council Oak are strongly suggested. Visit casino.hardrock.com.

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA OFFICIAL NOTICE

TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE HUNTING AND KILLING OF ALLIGATORS ON THE BIG CYPRESS AND BRIGHTON RESERVATIONS

NOTICE TO ALL TRIBAL MEMBERS AND VISITORS

Effective immediately, the Tribal Council of the Seminole Tribe of Florida (“Tribal Council”) has enacted a temporary moratorium prohibiting the hunting and killing of alligators within all lands and waters of the Big Cypress and Brighton Reservations.

This moratorium applies to all persons, including Tribal citizens, non-citizens, visitors, contractors, and any other individuals present on all lands or waters of the Big Cypress and Brighton Reservations.

EXCEPTIONS: The following limited exceptions shall apply:

- Trapping for traditional use
- Actions taken by authorized Department of Conservation officials for public safety purposes

VIOLATIONS: Violations may result in:

- Fines
- Suspension or revocation of hunting privileges
- Additional penalties under Tribal law

This moratorium will remain in effect until further action by the Tribal Council.

This moratorium is enacted pursuant to the Tribal Council authority to conserve, regulate, control, and manage wildlife resources of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

For questions or to report violations contact:
Department of Conservation
954-965-4380

Still Here After 35 Years,
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◆ **MMIW**
From page 1A

In partnership with the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, an exhibit conceptualized and curated by Lorelei Tommie titled "Seeing Red," was displayed alongside signage of loved ones who've passed on.

The traveling piece, initially featured in the Nook Gallery at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Reservation, is partly inspired by the case of Owachige Osceola. Nearly 14 years ago, the tribal member was murdered and found dead in her apartment in Norman, Oklahoma; no one has been charged in connection with her murder. Osceola was 27 years old.

Blais-Billie, a social responsibility specialist and recipient of the 2023 Freedom Award from the Protect All Children from Trafficking (PACT) organization, opened the walk on May 12 at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center in Hollywood with a prayer by Madison McKinney of the Dakota Oyate tribe, "Creator who bears the hurt of the world, we pray for the grace, courage, and wisdom to bear one another's burdens; to sit in silence with your children who are in pain, who grieve, who endure heartbreak beyond our imagining, to sit in silence until a place of love is reached."

Blais-Billie and Chupco led the mile-long walk with prayer chants, offering tribal and community members moments of silence along the route.

"I want to remind everyone that as we're getting into this exercise, to have your own prayer— your own intention to carry you through this action," said Blais-Billie. "It's very powerful when we all come together and carry meaningful thoughts or memories of these women with us."

Blais-Billie and Chupco shared resources for those looking to take action and stay informed on this crisis. "A great resource is the NIWRC," said Chupco, founder of Indigenous Intentions. "They host webinars and events. We, ourselves, are trying to build and expand across the Seminole reservations to bring more workshops and events like this to their communities."

The NIWRC is a Native-led nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence



Durante Blais-Billie offers participants a moment of silence for MMIR.

against Native women and children, providing national leadership by uplifting the collective voices of grassroots advocates and offering culturally grounded resources, technical assistance and training, and policy development to strengthen tribal sovereignty. Additional resources include the StrongHearts Native Helpline—a safe, confidential, and anonymous domestic

and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans and Alaska Natives. For support and advocacy, call 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483).

"When many Seminoles think of MMIR, they picture these cases happening in remote, faraway reservations," said Blais-Billie. "They imagine it looking like being kidnapped off the side of the road,

but what a lot of individuals don't realize is that this crisis of violence happens every day. Whether it's dating violence, online harassment, or stalking—those are all cases within the crisis of MMIR."

For allocating local resources, visit thehotline.org.

◆ **CONFERENCE**
From page 1A

"We told him we want him to come to Florida," Osceola said. "We took him to sites from Big Cypress to Marco Island and all over the state. We got a phone call afterward." Osceola said it was because of that human connection and conversation with Johnson that helped put both sides on the same page.

Osceola said Johnson walked on the mounds and saw where Seminole ancestors came from and realized they cannot be reburied where they were taken from since there are multi-million-dollar homes on those sites. Osceola is still working with NMNH, which has turned into an ally in the effort to repatriate the ancestors. She said they couldn't have done it without the help of the state of Florida, which allowed them to use their facilities for collecting purposes.

"We don't have a ceremony for reburials because we never anticipated digging them up to begin with," Osceola said. "And my point of telling you that story is that within historic preservation, the definition of how we do our work is constantly changing. Whether it be an ethical decision, a moral dilemma or the use of technology, the tribe is constantly evolving on how we do historic preservation."

Osceola also talked about the Western Everglades Restoration Project. The federal government and the Army Corps of Engineers signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the state, so the water management districts are taking control of the majority of that project now.

"We've taken 7,000 shovel tests in the western part of the region," Osceola said. "The data we're collecting is amazing. It will allow us to understand the hydrology in that area better. This is that the whole area of the Everglades is environmentally and historically important. It's telling its story. One thing I think people don't understand about archeology is that the work that's done gives the land a voice. You are able to see how our people lived. You see that human occupation didn't start 250 years ago."

Osceola believes communication and human connections are the most important aspects of historic preservation.

"We rely so much on technology to do that communicating for us that we forget that we can pick up a phone or schedule a meeting, an in-person meeting," Osceola said. "There's so much taken away by not having that human connection anymore. And the work that we all do in this area mandates that we get to know each other."

IHS, Haskell partner to expand health services, training opportunities

STAFF REPORT

Haskell Indian Nations University and the Indian Health Service announced June 1 a collaboration aimed at improving health care in the Lawrence, Kansas, community while expanding educational and workforce training opportunities for Native students.

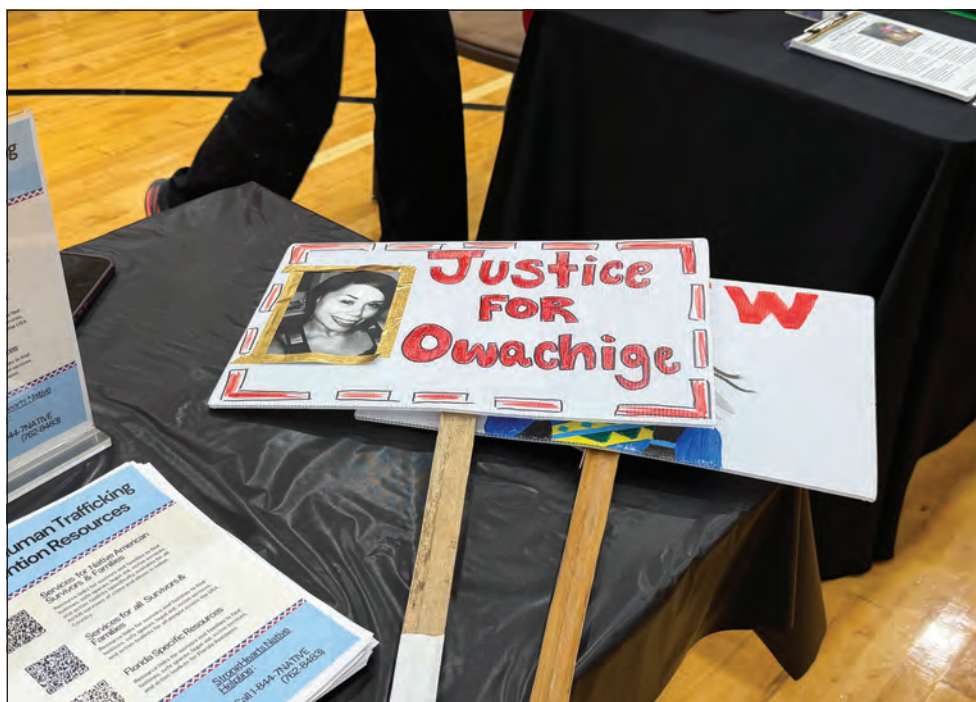
The partnership, which includes Haskell Indian Health Center, allows IHS to build a new clinic on 4.4 acres on campus. According to a press release, once the new facility is complete, the current clinic will be returned to Haskell for future academic and training use that will help expand the university's health and public service abilities.

The new facility on campus will also provide Haskell students with firsthand opportunities and experiences in a modern clinical environment. Students will be able to complete training, observational learning, and other professional preparation activities directly alongside IHS providers.

"Expanding Haskell's campus resources while improving access to modern health care services is a practical investment in the future of Indian Country and in the long-term strength of tribal communities," said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum in a statement.



Aliahna Jimenez, left, Olivia Aquino, second left, Tommie Wilson, second right, Baisey Tiger, right, carry handmade signs in honor of MMIW such as Emily Pike.



Handmade signage in remembrance of Owachige Osceola was brought out by tribal members at this year's MMIR walk.

DOI approves nation's first tribal energy resource agreement

STAFF REPORT

On May 11, the U.S. Department of the Interior approved the nation's first tribal energy resource agreement, which the DOI described as a historic step in strengthening tribal self-determination.

"This agreement delivers on President Trump's promise: tribes should have greater authority to manage their own resources without unnecessary federal delay," said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum

in a statement released by the DOI. "The Southern Ute Indian Tribe is setting the standard for how sovereign nations can move quickly, responsibly, and on their own terms to develop energy, create jobs, and strengthen America's energy future."

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe will be able to enter and manage energy-related leases, rights-of-way, and business agreements without obtaining approval from the DOI, eliminating repetitive approvals and reducing processing delays, on its 700,000-

acre reservation in southwest Colorado.

In turn, tribal energy resource agreements support the national energy policy of increasing utilization of domestic energy resources to lower prices and strengthen economic security.

The DOI said it is actively working to increase participation in tribal energy resource agreements by gathering feedback through listening sessions on how to streamline the application process.

Second show added for Jo Koy at Hard Rock

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TAMPA — Due to popular demand, Hard Rock Event Center at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa has added a second show for The Jo Koy Live tour on July 22 at 8 p.m.

Koy is one of today's premier stand-up comedians, rising from performing in a Las Vegas coffee house to selling out arenas worldwide.

Go to casino.hardrock.com or Ticketmaster.com for ticket information.

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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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Paul Bowers Sr. leads veterans in the Memorial Day Walk May 21 in Big Cypress.

Beverly Bidney

Memorial Day Walk in BC honors U.S. military personnel who died serving

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — More than 20 tribal and non-tribal veterans gathered May 21, 2026, for the annual Memorial Day Walk to honor fallen service members.

The Seminole Veterans Memorial Fitness Trail on the Big Cypress Reservation is a quarter mile. Some veterans, including some from the Seminole Tribe of Florida, did more than one lap. The event was organized by Big Cypress Integrative Health.

Tribal member Sallie Josh, U.S. Navy veteran, said it was the largest turnout for the walk in quite a while.

"I really appreciate the support we get today," Josh said.

After the walk was complete, the veterans reminisced about their time in the U.S. Armed Forces.

"I didn't know if I was going to make it back or not but after 79 years, I'm still here," said tribal member Paul Bowers Sr., U.S. Marine Corps. "Twelve of us went to Vietnam and we all came back, but there are only four of us left now. It was hard getting a job when we got back but later, we were tribal leaders, every one of us. We knew the chain of command from the service."

Bowers is a member of the Red Feather Society, which honors Native American veterans who were wounded in war while acting on behalf of their country. It is one of the highest honors bestowed in Indian Country, according to its website. Bowers earned two Purple Hearts while he was in Vietnam.

Tribal member Mitchell Cypress,



From left to right, Ruby Osceola, Matthew Mallo, Joe Lee, Paul Bowers Sr., Sallie Josh, Curtis Motlow, Coleman Josh, Gary McInturff, Mitchell Cypress and Patricia Magnuson.

Beverly Bidney

National Guard and U.S. Army, joined the National Guard in high school and was drafted into the Army in 1968.

"We veterans are one, it doesn't matter what color you are," Cypress said. "We are all fighting for freedom like a family. We veterans have our own day; Memorial Day is to remember the ones who can't be here."

Joe Lee, U.S. Army, is an Iraq veteran

and a friend of Cypress.

"Mitchell gave me a medicine bag to take with me," Lee said. "I served three tours and I'm still here, so it must have worked."

A discussion ensued about people thanking veterans for their service.

"When someone thanks you for your service, I just look at them and say I did it for you," Lee said.



Beverly Bidney
Participants in the walk gather in the Seminole Veterans memorial plaza.

Haskell Indian Nations University graduation includes STOF Honor Guard

STAFF REPORT

Kansas.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida Honor Guard was invited as special guests to assist the Haskell Color Guard at Haskell Indian Nations University's 2026 graduation commencement and powwow in Lawrence,

Paul Downing, Curtis Motlow, Sallie Josh and Taneil Dixon represented as STOF's Honor Guard to start the graduation May 8. They also participated in all three grand entries of the graduation powwow May 8-9.



Haskell/YouTube

Above, Seminole Tribe of Florida Honor Guard's Sallie Josh participates in Haskell Indian Nations University's graduation ceremony May 8 in Lawrence, Kansas. Below, Josh and Curtis Motlow at the ceremony.



Courtesy photo
Paul Downing in the Seminole Tribe of Florida Honor Guard at Haskell's graduation ceremony.



Courtesy photo

STOF Honor Guard at the Haskell powwow with veterans from Haskell and a U.S. Marine.

'Reflections' artwork donated to FL Seminole Veterans Building

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Members of Operation Vet Help donated a print of the renowned painting "Reflections" to the Florida Seminole Veterans Building May 5 on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Brighton Reservation.

"Reflections" shows a Vietnam veteran touching the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall in Washington, D.C., as the reflection of fallen comrades appear in the polished granite surface of the wall. The original was painted by artist Lee Teter in 1988, who depicted the emotional connection between living veterans and those who didn't survive the conflict.

Veterans from the Seminole Tribe of Florida who received the gift for the building were U.S. Navy veterans Sallie Josh and Curtis Motlow, U.S. Marine veterans Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Paul Bowers Sr. and

Charlie Heirs, and U.S. Army veteran Jake Osceola Jr.

"I'm truly honored," Josh said. "I feel like it completes our building. I went to D.C. 10 years ago and I could feel a presence there (Vietnam Memorial). The picture will bring that presence here."

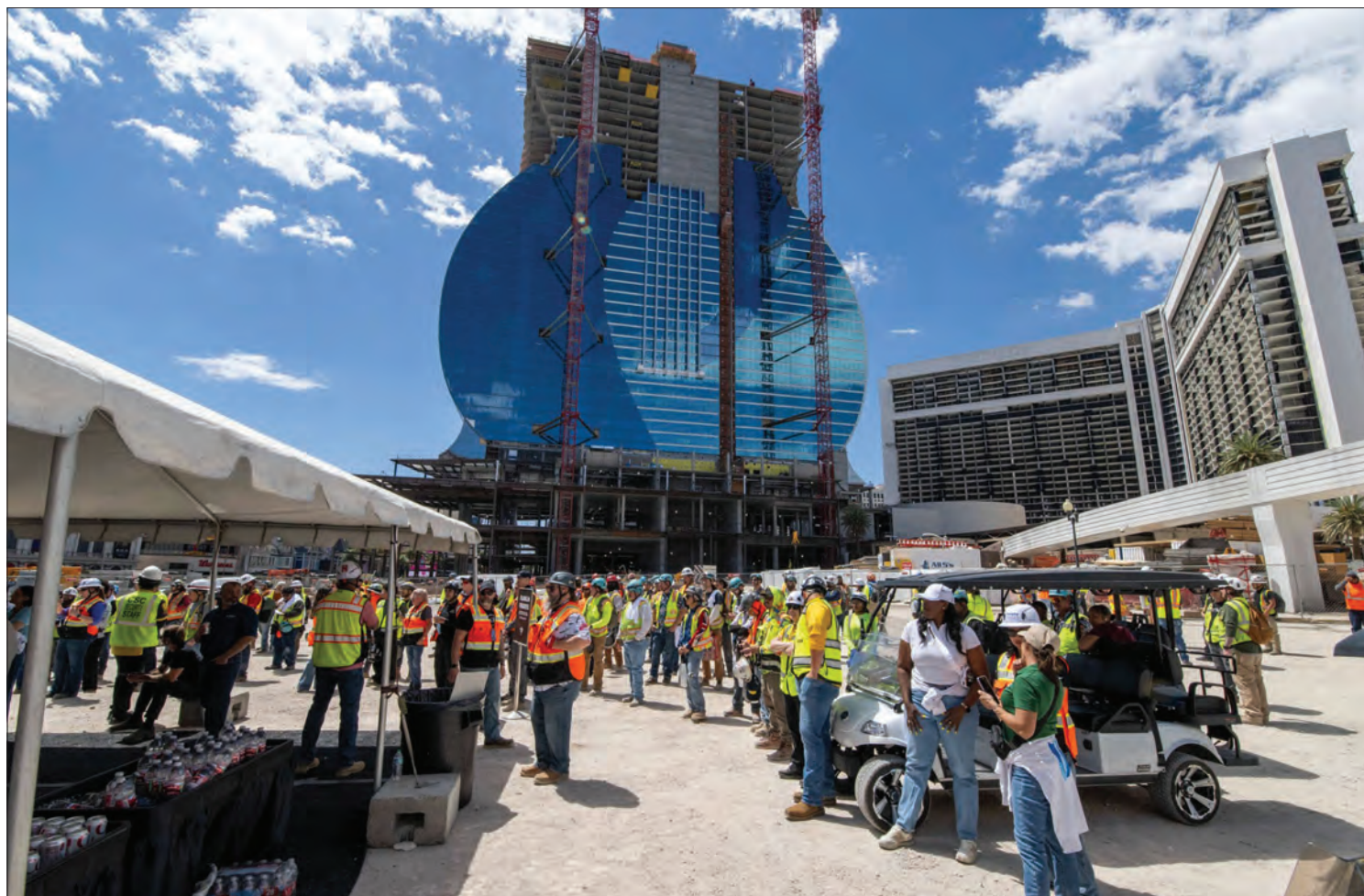
For five years, Naples-based Operation Vet Help members, who are also part of Gold Star Riders motorcycle club, have been riding with flags of honor as escorts to all Gold Star memorial monuments in Florida. The memorials honor families of soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice and are places for those families to visit and remember their loved ones.

"The Brighton veterans building is one of our stops," said Frank Granese, from Operation Vet Help. "It's our pleasure to have the picture here. We found a nice home for it. We are a small organization, and we help when we can; if we can't, we direct people to someone who may be able to help them."



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Seminole veteran Charlie Heirs, Operation Vet Help Frank Granese, Seminole veteran Curtis Motlow, Operation Vet Help Joseph Easterly with the print of the painting "Reflections", Seminole veteran Sallie Josh, Operation Vet Help James Siegel, Seminole veteran Paul Bowers Sr., Seminole veteran Andrew J. Bowers Jr. and Seminole veteran Jake Osceola Jr. at the Florida Seminole Veterans Building May 5.



Construction workers gather at the site of the Guitar Hotel in Las Vegas for a topping out ceremony May 1. The 660-foot hotel is being built next to the former Mirage hotel, which is also part of the Hard Rock property.

Topping out ceremony held for tribe's Vegas Guitar Hotel

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

The massive Guitar Hotel at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas is a step closer to completion.

On May 1, the property hosted a topping out ceremony to celebrate the milestone placement of the final beam.

"This event is in honor of our construction partners at PENTA and McCarthy and the thousands of hardworking men and women on our construction team," said Jim Allen, CEO of Seminole Gaming and chairman of Hard Rock International, in a press release. "We are grateful to our construction teams and their commitment to safety as we watch this property undergo the most significant transformation the Strip has seen in two decades, and we are proud to be at the center of it."

Construction began in summer 2024 and

has employed more than 5,000 workers since the start of the project, according to Hard Rock, which is owned by the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

The property, which includes the former Mirage hotel, is expected to have more than 3,700 hotel rooms, about 175,000 square feet of gaming area, more than 200,000 square feet of meeting space, and several restaurants, lounges and retail outlets. The Mirage closed in 2024 to allow for renovations.

Clark County (Nev.) Commissioner Tick Segerblom attended the topping out ceremony. He posted on social media that he had "a firsthand look at the progress and touring the site as this exciting project comes to life."

The Guitar Hotel, located on the famed Vegas Strip, will be about 200 feet taller than the original one on the Seminole Tribe's Hollywood Reservation.



Hard Rock



Mundo Planalto

A rendering of Hard Rock Hotel in Gramado, Brazil.



Hard Rock

A groundbreaking ceremony is held May 21 at the site of a future Hard Rock Hotel in Brazil.



Hard Rock

Joe Lupo, president of Hard Rock Las Vegas, signs the ceremonial final beam at the Guitar Hotel.

State, local authorities seize slot machines in Sarasota, Venice

STAFF REPORT

Nearly 70 illegal slot machines at two locations in Sarasota County were shut down by state and local officials May 27, according to a press release from the Florida Gaming Control Commission.

A coordinated effort between the commission and Sarasota County Sheriff's Office included the execution of search warrants at Bingo Palace, located at 2029 South Tamiami Trail in Venice, and an unnamed casino located at 4235 Clark Road in Sarasota. Police seized a total of \$62,376 in cash from the devices, according to the release.

"Illegal gambling operations are not harmless businesses. They operate outside the law, avoid oversight, create opportunities for crime, and take money from Florida communities," Julie Brown, commission chair, said in the release. "This operation reflects our continued commitment to working with law enforcement partners to protect Floridians and enforce the law wherever illegal gambling activity is found."

Randy Houser to perform in Brighton

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON — Country music singer-songwriter Randy Houser will perform July 24 at 8 p.m. at Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino. For tickets to to ticketmaster.com.

With an inimitable voice The New York Times describes as "wholly different, thicker and more throbbing, a caldron bubbling over," Houser racked up over one billion streams with smash hits including "How Country Feels," "Runnin' Outta Moonlight," "Boots On," "Goodnight Kiss," "We Went," and earned critical acclaim for his powerful delivery of the Top 5 smash and CMA Song

of the Year-nominated "Like A Cowboy."

In 2023 Houser landed on-screen roles in Martin Scorsese's acclaimed film "Killers of the Flower Moon" starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro and more, as well as the inspiring "The Hill" starring Dennis Quaid which hit number one most streamed movie on Netflix in February 2024. The deluxe version of Houser's sixth studio album "Note To Self" came out in 2025 via Magnolia Music Group and featuring new collaborations with artists including Cody Johnson, Miranda Lambert and Riley Green.

For more information, visit RandyHouser.com.

Seminole Hard Rock Tampa earns 'luckiest casino' nod again

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TAMPA — Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa has once again been named the luckiest casino in the U.S. by Casinos.com, marking the second consecutive year the award-winning resort has claimed the top spot in the national ranking.

The 2026 study analyzed 830,250 TripAdvisor reviews across 108 major casino resorts throughout the country, measuring the frequency of luck and reward-related keywords such as "lucky," "luck," "won," "winning," "success," "jackpot," "hand pay," "winner," "bonus," and "profit."

The Bayesian-adjusted methodology was used to measure how guests referenced

luck, jackpots and winning experiences in online reviews while accounting for sample size differences between casino properties.

Seminole Hard Rock Tampa earned the highest Bayesian-weighted "luck score" in the country with 323.58 luck mentions per 1,000 reviews. Nearly half of all TripAdvisor reviews for the property, 46.39%, referenced winning experiences or luck-related terms.

In 2025, Seminole Hard Rock Tampa surpassed \$2 billion in jackpots for the fifth consecutive year.

On May 26, a local Tampa guest hit a massive \$1,18 million jackpot on a Dragon Link slot machine with a \$25 bet.

Hard Rock Hotel breaks ground in Brazil resort town

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Hard Rock International, owned by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, is expanding its presence in the scenic mountain resort town of Gramado in southern Brazil.

Already with a Hard Rock Café, the town will be home to a new Hard Rock Hotel.

On May 21, officials from Hard Rock and Brazilian real estate development company Mundo Planalto broke ground for a Hard Rock Hotel. When fully completed, the hotel is expected to feature 858 guestrooms, restaurants and bars, a coffee shop, retail, ballrooms, meeting facilities and other amenities. According to a press release, the initial phase should open in late 2028 with 431 guestrooms.

"Brazil has an unmistakable energy, and its music, creativity, and culture have always created a natural connection with

Hard Rock," said John Rees, senior vice president of Hotel Operations at Hard Rock International, in the release. "Celebrating this milestone in Gramado reinforces our long-term commitment to the country and our belief in Brazil as a destination for world-class hospitality and entertainment. Together with Mundo Planalto, we look forward to bringing an experience that reflects the spirit of the brand while honoring the character of this remarkable region, which is one of the most sought-after leisure destinations, known for its rich gastronomy, cultural events and stunning Serra Gaúcha landscapes."

The project includes an aspect for potential investors. Buyers can acquire fractional ownership interests that include access to the accommodations and shared-use vacation experiences, according to the release.

Gramado, known for its culture and seasonal events, is about 1,000 miles south of Rio de Janeiro.

Hard Rock to build hotel at casino in Illinois

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Hard Rock's footprint in Rockford, Illinois, is expanding.

On May 7, Hard Rock and city officials announced that a Hard Rock Hotel will be built next to the Hard Rock Casino Rockford, which opened in August 2024 about 80 miles northwest of Chicago.

Funding for construction of the hotel, which includes a convention center, will be issued through the city's bonding authority with Hard Rock holding sole responsibility on the repayment. According to local news reports, the Rockford City Council on May 11 approved selling \$103 in bonds to fund construction of the project.

In a three-minute video posted on the city's Facebook page May 18, Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara said Hard Rock would pay the bond payment on an annual basis via revenue from the hotel and convention center, and if necessary, from revenue from the casino.

"We have very limited risk on this deal, but a lot of upside," McNamara said.

The bonding partnership is a strategic move as gaming and hospitality competition grows nearby. The Ho-Chunk Nation is scheduled to open a hotel and casino this year in Beloit, Wisconsin, about 20 miles from Rockford.

Hard Rock Casino Rockford opened in August 2024. Before and after it opened,

Hard Rock has made several donations to community organizations and programs, including Women's Baseball Center, GiGi's Playhouse Rockford, American Cancer Society, Alignment Rockford and YMCA of Rock River Valley's Black Achievers initiative.

Tax revenue from the casino helps the city and the nonprofit Rockford Promise fund academic scholarships that cover full college tuition for local students.

"Hard Rock Rockford has been an outstanding partner to our community. Strengthening that partnership and expanding its impact requires continued growth of the Hard Rock campus. We are proud to build on this relationship in a way that helps retain visitors and drives sustained growth in shared revenue," McNamara said in a press release.

The 200-plus room Hard Rock Hotel will include 15,000 square feet of convention space, a spa and fitness center, and dining options.

"This hotel and convention center cements our commitment to this community and its growing needs," Geno Iafra, president of Hard Rock Casino Rockford, said in the release. "Our belief is that this region is a destination that can compete at the highest level. We're not going anywhere; instead, we're defining and building what's next in expanding our role as the premier entertainment destination in the region."



Hard Rock

A rendering of the proposed Hard Rock Hotel with the existing casino in Rockford, Illinois.

Research at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

BY JOSEPH A. GILBERT
Research Coordinator
and
TARA BACKHOUSE
Curator

BIG CYPRESS — 160,000 photographs, 31,000 documents and audiovisual materials, 6,000 books, and 3,000 pieces of art and historic objects. The collection at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is a treasure trove of primary documents



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Copies of the Seminole Tribune are carefully preserved at the museum as a valuable record of recent Seminole history.

that discuss the Seminole Tribe of Florida's history. Navigating those objects, whether it be government papers, newspapers, photographs, books, reports or paintings, can be a daunting task. This is where the research and collections divisions of the museum can help. Together we handle requests from within the community and without.

Do you want to go through Seminole Tribunes from the 80s to see what events were hosted by the tribe? Are you interested in looking at bandolier bags from the 1800's to see how Seminole Warriors carried their gear into war? Do you feel like you want to peruse through photographs to find pictures of your parents and grandparents or yourself? Do you want to listen to recordings from the Oral History Collection? Do you know someone who wants to study Seminole history? Or someone who wants to investigate how the Seminole people help create the tourism industry in Florida? Those are just a few of the kinds of research that is possible in the museum. We can help with many of these requests. With others, especially when the requests don't come from the Seminole community, there is a more formal process for research.

For the Seminole community we accommodate walk-in requests as much as possible. However, if you are able to make an appointment, we will be better able to assist you during your visit. You can also find us at many community events, often with binders of copies of our historic photos. We're happy to help you there and follow up when we get back to the museum.

Every request that doesn't come from within the community must go

through a research permitting process that is administered by the Tribal Historic Preservation Office in accordance with the Cultural Resource Ordinance, a part of STOF policies. Researchers go through this process for the protection of tribal sovereignty and community members. More information about that process can be found on the website stofthpo.com/research/. Once a researcher has been permitted, the approved request is routed to the appropriate STOF department. For researchers permitted to do research at the museum, the research and collections divisions lead the research process and provide access to the ATTK collection in whatever way the permit specifies. In an effort to publicize the permitting process and make sure outside researchers are following STOF policies and procedures, the THPO and Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum work to educate people about this process and why it exists.

Although the collection at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki is open to permitted researchers, our purpose first and foremost is to serve the Seminole community. Our staff preserve, catalog, and make the community's historic resources available for them. For access to the Oral History Collection, please contact Anthony Alvarez, Oral History Coordinator, at anthonyalvarez1@semtribe.com

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



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Bandolier bag and sash from 1830s which may have belonged to Osceola.

If any visitor would like to look at our collection before coming to the archives, the public objects in our collection can be viewed online at semtribe.pastperfectonline.com/. For questions, please contact the Ah-

Thi-Ki's Museum's Research Coordinator at josephgilbert@semtribe.com.

An afternoon of creative writing with Elgin Jumper

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Students and staff gathered at the Dorothy S. Osceola Memorial Library in Hollywood on May 14 for an afternoon of poetry and short story

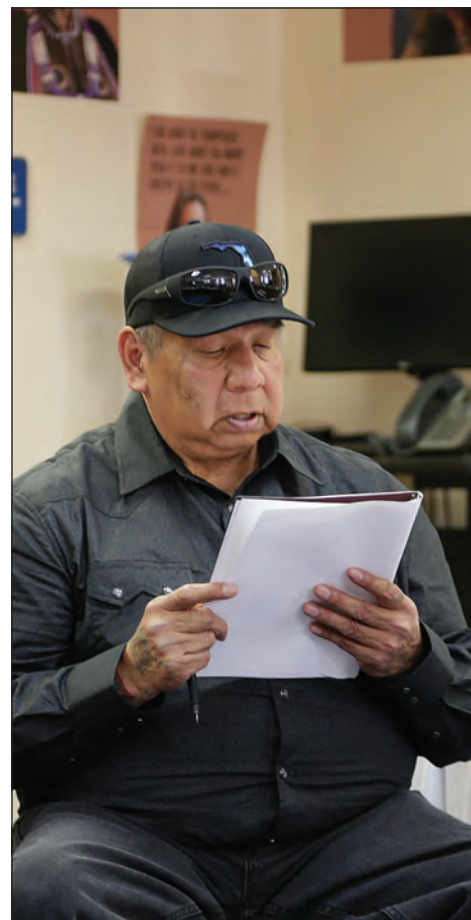
writing with Elgin Jumper.

Jumper is a poet, short story writer, essayist, and an artist. Serving as outlets for Jumper's advocacy on the preservation of tribal lands and Seminole history, Jumper channels his rebelliousness through both his artwork and writing.



Daniella Hakim

Mai Billie listens as attendees openly shared poems they developed throughout the workshop.



Daniella Hakim

Elgin Jumper reads excerpts from his favorite novelists and poets, such as Sherman Alexie and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.



Daniella Hakim

Marlena Olson, left, and Shayla Brown brainstorm as they practice writing a haiku.

"I just love how words come together in poetry," Jumper said. "This is something I want to share with everybody and see what they can do with it—with the techniques and the words."

The workshop covered abecedarian and haiku poems, as well as character archetypes, plotting, and prompts for short story writing.

"The voice of our writing, the speaker, has its own persona," Jumper added. "Even though I'm the speaker, this voice changes the tone of our story or poem."

Jumper often finds himself venturing into the Everglades and the Big Cypress Reservation, painting landscapes and capturing technicolor sunsets, artwork that goes hand-in-hand with his writing. His

work spans both acrylic and oil paints.

"We need more Native artists," Jumper said. "I've never regretted pursuing the arts. I encourage students to pursue creativity. I wish I had honed it earlier."

Jumper's upcoming series of projects will be featured in "How We Got Here," an anthology set to be released in 2027, and he is currently working on a novel adaptation of his poetry. Jumper is a co-founder of the Florida Indigenous Writers Group with Krystle Young Bowers. He is a regular contributor to the Seminole Tribune and lives in Hollywood.

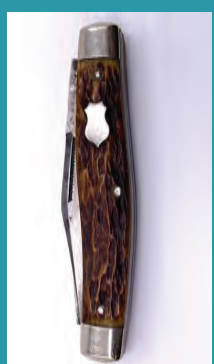
June 2026

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Pocketknives, like this month's artifact, are extremely common among individuals' toolkits; some people even carry them daily or use them for self-defense. But just how common is it for a person to have a pocket knife? In 2023, the global market size for pocketknives was roughly 600.5 million and is expected to grow by another 6% from 2023 to 2030 (Gore, 2026).

The story of the pocket knife starts as early as 3000 B.C. in regions like Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt. These knives were often one blade made up of bronze or copper and used for many tasks, including carving and cutting (Shokunin USA, 2025).

Today, there are many different types of pocketknives, this includes slip joint knives, tactical folding knives, and locking knives. Each type of knife has its own purpose. For example, the slip joint knife is the most popular pocket knife for light tasks, whereas a tactical knife was first developed for soldiers to have a single knife that could perform multiple tasks rather than having several knives.



Vintage Remington R3553 Three Blade Stockman Circle UMC Folding Knife USA | #455573228, (2022)



Front



Back

We believe that this month's artifact is one of the Remington UMC pocketknives. Although the knife exhibits corrosion, the shield emblem is very similar to the Remington UMC pocket knife style. As seen to the left, a vintage pocket knife by Remington that was sold from 1970s to 1990s has the same emblem. The handle also looks to be made of antler or jigged bone, (cattle or camel bone that is dyed and textured) which is common amongst Remington UMC pocketknives.

Remington UMC was "One of America's leading manufacturers of knives during the post World War I and the pre-World War II period" (Remington Contributor, 2024). The company first produced pocketknives in the 1920s, and by 1926, the annual production was 2.5 million units. These units were then placed into catalogs and sold to consumers.

Pocket knife (THPO) 1994.9.64

To learn more about all the incredible artifacts within our collection, please visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com.

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - JUNE 2026

CANOES THROUGH TIME



Today, roads and highways cut across the South Florida landscape, disrupting the natural flow of ecosystems while cars pollute the air. But for thousands of years canoes provided the primary means of transportation and waterways served as natural conduits for travel.

Canoes have a long history and are part of Indigenous cultures all over the world. Traditions from across Indigenous tribes in the Americas agree that the ancestors used canoes and kayaks since time immemorial, and archaeologists place the widespread use of canoes to well over 10,000 years ago. Considering that canoes remained central to Seminole life into the 20th century, and that they continue as a craft tradition among Tribal citizens today, the importance of canoes to Seminole culture and their strong link to the ancestors is obvious. As Tribal member Pedro Zepeda says, "there has never been a time in our history when we have not made dugout canoes."

The canoes built by ancestors came in many varieties and sizes. Records of European colonizers describe canoes with outriggers that could cross open water, and war canoes that could carry 80 warriors. In 2020, an ancestral Seminole canoe with features for attaching sails was discovered on the shores of Egmont Key, indicating that it was built to navigate coastal waters. More streamlined canoes carried ancestors to their camps deep in the Everglades where they evaded enemies and carried on their traditions.

Like other examples of Indigenous science, canoes were appropriated by colonizers who depended on traditional Indigenous knowledge for their survival. Indigenous engineering cleverly adapted canoes to many tasks and many different environments. Colonizers quickly recognized the broad utility of canoes and used them to their own ends.

For generations, canoes were central to everyday life for the Seminole, serving fundamental needs of transportation. But, as Seminole canoe carver Daniel Tommie has stated, canoes also "were a lifeline", ensuring the survival of Tribal members and Tribal traditions through challenging times.

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

Photo: This canoe washed up on Egmont Key following Hurricane Dorian. Even broken, the section is 16 feet in length. Radio carbon dating has placed it as over 500 years old.



Health

Know your numbers: What cholesterol really means for your health

BY TERESA SNOW

Your doctor orders a routine blood test, and the results come back flagged for cholesterol. You're not alone. Millions of people receive that same result every year and leave the office unsure what it means or what to do next. The good news is that cholesterol is something you can understand and, in many cases, improve with everyday choices.

What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance your liver produces naturally. Your body needs some of it to build healthy cells and produce hormones. The problem starts when too much of the wrong kind builds up in your bloodstream.

Over time, excess cholesterol can form a sticky buildup called plaque inside your arteries, narrowing them and raising the risk of heart attack and stroke. There are two main types:

- LDL ("bad") cholesterol: Too much leads to plaque buildup in your arteries.
- HDL ("good") cholesterol: Helps carry LDL away from your arteries to be removed by the liver.

The goal is simple: keep LDL low and HDL healthy.

No Symptoms, No Warning

High cholesterol does not cause pain, fatigue, or dizziness. Most people feel completely fine, which is exactly why it is easy to miss. The only way to know your numbers is through a simple blood test called a lipid panel. Regular checkups are the only early warning system you have.

Take Sandra, a woman in her early 50s who felt perfectly healthy. A routine physical revealed her LDL had been quietly climbing for years. Catching it early gave her time to act before it became a serious problem.

What raises the risk?

Some risk factors are within your control, and some are not:

- Diet high in saturated fat (fatty meats, fried foods, full-fat dairy)
- Little or no physical activity
- Smoking, which lowers good cholesterol and harms blood vessels
- Excess weight, especially around the waist
- Family history of high cholesterol or early heart disease
- Age, as levels tend to rise over time

If heart disease or high cholesterol runs in your family at a young age, let your doctor know. Some people have a hereditary condition that causes high cholesterol no matter how healthy their lifestyle is.

Practical Steps You Can Start Today

- Swap saturated fats. Use olive oil instead of butter. Choose grilled fish or chicken over fried options.
- Eat more fiber. Oatmeal, beans,

apples, and lentils contain soluble fiber that helps lower LDL. Start with oatmeal for breakfast.

- Walk more. A 30-minute walk most days can raise good cholesterol and lower bad cholesterol. No gym needed.
- Quit smoking. It is one of the single best things you can do for your heart and your cholesterol levels.

Small changes stick. One man in his 60s added a morning walk and switched to oatmeal after his doctor flagged his numbers. Six months later, his levels had measurably improved.

When lifestyle changes are not enough, doctors may recommend medication such as statins, which are well-studied and commonly prescribed. That decision is always one to make together with your doctor based on your full health picture.

When to get medical help

Reach out to your healthcare provider if:

- You have never had your cholesterol checked and are over 35 (men) or 45 (women), or sooner if you have risk factors.
- A parent or sibling had a heart attack, stroke, or high cholesterol at a young age.
- You were told your cholesterol was borderline high and have not followed up in the past year.
- You have diabetes, high blood pressure, or kidney disease, all of which increase your cardiovascular risk.
- You have chest pain, shortness of breath, or sudden dizziness. Call 911 right away.

borderline high and have not followed up in the past year.

- You have diabetes, high blood pressure, or kidney disease, all of which increase your cardiovascular risk.
- You have chest pain, shortness of breath, or sudden dizziness. Call 911 right away.

borderline high and have not followed up in the past year.

Start where you are

Managing cholesterol does not require perfection. It requires awareness and a few steady choices made over time. Talk to your doctor, get your numbers checked, and take it one step at a time. Your heart, and everyone who loves you, will thank you for it.

This article is for general education only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have symptoms, concerns, or a medical condition, please speak with a qualified healthcare provider.

Sources: American College of Cardiology / American Heart Association 2026 Dyslipidemia Guideline; Mayo Clinic; Johns Hopkins Medicine; CDC Million Hearts Program.

Teresa Snow is a nurse with more than 30 years of experience in pediatric and geriatric care. She enjoys writing clear, practical health articles for everyday readers and has a personal connection to the Seminole community through her family.

Hollywood walks in support of child abuse prevention

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Organized by the Advocacy and Guardianship Department, Hollywood Preschool students were joined by their parents and guardians at the Betty Mae Jumper Clinic on the Hollywood Reservation. Fashioning all things blue—tribal, community, and staff members gathered for a walk and ice cream social on April 28 for National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

"Child safety is a community effort," said Deandra Thomas, the department's advocacy supervisor. "We encourage parents to come with their children to join in on the festivities and raise awareness about our program."

The Advocacy and Guardianship Department serves vulnerable tribal members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Both the advocacy and guardianship programs seek to support children at risk of abuse and neglect and tribal members who are incapacitated and under tribal guardianship.

"We focus a lot on prevention and intervention," Thomas said. "Our department is always here to put referrals in place for those who have children who need mental health services and therapy."

This year marked the program's 11th consecutive year hosting community walks for child abuse prevention. Alongside the Hollywood Reservation, program supervisors across all reservations organized their own community walks.

"We're always here to be of support to the children," Thomas said. "If anyone ever feels like they have family members who can benefit from our services, we're always here. They don't always have to come when things get tough."

Children placed their blue pinwheels across the reservation in recognition.

"We're here to make sure that children have a safe environment, and part of having a safe environment means that parents are also safe and healthy," Thomas added. "We're all for prevention, whatever that may look like."



Daniella Hakim

Saint Stewart, left, walks the half-mile long route hand in hand with Shanelle Wright.



Daniella Hakim

Jai'a Osceola-Culver, left, Draco Mctier, right, are all smiles as they wait in line for their ice cream at the child abuse prevention walk's ice cream social.

National Tribal Health Conference to be held in August

FROM PRESS RELEASE

CHANDLER, Ariz.— The National Tribal Health Conference will be held Aug. 16-21 at the Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse

Pass in Chandler, Arizona. The conference will feature a tradeshow, plenary and workshop sessions, and a cultural event.

The event highlights the interconnectedness of policy, advocacy, and

best practices in Indian health. Attendees can engage in Tribal listening and consultation sessions, hands-on training, plenary sessions, and workshops covering critical topics.

For more information, go to nihb.org.

Museum offers free admission to teachers

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BIG CYPRESS— The Seminole Tribe of Florida's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will celebrate Teacher Appreciation Month in July by offering complimentary admission to educators throughout the entire month.

Teachers will have the opportunity to explore dynamic exhibits showcasing historic and modern Seminole life, along with the museum's expansive mile-long boardwalk through a scenic cypress dome in the heart of the Florida Everglades.

Educators may also bring up to four guests, who will receive 50% off the standard admission rate.

The program provides teachers with an opportunity to plan ahead while discovering engaging educational resources that can help infuse Seminole culture and Everglades flora and fauna into classroom lesson plans.

Teachers are encouraged to utilize featured exhibits, cultural resources and environmental experiences to create memorable and enriching learning opportunities for their students. Information tied to applicable Next Generation Standards is also available upon request.

The museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., except July 4, when the museum will be closed in observance of Independence Day.

To sign up for the free visit, teachers should register at <https://www.ahtahthiki.com/teachers/>.

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- | | | |
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♦ See ANSWERS on page 6C



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SEMINOLE SCENES



Courtesy photo

SPECTACULAR VIEW: Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. held a tribal member non-resident meeting in picturesque Jackson Hole, Wyoming, from May 1 through May 3. About 54 tribal members and their families from as far away as Alaska, California, Colorado and New York attended the meeting. The attendees enjoyed a bus tour of Grand Teton National Park, where they stopped and learned about the environment from a tour guide. In addition to attending a meeting, the group played Elaponke bingo, posed for photos with Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford, and had dinner together. It was the first time Chairman Osceola held a non-resident meeting in Wyoming. Staff said the group enjoyed the beautiful location as well as the information conveyed.



U.S. Travel Association (left); Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum (right)

FLUTE IN FORT LAUDERDALE: Gordon Wareham, director of Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum, performs with his flute during the first day of the U.S. Travel Association's IPW trade show in Fort Lauderdale. The event was held May 17-21 at the Broward County Convention Center and other local venues, and attracted thousands of people in tourism and related industries throughout the world. The museum had staff, displays and tables at the event. Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith had a good seat on the beach.



WDW News Today (left); Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum (right)

DISPLAY AT DISNEY: An area at Walt Disney World's American Heritage Gallery that features objects from the Seminole Tribe of Florida has been updated with a new rotation. The Ah-Tha-Thi-Ki Museum reported in May that the gallery now includes a beaded baseball cap and a beaded stethoscope (pictured at right), both made by Linda Beletso. The display also features Billy Walker's alligator wrestling shirt, a patchwork shirt made by Ida Cypress, and a pair of 19th century moccasins.



Rodeo Ready

CHAMP IN ACTION: Indian National Finals Rodeo (INFR) World Champion Josh Jumper, from the Big Cypress Reservation, competes in The American Rodeo's western regional, which was held May 1 and May 2 at South Point Arena in Las Vegas, the same venue where Jumper won the INFR championship in team roping last year with Clay Gunshows. The American Rodeo, with three regionals across the country, features some of the top cowboys in the United States. All were vying for a spot in championship weekend, May 22-23, in Arlington, Texas. Jumper and Gunshows did not qualify for the championship weekend. They had two no-times and one time of five seconds with a 10 second penalty.



Beverly Bidney (2)

CINCO DE MAYO: The Immokalee Reservation's library treated its after-school students to some "walking tacos" May 5 in honor of Cinco de Mayo, a day that celebrates Mexican American culture. Walking tacos are made in a bag of corn chips topped with taco meat, cheese and all the fixings. Above, students Gerren James and Jose Solano get tacos made by library employees Gwyn Bastida Garcia and Dolores Lopez. Below, students enjoy their walking tacos in the cheerfully decorated library.



Hard Rock (2)

JETER STEPS UP: Former New York Yankees star and Baseball Hall of Famer Derek Jeter held his 3rd Annual Weekend event at Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood. The event included a \$100,000 check presentation on May 16 to his Turn 2 Foundation charity from Seminole Gaming, at left; and a stroll through the shops on the property, at right. The event is presented by Seminole Hard Rock.



NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Arizona tribal agricultural generates over \$750 million in total economic output, new analysis finds

TUCSON, Ariz. — Tribal agriculture contributed \$753.3 million in total economic output and directly supported more than 2,300 jobs statewide in 2022, according to a first-of-its-kind analysis examining the economic footprint of Arizona's 22 federally recognized tribes using data from the most recent agricultural census.

The report, "Tribal Agriculture in Arizona: An Economic Contribution Analysis" was conducted by Cooperative Extension economic analysts in the University of Arizona College of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences and was supported by the Indian Land Tenure Foundation and the Native American Agriculture Fund.

Arizona's Indigenous communities have practiced agriculture for thousands of years, developing farming systems grounded in traditional ecological knowledge, water management and biodiversity. These practices remain central to tribal economies, cultural identity and food sovereignty today, yet the overall economic contribution of tribal agriculture across the state has received little study.

Estimating tribal agricultural activity is difficult because federal datasets often do not align with tribal boundaries, many reservations span multiple states, and privacy protections limit detailed reporting in sparsely populated areas, according to Dari Duval, corresponding author on the report and an Extension economist in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment.

"We have always known that tribal agriculture is a huge share of Arizona agriculture in terms of the number of producers, the amount of land that these operations manage, and it has sort of an outsized effect on the state-level numbers," Duval said.

Tribal agricultural activity was estimated by the research team using the USDA Census of Agriculture, Reservation Census, and Navajo Nation Census, supplemented with USDA CropScape satellite data and supporting Extension and institutional reports. These sources provide a baseline estimate and the report is meant to provide a starting point for future analyses in partnership with tribal communities.

The analysis revealed American Indians operate 62% of all farms in Arizona and manage 20 million acres, or 81% of the state's total agricultural land.

While numerous, many operations are categorized as "small-scale," with 67% of American Indian farms falling in between 1 and 9 acres in size.

Despite that, on-farm sales from tribal agriculture totaled \$434 million in 2022, with crop production accounting for \$410 million and livestock production contributing \$23.9 million.

American Indian farms also account for 95% of all sheep and goat farms and 71% of vegetable and melon farms in the state.

"People don't always connect the dots and there's this perception that tribal communities aren't impacting our economic bottom line in the state," said Michael Koutwa Johnson, a coauthor on the study and assistant professor and Cooperative Extension specialist of Indigenous resilience. "But this report, for the first time, can really point to that bottom line."

The report debunks the idea that tribal agriculture is an isolated sector. It found that 85% of economic multiplier effects generated by tribal agriculture actually "spill over" into non-tribal areas of the state.

Maricopa County was the largest beneficiary, receiving \$203 million in economic output from tribal agricultural activities in 2022, followed by Yuma County with \$31 million and Pima County at \$18 million.

This activity supported 1,670 jobs outside of tribal lands in sectors such as wholesale nondurables — like food distributors, fuel, and farm supplies — and ag support services, according to the report.

Beyond the commercial data, the report also uncovers a significant "hidden economy" through the first-of-its-kind quantification of home production for home consumption, or food and livestock raised to feed families and communities that never enters formal market channels.

"It's challenging to provide a good, defensible metric for the value of home consumption in tribal communities, particularly in food deserts where a grocery store isn't around the corner," said Trent Teegerstrom, manager for tribal engagement with the Cooperative Extension.

The report notes that while many tribal operations may appear to have production expenses that exceed their market sales, these figures fail to account for the essential role this food plays in food security and cultural continuity.

"If it doesn't enter the market channels, we don't really get to count it as sales but that agricultural production has value, it's contributing to food security, to food sovereignty and cultural resilience," Duval said.

Working from both supply and demand ends of the economic spectrum, the research team estimated the production value of this hidden economy within tribal communities at \$116 million. On a per-capita basis, this translates to as much as \$1,120 in grocery retail value per person in tribal areas.

"These are healthy foods, nutrient dense foods. You can't really put a price tag on that," Koutwa said. "The social impact, in my mind, is 10 times greater than the economic impact."

— University of Arizona News

Efforts to resolve intra-tribal dispute continue to stall after Oklahoma Supreme Court decision

Oklahoma's Supreme Court has ruled a local judge should stay out of an intra-tribal dispute involving the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town in the eastern part of the state.

The Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, a federally recognized tribe and band of the Muscogee Nation, has been at odds over who should lead its citizens since 2007. However, in recent months, this dispute has halted tribal services, as the Bureau of Indian Affairs has decided not to designate a leader.

Now, the Oklahoma Supreme Court said the tribe has to figure out the situation without intervention from state courts.

The court unanimously ruled May 19 that the matter is an intratribal dispute, meaning it must be resolved internally. In a 17-page decision, the justices wrote that if the state determined the rightful governance of the tribe, it would undermine tribal sovereignty.

"Deciding which group constitutes the lawful governing body would require interpretation of Tribe's constitution, evaluation of its electoral processes, and review of its governance structure — matters that fall squarely within the Tribe's inherent right of self-government," the court wrote. "As such, this case presents precisely the type of question that state and federal courts have consistently declined to adjudicate."

The decision addressed an appeal submitted by Nathan Anderson, a former tribal leader known as a mekko, or town king, elected in 2007. He was later ousted by former business committee members whom he had removed. The tribe was then run by business committee members appointed without elections due to ongoing litigation between the two parties, according to the state supreme court. That process allegedly violated the tribal constitution.

Anderson's appeal argued he was rightfully elected as mekko again in 2025, a point of contention among three groups of tribal citizens vying for power.

In October, Brent Brown — who had served on the tribe's business committee since 2007 and later led it as mekko in 2025 from July to October — filed a lawsuit in the Okfuskee County District Court. He alleged a tribal member named Brent Smith forcefully came into the tribal headquarters on Oct. 18 and sent tribal employees home because of the volatile situation.

The judge entered an emergency restraining order against Smith, according to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Anderson argued the district court did not have the authority to do so, requesting the state's high court assume jurisdiction.

An attorney for Anderson, Jon Velie, said they are satisfied with the ruling, as a ruling against them would have been a "big blow" to sovereignty.

"It's good that the Oklahoma Supreme Court said Oklahoma does not have the jurisdiction to make determinations on tribal leadership. We're very happy with that decision," Velie said. "That's the right decision for our clients and all of Native American leadership."

Velie said now, the Bureau of Indian Affairs must intervene because intratribal negotiation isn't possible.

"Seventeen years ... they don't follow the law," Velie said of Brown's faction. "There's nothing to work out with them. The BIA has to make a decision."

Supreme Court Clerk Selden Jones said the decision is subject to revision over the next few weeks, during which the parties may petition for rehearing. But revision is rare, he said, and the ruling is likely final.

In a previous interview from November, Ron Barnett, the treasurer for Brown's business committee, said Anderson's election was illegitimate and held hope that the tribe could persevere.

"And we hope that we can get back on track and start moving forward again," Barnett said. "We do want to have an election, and we do want the building and the projects that we have in place to go forward."

Attorneys for Brown's administration did not immediately respond to comment. An email listed in court filings under Brent Smith's name could not be reached.

— KOSU (Stillwater, Okla.)

New Mexico pueblos sue Kalshi, alleging prediction market violates tribal gaming sovereignty

Three New Mexico pueblos and one tribe on May 12 sued the prediction market platform Kalshi, alleging the app enables sports gambling on tribal land and, in doing so, violates gaming compacts and federal law.

In an announcement May 13, the plaintiffs — the Mescalero Apache Tribe, as well as the Pojoaque, Sandia and Isleta Pueblos — said Kalshi provides anyone over age 18 access to sports gambling in New Mexico, which deprives tribes of revenues they receive for schools and other services in accordance with hard-fought tribal compacts and state and federal law.

"The use of prediction markets for gambling purposes diverts essential revenue away from our governments, provides an end-run around regulation of gaming on our lands, and allows gaming by underage people," Sandia Pueblo Gov. Stuart Paisano said in a statement. Only people aged 21 and over in New Mexico can gamble at tribally owned casinos under state gaming compacts and federal law.

The lawsuit, filed by a Washington-based law firm, alleges that Kalshi, which

is based in New York City, could and should have created a "geofence" to prevent its app from being used within tribal boundaries. It also says that by operating on tribal land, the company is violating the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and infringing on tribal rights to self-determination that the United States Supreme Court first recognized in 1987.

As one piece of evidence, the lawsuit contains a screenshot of the platform allowing New Mexico users to gamble on the University of New Mexico Lobos men's basketball game against the New Mexico State University Aggies last November.

The lawsuit marks the latest escalation in local pueblos' campaign against the prediction markets. Last month, U.S. Rep. Gabe Vasquez (D-N.M.) visited a school on Isleta Pueblo land that received most of its funding from tribal gaming revenues.

Isleta Gov. Eugene Jiron told Vasquez that the pueblo anticipated "a lot of impact down the road" as a result of prediction markets enabling sports gambling. Vasquez said he is working on legislation prohibiting markets like Kalshi and Polymarket from offering sports betting services.

Last July, Mescalero Apache Tribe Vice President Duane Duffy urged state lawmakers to help crack down on the markets. Duffy, in the statement May 13 announcing the lawsuit, said Mescalero and other tribes and pueblos in New Mexico "fought hard to protect their inherent sovereign right to operate and regulate casinos on tribal lands. We cannot sit by idly as the laws that enshrine this right are ignored."

Duffy did not return Source NM's request for additional comment May 13. Representatives for Kalshi also did not respond to an emailed request for comment Wednesday.

At least one other tribe has sued Kalshi for similar allegations. The Ho-Chunk Nation in Wisconsin sued Kalshi last August, alleging the company illegally provides sports betting on tribal land.

A federal judge on May 11 denied the tribe's request for an immediate prohibition on the company from operating in Wisconsin, but he did affirm that the tribe had shown a "likelihood of success" as it pursues a lawsuit against the company for potential violations under federal Indian gaming laws. The tribe hailed the ruling as a "major" win in a news release May 12.

According to the latest figures, 14 tribes and pueblos in New Mexico reported generating more than \$266 million in "adjusted net win" in the last quarter of 2025, a figure that includes the revenue made from gaming machines minus the amount paid out in prizes and regulatory fees. It's not clear from New Mexico Gaming Control Board figures how much of that money came from sports gambling specifically.

— Source New Mexico

US Supreme Court sends North Dakota tribal redistricting case back for review

The U.S. Supreme Court on May 18 ordered an appeals court to reconsider a North Dakota tribal redistricting case under new legal standards set in the high court's recent Voting Rights Act ruling.

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Spirit Lake Nation and three tribal citizens filed the lawsuit against the North Dakota Legislature in 2022, arguing that its new legislative map shifted district lines in a way that diluted tribal representation. The tribes filed the case under Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act, which outlaws racially discriminatory voting practices.

North Dakota U.S. District Court Judge Peter Welte in 2023 sided with the tribes and soon after ordered that a different map be put in place.

The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals last year came to a much different conclusion. It found that the tribes didn't have the right to bring the lawsuit because compliance with Section 2 may only be enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice. The 8th Circuit is the only federal appeals court to make this finding.

The tribes in September officially asked the U.S. Supreme Court to weigh in on the 8th Circuit's decision and answer whether private citizens can bring Section 2 cases.

The Supreme Court on May 18 decided 8-1 to void the appeals court's ruling, ordering the 8th Circuit to review the lawsuit again in light of its April decision in a separate racial gerrymandering case, Louisiana v. Callais.

The court did not issue an opinion explaining the reasoning behind its decision in the North Dakota case.

North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley said the district map ordered by Welte will remain in place for this fall's election.

Attorneys for the tribes applauded the court's decision to vacate the 8th Circuit's ruling.

"The Supreme Court was correct to vacate the Eighth Circuit's decision, which wrongly prevented Native voters and Tribal Nations from vindicating their rights under the Voting Rights Act," Lenny Powell, a staff attorney for the Native American Rights Fund, said in a statement.

Mark Gaber, senior director for redistricting at the Campaign Legal Center, said he believes the decision affirms private citizens' ability to bring suits under Section 2.

"Today, the Supreme Court agreed that courts cannot slam the courthouse doors on plaintiffs seeking equal representation," Gaber said in a statement.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was the lone dissenting justice in the May

18 decision. In a note included with the decision, Jackson wrote she sees "no basis for vacating" the 8th Circuit's ruling. Jackson said the high court's decision in Louisiana v. Callais did not touch on the question central to the Turtle Mountain case — whether private citizens can file suit under Section 2 — so there are no new legal standards that would change how the 8th Circuit analyzes it.

Jackson wrote that she would instead reverse the 8th Circuit's ruling.

Welte's map remained in place while the tribe's request was pending before the high court.

The North Dakota Secretary of State's Office also must finalize maps by the December before an election year, according to legal documents the state filed in the lawsuit.

Attorneys for the state have previously said they agree with the 8th Circuit's decision dismissing the tribes' case, and have maintained that the Legislature's 2021 map is not discriminatory.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Louisiana v. Callais makes it much harder to challenge district maps for alleged racial discrimination.

Previously, courts had interpreted Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act to forbid states from adopting any maps that reduce minority groups' voting power, whether deliberate or accidental. The Supreme Court in Louisiana v. Callais found that in order to be found in violation of Section 2, there must be sufficient evidence that a state chose the map with the intent to discriminate based on race.

The Native American Rights Fund, Campaign Legal Center and other groups condemned the previous decision as a blow to voting rights.

North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley told the North Dakota Monitor previously that he supports the ruling, saying it "strengthens North Dakota's position that the Constitution is colorblind."

— Source New Mexico

Fast-fashion brand Shein accused of stealing designs from Winnipeg-based Indigenous company

A Winnipeg (Canada)-based Indigenous clothing company is accusing fast-fashion brand Shein of stealing dozens of its designs.

"We're all really upset about it. A lot of anger's coming from it," said Michelle Cameron, the owner and founder of Indigenous Nations Apparel Company, or INAC.

"I was really shocked. And then it turned to anger and disgust."

[On May 22], customers of her Polo Park shopping centre store alerted her to what appear to be copies of her products being sold on the website of Shein, a global e-commerce company that specializes in fast fashion.

In all, Cameron said 20 INAC designs are being sold on the site without permission.

"It's even our staff members that they're using [in] their photos. The one picture has my daughter in it. It's absurd," she said.

When Cameron reached out to Shein, she got an emailed response with a link to where she could file a complaint. She's now seeking legal advice.

Many of INAC's designs comment on the mistreatment Indigenous people have faced, including stolen land, and those designs themselves are now being stolen, Cameron said.

"There's even a design on there that has our company name on it," Cameron said, featuring a chief's head and reading "established 2021," the year INAC was established. "So, they even took that."

The one that hurts the most is a shirt designed for Red Dress Day, the national day of awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people, Cameron said.

"So much thought [went] into it, and it means something to each and every one of us because we all have Indigenous family members that are missing or murdered," she said.

The image of that design on Shein's website is the one featuring Cameron's daughter.

Shein said in an emailed statement to CBC News late May 19 that it "immediately removed the listings from our platform and launched an investigation" after learning the items were being offered by third-party sellers on Shein Marketplace.

Shein said sellers are required to certify their products do not infringe on intellectual property.

"We take all claims of infringement seriously and act swiftly when valid complaints are raised by IP rights holders," Shein said in the email.

"We continue to invest in and strengthen our processes to ensure partners adhere to our strict policies."

Cameron has heard from many people urging her to trademark the designs to protect them, but to do that for each one would be costly, she said.

"In the apparel world, all [someone has] to do is change a logo by 10 per cent and it is no longer your logo. So, for us to make that financial investment [to trademark everything] doesn't always make sense," she said.

But each design involves a lot of work by INAC, Cameron said.

"We usually plan out our designs a year in advance. All of us Indigenous staff, we all gather together and talk about what designs we want to come up with ... and what does it mean to us as Indigenous people," she said.

"All the designs that go into our store, there's an Indigenous artist attached to it [and] a royalty that goes back [to them]."

A company that takes that design without permission is "actually just taking away from all the effort we put in, and all the heart," Cameron said.

"There was a time that we [Indigenous people] didn't own businesses. Now we're taking our place in the business world, and it's really sad to see a company ... trying to profit from it [with] no credit to the designers and everything we do."

Jackie Traverse, a Winnipeg-based multidisciplinary Anishinaabe artist from Lake St. Martin First Nation, has also had her designs taken and used on other products.

"This has been going on with me for about 16 years," she said.

In recent years, some of Traverse's images have shown up emblazoned on Orange Shirt Day T-shirts sold on social media and e-commerce websites.

"There's pretty much nothing you can do about it. And with the rise of AI, good luck," she said. "It's just going to keep happening."

Anyone can ask AI to create an image in someone else's style, or mixed with other styles, Traverse said, noting she has witnessed her creations used that way.

"You can't even watermark [photographs of] your work to protect it," she said. "It's a battle you can't win."

She's proud of her work and creates it to be seen — but if it becomes too popular, "it means it's going to get stolen," Traverse said.

"But you can't not share your work. That defeats the purpose of creating art. So, I'm just going to do what I can with my work."

Traverse said in her case, it seems to be primarily companies based in China that are pilfering the work.

"I've given up. I don't even complain about it no more, because what's the point? I don't even have any advice for anybody. I just say good luck."

INAC's Cameron said years ago, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to find a store in a mainstream mall that catered to Indigenous culture.

"[We] put everything that we had, all of our heart, into building a store for our people," she said.

Now, products that once would only be found at a powwow or Indigenous conference are trending, and bigger retailers are trying to get a piece of the pie, Cameron said.

"If you truly want to have that product on your website, contact the artist first. Contact the company, maybe come up with a partnership or an agreement or a royalty or something, or ... even just asking permission."

For those stealing designs, "I want to tell them that it is disgusting, what you're doing," Cameron said. "I think you need to do better."

— CBC

President signs bill supported by South Dakota delegation to quicken mortgage processing on tribal trust land

President Donald Trump has signed a bill into law that its sponsors from South Dakota say will accelerate the review and processing of mortgages on tribal trust land.

Trust land is held by the federal government for the benefit of Native American tribes or tribal members. The Tribal Trust Land Homeownership Act will create legal timelines for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to process mortgages, according to the office of U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota. Additionally, it will enhance the ability of certain federal agencies to operate their tribal housing programs and establish a realty ombudsman within the BIA to improve communication with tribes, tribal members and lenders.

The bill passed the Senate in December and the House of Representatives in March.

"For years, affordable housing opportunities on tribal trust land have been hard to come by in South Dakota and across the nation due in part to the BIA's challenging mortgage approval process," said Thune, the bill's main sponsor, in a news release. "With the enactment of our legislation, this mortgage approval process will now be expedited, encouraging homeownership across Indian Country."

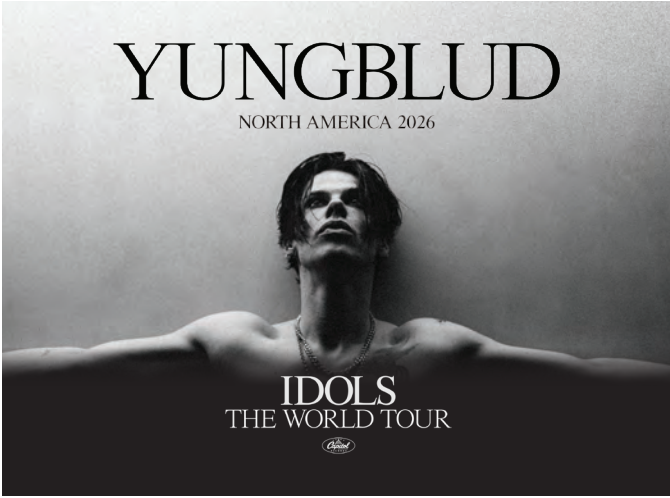
Sen. Mike Rounds was a cosponsor, and Rep. Dusty Johnson sponsored a House version. Both are Republicans from South Dakota.

Sharon Vogel, board chair of the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition and executive director of the Cheyenne River Housing Authority in Eagle Butte, praised Thune's efforts in the news release.

"From the beginning, he has focused on prioritizing and streamlining mortgage-related processes within the Bureau of Indian Affairs," Vogel said. "The Tribal Trust Land Homeownership Act advances that work."

— South Dakota Searchlight

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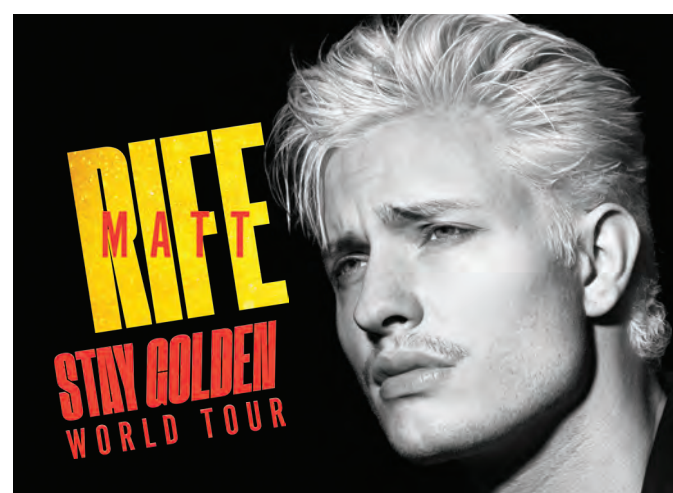
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Education



Ahfachkee celebrates its class of 2026

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BIG CYPRESS — The bigger, the better.

That was the unofficial theme to the Ahfachkee School's class of 2026 graduation May 20 in the school's gymnasium.

Thirteen students received diplomas, which Principal Philip Baer said was the school's largest graduating class as far as he knows.

In recent years, the number of graduates has at times been in single digits. But the school is growing. Thirteen this year, 14 projected for next year and 17 in 2028.

"It tells me that more students are graduating from this community and, as well, families are more involved," President Holly Tiger said to the audience regarding the school's growth. "And that's what I like to see, the community come together."

For Baer, the 2026 class has always had a special place because the students have been with him for all four years of his tenure as principal. They were freshmen when

Baer's title shifted from assistant principal to principal.

"It's the biggest class we've had. They were the first class when I became principal. It does mean that much more to me, and they're a good group of kids," he said.

Zechariah Stockton, one of those 13 graduates, described his class as being full of life.

"Talkative. Energetic. And they're pretty funny, too," he said.

Graduates who earned special recognition included Landell Ocoala-Turtle (Warrior award), Alice Osceola (valedictorian), Curtis Smith (salutatorian) and community service hours award) and Ewanteke Roberts (community service hours award).

Brian Weeden, the youngest chairman ever in the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe in Massachusetts, provided the keynote address. Weeden also holds positions in UNITY and the National Congress of American Indians. After speaking to the graduates and performing a song from his tribe, Weeden received a Seminole patchwork jacket from Big Cypress Councilwoman

Mariann Billie. "You deserve everything you worked for," she told them.

In his address, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard looked at the graduates seated in front of him and saw the future.

"You are the leaders of tomorrow," he said.

Other speakers included Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Billie and Hollywood Board Rep. O'Hara Tommie.

Van Samuels emceed the ceremony. Mary Jene Koenes provided a traditional welcome and prayer. The pledge to the Seminole flag was provided by Shayln Koenes, Athena Osceola, Willow Cypress, Briella Hall, Talia Osceola, Natalie Shaffer and Allie Billie.

After diplomas were awarded,

graduates and everyone else in the gym watched a video by Seminole Media Productions that featured interviews with most members of the class, who reflected on their time at the school and what lies ahead.

When the ceremony ended, the new graduates joined their families and others for photos and lunch in the gym.



Kevin Johnson

Ahfachkee's class of 2026, including Curtis Smith, center, celebrates at the end of the ceremony May 20 in the school gymnasium.

Ahfachkee School Class of 2026

- Lavin Billie
- Shaniah Cypress
- Donald Cypress
- Louise Cypress
- Nicholai Cypress
- Kaydence Green
- Takoda Howard
- Alice Osceola
- Landell Osceola-Turtle
- Ewanteke Roberts
- Curtis Smith
- Tommi Stockton
- Zechariah Stockton



Kevin Johnson

Nicholai Cypress smiles with his diploma and with Assistant Principal Nuria Suarez and Principal Philip Baer.



Kevin Johnson

Louise Cypress is congratulated by President Holly Tiger, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, left, and assistant principal Nuria Suarez, right.



Kevin Johnson

Takoda Howard enters the gym as he gets ready to graduate.

See AHFACHKEE on page 3B

Kyle Doney addresses FSU class of 2026 graduates

STAFF REPORT

Florida State University held its 2026 Spring graduation for over 7,000 students at the Donald L. Tucker Civic Center in Tallahassee on May 1 and May 2. During the ceremonies, FSU alum and tribal member Kyle Doney briefly spoke to the graduates via a prerecorded video message. He congratulated the class.

"As you begin the next phase of your life, be sure to take that unconquered spirit of the Seminole Tribe of Florida with you and make a commitment to support the tribe and other Indigenous peoples," said Doney, who is the deputy director of the Native Learning Center in Hollywood and a 2007 FSU graduate. He serves on the FSU Alumni Association National Board of Directors.

In his address to students, FSU President Richard McCullough highlighted the ongoing partnership with the tribe and FSU.

"Florida State University respects its unique and collaborative friendship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The university and the tribe are partners who work side by side towards the respectful use of name, imagery and symbols. Seminole history is Florida history and everyone in the FSU community is responsible for maintaining this lasting partnership," McCullough said.

Representatives from the STOF Color Guard were also part of the ceremonies.



Kyle Doney speaks to FSU's class of 2026 graduates in a prerecorded video message.

Dual enrollment students earn college degree before high school diploma

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

FORT MYERS — Four high-achieving high school seniors from the Seminole Tribe of Florida graduated with college degrees before receiving their high school diplomas.

Miley Jimmie, of Brighton, Halley Balentine, Laylah Billie and Tahniah Billie, of Big Cypress, each graduated with an Associate in Arts degree from Florida SouthWestern State College in Fort Myers May 1, three weeks before the Moore Haven High School graduation May 22.

The dual enrollment program is a rigorous one in which students must complete all high school requirements for a diploma, while they take college classes to earn a degree. The 11 Moore Haven students in the dual enrollment program met up at the FSW graduation in the college's caps and gowns.

"For the first year, I was nervous and it was hard to deal with it," Jimmie said. "But then I learned it wasn't that different from high school. I learned how to prepare and get organized for classes."

In addition to being a dual enrollment student, Tahniah Billie was class president, student government president, Future

Business Leaders of America president, played on the high school volleyball, basketball and softball teams and played in a travel volleyball team.

"It was definitely hard and junior year was the biggest challenge," Billie said. "It was hard to keep up, but our advisor helped us and guided us through the program."

Dual enrollment was a challenge for the students, but they all found a way to get the work done and earn that college degree.

"Senior year was really fun," Balentine said. "I liked the bond the whole group had, we were like a family."

"Dual enrollment was hard, but my mom made me push through it," Laylah Billie said. "I finished and it was good for me. I'm making people proud. It was fun in the end and I'm glad I did it. My advice is to never give up, even if it's hard. Just always push through."

Each of the newly-minted graduates had advice for other students entering the dual enrollment program.

"Don't shut yourself away when you get too focused on your work," Jimmie said. "Get to know your classmates because they can help you with work and whatever else is going on in your life."

Balentine said everyone who plans to go



Beverly Bidney

From left to right are Florida SouthWestern State College dual enrollment AA graduates Laylah Billie, Halley Balentine, Tahniah Billie and Miley Jimmie.

to college should be in the program.

"It teaches you a lot about life and time management," she said.

"Keep pushing yourself," Tahniah Billie

said. "It's hard but find someone who motivates you. You will succeed if you have a good support system."

Jada Holdiness earns Master of Science degree from FSU

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Jada Holdiness graduated with a Master of Science degree in sociology from Florida State University on May 2, but that degree will not be the end of her academic career. She worked on the M.S. degree while being on her way to a Doctorate, or Ph.D., in sociology.

"The Master's degree is something really special even though I know I'm not finished yet," Holdiness said. "I'm already in summer classes that are preparing me to teach my own sociology class at FSU next fall."

For the Master's degree, Holdiness compared older Native American adults to older non-Hispanic adults using a behavioral risk factor data.

"I found that Native Americans have the worst health compared to whites, due to the lack of insurance and education levels," she said. "For my Ph.D. I want to work with quantitative and qualitative data, which is more ethnographic research, and see if the numbers tell a story."

Ethnographic research involves

observation and interviews for collecting data with which to draw conclusions about how societies function. Holdiness's goal when she finishes her Ph.D. is to teach at an R1 university or research institution.

According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, R1 universities are committed to graduate education through the doctorate level, give a high priority to research, award 50 or more doctoral degrees each year and receive at least \$40 million in federally support annually.

"FSU is a public R1 university, so maybe I will start there as an assistant professor in Native American studies," Holdiness said.

Holdiness was inspired by her mother Ada Campos, who was a teacher in Collier County schools and worked as a professor for dual enrollment students in Immokalee.

Graduate school was intimidating for Holdiness at first; it is very competitive with only 10 students accepted each year. The classes are small and are held in a conference room instead of a large auditorium or classroom where undergraduate classes are typically held.

"Your instructors consider you more as a



Courtesy photo

From left to right are Brenda Holdiness, Jimmy Wayne Holdiness, Jada Holdiness and Ozzie Holdiness on graduation day at Florida State University May 2.

peer, it was hard to adjust to that," Holdiness said. "Being the only brown person in the room, when you are one of ten and everyone else is white, was interesting."

According to the FSU website, its Ph.D.

program is nationally recognized and has always been ranked as the top sociology graduate program in Florida.

See HOLDINESS on page 3B

Immokalee Preschool graduation



Beverly Bidney

Amari Osceola is decked out in beads and patchwork.

Immokalee Preschool Class of 2026

Juelz Alvarado
Anakin Billie
Lyanna Cardenas
Justin Davis
Eralynn Garcia
Rosie Garza
Moalana Gutierrez
Kyren James
Amiyah Lofton
Amari Osceola
Giovanni Yzaguirre
Lilyana Yzaguirre



Beverly Bidney

With a Western theme, the Immokalee Prechool graduates enjoy performing a dance for the audience at their ceremony May 12.



Beverly Bidney

Giovanni Yzaguirre is a proud graduate.



Beverly Bidney

Eralynn Garcia walks down the aisle to receive her diploma.



Beverly Bidney

Juelz Alvarado introduces himself at the Immokalee Preschool graduation.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Immokalee Council Liaison Jaime Yzaguirre, Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie congratulate Justin Davis at graduation.

Big Cypress Preschool graduation



Beverly Bidney

Big Cypress Preschool graduate Jaite Billie Flournah makes his way down the receiving line as he is congratulated by President Holly Tiger and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie May 19.



Beverly Bidney

Cher Osceola waves to family at the graduation.

Big Cypress Preschool Class of 2026

Ariella Hall
Carsyn Cypress
Cher Osceola
Cohen Tommie
Daniella Quintana
Jaite Flournah
Kai' Monte Vazquez
Makayla Cypress
Odin Cypress
Taezleigh Bear-Pruitt



Beverly Bidney

Big Cypress Preschool graduates say the pledge of allegiance to open the graduation ceremony.



Beverly Bidney
Big Cypress Preschool Center manager Andrea Jumper helps the graduates after they received their diplomas.



Beverly Bidney

Cohen Bear Tommie holds his diploma.



Beverly Bidney

Caps and gowns are in place, now the wait begins for the Big Cypress preschoolers, including Kai' Monte Vazquez, center.



Beverly Bidney
The Big Cypress Preschool class of 2026 with Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, President Holly Tiger and Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers.

Brighton and Hollywood preschool graduation coverage will be in the Tribune's July issue.



PECS alumni graduates pose on the school's playground which they enjoyed when they were younger. The school invited this year's high school and college graduates back to their former school for grad walk day May 20.

Beverly Bidney

PECS welcome back its graduates

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — In its annual tradition, Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School alumni returned to school for the annual grad walk on May 20 where they were met with cheers, applause and hugs from students, teachers and staff.

This year, the hallways were crowded with six college and 18 high school graduates dressed in caps and gowns and clearly happy to be back at their K-8 school. Before the grads perused those familiar hallways, principal Tracy Downing addressed the group in the school's media center.

"This is the largest crowd we've had in my seven years as principal," Downing said. "Our students look up to you and are motivated by you as you walk through



Beverly Bidney

school in your caps and gowns. They will see something they can do, too."

Josiah Hardy greets PECS students during the grad walk. Behind him is Keanu Bert.

Administrative assistant Michele Thomas told the group that grad walk is her favorite day of the year.

"We are so proud of you," Thomas said. "Parents, congratulations to you, too. I know sometimes it's hard, but you are the ones who keep them in the game and make sure they get to the finish line."

Before they enjoyed their final lap through PECS, the students listened as Downing gave them some words of advice.

"Life is a series of moments and it's important to savor each one," Downing said. "Celebrate your successes, learn from your failures and cherish the relationships that you build along the way."

The alumni graduates who participated included: Bryce Trammell, Hilowaishtalla Garcia, Malakai Garland, Truley Osceola, Tahnia Billie, Miley Jimmie, Raylen Smith, Jetta Osceola, Sariya Alvarez, Yani Smith, Alyssa Madrigal, JayLissa Brunette, Jayleigh Braswell, Ava Taylor, Aaryn King, Jovanny Torres Jr., Josiah Hardy, Julissa Hardy, Greyson Johns, Steel Gopher, Summer Gopher, Silas Madrigal and Michael Garcia.



Beverly Bidney

Advanced degree graduates pose in the PECS gym. From left are Miley Jimmie- AA, Tahnia Billie- AA, Summer Gopher- AA, Chaka Yani Smith- AA, Silas Madrigal- MA and Michael Garcia- AA.



Beverly Bidney

Silas Madrigal, who graduated with a master's degree from North Park University in Chicago, leads the grad walk through the halls of Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School May 20.



Beverly Bidney

Jetta Osceola captures the grad walk on her phone as she and other grads walk through the PECS hallways greeting current students. Yani Smith is next to her.

◆ AHFACHKEE From page 1B



Kevin Johnson

Valedictorian Alice Osceola.



Kevin Johnson

At left, Zechariah Stockton gets a hug from Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. Above, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Chairman Brian Weedon, the keynote speaker, performs a song from his tribe.



Kevin Johnson

Lavin Billie makes his entrance into the graduate ceremony. Each graduate entered separately.

◆ HOLDINESS From page 1B

Holdiness is still figuring out exactly what her doctoral dissertation will be on, but she knows she wants to focus on the Native American population and geriatrics. A doctorate degree usually takes five years to complete, but Holdiness is hoping to do it in four years.

"The research I'm interested in is so limited, but it's rewarding to know that I'm contributing to this field of research," she said.

Graduation day was a big one for Holdiness; her father Jimmy Wayne Holdiness, brother Ozzie Holdiness and stepmother Brenda Holdiness attended the ceremony in Tallahassee.

"The day was great," Holdiness said. "Since my brother and mother passed, I've had few days that I felt really happy. It was a beautiful day."

"I have an overwhelming sense of pride," Jimmy Wayne Holdiness said. "I can't even describe how proud I am of her; she is an amazing woman. I'm so excited for her future. I think she will do great things."

For now, Holdiness plans to be a teaching assistant in an undergraduate sociology class in the fall and hopes to have an internship with the tribe over the summer. She serves as the treasurer for the sociology student union and makes an effort to be involved in other things around campus.

"It's easy to feel isolated in graduate school," she said. "I've made friends that way."

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Keant Bert



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Miley Jimmie



Thaddeus Johns



Jaylissa Brunette



Hayzen Balentine



Tahnia Billie



Halley Balentine



Moore Haven
High School
graduation
May 22, 2026



Kevin Johnson (2)



Moore Haven graduates include Halley Balentine, above, and Thaddeus Johns, right.

Celebrating Indigenous representation in children's literature

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

In her debut children's literature novel, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma citizen Christine Hartman Derr circles back to her Native roots. In "Raven, Rising," Derr celebrates Indigenous representation and culture from the perspective of her protagonist, Raven Miller, a Cherokee girl with supernatural capabilities she uses as a catalyst for social justice.

A cruel rumor spreads that the middle schooler is a witch responsible for the death of her parents. The rumors would be easy to disregard, but Miller possesses magical abilities when wielding ingredients for baking—her delicious goods, truth serum cupcakes or love spell cinnamon buns, have the power to change the people who eat them. Ever since her parents' death, however, baking only brings hard memories.



Courtesy photo

Christine Hartman Derr



Courtesy photo

"Raven, Rising"

After this tragic loss, Miller and her Aunt Coral move to Bear Creek Falls for a fresh start—except there's a clique that has it out for her and a vice principal who continuously targets her for dress code violations.

The Vermont College of Fine Arts (VCFA) graduate blends magic realism with timely discussions and conflicts that tweens can relate to. Originally from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, Derr relocated to Tallahassee to pursue her bachelor's degree at Florida State University. The author recalls finding her footing within the creative writing community from a young age.

"In fifth grade, I wrote my very first manuscript," Derr said. "In hindsight, it was Titanic fanfiction, but my teachers read it and gave me feedback. They enjoyed it, and that was very impactful to me."

Derr's first poem was published at just 12 years old.

"I've always been a storyteller and a writer—it's always been trying to find its way out," Derr added.

Both Christine Day and Cynthia Leitch Smith's stories, being authors of Native American descent, served as inspirations for Derr.

"Growing up, pop culture influenced my work more than my culture did," Derr said. "There wasn't a lot of Native representation in children's fiction. It hurts so much that there weren't characters like me in novels."

The heart of Derr's work is being a source of Indigenous representation, like Day and Smith, for today's generation of children and tweens.

"It wasn't until I was an adult that I thought, 'I can actually work to change this,'" Derr said. "I knew I wanted to represent people like me, those who are Native or mixed, to show that there isn't one way to look or be Native."

As Miller grows into her audacious spirit, Derr tackles conversations around dress codes and how wrongful violations are at the root of racial discrimination, fatphobia, and misogyny.

"I've always loved children's media," Derr said. "Much of it is overlooked or underestimated. It's important to address what adults would consider 'big issues,' because kids are experiencing them. They experience discrimination, both racial and religious, in all forms. Whether that's being ignored or isolated in school because of social hierarchies to dress code policies and how they oftentimes result in misogyny."

"Raven, Rising" centers around themes of grief, identity, belonging, and sharing the Cherokee language. Derr started her first draft of the novel in 2020 and finished in 2022. The revision process took two more years while she was a graduate student at VCFA—it wasn't until May 2024 that it was sold to HarperCollins for publishing.

"My identity informs my work so deeply," Derr said. "Every single project is like a tiny piece of my heart. I hope young Natives see that they belong and that they matter—that the absence of representation in media doesn't mean they don't belong—it just means that we need more of us to rise up and tell our stories."

With a release date scheduled for July 7, "Raven, Rising" will be available for purchase on Amazon, Barnes and Nobles, and anywhere books are sold. The audiobook, narrated by Native storyteller Anvil Rich, will be available on Amazon, Spotify, and Libro.

Following the novel's release, Derr's debut picture book, "Until We Meet Again: Donadagohvi," will be released on Sept. 22.

Caleb Hiatt graduates from Creighton University

STAFF REPORT

Caleb Hiatt graduated this spring from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, with a double major in Business Intelligence Analytics and Financial Technology. He will be working for Todata as a business intelligence developer. He is the son of Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal member Stephanie Bowers Hiatt and Jon Hiatt.



Courtesy photo

From left to right, the Hiatt family, Tyler Hiatt, Stephanie Bowers Hiatt, Caleb Hiatt, Jon Hiatt and Lucas Hiatt.

Blake Shelton to perform at Hard Rock Hollywood this fall

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Country music singer-songwriter and TV personality Blake Shelton will perform Oct. 24 at 8 p.m. at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino's Hard Rock Live. For tickets, go to myHRL.com.

With 31 No. 1 singles, 52 million singles, and 13 million albums sold and nearly 11 billion global streams, Shelton has received numerous awards, including six ACMs, three AMAs, 11 CMAs, 11 CMTs, and six People's Choice, among many others.

John Anderson, other country music stars to perform in West Palm Beach

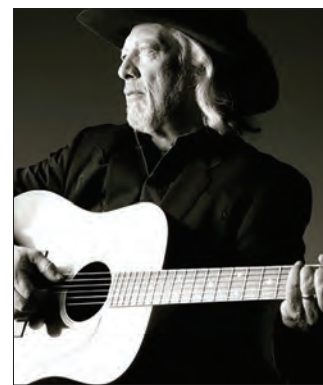
STAFF REPORT

WEST PALM BEACH — Alan Jackson's Five O'Clock Somewhere Fest will be held June 12-13 at The Palm Beaches Waterfront Commons in West Palm Beach.

Organized by Jackson, the festival is scheduled to include several country music performers, including John Anderson ("Seminole Wind"). The lineup also features Ella Langley, Old Dominion, Jimmy Buffet's Coral Reefer Band, Dylan Scott, Clint Black, Shenandoah, Rodney Atkins, Jammy Buffet (a Jimmy Buffet Tribute), Allen Stone and JD Spradlin of Sirius XM's Radio Margaritaville will host the event.

Festival originator Jackson played a direct role in its creation and conceptualization. "I've gotten to enjoy so many experiences at my concerts over the years," he said in a press release. "I'm not touring any more, but I like the idea of still being able to give people an opportunity to have a 'Good Time' and enjoy some great country music while they do," he adds, invoking the spirit of another hit from his career. Jackson is excited to welcome fans to Five O'Clock Somewhere Fest as he launches the event...and he'll mark the end of his touring career in late June at a sold-out stadium concert in Nashville.

For more information and tickets go to 5oclocksomewherfest.com.



Anderson, Black/Facebook

Above, John Anderson. Below, Clint Black.



A BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA HOUSING DEPARTMENT

TCD Department News Spotlight on Page 4

HOUSING DEPARTMENT SEMINOLE LIVING

MAY/JUNE ISSUE SERVING THE TRIBE WITH PRIDE! 2026 EDITION

HOUSING SNAPSHOT A YEAR IN REVIEW

April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026

Residences Served
2,155 Total Residences Served

92% Total Properties

70 ADA PROJECTS COMPLETED
57 TRAFFIC INFRASTRUCTURE
41 ROADS REPLACED
14 WINDOWS/DOORS REPLACED

Total Homes & Rentals Units: 2,155
Total Rental Units: 533
Total Families on Rental Waitlist: 487

HOUSING SERVICE CENTER PROCESSES A RECORD NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR THE TRIBE

Providing members with seamless 24/7 access to request services, a centralized tracking of work orders, and an efficient system of scheduling appointments were all driving forces behind the creation of a centralized call center.

Serving Our Tribal Members: Service Work Orders (WO)

Total WO Processed: 44,972
Service WO Opened: 22,591
Service WO Closed: 22,381

HOUSING DIRECTOR REFLECTS ON THE PAST 12 MONTHS OF PROGRESS ACROSS THE REGIONS

Over the past 12 months of Director Kadeja Jackson's administration, Housing has embraced pillars of technology, employee development, and community relations.

After stepping into a new role as the director of the Seminole Tribe of Florida Housing Department in 2025, Kadeja Jackson has continued to make strides to ensure tribal members receive the highest quality of housing services and professionalism across all tribal regions. Due to her leadership, the Housing Department has seen heightened communication across tribal regions; a drastic 47.6% decrease in after hour calls in key regions like Immokalee due to preventative maintenance, and a 13% decrease in general maintenance services requested tribal-wide. The Housing Department also experienced a 59% increase in Health & Safety 330K Program participation, and a 25% increase in ADA/Special Needs Program participation.

Reflecting the success of outreach efforts in educating tribal members about essential services available to them through the Housing Department. The key to Jackson's accomplishments is her focus on delivering safe, efficient, and sustainable housing services through communication, skilled professionals, and strong community partnerships.

"Service is more than a function, it's a responsibility and commitment to the well-being of every tribal member we serve," Jackson explained. "We are here to ensure tribal members experience excellent service every day."

In its first full year of operation as a centralized call center, the Seminole Tribe of Florida Housing Service Center under the management of TW Housing Operations Manager Susan Coleman processed nearly 45,000 service work orders over the past 12 months. Its heightened performance was due to several operational changes including professional development, streamlined processes, and the incorporation of a maintenance mobile app. The app allowed technicians to eliminate physical paperwork, reduce steps in their workflow, and decrease their work order completion time. As a result, the Service Center coordinators were able to improve their overall processing time.

Seminole Tribe of Florida Housing Department
Kadeja Jackson, Housing Director
Contact Us! 954-967-3609
HousingRequest@SemTribe.com

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE REGIONS

Beyond providing excellent service every day, the Housing Department is continuously connecting with tribal communities across regions. From Lakeland to Hollywood, tribal members are meeting Housing staff at outreach events like community meetings, vendor meetings, and even Take Your Child to Work Day!

The annual Brighton Field Day attracts hundreds to the festival each year and this year the Housing staff represented the department in the parade. Then in the Hollywood, Big Cypress, and Brighton regions, career fairs were the popular attractions among the youth. Other events included 5K charity run/walks like the Lexus Corporate Run and Autism Awareness Walk; an Easter event; and several senior activities. The Housing Department also hosted yummy "Lunch on Us" events for tribal members in Lakeland (March), Hollywood (April), and Brighton (April). These events were not only FUN but were filled with lots of essential Housing information.

Career Fair: Big Cypress
Career Fair: Hollywood
Easter: Service Center
Food Truck: Lakeland
Food Truck: Brighton
Cookout: Hollywood
Take Your Child to Work Day: Generator Tech Team
5K: Service Center
Vendor Meeting: Brighton

MEET YOUR HOUSING TEAM: IMMOKALEE & TAMiami TRAIL

Under the management of Senior Property Manager Kathryn Jo Ojeda, the Housing team serves both the Immokalee and Tamiami Trail regions along with several homesites of reservation.

OUR TECHNICIANS

William Toledo, Maintenance Coordinator
Carl Smith
Daniel Puente
David Krymski
John Medrano
Salvador Menendez

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: UPCOMING HOUSING EVENTS

Immokalee/Tamiami Trail
Call IMM Housing at 239-657-4509 for event details!

Hollywood
Attend Hollywood Housing events at the senior center starting with the Hurricane Readiness Session on Thursday, May 14, 2026, beginning 11AM. Then on Thursday, June 11, 2026, have lunch with Housing at the "Let's Talk Housing" event featuring a food truck and fun activities from 1PM-3:30PM. For details, call Jazzymin Shirley at 863-458-4721.

Brighton/Fort Pierce
Come meet with the Brighton Housing team for another Lunch on Us Brighton Community Food Truck event. It will take place in Flowing Well on Friday, June 12, 2026, from 12pm-4pm. Call Brighton Housing at 863-824-6051 for details.

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HOUSING PREPARES FOR HURRICANE SEASON

Tribal members can also expect another wave of quarterly generator inspections to occur in late June '26. These periodic inspections coupled with preventative maintenance services are critical especially during hurricane season to ensure the generators are working at optimal capacity for the full extent of their life span. With a service team of nine generator technicians tribal-wide, the Generator Maintenance Program is one of the largest programs in the Housing Department inclusive of the elder program.

The Generator Maintenance Program services 1,075 generators - and growing! Quarterly services typically include voltage checks, oil/filter changes, cleaning and pressure wash plug changes, battery checks, fuel top off, coolant level top off, charging system exams, repairs, installs, and more.

Immokalee Housing team is preparing CODE RED hurricane supply kits for maintenance staff to ensure their vehicles are well stocked for hurricane season.

"We want to ensure that homes across regions are well prepared for this hurricane season," Housing Director Kadeja Jackson explained. "We rely on the cooperative efforts of our tribal members to adhere to preventative maintenance recommendations and to contact us for help securing their homes in advance of any adverse weather condition. We don't want to wait for a pending storm to arise to take action. We want to help tribal members now."

During pre-hurricane season typical services include tree trimming, debris removal, window and door re-caulking, and other services as requested.

Did you know the Housing Department installed 39 additional stand-by generators over the past year for tribal member safety?

Generator Check
Roof Check
Community Check

Seminole Tribe of Florida Housing Department
Kadeja Jackson, Housing Director
Contact Us! 954-967-3609
HousingRequest@SemTribe.com

Tip of the Month! Generator Care

Home generators are programmed to reflect an Exercise Time - an automated run time that occurs each week at a set time - to ensure optimal operation.

If you notice during this hurricane season that your generator does NOT turn on during its weekly Exercise Time, call the Housing Service Center to schedule a preventative generator check!

HOUSING BUILDS ANOTHER CUSTOM HOME

The Housing Department is at it again - building yet another custom home on the reservation. Under the oversight of TW Senior Project Manager Brian Clark, the Housing Department works in collaboration with the Real Estate Department to build custom homes for tribal members. This program allows members to design their own home from the ground up based on their specifications and unique family needs. Whether it is a simple one-story ranch style home or an embodiment of two-story modern luxury, the Housing Department works with the homeowner to ensure they bring their dream homes to life.

Over the past two years, the Housing Department has built seven custom homes for elated homeowner. The entire process can take an average of 24 months to complete. Once completed, happy owners are ecstatic to receive the keys and start a new chapter in their brand new home. Congratulations!

Ever dreamed of building your own custom home on the reservation? Contact the Housing Service Center at 954-967-3609 to get connected to the TCD custom home build team.

Exterior Projects Happening Around the Regions!

Immokalee
In addition to a summer refresh at Alice Jimmie Circle, Immokalee Housing will also begin a summer exterior painting and landscape project at Lena Frank Townhomes. Call Josh Gonzalez at 954-864-0843 for details.

Hollywood
New landscape installation is happening at the Priscilla Sayen Way and Seminole Winds rental communities. Trees and flowering plants are currently undergoing a refresh and replacement throughout the communities. These improvements are scheduled for completion May '26. Hollywood Housing will also continue its annual gutter cleaning project. Owners are asked to secure pets and relocate vehicles for gutter access during the project. The project will continue through May '26. For project details, contact Property Manager Jazzymin Shirley at 863-458-4721.

Lakeland/Tampa
Residents can expect routine exterior maintenance to continue throughout the season including pre-hurricane season hazardous tree trimming; pressure washing; lawn care; and tree, hedge, plant, and shrub trimming. Call Lakeland/Tampa Housing at 813-245-3100 for details.

REMINDER Annual generator fuel 'top off' happening throughout May '26

Seminole Tribe of Florida Housing Department
Kadeja Jackson, Housing Director
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HousingRequest@SemTribe.com

NEWS FROM AROUND TCD

THE TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS ALONG TRIBAL ROADWAYS

The Transportation Department is making significant progress in the Flowing Well Roadway Improvement Project. The project encompasses roadway widening and re-paving, sidewalk construction, signage, drainage, lighting, fiber optics, and utility improvements. Throughout the month of May 2026, expect traffic impacts in the area due to roadway activities, and drainage culvert installation crossing Flowing Well Road near Harney Pond Road. Travel the area with caution.

For more information about the Brighton Capital Improvement Project, please contact the Transportation Department at 954-894-1060 or Transportation@SemTribe.com.

The Transportation Department is also making strides in the Harney Pond Road/Red Barn Road Improvement Project. The project encompasses water main, roadway, lighting, fiber optics, and multi-use path improvements. Throughout the month of May 2026, expect traffic impacts in the area due to paving activities along Harney Canal Road and Billy Hank Way as well as waterline installation at the intersection of Harney Pond and Flowing Well.

In April, TCD recognized Autism Awareness Month!

CONSTRUCTION HOUSING REAL ESTATE RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PUBLIC WORKS TRANSPORTATION

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION LEADS THE WAY IN HELPING REBUILD TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

In a collaborative effort across several departments, TCD has developed a dedicated team of industry experts to address the Lennar Home build back project. With Residential Construction & Development serving a key role, the team also includes the Housing Department, third party mold and forensic specialists, and Conrad & Scherer Law Firm. At an April 26 community meeting in Hollywood, several tribal members with homes in Seminole Park were in attendance for an update on the Lennar Homes deficiencies. Residential Construction Director Sherrika McWhin provided a comprehensive report on the department's approach to rebuilding the Lennar homes. Other departments in attendance included Public Works Department, Procurement Department, Tribal Inspector's Department, and Housing. Tribal members also signed up for a one-on-one session to review their Hollywood forensic home assessment with Residential Construction, Housing, and the legal team. Interested in reviewing your Hollywood home's forensic report? Call Housing to schedule an appointment!

Stay Connected

- Semtribe.com/Services/Housing-Department
- HousingRequest@SemTribe.com
- Office (Mon-Fri) | 8AM-5PM: 954-967-3609
- After Hours/Weekends/Holidays: 800-617-7517
- 5700 Griffin Road, Davie, FL 33314

IN OTHER TCD NEWS: FORT PIERCE COMMUNITY MEETING

Residential Construction, Housing and other STOF departments spoke at an April 26 community meeting at Chupco's Landing, led by STOF Fort Pierce Liaison Tihel Timothy.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Seminole Living is formerly **Housing Highlights** and has expanded to include news spotlights from across the Seminole Tribe of Florida Tribal Community Development (TCD) departments.

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Guitar Hotel to host World Cup pool party

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood's World Cup Kickoff Pool Party at The Guitar Hotel on Thursday, June 25, from 8:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The Latin poolside celebration will feature Colombian artist and one of the most polarizing voices in Latin music, Jessi Uribe.

For tickets, go to myHRL.com. Must be at least 21 years old to attend.

Uribe is one of Colombia's most-streamed artists and is a leading force in regional Mexican music. Known for his chart-topping hits and memorable performances, Jessi Uribe has established himself as one of the genre's most influential voices with songs such as "Dulce Pecado," "Matemos las Ganas" and "Alguien Me Gusta." His collaborations with Mexican artists, including Alejandro Fernández, Carín León, Joss Favela, Luis R. Conriquez, Espinoza Paz, and Edwin Luna y La Trakalosa, have propelled his music to new heights, further cementing his international appeal.

Uribe reached No. 1 on Billboard's Regional Mexican chart with "Si Ya Me Voy." In 2024, his album De Lejitos received a Grammy nomination for Best Música Mexicana Album, marking a milestone in his career and making him the first Colombian popular music artist to earn the distinction.

YOUR VISION IS OUR FOCUS!



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



Ahfachkee honors its student-athletes

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — After a six-year hiatus, sports at The Ahfachkee School returned in the 2025-26 academic year, and so did awards for those who excelled.

Awards were handed out May 26 in the school's gym during a pep rally. Student-athletes were recognized in archery, basketball and softball.

"Sports are a big part of getting students involved in school and it gets the community to come out," said Principal Phillip Baer. "At most of our basketball games this year, we had more people in the stands than the home team did. It's important to get the community involved. We hope to have more sports next year, including volleyball, archery, softball and track and field."



Beverly Bidney

Being able to participate in school sports can provide students with a

Harvey Bowers-Billie with the most consistent player medal he won in archery.



Beverly Bidney

Ollie Balentine with basketball leadership award.

sense of accomplishment.

"It's a source of validation, encouragement and appreciation," said Athletic Director Craig Freeman. "They have been without sports for a long time. Through sports they are able to accomplish things they didn't know they could do. They see that their hard work pays off whether or not they win the game."

Here are the award winners (MVP – most valuable player), (MCP – most consistent player).

Archery
MVP – Joshua Billie
MCP – Ezra Thomas-Bushell, Clive Bowers-Billie, Harvey Bowers-Billie
Leadership Award - Joshua Billie

Elementary Basketball
MVP – Zhane Carter
MCP – George Grasshopper
Coach's Award – Braylen Carter
Leadership Award – Azalea Billie

Middle School Girls Basketball
MVP – Madelynn Garza
MCP – Josphine "JoJo" Billie
Coach's Award – Faithlynn Cypress
Leadership Award – Ollie Balentine

High School Girls Basketball
MVP – Curmya Smith
MCP – Reyna Rios
Coach's Award – TJ
Leadership Award – Vanessa Osceola

Middle School Boys Basketball
MVP – Tito Orozco
MCP – Amasiah Billie
Coach's Award – Kasyr Hannahs
Leadership Award – Amasiah Billie

High School Boys Basketball
MVP – Curtis Smith
MCP – Lavin Billie
Coach's Award – Chance Frye
Leadership Award – Blaze Cypress

Middle/High School Softball
MCP – Goldie Jumper, Jesse Has No Horse
Leadership Award – Ada Bruised-Head

Athletics Warrior of the Year
Ada Bruised-Head



Beverly Bidney

The moment Ada Bruised-Head heard her name called as the Athletic Warrior of the Year.



Beverly Bidney

Principal Phillip Baer with Ada Bruised-Head, winner of Athletic Warrior of the Year.



Kevin Johnson

Oxbridge Academy left fielder Ila Trueblood makes the defensive play of the game with a diving catch on the foul line to end the second inning in the Class 2A softball state championship May 21 in Longwood. Oxbridge went on to win the championship, 5-1, against Cornerstone Charter Academy.

Ila Trueblood, Oxbridge Academy win state championship

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

LONGWOOD — All over the field, Ila Trueblood, from the Brighton Reservation, provided a spark for the Oxbridge Academy softball team in its Class 2A state championship win May 21 at Boombah-Soldiers Creek Park in Longwood, just north of Orlando.

Trueblood starred in the field, at the plate and on the basepaths to help lead Oxbridge (West Palm Beach) to a 5-1 win against Cornerstone Charter Academy (Belle Isle). If state championship games handed out MVP awards, Trueblood certainly would have garnered plenty of votes.

It was a diving catch by Trueblood, a junior left fielder, on the foul line that ended the second inning with a runner at first and gave Oxbridge its first big play of the night.

"Our defense has been unbelievable all year," said Oxbridge coach Kevin Drake. "Ila Trueblood, the dive in left field down the line. It's awesome. She had a good game today."

"I always play for my pitcher. I know she wants it just as bad as I want it. Every time I'm out on the field, I want to leave it all on the field and play for her," Trueblood said.

Oxbridge had a leadoff walk to start the game, but struggled to make solid contact and was held hitless by Izzy Choquette through five.

Trueblood, right after she made the diving catch, led off the third and flew out to fairly deep centerfield. Even though it was

an out, it was the hardest and furthest struck ball of the game for Oxbridge to that point, and it paved the way for later success at the plate from Trueblood.

"That really boosted me," Trueblood said. "I had a teammate tell me that they had a really good feeling about me today, and I feel like that really helped me have confidence in myself."

Trailing 1-0 in the sixth, Oxbridge desperately needed another momentum booster. Trueblood, batting in the eighth spot in the order, provided the jolt with a leadoff single to center. The hit couldn't have come at a better time for Oxbridge. It was the team's first hit. Trueblood became the first Oxbridge runner to reach second base after a successful sacrifice bunt by Riley Lyons. Trueblood alertly stole third, and scored the team's first run on a single by winning pitcher Aubrey Vital (4-hitter, 7 Ks) to knot the score at 1-1.

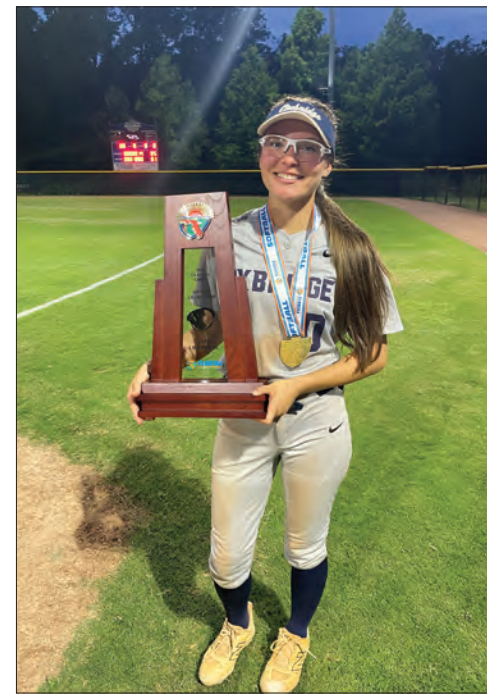
In the top of the seventh, Oxbridge pulled ahead with four runs. Trueblood walked on four pitches and was one of three runs that came home when Hailey Goode singled and rounded the bases on Cornerstone errors.

Cornerstone had two runners on base in the bottom of the seventh, but didn't score. A final out popout clutched by shortstop Kaiya Glucksman with a charging Trueblood right behind her touched off a wild celebration by the Oxbridge players, who heaved their gloves high into the late evening air.

"It's all about them," Drake said. "The girls win the game. We coach, but they win the games. They play hard. You see tonight, they never gave up."

Trueblood, who has a 4.0 GPA and a strong interest in science, said the team's bonding helped pave the way to a state championship.

"I love them all," she said. "No matter our differences, no matter our problems, we always correct them and make up. We just love each other so much, and the chemistry is so great."



Kevin Johnson

Ila Trueblood holds the Class 2A state championship trophy.



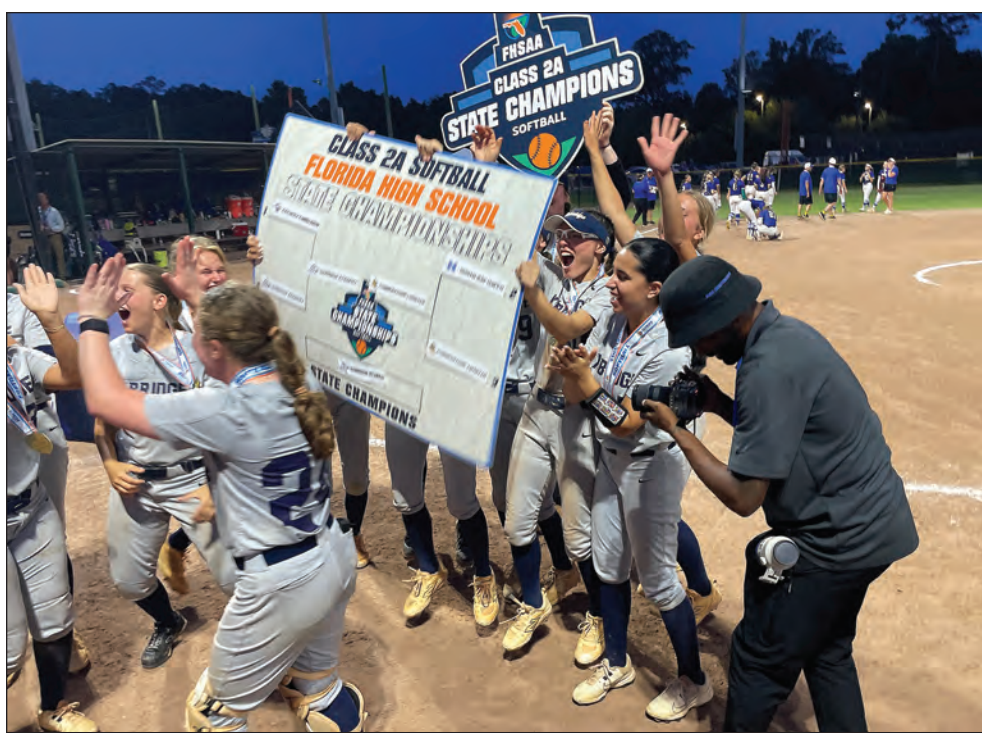
Kevin Johnson

Ila Trueblood comes through at the plate with Oxbridge's first hit of the game, a leadoff single in the sixth inning.



Kevin Johnson

Ila Trueblood avoids a tag at the plate as she scores a run in the seventh inning.



Kevin Johnson

Oxbridge celebrates winning the 2A state championship.



Kevin Johnson

On her way to first base after drawing a walk in the seventh, Ila Trueblood shows her teammates that she's fired up.



The Class 4A-District 14 champion Okeechobee High School softball team after the Brahms defeated Jensen Beach, 7-5, April 30 in Jensen Beach.

Kevin Johnson

District title, regional playoff win highlight OHS softball season

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

A second straight district championship. Sixteen wins, the most in a decade. The first regional playoff win in seven years.

Those are the memories Okeechobee High School softball should cling to. The final game, a 10-1 loss to American Heritage in a Class 4A regional semifinal – the team's third consecutive day of riding a bus from OHS to Plantation due to uncooperative weather – not so much.

"We had a good season," said Danny Bonilla, who guided the Brahms to a 16-11 record in his first year as head coach. "We did things that nobody thought we could do; we won a regional game. We played a pretty decent schedule. We didn't play too many easy teams. For the most part, they were challenged for the whole season."

Okeechobee has 10 tribal members on the team. They are Serenity Billie, Melaine Bonilla, Amalia Estrada, Dyani Kayda, Kulipa Julian, Charisma Micco, Cherish Micco, Dali Nunez, Tehya Nunez and Kierra Snell. None are seniors, so no doubt expectations will be higher next year as the team returns most of its players.

Big start propels Okeechobee in district semifinal

Okeechobee built an 8-1 lead after two innings against Dr. Joaquin Garcia in the district semifinals April 28, and the Brahms needed all those runs and then some to advance with a 10-8 win.

Audra Friend and Hayden Slovenski each had RBI hits in the first inning. In the second, Charisma Micco led off with a double and scored on a single by Haylee Pendrey. Melaine Bonilla smacked an RBI single, and Friend delivered her second run-scoring hit.

Okeechobee led 10-4 after three. Micco, Bonilla, Friend and Pendrey led a 10-hit attack with two hits each.

Two district championships in a row

The prospect of repeating as district champions looked bleak for the Okeechobee.

Trailing No. 1 seed Jensen Beach by two runs in the Class 4A-District 14 championship game April 30, the second-seeded Brahms, who have 10 players from the Seminole Tribe of Florida, were down to



Kevin Johnson

After making a tough running catch, Okeechobee center fielder Tehya Nunez is congratulated by teammates in the district championship game.

their final out in the seventh inning. With a runner at first base, they desperately needed a hero...or two. Melaine Bonilla and Audra Friend stepped up and filled those roles with clutch hits that paved the way for extra innings and a 7-5 win by the Brahms.

Bonilla smacked a double to left-center that put runners in scoring position. The stage was set for Friend, who drilled an 0-1 fastball with a line drive rocket over the leftfielder's head and brought home Haylee Pendrey and Bonilla to knot the game at 5-5.

The drama wasn't over. In the bottom of the seventh, Jensen Beach had runners at second and third with no outs. With first base open, Okeechobee pitcher Charisma Micco could have pitched around or intentionally walked a batter to set up a force at any base, but instead she met the challenge head on right away, and it paid off. She kept the runners in place by retiring the next three batters, including two strikeouts.

In the eighth, per the rules, the teams started with a runner at second; Okeechobee capitalized; Jensen Beach did not.

An infield chopper off the bat of Dyani Kayda was misplayed, allowing Janessa Arana to score the go-ahead run. Tehya Nunez brought home an insurance run on a



Kevin Johnson

Winning pitcher Charisma Micco helps her own cause by delivering a hit in Okeechobee's 8-3 regional quarterfinal win against Archbishop McCarthy May 6 in Okeechobee.

groundout. Micco delivered a perfect 1-2-3 eighth inning to seal the win.

Friend (2-for-3, 3 RBIs) led Okeechobee at the plate. Pendrey and Lilly Larson each had two hits. Micco fanned nine and allowed only two earned runs.

OHS notches regional quarterfinal win

With 10 hits and 12 walks, getting runners on base wasn't a problem for the Brahms in their 8-3 win against Archbishop McCarthy (Southwest Ranches) May 6 in a Class 4A regional quarterfinal. Although they stranded 13, the Brahms never trailed.

Winning pitcher Charisma Micco led off the game a single. Her courtesy runner was her younger sister Cherish, who scored on a wild pitch. Another run came home on a groundout by Janessa Arana.

The score remained 2-0 until the fourth when Dyani Kayda walked, moved to third on a hit by Tehya Nunez, and scored on a wild pitch. Nunez scored on a sac bunt by Melaine Bonilla, who also had an RBI sac fly in the seventh.

Okeechobee padded its lead on a 2-run double by Lilly Larson in the sixth to make it 6-0. Hayden Slovenski followed with an RBI single. Slovenski and Haylee Pendry each had two hits; Kayda drew three walks. McCarthy's Salma Amer belted a 3-run homer to center in the sixth.

Season ends in Plantation

Okeechobee's season ended with a 10-1 loss to powerhouse American Heritage May 14. The game was twice rained out the previous two days as Okeechobee made the lengthy trip three times in a row.

The Brahms showed some bus lag as they fell behind, 2-0, in the first inning. In the fourth, Melaine Bonilla led off with a double and scored to make it 2-1, but that was as close as OHS got as Heritage advanced with a 10-1 win.

The tribe's JLa Billie scored two runs as a courtesy runner for Heritage.

Top performers

Charisma Micco led the team in batting average (.512) and hits (44) followed by Melaine Bonilla (.489 and 43). Bonilla led the way in RBIs with 31. Micco was the team's main pitcher. She finished with a 2.09 ERA and an 11-5 record with 82 strikeouts in 114 innings pitched.

Angelina Yzaguirre goes 4-for-4 in final game for ECS

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

If anyone wants to know how to end a softball season on a high note, just check with Angelina Yzaguirre.

In 2024 and 2025, she and her teammates at Evangelical Christian School in Fort Myers ended their seasons as state champions.

This year, ECS's bid for three straight state titles ended with a loss in the 1A state semifinals, but Yzaguirre played a starring role in what was her final high school game.

She went 4-for-4 with a triple, two RBIs, one walk and one run scored. ECS lost a slugfest, 16-15, to Geneva, in Longwood.

Yzaguirre had two 3-hit games earlier in the season, but never four. It was her seventh multiple hit game of the season.

She also shined in the previous game, a 14-4 regional final win against Northside Christian. She went 2-for-3, with one double, one RBI and three runs scored.

On an offensively gifted team, Yzaguirre's .397 batting average was the fifth highest. She had 25 hits in 63 at-bats with one triple, four doubles, seven RBIs and 17 runs scored.

This season was Yzaguirre's sixth with ECS. Remarkably, the team won district championships all six years.

With the loss of only a few seniors, ECS figures to be strong again next year and likely will be a serious contender for another state title, but will have to do so without Yzaguirre.



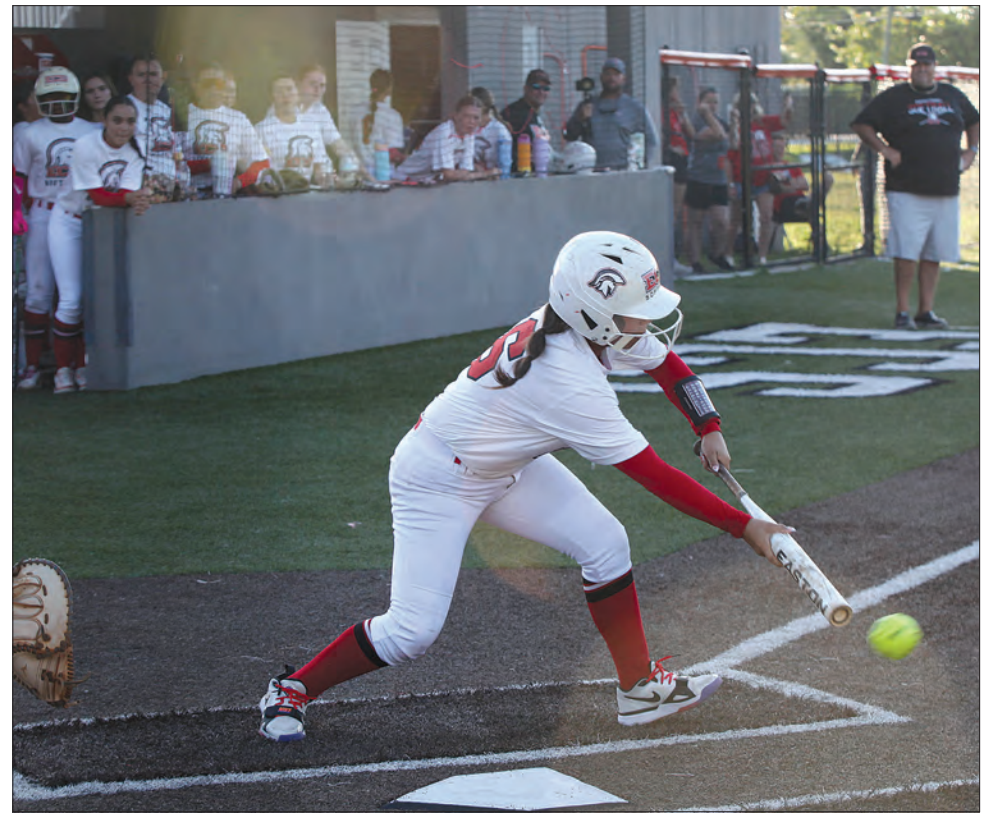
Beverly Bidney

Angelina Yzaguirre on the basepaths for Evangelical Christian School softball in its 16-1 win against Sarasota Christian in a Class 1A regional quarterfinal May 6 in Fort Myers.



ECS

Angelina Yzaguirre won district championships in all six years she was on the ECS softball team.



Beverly Bidney

Angelina Yzaguirre makes contact at the plate in a 1A regional quarterfinal.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee catcher Melaine Bonilla gets ready to tag out a Jensen Beach runner.



Kevin Johnson

Cherish Micco, as a courtesy runner, dives into home plate for a run against Archbishop McCarthy.



Beverly Bidney

Angelina Yzaguirre and her teammates are in an upbeat mood for their regional quarterfinal game.

OB Osceola III leads St. John Neumann to regional championship win

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

OB Osceola III's final outing on the mound for St. John Neumann was one to remember.

The senior southpaw and Florida State University-signee tossed a masterpiece in game 3 of the Class 1A best-of-three regional final against rival Canterbury, from Fort Myers.

After the teams split the first two games, Osceola picked a good time to pitch perhaps his best game of the season. Osceola's gem included nine strikeouts as Neumann edged Canterbury, 4-2, on May 9 in Fort Myers. He allowed only one earned run in six and one-third innings against the defending state champions who entered the game with a 26-4 record and averaged seven runs per game.

The nine Ks tied Osceola's season-high when he fanned nine in a complete game, three-hit shutout against Mariner April 9.

The victory against Canterbury earned Neumann a spot in the 1A state semifinals at Hammond Stadium in Fort Myers. The momentum from the regional win didn't carry over for Neumann, which was shaky in the first inning against Orangewood Christian (Maitland) and never recovered. Neumann trailed all game, gave up 12 hits and committed four errors. Osceola did not play.



Kevin Johnson

Courtesy photo

Winning pitcher OB Osceola III hoists the regional championship trophy that St. John Neumann captured with a 4-2 win against Canterbury on May 9.



OB Osceola III and teammates at the end of the top of the first inning in the Class 1A state semifinals in Fort Myers.



Kevin Johnson (2)
Above, left, and right, OB Osceola III (uniform No. 3) and his St. John Neumann teammates at the Class 1A state semifinal May 14 at Hammond Stadium in Fort Myers. Neumann's season ended with a 6-4 loss to Orangewood Christian.



Kevin Johnson

OB Osceola III, second player from left, and his teammates cheer from the third base dugout at Hammond Stadium in Fort Myers.

Teena-Maree Covarrubias signs with Concordia University Chicago

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — Having lived her entire life on the Big Cypress Reservation, Teena-Maree Covarrubias knows all about rural living. She's about to find out about life in the big city.

Covarrubias will attend Concordia University Chicago. She's eager to start her college career close to the nation's third largest city; the college is located in River Forest, 10 miles from downtown.

"I'll be majoring in history and playing softball, so I'm very excited," Covarrubias said.

On May 1, Covarrubias was joined by family members as she signed with Concordia softball during a ceremony at her high school, Xceed Preparatory Academy in Weston, 45 miles from the reservation.

She made lengthy trips south on Alligator Alley for academics, but she headed north of the reservation for softball. Because Xceed doesn't have a softball team, Covarrubias was allowed to play for Moore Haven.

She excelled for the Terriers with a highly competitive approach that included being a solid and reliable third baseman and a warrior at the plate, evidenced by her being hit by pitches nine times this season, by far the most on the team.

She batted .237 in 18 games as a senior



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven High School third baseman Teena-Maree Covarrubias gets set during a district semifinal game April 28.

with eight RBIs and three doubles. One of her best games at the plate came late in the season when she went 2-for-3 and scored a run in a district semifinal win against Glades



Calvin Tiger

Teena-Maree Covarrubias, from the Big Cypress Reservation, signs with Concordia University Chicago for softball May 1 at Xceed Preparatory Academy in Weston. With her are, from left to right, Kyle Davis, Olivia Peredo, Orlando Covarrubias, Marlin Miller-Covarrubias and Orlando Chance.



Kevin Johnson

Teena-Maree Covarrubias prepares to lay down a bunt.

Day.

Covarrubias said she researched colleges with softball and wanted to find a level where she could play. She landed on Concordia, an NCAA Division III school.

Although her high school career is over, she might still have more softball to play in Florida. For the past five years, Concordia has started its season with trips to Florida.

Covarrubias visited the campus last fall and was immediately impressed.

"I love the area; right near family. I fell in love with it. And their history program is amazing," she said.

She'll be in an area oozing with history; Walt Disney's childhood home and Frank Lloyd Wright's longtime family home are within five miles of the school.

As for career aspirations, Covarrubias has her eyes on the Ah-Tah-Thi-Museum.

"I want to work at the museum in Big Cypress with the museum curator," she said. "If everything goes as planned, I want to be the museum director."

Presented By Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

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

PECS honors sports award winners, scholars

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BRIGHTON — Excellence on the field and in the classroom were recognized at the Pematyev Emahakv Charter School sports

awards night May 11. Jovanny Torres, athletics director, hosted the program in the school's gymnasium that honored the volleyball, soccer, basketball, baseball, softball and pep squad teams. Here's a look at the award winners for

each team. The Seminole Award is given to a student-athlete on each team who exemplifies outstanding qualities such as determination, teamwork and good sportsmanship.



Kevin Johnson

Top scholar athletes: Dylanie Peak (girls), Jessa Davis (girls), Samuel Van Camp (boys).



Kevin Johnson

Coed soccer: from left, Willena Tommie, Kahniyah Billie, Jasper Gore, Alakai Bert.



Kevin Johnson

Varsity volleyball: from left, Kaliyah Hodge, Ameliana Osceola, Jamelynn Anderson, Macayden Sardina, Dalysse Baker, Avani Smith.



Kevin Johnson

Baseball: from left, Nakoa Smiley, Damahni Bonilla.



Kevin Johnson

Softball: from left, Kaliyah Hodge, Serenity Bishop, Ameliana Osceola, Amariah Lavatta, Okalani Collins, Jolietta Osceola.



Kevin Johnson

Pep Squad: from left, Sarah Randolph, Aaliyanice Castro, Mellanie Alvarez, Malliea Alvarez, Macy Williams, Nohea Collins.



Kevin Johnson

Girls basketball: from left, Jolietta Osceola, Amariah Lavatta, Dalysse Baker, Ameliana Osceola, Kaliyah Hodge



Kevin Johnson

Boys basketball: from left, Matthew Peaden, Elakiah Collins, Nakoa Smiley, Damahni Bonilla, Silas Snow.



Kevin Johnson

PECS coaches, from left, Jovanny Torres (girls basketball), Haley Underhill (softball), Bryan Van Camp (soccer), Abril Bert (soccer), Monica Koger (volleyball), Suraiya Smith (volleyball), Katie Bert (pep squad), Faith Vest (softball), Eli Finney (boys basketball), Marshall Tommie (baseball).

2025-26 PECS sports award winners

VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

- Dalysse Baker – Seminole Award
- Avani Smith – MVP
- Kaliyah Hodge – Offensive Player of the Year
- Ameliana Osceola – Defensive Player of the Year
- Macayden Sardina – Most Improved
- Jamelynn Anderson – Rookie of the Year

JUNIOR VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

- Oklahni Collins – Seminole Award
- Amilya Rodrigues – MVP
- Jessa Davis – Offensive Player of the Year
- Willena Tommie – Defensive Player of the Year
- Amariah Lavatta – Most Improved
- Claire Randolph – Rookie of the Year

PEP SQUAD

- Sarah Randolph – Seminole Award
- Nohea Collins – Crowd Leader
- Macy Williams – Positive Attitude
- Malliea Alvarez – Most Encouraging
- Mellanie Alvarez – Most Improved
- Aaliyanice Castro – Most Cheer Spirit

COED SOCCER

- Kahniyah Billie – Seminole Award
- Alakai Bert – MVP
- Teo Estrada – Offensive Player of the Year
- Willena Tommie – Defensive Player of the Year
- Jasper Gore – Most Improved Player
- Cody Tommie – Rookie of the Year

BOYS BASKETBALL

- Nakoa Smiley – Seminole Award
- Silas Snow – MVP
- Damahni Bonilla – Offensive Player of the Year
- Jeremy Smith Jr. – Defensive Player of the Year
- Matthew Peaden III – Most Improved
- Elakiah Collins – Rookie of the Year

GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Jolietta Osceola – Seminole Award
- Margarita Fudge – MVP
- Kaliyah Hodge – Offensive Player of the Year
- Ameliana Osceola – Defensive Player of the Year
- Dalysse Baker – Most Improved
- Amariah Lavatta – Rookie of the Year

BASEBALL

- Manny Estrada – Seminole Award
- Miguel Estrada – MVP
- Nakoa Smiley – Offensive Player of the Year
- Damahni Bonilla – Defensive Player of the Year
- Teo Estrada – Most Improved

SOFTBALL

- Okalani Collins – Seminole Award
- Kaliyah Hodge – MVP
- Serenity Bishop – Offensive Player of the Year
- Ameliana Osceola – Defensive Player of the Year
- Jolietta Osceola – Most Improved
- Amariah Lavatta – Rookie of the Year

TOP SCHOLAR ATHLETES

- Female: Dylanie Peak (4.0), Jessa Davis (4.0)
- Male: Samuel Van Camp (3.8)

SCHOLAR ATHLETES (3.5 GPA and above)

- Alakai Bert (3.5)
- Serenity Bishop (3.8)
- Elakiah Collins (3.7)
- Okalani Collins (3.9)
- Jessa Davis (4.0)
- Jaiden Fludd (3.5)
- Bryant Hunsinger (3.7)
- Arrow Johns (3.6)
- Jolietta Osceola (3.6)
- Matthew Peaden (3.5)
- Dylanie Peak (4.0)
- Avani Smith (3.8)
- Riley Thomas (3.8)
- Willena Tommie (3.6)
- Samuel Van Camp (3.8)



Kevin Johnson

Scholar athletes with 3.5 GPA and above.



Kevin Johnson

JV volleyball: from left, Jessa Davis, Willena Tommie, Jolietta Osceola, A'Milya Rodriguez, Claire Randolph, Okalani Collins.

UF, FSU to play afternoon game

STAFF REPORT

TALLAHASSEE — This year's Florida vs Florida State rivalry football game will be an afternoon affair. FSU announced in May that the kickoff will be at 3:30 p.m. when the Gators visit Doak Campbell Stadium Nov. 27. It will be the final regular season game for both teams. As of June 1, only five of FSU's 12 regular season games had start times; one of those is a Sept. 19 trip to Alabama to face the Crimson Tide at 3:30 p.m. FSU will host SMU on Labor Day (Sept. 7) at 7:30 p.m. On Oct. 17, FSU will come to Hard Rock Stadium to face the Miami Hurricanes.

The Seminoles will be home on Halloween to face Clemson; the kickoff time has yet to be announced. The homecoming game will be Nov. 21 against North Carolina State. FSU's roster includes redshirt freshman defensive back Zae Thomas from the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Thomas saw action in two games last season.

2026 FSU football schedule

Aug. 29 vs New Mexico State, 7 p.m.
 Sept. 7 vs SMU, 7:30 p.m.
 Sept. 19 at Alabama, 3:30 p.m.
 Sept. 26 vs Central Arkansas, TBA
 Oct. 3 vs Virginia, TBA
 Oct. 9 at Louisville, 7 p.m.
 Oct. 17 at Miami, TBA
 Oct. 31 vs Clemson, TBA
 Nov. 7 at Boston College, TBA
 Nov. 13 at Pittsburgh, TBA
 Nov. 21 vs North Carolina St. TBA
 Nov. 27 vs Florida, 3:30 p.m.

FLORIDA STATE

22 ZAE THOMAS
 DB • 6-3 • 201 • Freshman • Fort Lauderdale, Fla. • American Heritage
 2025 (FRESHMAN): Played two games in redshirt season... made Florida State debut against East Texas A&M... also played vs. Kent State... contributed to scout team.

32 JALEN ANDERSON
 DL • 6-2 • 242 • Junior • Slidell, La. • Slidell/Pearl River (Miss.) CC
 BEFORE FSU: No. 6 national prospect on 247Sports JuCo board... No. 1 JuCo edge and No. 2 player from Louisiana... No. 7 JuCo player on ESPN's JUCO... played 18 games for Pearl River in 2024 and 2025, recording 80 tackles, 9.5 sacks and 20.5 tackles for loss... added four forced fumbles, three fumble recoveries and two interceptions... had 41 tackles, 7.0 sacks and 9.0 tackles for loss as freshman in 2024... totaled 39 tackles, 2.5 sacks and 9.0 tackles for loss as sophomore in 2023... All-State and All-District at Slidell High School from 2022-23... All-State as senior in 2023... chose Florida State over offers from Vanderbilt, Colorado and West Virginia.

FSU's spring football notes highlight the team's players, including the tribe's Zae Thomas.

FSU men to open in Tampa

STAFF REPORT

TALLAHASSEE — The Florida State men's basketball team, which includes the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Xavier Osceola, will open its 2026-27 season against Florida A&M in the Orion180 Tip-Off Classic at Benchmark International Arena in Tampa on Nov. 2. The event also features a matchup between Florida and Miami. "We're excited to open our season in Tampa in an event that showcases four outstanding basketball programs from the state of Florida," head coach Luke Loucks said in a press release. "To have Florida State, Florida, Miami and Florida A&M all together in one doubleheader is a great opportunity for our fans and a great celebration of basketball in our state. It's also especially meaningful for me personally to bring our program back to the Tampa Bay area, so close to my hometown of Clearwater, and play in front of so many Seminole fans from that region." Florida State welcomes 13 newcomers for the 2026-27 season, including eight four-star prospects. Loucks' first high school class is ranked as the nation's No. 11 prep signing class according to 247Sports, and the full class is the consensus No. 2 group in the ACC while ranking No. 16 nationally by 247Sports. The group of five transfers is first in the ACC and No. 4 in the country in On3's Team Transfer Portal Index. Last season, the Seminoles posted an 18-15 record with a 10-8 mark in the ACC to set the program record for conference wins by a first-year head coach. The Seminoles displayed solid improvement over the course of the season, winning seven of their final eight games, and 10 of 12, before falling 80-79 to No. 1-ranked Duke in the ACC Tournament quarterfinal. FSU's winning torrent over the final month of the season included a school-record five consecutive ACC road victories. For ticket information, go to Seminoles.com/tickets or contact FSU's Ticket Office at 850-644-1830.

Hard Rock Live to host boxing matches June 28

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Boxing takes center stage as the Fists of Fury Series returns to Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood June 28 at 4 p.m. For tickets, go to myHRL.com. Fresh off his impressive victory over the previously unbeaten Neslan Machado, WBC Middle East, WBC FECARBOX, and WBA Continental lightweight champion Armando Martinez (18-0, 15 KOs) continues his march toward a world title in the main event of the evening. The event will also feature a bevy of local talents in separate special attraction bouts, including the always exciting Jeremy Park (1-1), undefeated lightweight prospect Miguel Paredes (7-0, 3 KOs), and hard-hitting heavyweight Lorenzo Medina (13-1, 11 KOs). "We are very excited to bring another action-packed evening of fights to Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino," promoter Kris Lawrence said in a press release. "This event is stacked with great matchups and a future world champion in the main event at the historic Hard Rock Live."

Rodeo in Davie June 20

STAFF REPORT

DAVIE — The Weekley Brothers Davie Pro Rodeo will hold a PRCA Rodeo event June 20 at 7:30 p.m. at Davie Arena on Bergeron Rodeo Grounds in Davie. For more information and tickets go to davieprodeocom.

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INFR Tour comes to Brighton with Josiah Johns Memorial Rodeo

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BRIGHTON — What's better than spending a night at the rodeo? How about two nights?

The annual action-packed Josiah Johns Memorial Rodeo ran April 24-25 at the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Brighton Reservation. The Eastern Indian Rodeo Association event is part of the Indian National Finals Rodeo Tour.

The competition featured several cowboys and cowgirls from the Seminole Tribe as well as others from the central and western U.S. and Canada.

Some of the standouts on the first night included Dakota Louis (7.7 calf roping), Ahnie Jumper (4.33 ladies breakaway), Dusty Louis (16.38 steer wrestling), Troy Crawler (4.76 senior breakaway), Quinley Inman (16.44 barrels), Ace Youngblood (16.45 barrels), Kalgary Johns (16.66 barrels) and Boogie Johns (17.29 barrels).

INFR World Champion Josh Jumper and Dakota Louis had the top time in team roping.

The saddle bronc riders also shined with the first three all staying for the required eight seconds. However, the bulls proved to be tough competition as they got the best of the riders in bull riding at the end of the night.

Norman Osceola and Steven Dewolfe started off the night with excellent rides in bareback, the first event.



Ryder Johns shows good form in jr. breakaway at the Josiah Johns Memorial Rodeo.



Team ropers Makayla Torres, left, and Jace Johns pursue their target.



Taylor Johns gets the Josiah Johns Memorial Rodeo underway April 24 at the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena in Brighton.



Lane Andrews goes airborne in bareback.



Madisyn Osceola competes in barrel racing.

2026 Josiah Johns Memorial Rodeo Results

Bareback

1. Norman Osceola
2. Steven Dewolfe

Bull Doggin

1. Dakota Louis
2. Dusty Louis

Saddle Bronc

1. Jalen Joaquin
2. Daniel Weyrich

Calf Roping

1. Quinton Inman
2. Jace Johns

Ladies Breakaway

1. Ahnie Jumper
2. Leanna Billie

Sr. Breakaway

1. Troy Crawler

Jr. Breakaway

1. Daisy Garnett
2. Ryder Johns

Team Roping

1. Josh Jumper/Dakota Louis
2. Greg Louis/Dusty Louis

Barrels

1. Quinley Inman
2. Acelynn Youngblood
3. Kalgary Johns
4. Boogie Johns
5. Madisyn Osceola
6. Leanna Billie

Jr. Barrels

1. Rilynn Inman
2. Ellie Garnett

Hard Rock Stadium to host 7 World Cup matches

STAFF REPORT

MIAMI GARDENS — Hard Rock Stadium will have a prominent role in World Cup soccer, which attracts thousands of spectators and billions of viewers.

Here's the lineup for the seven games at the stadium:

- June 15: Saudi Arabia vs Uruguay, 6 p.m.

- June 21: Uruguay vs Cape Verde, 6 p.m.
 - June 24: Brazil vs Scotland, 6 p.m.
 - June 27: Portugal vs Colombia, 7:30 p.m.
 - July 3: Round of 32, 6 p.m.
 - July 11: Quarterfinal, 5 p.m.
 - July 15: Bronze final, 5 p.m.
- For more information go to hardrockstadium.com.



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