

# The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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Volume I • Number 5

May 2026

## Hard Rock Tampa expands presence with speedway name

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

A motorsports racetrack in Tampa has a new name.  
The 1.72-mile track at Motor Enclave, which offers high performance vehicle driving experiences to the public, is now known as Hard Rock Speedway. The announcement about the new naming rights was held April 4 at the track, and included Motor Enclave and Hard Rock executives and Tampa Mayor Jane Castor.  
As a part of Motor Enclave's 200-acre campus, Hard Rock Speedway will host performance driving experiences, corporate and community events, and track club member days.  
"This partnership represents exactly what The Motor Enclave was built for—bringing together world-class brands to create unforgettable experiences," Brad Oleshansky, founder and CEO of The Motor Enclave, said in a press release. "Hard Rock is synonymous with entertainment, energy, and scale. The Hard Rock Speedway is a bold step forward and a reflection of the future we're building together."

◆ See SPEEDWAY on page 7A

## Indian Country says goodbye to Gathering of Nations

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Gathering of Nations Pow Wow came to the end of its 43-year history April 24 and 25 at the Tingley Coliseum at Expo New Mexico in Albuquerque. Signs on the electronic board read "Fare Thee Well and Thank You" above the crowded dance floor as dancers and drummers enjoyed "The Last Dance" celebration.  
Billed as the largest pow wow in North America, historic annual attendance was about 3,000 competitors and 100,000 visitors over the two-day event. At press time, final figures for attendance were not available.  
The Seminole Tribe of Florida's current princesses — Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith — participated in the Grand Entry along with numerous princesses from other tribes.  
"I met a lot of people and made new friends," Latchford said. "The immersion aspect of it was great. I feel like I'm more comfortable talking to anyone, I think the crown made it easier. This experience proved to me that I can do great under stress. It made me more confident in my abilities."  
Former Miss Florida Seminole Cheyenne Kippenberger is on the GON Miss Indian World committee and helped out during the event. She served as Miss Indian World from 2019-21.  
The Miss Indian World pageant has been a highlight of GON where young women showcased their culture as they competed for the crown. The final Miss Indian World, Dania Wahwasuck, of the Prairie Band of



Beverly Bidney

Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford, second from left, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith, second from right, gather at the final Gathering of Nations on April 24 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with, from left, Cassandra Jimmie, Wanda Bowers, Loretta Micco and Suraiya Smith. Jimmie, Bowers and Smith are former Seminole princesses.

Potawatomi in Mayetta, Kansas, retired the crown at a ceremony April 25 after the Pow Wow's last Grand Entry.  
Cassandra Jimmie, Miss Florida Seminole 2010, served as chaperone for

Miss Florida Seminole and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole during the event. She attended GON and competed in Miss Indian World during her reign.  
"It's different now, it was smaller then,"

Jimmie said. "It isn't Gathering of Nations without the pageant; that made it stand out from any other pow wow."

◆ See GATHERING on page 4A

## Kids learn about tribe in annual Take Your Child to Work Day

BY CALVIN TIGER  
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe held its annual Take Your Child to Work Day event at the tribal headquarters building in Hollywood on April 23. Hosted by the Human Resources Department, multiple activities were planned for more than 140 children along with their parents who accompanied them during the day-long event.  
The Take Your Child to Work Day event started in the auditorium with a welcoming words by Human Resources, which also provided a presentation about the functions that HR does for the tribe and its team members. Shortly thereafter, a health presentation was conducted to show the

importance of dental hygiene and the dental services offered to the tribal community.  
There was plenty to see and experience inside and outside. Kids and their parents received a close-up view of a wildlife show hosted by Pharaohs Wildlife Kingdom, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and Okalee Village. Pharaoh Gayles presented multiple reptiles, including a crowd-pleasing encounter with an alligator.  
After the wildlife presentation, attendees were able to engage in multiple hands-on activities hosted by several departments, including Seminole Fire Rescue, Seminole Police Department, Integrative Health, Public Works, Advocacy and Guardianship, Seminole Media Productions, and the Culture Department.  
Some of the hands-on activities included a firehose demonstration, CPR training, fire

extinguisher training, beadwork for making bracelets and necklaces, making lotion with different essential oils, learning about snacks — such as Acai bowls — to promote healthy eating, a green screen interactive video experience conducted by Seminole Media Productions, and a presentation hosted by Culture about how to make the traditional tribal drink sofkee, which the attendees were able to try.  
"We love hosting this event and every year, our participation grows," said Timika Reid, HR director. "We are so excited to have the kids learn about what departments do here and we hope that it inspires them to pursue their dreams (and also come back and work for us)."

◆ See CHILD TO WORK on page 5A



Calvin Tiger

Wildlife presenter Pharaoh Gayles shows the crowd a blue tongue skink reptile as one of the Take Your Child to Work Day activities for attendees.



Calvin Tiger

Ashton Beckford learns CPR on a practice mannequin assisted by Seminole Fire Rescue's Fire Prevention Supervisor Natalia Whiteshield during the Take Your Child to Work Day event April 23.

# Editorial

## Spotlight on Florida's Future: How sea-level rise and community design impact our rapidly growing state

• Tom Hctor and Vivian Young

What could Florida's future hold? The relocation of a million residents by 2070 due to land inundation from sea-level rise? The loss of 250 acres of land every day – more than 90,000 acres a year – to sprawling development?

Or the protection of priority natural and agricultural lands and the valuable ecosystem services they provide? A thriving agricultural economy? More compact, livable and fiscally sound communities?

Since 2022, the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning and 1000 Friends of Florida have partnered on a series of GIS-based and economic studies to better understand how sea-level rise and community design decisions could impact Florida's lands, waters and economy.

"Spotlight on Florida's Future," available at [1000fof.org/outreach/reports/spotlight](http://1000fof.org/outreach/reports/spotlight), compiles major findings in a brief, readable new report.

### Major findings

Based on moderate projections from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, sea level could rise by about 10 inches by 2040, inundating a million acres of land in Florida and necessitating the relocation of more than 200,000 residents. By 2070, sea level could rise by almost 3 feet, inundating 1.7 million acres and forcing almost a million residents to relocate.

Compounding this significantly is how Florida chooses to develop. Before World War II, communities featured traditional, compact downtown areas with a mix of shops, offices and housing, along with adjoining walkable neighborhoods. Today, sprawling suburbs and strip shopping centers predominate in Florida, with tremendous impacts on our environment, quality of life and pocketbooks.

The bottom line? It takes more land than before to meet residents' needs for housing, offices, shops and other uses.

With Florida projected to add about 12 million residents by 2070 – about 57% more than in 2019 – continued sprawling development could consume 3.5 million acres, including about 2.2 million acres of agricultural land. Avoiding development on Florida's most important natural and agricultural lands and returning to more compact community design could save about

1.3 million acres from development.

Florida-focused economic studies conducted by the geoaccounting firm Urban3 reveal that community planning to support more compact design and to keep rural areas rural is the fiscally sound and responsible choice for local governments and taxpayers alike. Avoiding the loss and fragmentation of agricultural land will also help keep agriculture – a mainstay of our state and local economies and essential for food security – economically viable in the decades to come.

### Florida can grow smarter

Our state is at a significant juncture. Seemingly small decisions our communities and state make each day have major, cumulative impacts on Florida's vast, iconic landscape over the long term. Undeveloped land supports essential ecosystem services, cleansing and protecting our drinking water, safeguarding our communities and residents from flooding and inundation due to sea-level rise, supporting wildlife habitat and providing myriad recreational opportunities.

As Florida's population grows and sea levels rise, making thoughtful, environmentally and fiscally responsible decisions can ensure a more sustainable future for all Floridians. Should we continue to allow development on the state's most vulnerable lands, even those likely to be inundated by rising seas and flooding? Should we continue sprawling development patterns that consume vast expanses of land, or learn from traditional planning practices that curb sprawl, saving land and taxpayer dollars?

As concerned Floridians, we must grapple with these and other issues. Science-based, data-driven, sustainable planning for Florida's future is essential to protect our natural and agricultural lands, while ensuring more livable communities for Floridians.

Please take a few minutes to read "Spotlight on Florida's Future" and consider how you can support smarter development and conservation practices to help create a more sustainable future.

*Dr. Tom Hctor is director of the UF Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, which conducts applied research on the relationship between conservation and land use, bridging the disciplines of design, planning and wildlife conservation. Vivian Young, FAICP, is the special projects director emerita at 1000 Friends of Florida, a statewide not-for-profit organization focused on sustainable planning practices.*

## Federal affordable housing funding includes Florida tribes

### STAFF REPORT

More than \$1.1 billion in federal funding to support affordable housing projects throughout Indian Country includes funds for the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Native American Programs announced April 10 that the funds will go to nearly 600 tribal communities through the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG). The funding is for eligible American Indian tribes, Alaska Native villages, and Tribally Designated Housing Entities to support affordable housing projects in nearly 600 tribal

communities.

The funding includes \$1,000,208 for STOF and \$110,362 for the Miccosukee Tribe.

"This investment will help us meet the needs of those living in Indian Country by promoting healthy communities while strengthening our partnership with tribes and their leaders," HUD Secretary Scott Turner said in a press release.

According to HUD, the IHBG program is a formula grant that supports initiatives in tribal communities including housing development, operation and modernization of existing housing, housing services for eligible families and individuals, and safety and crime prevention measures.

## Brighton enjoys relaxing session of 'fun art, not fine art'

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — A group of Brighton tribal members learned a new trick to combat stress in their lives; paint a picture.

April is Stress Awareness Month, so the Integrative Health Department found a unique way to help release stress at its Paint Your Stress away class in Brighton April 9. Artist Melissa Mills, of Davie, taught the participants how to paint as she painted along with them.

The 12 promising artists sat in front of 16-by 20-inch canvases on tabletop easels, a palette of paints on a paper plate and a variety of paintbrushes nearby. At the front of the class, Mills projected a picture of chickees in a clearing surrounded by bushes and trees. The class assignment was to paint their version of that picture.

"Every painting is a matter of layers," Mills said. "We will go bit by bit and do it together. This is fun art, not fine art. We will have a good time. We have music playing; if you feel like dancing, get up and dance."

Mills told the budding artists they would start with the background and work one area at a time. As she stood at her canvas, Mills showed how to paint the sky with long strokes of paint. She explained they would let that portion of the canvas dry as they worked on the next area, the land.

Over the course of two hours, clouds were painted in the sky, the land sprouted bushes, trees and a few chickees as the tribal members released their inner artists.

"Clouds can look like cotton balls or however you see them," Mills said. "There is no right way or wrong way, it's just your way."

"I've never painted before," Mahala Madrigal said. "I like it with the instructor. I hope they bring it back."

That sentiment ran through the group as each one expressed similar feelings about the class.

"It's cool, I'd like to do it again," Laverne Thomas said. "We don't get to do things like this very often, it's fun."

"It's a calming and relaxing hands-on activity," Dalmionna King said.

Paint Your Stress away classes were also scheduled for Immokalee, Big Cypress and Hollywood in April.



Beverly Bidney

From right, Jimi Jamison and Clarissa Urbina work on their paintings of a group of chickees at the Paint Your Stress art class April 9 in Brighton.



Beverly Bidney

Budding artists paint with direction from artist and teacher Melissa Mills during the Paint Your Stress Away class.



Beverly Bidney (2)

Above, Jessica Billie paints with instruction from artist and teacher Melissa Mills, standing. Below, Dalmionna King, right, and Summer Tubby work on their paintings.



## Indigenous tourism to be represented at international trade show in Fort Lauderdale

### STAFF REPORT

The American Indigenous Tourism Association will have a delegation attending the U.S. Travel Association's IPW event May 17-21 at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center in Fort Lauderdale. The international travel trade show will feature global travel professionals, international travel enthusiasts, buyers, and media from more than more than 60 countries.

The American Indigenous Tourism

Association invites Native nations and Indigenous tourism businesses to join its delegation at the event.

For more information contact Education and Business Development director Dawnielle Tehama at [dtehama@americanindigenoustourism.org](mailto:dtehama@americanindigenoustourism.org).

Also, the American Indigenous Tourism Conference will be held Oct. 19-22 at Tulalip Resort Casino in Washington state. The theme is "Indigenous Tourism is Sovereignty in Action."

For more information visit [AmericanIndigenousTourism.org/AITC](http://AmericanIndigenousTourism.org/AITC).

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

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

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

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

Issue: June 2026  
Deadline: May 15, 2026

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

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# Community



## Seminoles shine at Festival of Indigenous Culture

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**NAPLES** — Members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and other tribes shared their customs and traditions with the public at the Festival of Indigenous Culture April 11 at Artis-Naples in Naples.

About 500 people came to learn as they watched a variety of Native dancers from the Iron Horse dance group, Polynesian Proud singers, hoop dancer Tony Duncan, storyteller and flutist Gordon Wareham, country singer Dzaki Sukarno, violinist Genevieve Gros-Louis and singer LOV.

The event was organized by Naples Council liaison Brian Zepeda and his team. The event started as a community event a few years ago. They opened it to the public during its second year but ran out of space for parking. The following year it moved to the Great Wolf Lodge and this year moved it to Artis-Naples to accommodate the crowd.

"We want people to know that Indigenous culture is still alive and prospering," Zepeda said. "We adapt to the modern world and all

aspects of American culture. When people come here, they can see that being done."

Artis-Naples consists of the Baker Museum, a theater which is the home of the Naples Philharmonic and two performance halls, including the Daniels Pavillion where the Festival of Indigenous Culture was held.

Tribal vendors set up tables inside the pavilion where they showed, worked on and sold their beadwork, patchwork and other traditional Seminole arts. In the plaza outside of the venue Seminole and other Native vendors displayed their goods and educated the public.

Pedro Zepeda, who has been making traditional dugout canoes since he was a teenager, brought a canoe he made to the festival and shared his knowledge with visitors. He said he can make one on his own in about two months and with other people helping in about two and a-half weeks. He uses power tools and traditional hand tools.

"With a chainsaw I save about three or four days of work," Zepeda said. "I use it to take out slabs of wood from the log."

Gordon Wareham, flutist, storyteller and director of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, told the audience inside the auditorium that he learned to play flute about 26 years ago. He had played trumpet in his high school band, so he knew music, but learning to play the traditional Native American flute proved to be a challenge.

"It took me three months of playing three hours a day to play one note," he said.

With that, he played a song on the flute and then told the Choctaw legend of how the possum got his smile.

The Iron Horse Dancers demonstrated a variety of Native American dances along with a drum. Little Big Mountain, a fancy dancer, explained that different tribes have



Lorraine Posada explains the sweetgrass basket-making process to a visitor at the Festival of Indigenous Culture April 11 in Naples.

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney  
Flutist and storyteller Gordon Wareham performs at the festival.

different cultures. He told the audience about the various songs, dances and languages among tribes.

The jingle dance was originally from the Ojibwe Tribe, the old style war dance is still being done at powwows and ceremonies, and the origin of the Fancy Shawl dance is the Dakota tribes. The Prairie Chicken dance is a celebration of life and mimics the mannerisms of the prairie chicken when it first awakens in the morning. The men's Fancy dance is more modern and originated during the Buffalo Bill Wild West shows in Oklahoma in the late 1800s.



Beverly Bidney  
Canoe carver Pedro Zepeda talks to visitors about the canoe he carved.



Beverly Bidney  
Hoop dancer Tony Duncan performs his hoop dance.



Beverly Bidney  
Iron Horse Dancers, from left fancy, jingle and fancy shawl dancers, perform at the Festival of Indigenous Culture.

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◆ **GATHERING**  
From page 1A

Suraiya Smith was Miss Florida Seminole in 1999 and is a Pemaeytv Emahaky Charter School culture teacher. "It's been overwhelming and an adventure," Smith said. "As a teacher, it's good to see other cultures here. I'll bring something educational back to talk to the students about."

Crowds seemed larger at this final GON than during the last few years. People were shoulder to shoulder on the plaza as they waited in lines for food for hours. Inside the coliseum was wall to wall people with dancers, families and visitors vying for a place to watch the pow wow. The Grand Entries were so large, some dancers didn't fit on the floor.

Entertainment outside the coliseum on the Expo New Mexico grounds included Aztec dancers, Apache dancers and other Native dance groups, who created an open space to dance and drew in the crowd.

Pow wow competitors and visitors

rubbed elbows and conversed as they waited on lines for food and drinks. Plenty of water stations to refill bottles dotted the grounds. "It's surprising seeing that many Indian people in the same place," said Cassie Pearce, 14, who attended with her grandmother Connie Whidden and aunt Michele Thomas. "It's kind of sad that it's the last one," Thomas said. "It's always fun to go to pow wows; it's good medicine to come to an event with so many Native people."

GON was a family affair. It was founded as a nonprofit organization in 1984 by Derek Mathews, his wife Lita Mathews, a member of the Santa Clara Pueblo, and their daughter Melonie Mathews. The family produced and managed the event together.

The only information about why the family chose to end the event was part of press release in August 2025, which stated "several factors beyond our control make long-term planning and coordination challenging. With that in mind, we have chosen to close this chapter by celebrating its incredible history at the 2026 event."



Beverly Bidney

The last Miss Indian World Dania Wahwasuck waves goodbye as her reign, and the title, come to an end.



Beverly Bidney

In center, Cheyenne Kippenberger, the only Miss Indian World winner from the Seminole Tribe of Florida (2019-2021), stands with a group of other former Miss Indian World at the retirement ceremony for the crown and title.



Beverly Bidney

Seminole Tribe seniors enjoy their visit to Albuquerque during Gathering of Nations.



Beverly Bidney

Babies are common sights at pow wows and Gathering of Nations is no exception. The youngsters learn to dance pow wow at a young age and may continue well into adulthood and old age.



Beverly Bidney

Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford, left, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith proudly represent the tribe at Gathering of Nations' Grand Entry.



Beverly Bidney

The leader at the Grand Entry with the staff.



Beverly Bidney  
After the Grand Entry April 24, Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford, former Miss Indian World Cheyenne Kippenberger and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole meet on the floor.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Cassie Pearce, Michele Thomas, Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith and Connie Whidden on the plaza at Gathering of Nations.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Loretta Micco, Wanda Bowers, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Chaka Yani Smith and Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford share a laugh under the wood frame of a giant teepee on the plaza at Gathering of Nations April 24.

**Mery Lopez-Palma visits Seminole Court**

**STAFF REPORT**

**HOLLYWOOD** — On April 22, Bina Fink Kohl, Outreach Coordinator for Broward District 5, serving under Broward County Commissioner Steve Geller (representing Davie, Cooper City, Broadview Park, and portions of Plantation, Southwest Ranches, Sunrise, and Tribal Land), introduced Mery Lopez-Palma to Moses Osceola, Director of the Administrative Office of the Seminole Court. Lopez-Palma is running for State Representative District 102.



Courtesy photo

Moses Osceola, Director, and Mery Lopez-Palma.



Courtesy photo

From left to right, Raquel Rothman, Judicial Advisor; Debra Young, Deputy Clerk; Carol Munroe, Deputy Clerk; Amparo Lozano, Paralegal; Mery Lopez-Palma; Moses Osceola, Director; and Luann Fuentes, Clerk of Court.

◆ **CHILD TO WORK**  
From page 1A



Calvin Tiger  
Kali Gomez plays in front of a video green screen with various interactive backgrounds presented by Seminole Media Productions during the Take Your Child to Work Day event.



Calvin Tiger  
At left, Kassidy Warren learns how to use traditional Seminole tools to grind roasted corn during a Seminole culture presentation hosted by Letitia Foster.



Calvin Tiger  
Kids get a chance to sit in the Seminole Police Department's Polaris off road vehicle.



Calvin Tiger  
Matteo Kecchi uses a Seminole Fire Rescue water hose accompanied by Battalion Commander Anthony Berger during the Take Your Child to Work Day event April 23 in Hollywood.



Calvin Tiger  
Pharoah Gayles attracts a big crowd for his wildlife presentation with an alligator.



Calvin Tiger (2)  
At left, Health nutritionist Jessica Pearl helps make acai bowls to promote healthy eating for attendees. At right, Billy Walker starts the Take Your Child to Work Day event by speaking about Seminole culture and conducts a storytelling time.



# Overcoming conflicts in clean energy projects

BY DANIELLA HAKIM  
Staff Reporter

When a community project sparks outrage, one's instinct is to lead with additional data, maps, and technical justifications. However, according to Michelle L. Holiday and Katherine "Kit" Cole, when it comes to developing engagement plans for community projects, facts won't make a difference.

Concluding their four-part webinar series with the Native Learning Center, Holiday and Cole led a discussion on April 7 about developing engagement plans for clean energy projects, providing listeners with a tactical roadmap, effective strategies, methods, and relationship building approaches for moving beyond any possible stalemate.

Their second-to-last panel in December discussed environmental impacts and identifying issues such as tribal energy sovereignty and cultural considerations may sometimes be in conflict and have meanings that may not be evident to others.

Holiday is an enrolled member of the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma and is the founder and president of Michelle Holiday and Associates (MHA). MHA has collaborated with clients on projects throughout the United States, including renewable energy, mining, broadband deployment, and community choice aggregation. Cole is the founder and CEO of Kit Cole Consulting. She is a nationally recognized authority on engaging stakeholders, including those living in historically disinvested communities near large infrastructures, including highways, ports, and hazardous waste landfills.

In January, Holiday and Cole led a presentation at the 8th annual Renewable Energy Conference at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

"The concepts, ideas, and approaches we're sharing today are very effective, regardless of the kind of project you have," Cole said. "We know these strategies work because we use them and have done so for about 20 years."

According to Cole and Holiday, research demonstrates that most conflict over renewable energy does not derive from opposition to clean energy itself—these conflicts commonly consist of economic concerns, environmental impacts, and governance.

"In working with communities on the development of transmission lines, Kit and I had been in some very hostile communication," Holiday said. "We did that for almost a decade, and the project was built."

Panelists encouraged listeners to spend their time, energy, and resources cultivating those who are in favor of their projects, aiming to be strategic about outreach, engagement, and communication.

"We've worked with tribes and many stakeholders," Holiday added. "We're in this for the long haul."

According to Cole, tribal energy sovereignty is a complex concept and can be challenging to deliver. Considering energy projects are tough to site, permit, and build, there aren't many energy projects across tribal lands for a reason.

"Tribal communities carry generational trauma," Holiday said. "For those working in tribal communities, you must know your audience, the community, and the history. It's important to be attuned to all issues arising throughout Indian Country, have 'empathy ears,' and not take things personally."

Listeners voiced their own experiences with "angry neighbors" opposing their projects. Most have received negative feedback across social media platforms, whereas others have had oppositionists confront contractors in person.

◆ See CLEAN ENERGY on page 6C



## WHO'S YOUR ATTORNEY?

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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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Billy Walker leads a friendship dance at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's Earth Day event

Calvin Tiger

## Visitors learn about healthy environments at museum's Earth Day

BY CALVIN TIGER  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — An Earth Day celebration April 16 organized by the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum focused on healthy environments. The event at the museum grounds on the Big Cypress Reservation also featured culture demonstrations from



Calvin Tiger

Polynesian dancer Laiuni livens up Earth Day.



Calvin Tiger

Plant information is presented to young students by John Arroyo from Tree Amigos Growers.

tribal members and other Natives. This year's theme included gardening workshops and explained the importance of plant pollination.

"Last year we went into pollinators, bees and how they play an essential part in nature in keeping the Everglades. And so we really wanted to expand that, what really pollinates what flowers are important to keep a healthy environment, not just we have pollinators.

Now, we really want get into the science and actually have classes on it," said Gordon Wareham, museum director.

One of the popular interactive sessions was a friendship dance featuring Seminoles, led by Billy Walker, joining hands with visitors. Other presentations included dancers, bee-keeping workshops, wildlife shows, storytelling, flute playing, and Go Native Music workshop.

## Okalee Village presents full day of Earth Day activities

STAFF REPORT

**HOLLYWOOD** — Seminole Okalee Indian Village & Venue, a division of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, hosted a jam-packed schedule of activities and presentations for its Earth Day celebration April 14 in Hollywood.

Starting at 9 a.m. and running throughout the morning and afternoon, visitors, including students from the Hollywood Preschool and Miccosukee Preschool, were treated to wildlife shows, pow wow dances, music workshops, flute playing, and storytelling.



Daniella Hakim

Go Native Now opens Earth Day festivities in Hollywood with interactive and educational Pow Wow performances.



Daniella Hakim

Jail'a Osceola, center, from Hollywood Preschool says the Pledge of Allegiance alongside her classmates.



Daniella Hakim

Miccosukee Preschool students pet 35-year-old tortoise at Pharaoh's "Wildlife Kingdom" show.

## Students receive hands-on education at EPO's Earth Day

BY DANIELLA HAKIM  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — For the Environmental Protection Office (EPO), every day is earth day. Held in Tucker Ridge on the Brighton Reservation, EPO organized Earth Day festivities April 22 for students from Pemayetv Emahaky Charter School.

The interactive program consisted of hands-on activities presented by EPO staff and organizations like Tree Amigos Growers, Archbold Biological Station and Florida Gulf Coast University.

This was the second year for EPO's Earth Day in Brighton.

"Compared to Earth Day festivities held at Hollywood and Big Cypress, this is more of a grass roots initiative," said Paul Backhouse, EPO senior director.

EPO strives to make community-based decisions that allow for a holistic, more informed view of ecosystems and how to best protect them through ecological youth programs, educational workshops, climate awareness outreach, and departmental collaborations. EPO was created in 2024.

"The intention for this was to make it more informational," said Community Engagement Coordinator Alyssa Osceola. "Earth Day, nationally and globally, has become commercialized. There's a lot of greenwashing, as well."

The educational initiative taught students about gardening, water restoration and wildlife. Students learned to tend and repot plants, discovered how weeds impact aquatic life and water flow, the uses of various tractors, and observed the prints, nests, and skulls of various endangered species such as the Florida panther and the crested caracara.

In the week leading up to event, some of the students had these themes implemented into their curriculum.



Daniella Hakim

Erin Kayda, left, and Nia Peak learn how to repot their plants at Earth Day April 22 in Brighton.

"Our first-grade students have been studying all things Earth Day," said Tracy Phillips, a teacher at PECS.

Having painted plant pots, wooden bird houses, and made bird feeders from scratch, each student's drawstring bag brimmed with goodies.

"Today was all about dialing it back to education, awareness, and exposing the students this unique way of celebrating Earth Day and showing them what they can do to make an impact," Osceola said.



Daniella Hakim

Students get a chance to sit in a big John Deere tractor with guidance from EPO's Walter Summeralls.



Daniella Hakim

Jason Long, from Tree Amigos Growers, teaches how to tend to plants.

# HURRICANE SEASON IS COMING.

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SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA  
RISK MANAGEMENT

# Gaming and betting trends, regulations, AI among topics at upcoming summit in Fort Lauderdale

BY DANIELLA HAKIM  
Staff Reporter

Taking place June 9-11, SBC Summit Americas will bring together several components of the gaming and betting industry from North, Central, and South America to the Broward County Convention Center in Fort Lauderdale.

The summit is expected to welcome over 10,000 delegates for a six-stage conference, offering stakeholders a comprehensive view of how regulation is redefining the North American gaming landscape and what it takes to stay ahead in an increasingly complex market.

"This year, we'll continue to focus on what resonated with attendees so strongly," said SBC Founder and CEO Rasmus Sojmark in a statement released by SBC Americas. "Delegates can expect insights from leading C-suite executives, engage directly with regulators and learn how technology is

transforming our industry, from affiliate operations to payments and compliance."

Hard Rock Digital will be an exhibitor at this year's conference.

On June 10, the program will bring together the industry's leading marketing voices across five panels to guide stakeholders to move beyond traditional tactics and embrace engaging strategies. Delegates can expect to learn how to use AI to drive deeper player engagement, navigate evolving advertising regulations, and how to build brands that ensure player retention.

On June 11, delegates can expect sessions addressing the rise of unrelated gaming formats and how operators are responding to new state regulations. Leading operators, regulators, and compliance specialists will examine the regulatory pressures and compliance challenges facing the gaming industry.

Seminole Hard Rock's SVP and Chief

Information Officer Macario Gallegos is among the tech leaders expected to speak and share where they're investing, which technologies drive competitive advantage, and how they're making high-impact decisions in a fast-moving, regulated environment, offering insights into what's working today and what will define the next era of gaming technology.

Chairman of the Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association, Matthew Morgan, will be joined by the CEO of Soaring Eagle Gaming Joe Nayquonabe, CEO of Potawatomi Casinos and Hotels Dominic Ortiz, and the Chairman of San Manuel Band of Mission Indians to discuss how tribes can work together to safeguard sovereignty, drive policy discussions, and define their own digital future.

For more information and tickets go to sbcevents.com.

## Street Tacos opens at Seminole Classic Casino

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**HOLLYWOOD** — Seminole Classic Casino officially introduced its newest dining concept, Street Tacos, with a launch celebration in late April featuring VIP guests, celebrities and influencers inside the EatStreet food pavilion.

The high-energy event featured a live performance by DJ Laz, appearances by notable influencers including Scott Richter "The Big Jackpot," Mr. and Mrs. Eats and MaxEats, and a first taste of the menu's offerings inspired by Latin and South Florida cuisine.

Street Tacos delivers a fast-casual dining experience centered around fresh, hand-crafted tacos and flavorful bowls. The new concept and menu were curated by Seminole Classic Casino Executive Chef Cristina Lane, a Puerto Rico-born culinary expert with a passion for bold authentic flavors.

Guests experienced a variety of signature dishes, including Al Pastor Tacos with charred pineapple salsa, Birria Tacos served with rich consommé, and specialty bowls like the Chili Lime Salmon Bowl and Lomo Saltado Bowl. The culinary experience was complemented by handcrafted cocktails such as the Hibis-Kiss, Batida de Coco and Frozen Mango Margarita with a black sea salt rim.

"The response from guests has been incredible," said Jason Stephens, director of Food & Beverage at the casino, said in a statement. "From the food to the atmosphere, everything came together exactly how we



Street Tacos is now part of the food pavilion area at Seminole Classic Casino.

envisioned. This concept adds a fresh energy to EatStreet and gives our guests another reason to come back and explore."

The launch event highlighted the casino's continued investment in enhancing its dining offerings and guest experience.

"We're always looking for ways to elevate the experience for our guests," said Edward Aguilar, the casino's general

manager. "Street Tacos brings something new, vibrant and culturally inspired to the property, and the turnout for the launch showed just how excited people are about it."

Street Tacos is open daily from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m.

## Seminole Brighton Bay to host \$100,000 guaranteed bingo session May 16

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**BRIGHTON** — Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino set will host a \$100,000 guaranteed bingo session on May 16 at 2 p.m. Doors open at 10 a.m.

Buy-in for the \$100,000 guaranteed bingo session is \$315 and includes 20

regular games paying out \$2,000 each.

Guests will receive three Regular Game books, two Block of 9, two Letter X and two Jackpot Games.

Additionally, guests can play to win two special games paying out \$5,000 each and a Jackpot Coverall paying out \$50,000 guaranteed.

Presale is available now until sold-out via Ticketweb.com. Search Seminole Brighton Bay for available sessions to reserve.

For more information, visit [seminolebrightonbay.com](http://seminolebrightonbay.com) or call 863-357-5625 for the latest jackpot updates.

## Hard Rock properties mark Earth Month

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Hard Rock properties participated in Earth Month actions tailored to local communities, ecosystems, and cultures.

Highlights from properties around the world include:

- Hard Rock Hotel Bali: Green Ritual welcome at check-in, waste-separation education, eco-bag distribution at local markets, mangrove planting, beach cleanup, and cultural garden visits at Besakih Temple
- Hard Rock Hotel Cancun: Mangrove cleanup, zero-waste guacamole class, recycle art workshop for children focused on sea turtle conservation, sunrise yoga, and a neon-themed Earth Hour dinner
- Hard Rock Hotel Desaru Coast: "Insects Keep the Earth Beating" educational experience led by an entomologist, seed ball creation for pollinators, insect-inspired yoga, and a fundraiser supporting a local arts organization for people with disabilities.
- Hard Rock Hotel Pattaya: Candlelit acoustic music, reused percussion performance, Sustainable Bites menu, wellness sessions and an upcycling initiative transforming damaged inventory into wearable merchandise
- Hard Rock Hotel Vallarta: Bike-powered smoothies, beach cleanup, upcycled art using repurposed linens, bonfire gathering and an unplugged nighttime concert under the stars.

## Hard Rock Atlantic City focuses on environmental causes



Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City held several Save Our Planet initiatives in April, including raising money for the Marine Mammal Stranding Center (above), which received a \$5,000 donation. The center is a rescue, rehabilitation, and release facility for marine mammals. "Thank you for being a friend of the marine mammals and sea turtles in our local waters, and for everything your Save The Planet initiatives do for the environment world-wide!" the center posted on Facebook. Hard Rock Atlantic City also helped Reed's Organic Farm & Animal Sanctuary, the Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City, and New Jersey's Marine Shell Recycling Program during the month.

## Country Hall of Fame duo to play in Hollywood

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Hall of Fame country duo Brooks & Dunn will perform Aug. 29 at Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino

Hollywood. The concert starts at 8 p.m.

Tickets start at \$75 and are available at [atmyHRL.com](http://atmyHRL.com)

## Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee to host summer show

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**IMMOKALEE** — Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee will host a summer concert on June 20 featuring a star-studded roster of

Asian entertainers. Admission to this event is free for Unity Card Rewards Program members. Tickets will be distributed while supplies last on the concert day, beginning at 8 p.m., with doors opening at 9 p.m. and the

show starting at 10 p.m. All attendees must be at least 21 years old.

## Gumball rally to start at Guitar Hotel; final stop: Mexico City

BY CALVIN TIGER  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — Drivers in the Gumball 3000, an international journey featuring more than 100 high-performance cars, will start their engines at the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Guitar Hotel in Hollywood.

The six-day rally will kick off June 4 at the hotel where the cars can be viewed. On June 5, an unnamed "A-list global celebrity" will wave the starting flag at the hotel, according to organizers.

On June 10, the participants are scheduled to cross the finish line in Mexico City.

Scheduled stops along the way include Amelia Island, New Orleans, Austin, Monterrey, and San Miguel De Allende. Street parties, festivals and concerts are planned for some of the cities.

This won't be the first time the Guitar Hotel has hosted the rally. In 2022, the organizers announced Hard Rock as an official partner in a long-term sponsorship deal. The deal includes

the use of various Hard Rock properties throughout the rallies. The '22 rally, which included Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, started in Toronto and finished in Miami, but not before making a festive stop at the Guitar Hotel.

Other years' Gumball rallies have included locations across Europe, Middle East, Southeast Asia, and North America. Last year's rally started in Istanbul and finished in Ibiza. With much fanfare, the rally's stops included Bucharest, Belgrade, Florence, Nice and Valencia.



Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola participates in the Gumball rally in 2022 at the Guitar Hotel.

In 2013, the Gumball 3000 Foundation was created to benefit underprivileged youth through education and recreational projects for various communities in need around the world. The foundation's mission is to provide greater opportunities in life for disadvantaged youth.

On June 9, the foundation's annual charity gala will be held in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, with auction lots of sporting and cultural memorabilia available for bidding.

## ◆ SPEEDWAY

From page 1A

The Motor Enclave, which opened in 2023, is located next to I-75, about four miles from the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa.

"We have been tracking the development of The Motor Enclave since it was first announced over five years ago," Travis Lunn, president of Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa, said in the release. "With its incredible growth and proximity to our Tampa property, this partnership creates meaningful opportunities to connect with

a shared audience through unique, high-quality experiences."

The naming rights announcement came during a free, public car show series known as "Cars en Coffee," which attracted thousands of guests, according to the release.

The property's driving experiences include opportunities for groups, including parties and business outings, to drive high-performance cars around the speedway and learn from pro instructors. Off-road experiences are also available.

The venue is also home to what Motor Enclave describes as the largest private garage community in the world.



Motor Enclave/Hard Rock (2)

Above, Hard Rock Tampa adds its name to the speedway at the Motor Enclave in Tampa. Below, the venue's "Cars en Coffee" sessions attract big crowds who can walk the speedway and check out high powered and classic cars.



## Usher, Chris Brown coming to Hard Rock Stadium

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**MIAMI GARDENS** — Grammy Award-winning icons Chris Brown and Usher will hold The R&B Tour, a 33-date outing that starts June 26 in Denver and

finishes with two dates in Florida: Dec. 3 at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, and Dec. 11 at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa.

For more information and tickets go to [RaymondAndBrownTour.com](http://RaymondAndBrownTour.com).

## Guest hits \$120,000 jackpot at Brighton Bay

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**BRIGHTON** — A lucky guest claimed a \$121,453.23 jackpot April 12 at Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino.

The winner hit the jackpot on a Dancing Drums slot machine by Scientific Games with a \$26.40 bet.

# From prints to people: Cataloging community through Tribune photographs

BY REBECCA KREST  
Cataloging Assistant  
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

**BIG CYPRESS** — The Seminole Tribune photograph collection came to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in 2015, and since then several people have worked on cataloging the photos. In March 2026, I



Courtesy photo

Rebecca Krest, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum cataloging assistant, in front of Wilson Hall at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

began working at the museum as the new steward of this collection. As I have come to understand, these photos are indelibly linked to the Seminole community and its history. With tens of thousands of photos, spanning from the early 1980s to 2015, it is incredibly important to accurately describe the photographs, ensuring that future generations can look back at the catalog entries and know that the information is representative of Seminole culture and language. As a tribal institution the museum is in a unique position to model decolonization. For the Tribune photographs, this means cataloging the photos in a way that puts the Seminole community's wants and needs first. This can be done in multiple ways, but the most important being that the information is directly guided by input from tribal members.

But let's start at the beginning, how are the photos cataloged and what information is needed? When starting to catalog a photograph, I first inspect it for any signs of damage and note the condition. Second, I look at what kind of photograph it is, who is in it, what is going on, where it is, and when it was taken, this forms the basis for the description. Next, I take that description and input the information into subfields within the database, some of those fields include date, photographer, place, event, people, subjects, and search terms. Being as thorough as possible allows collections staff, researchers, members of the community, and the larger public to find a photo they may be

looking for. This is where speaking to the community, and gaining their input, provides the best information in cataloging these photos. No one knows the people, events, or cultural objects in the photos, better than the community members themselves.

While working on cataloging the photos it is easy to get distracted by trying to note every little detail, that the bigger picture can get lost. Many of the Tribune photos were taken in a time where not everyone had a handheld camera in their pocket, and not every photo taken was published in the Tribune. This ongoing project serves as a community-wide photo album, where people now have access to unseen photos of family, friends, and even themselves. It is a joy to be able to carry on this project and help give physical memories back to the tribe. One of my personal favorite images that I have cataloged so far, captures Billy Ray Cyrus and Micki Jolene Diaz, the 1995-1996 Miss Florida Seminole Princess, at the 1995 Tribal Christmas Party.

So, how can you help? Museum staff often travels out to different community events with photo binders, so if you see us stop by, say hi, and look through the photos. Let us know if you recognize anyone, the location, or any other details. If you are looking to see what photos we have in our



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Billy Ray Cyrus and Micki Jolene Diaz at the 1995 tribal Christmas party.

collection, you can search the museum's website. Or, if you are interested in finding a more specific person or event, please feel free to reach out and we can help you. We can never have too much information, and

who knows, you may spot yourself! For additional information or to access the collection, please contact Rebecca Krest at [rebeccakrest@semtribe.com](mailto:rebeccakrest@semtribe.com).

# Yakne Seminoli exhibition extended at HistoryMiami Museum

BY JIM PATRICK  
Head of Exhibitions  
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Due to popular demand, a major Seminole art and history exhibition at HistoryMiami Museum is now open through August 2nd. Co-curated by Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Director Gordon O. Wareham, Yakne Seminoli (Seminole World) showcases more than 30 Seminole artists featuring a mix of unique contemporary, traditional, and historic pieces that honor the artists and their predecessors. These works reflect knowledge passed down through generations, and the continued importance of cultural practices today.

A historical overview examines the inseparable connection between Florida and Seminole history, debunking common misconceptions frequently taught in traditional education.

This section explores Seminole strategies of survival rooted in land, resistance, and economic adaptation through tourism.

In addition, there is a section confronting the crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous People (MMIP). Through art, personal testimony, and information which includes startling statistics, the display underscores that this is not a distant issue, but a present crisis affecting families right here and now.

While many Seminole artists are featured, the exhibition is highlighted by the noteworthy works of five Seminole artists. Erica Deitz's drawings and paintings intimately depict tribal lifestyle, lineage, culture, and clan. Wilson Bowers's My Family mural stands 20 feet tall, looking out over the length of the exhibition space. Brian Zepeda's traditional Seminole coats show intense scholarship and attention to detail, some fully hand-stitched. Blending tradition with abstraction, Elgin Jumper's paintings merge cultural themes with classical landscapes. A large



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Hollywood artist Wilson Bowers painting his mural "My Family" at HistoryMiami in 2025.

hand-carved sculpture and 10 paintings representing Seminole life from Jimmy John Osceola showing the next generation of Seminoles how things were taught to him "back in the day."

Contrasts and complements can be found throughout the more than 2600 square-foot exhibition space. There are both traditional techniques portraying contemporary concepts and contemporary materials incorporated into traditional designs. Danielle Nelson's shiny patchwork jacket material contrasts Jimmy O'Toole Osceola's

patchwork skirts created from hand-ripped cloth. Beaded coin necklaces by Tina Osceola complement bead embroidered objects by Ricky Doctor. The passing of knowledge and importance of continuing culture is illustrated through the baskets of Donna Frank and Hali Garcia. There are several generations of artwork; from a drum painted by Buffalo Tiger at Musa Isle in 1940s to scratchboard engravings by Kiki Roberts and Ada Bruised Head at Ahfachkee School in 2025.

There is so much to explore and experience. In the center of the gallery is a canoe created by Daniel Tommie in collaboration with Bobby Henry and artists from the Māori Tribe of New Zealand. Other items of note are a dragon-tooth necklace by Gordon O. Wareham, a 3-tier basket by Linda Beletso, paintings by Noah Billie, large Seminole dolls by Minnie Doctor, Mabel Doctor, and Judy Baker, and patchwork items by Judy Bill Osceola, Carla Cypress, Clarissa Garza, Virginia Osceola, and JoJo Osceola. Recent additions include sweetgrass baskets by Elaine Aguilar (traditional) and Jessica Osceola (modern designs).

HistoryMiami Museum is located at 101



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Noah Billie's "Seminole Warrior" overlooks an interactive area where visitors can touch and read the reproduction of a historic newspaper in the Seminole War section of the exhibit.

West Flagler Street, Miami, and is open to the public Thursdays through Sundays from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. With so many things to discover and learn it is well worth the trip!

May 2026

## ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Florida is home to a vast variety of plant species; the warm and humid climate makes it an excellent environment for encouraging biodiversity. There are a number of *Celtis* species that thrive here in Florida. *Celtis* is a genus of plants in the family *Cannabaceae* commonly referred to as hackberries and are found all throughout the northern hemisphere (Touhtouh et al., 2025). There are about 73 species that make up the genus, and of these at least a handful such as *C. iguanaea*, *C. laevigata*, and *C. tenuifolia* can be found in Florida (POWO, 2026).

While *Celtis* species can vary in appearance, there are some shared characteristics that one can use to distinguish them. These tree or shrub-like species are all monoecious, meaning that they possess male and female reproductive structures. The leaves are typically leathery in texture and are asymmetrical at their base.



*C. australis* (Global Biodiversity Information Facility)

*Celtis* plants are drupes, a type of fruit made up of three layers (the exocarp, mesocarp, and endocarp) surrounding the seed (Touhtouh et al., 2025). The seeds, featured as this month's artifact, are small and have a reticulate, or net-like, appearance (CSIRO, 2020).



*Celtis* seeds (THPO)

*Celtis* plants are widespread, and different cultures have historically utilized these plants for various purposes. *C. australis* has been used as a remedy for a myriad of ailments, from relieving gastrointestinal issues to reducing menstrual bleeding (Touhtouh et al., 2025; Chevallier, 1996). *C. africana* is known to have been used as a treatment for conditions such as dyspepsia, edema, ocular infections, fevers, and as an analgesic (pain reliever) (Touhtouh et al., 2025). As a food source, the fruits of *C. laevigata* and *C. occidentalis* have been enjoyed by Native peoples across the United States (Benfer, n.d.). These are just a few examples that illustrate the importance of *Celtis* plants to populations around the world.

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

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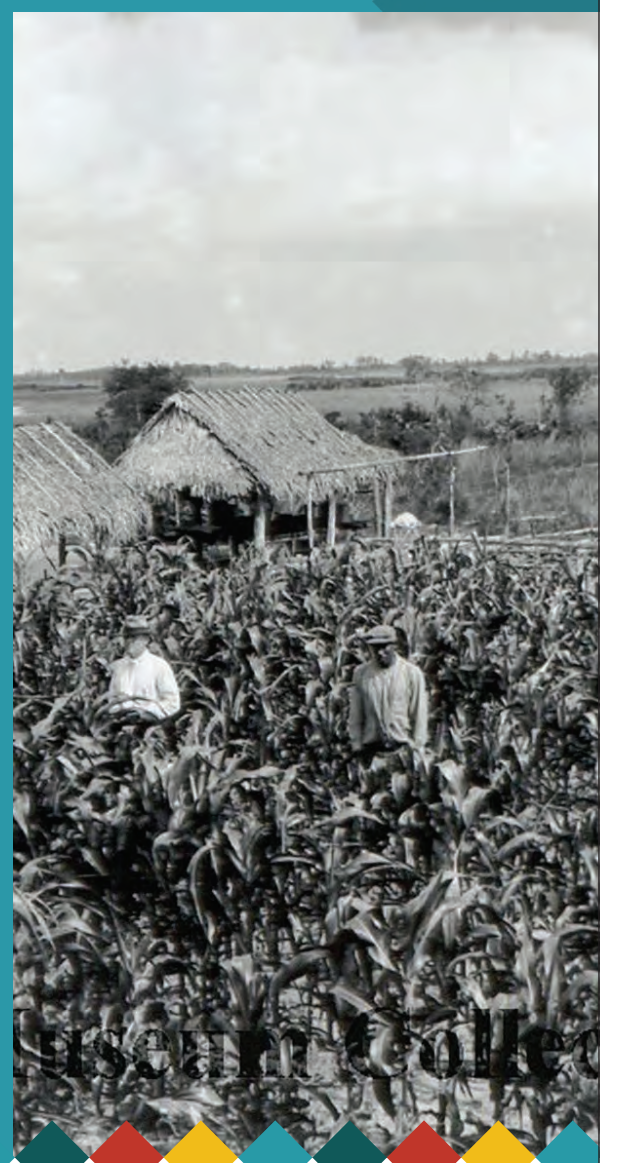
SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - MAY 2026

## GROWING GARDENS

Each month this year we're looking at a different case of how Indigenous knowledge that was developed and shared over generations led to the many successes of the Seminole and their ancestors. This month we focus on gardening and agriculture. Modern Seminole families still enjoy lots of traditional foods, like sofkee and pumpkin fry bread. Both of those Seminole comfort foods use key ingredients that have been enjoyed since ancestral times.

Corn, or maize, often a main ingredient in sofkee, was first domesticated by Indigenous people in central Mexico almost 10,000 years ago! It quickly spread across the Americas and became an important crop for Seminole ancestors. In fact, 1000 years ago, corn was the staple of many Indigenous groups in what became the southeastern United States. As you might imagine, today's corn, which is mostly modified for mass production, has lost many of the qualities that the ancestors worked to produce in it. Unlike modern corn, ancestral corn came in many varieties because it was bred to grow in many different places. This made it more adaptable and resilient, which are great qualities for agriculture, and made it less harmful to the environment - modern corn requires adaptations to the environment to fit the needs of the grower, while ancestral corn was modified to fit local environments. One variety of ancestral corn, Sierra Mixe, bred by Indigenous farmers in Oaxaca, Mexico, even produces its own nutrients (nitrogen)!

Pumpkin, another favorite domesticated plant among Seminole families past and present, has been around almost as long as corn (maybe even a bit longer). Seminole ancestors produced the variety of pumpkin that bears the Seminole name (Seminole pumpkin) by breeding in qualities that allowed it to grow in warm places like Florida. The thick skin makes it more resilient to the hot, humid climate, allowing it to stay fresh in storage for months. It's also tastier and less fibrous than traditional pumpkin, making it more edible and enjoyable.



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

Photo: A Seminole man taking stock of his cornfield. (ca 1950)  
Courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum (ref number 2007.46.28)



# Health



## Diabetes in everyday life: What families need to watch for

BY TERESA SNOW

Diabetes is a health problem many families have heard about, but not everyone knows what it looks like in everyday life. That is one reason it can be missed. It does not always start with a dramatic emergency. Sometimes it begins quietly, with symptoms people brush off as stress, getting older, poor sleep, or simply not feeling quite right.

### Common warning signs of diabetes

Many warning signs of type 1 and type 2 diabetes can look similar, so it is important not to ignore ongoing changes in how a person feels.

### Type 1 diabetes warning signs

Symptoms may appear more suddenly and can include:

- urinating often
- feeling very thirsty
- feeling very hungry, even after eating

- extreme tiredness
- blurry vision
- cuts or bruises that are slow to heal
- unexplained weight loss

### Type 2 diabetes warning signs

Symptoms may develop more slowly and can include:

- urinating often
- feeling very thirsty
- feeling very hungry
- feeling more tired than usual
- blurry vision
- cuts or bruises that are slow to heal
- tingling, pain, or numbness in the hands or feet

Not everyone will have all of these symptoms. Some people, especially those with type 2 diabetes, may have signs so mild that they do not notice them right away.

Type 2 diabetes is the form many adults

know best. Risk can be higher with family history, older age, extra weight, and not getting enough physical activity. Prediabetes is also common, and many people do not know they have it. The good news is that healthy food choices, regular physical activity, weight loss if needed, and early screening can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

Families can play a big role. Sometimes a spouse, parent, child, or friend is the first to notice that something has changed. Maybe someone is always thirsty, getting up often at night to use the bathroom, feeling unusually tired, or having trouble with wounds that heal slowly. These may seem like small things on their own, but together they can be warning signs worth checking out.

Diabetes is not something to fear in silence, but it is something to take seriously. When it is ignored, it can lead to serious problems affecting the heart, kidneys, eyes, nerves, and blood vessels. That is why regular checkups, recommended testing, and paying attention to symptoms matter so much.

One more thing families should know: if symptoms come on suddenly, especially with nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, or trouble breathing, seek urgent medical care right away.

If there is one message to remember, it is this: do not wait until symptoms become severe. If you or someone you love has warning signs or risk factors, talk to a healthcare provider, ask about testing, and take early action. Sometimes the best protection starts with simply paying attention and getting checked.

*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.*

## Together for inclusion: Autism awareness

BY DANIELLA HAKIM  
Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — In honor of Autism Awareness Day, tribal members and others from the community gathered at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center on April 6 in Hollywood to promote understanding, acceptance, and support for autistic individuals.

Autism acceptance is about celebrating strengths, honoring differences, and creating spaces where everyone feels valued.

Jasmine Tennie, Integrative Health Department educator, guided children and families through stretches as a warm-up for the mile-long route. Repping vibrant colors of the Autism Acceptance rainbow, representatives from organizations such as Boys & Girls Club, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, Hope Links, and ARC Broward, participated in the walk.

"It feels great to bring the community together," said Luis Viveros, the Education Department's ESE program manager. "The hope is for more families to join in and understand that there is help out there. It's okay to reach out."

For the first time, the walk was followed by a vendor fair with more than 17 participating vendors and 14 of tribal departments.

"The goal is to have vendors at the rest of our reservations moving forward to highlight support services available to families in their area," Viveros said.

The walk concluded Autism Awareness Spirit Week, but kicked off Autism Awareness Month, observed worldwide every April.



Daniella Hakim

Conley partakes in the stretching exercises led by Integrative Health specialists and Hollywood Health educator Jasmine Tennie.



Daniella Hakim

Michael Sampson, left, and Evy Alonso participate in the mile-long walk.

## Report shows cancer's urgency in Indian Country

FROM UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

**NORMAN, Okla.**— The University of Oklahoma's Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research recently released a new Sovereign Report titled "Purchased/Referred Care and Cancer: Overview and Options for Tribal Consideration."

Authored by Grace Fox (Seminole Nation of Oklahoma), tribal health care policy analyst at the center, the report examines how the Indian Health Service's Purchased/Referred Care (PRC) program intersects with cancer

screening, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up for eligible tribal citizens.

PRC is the program through which the Indian Health Service (IHS) authorizes and pays for eligible care delivered by non-IHS or non-tribal providers when services are unavailable or inaccessible locally. The report provides an overview of PRC structure, eligibility requirements, notification timelines, medical-priority levels, alternate-resource coordination and funding constraints.

"Our work at the Native Nations Center is first and foremost for tribal

leaders and their communities," Fox said. "This report is designed to provide clear, accessible information about how the Indian Health Service's Purchased/Referred Care program works in practice and where, particularly in cancer care, delays or gaps are most likely to occur."

The report emphasizes that cancer is an increasingly urgent public health priority in Indian Country. American Indian and Alaska Native populations experience later-stage diagnoses, lower screening participation and higher mortality than the U.S. population overall.

"When someone is facing a cancer diagnosis, timing matters," Fox said. "The Purchased/Referred Care program often serves as the bridge to specialty oncology services that aren't available locally. Understanding that process — from referral to authorization to payment — can make a meaningful difference for patients and for tribal health systems."

While the report draws on national data and federal regulations, it also includes Oklahoma-specific information. Oklahoma is home to 39 Tribal Nations, 38 of which are federally recognized tribes. All 77 counties in the state are designated purchased and referred care delivery areas under federal Indian Health Service guidelines. Even with a statewide purchased and referred care delivery area status, individuals must still meet all eligibility, documentation and funding requirements for program authorization.

Fox said the report's final section outlines policy options tribes may consider under the current system, including self-determination and self-governance authorities, regional collaborations and service-delivery models such as mobile screening and teleoncology. Teleoncology uses telemedicine technology to deliver cancer care services. The section also addresses care coordination and navigation, as well as avenues for sovereignty-driven federal engagement.

Fox's position as tribal health care policy analyst at the Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research was created as a collaborative effort between the center and the Native American Center for Cancer Health Equity at the Stephenson Cancer Center. It was funded by the Improving Cancer Outcomes in Native American Communities (ICON) grant as part of a larger effort to transform health-related research and policy for tribal communities.

## WELLNESS Word Search

K	E	X	E	R	C	I	S	E	I	A	G
F	B	R	E	A	T	H	I	N	G	B	B
I	M	S	G	A	J	L	S	K	A	B	A
T	E	G	K	D	C	M	W	A	H	I	L
N	U	T	R	I	T	I	O	N	A	I	A
E	T	U	M	D	H	E	A	L	T	H	N
S	L	E	E	P	R	J	F	S	M	S	C
S	K	F	S	U	L	S	G	U	J	L	E
I	M	E	D	I	T	A	T	I	O	N	M
S	N	S	J	E	R	I	B	S	U	O	B
V	H	Y	D	R	A	T	I	O	N	N	E

- Fitness**
- Nutrition**
- Hydration**
- Exercise**
- Sleep**
- Balance**
- Meditation**
- Breathing**
- Health**

♦ See ANSWERS on page 6C

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# SEMINOLE SCENES



TCD (3)

**HOLLYWOOD CONSTRUCTION:** Aerial views on April 16 provide a glimpse of major construction projects on the Hollywood Reservation. Above, the senior center; middle, Betty Mae Jumper Medical Center expansion; and bottom, the community center, which will be built on the site of the Estates Clubhouse, which was recently demolished.



AIBL

**GUEST SPEAKER:** President Holly Tiger speaks at the American Indigenous Business Leaders' National Business & Leadership Student Conference in March at RES 2026 in Las Vegas. It was the second year in a row President Tiger has been a keynote speaker at the event.



Masters.com

**'HARD ROCK' HARRY AT THE MASTERS:** PGA Tour golfer Harry Hall, whose major sponsors include Hard Rock, competes in the second round of The Masters on April 9 in Augusta, Georgia. Hall nearly made the cut. His rounds of 77-72 left him at +5, one shot above the cut line. He appeared to be on his way to making the cut after four straight birdies on Nos. 11-14 in round two, but he had bogeys on No. 17 and No. 18 that prevented him from advancing to the weekend. Rory McIlroy won The Masters for the second straight year. In tournaments, Hall wears golf shirts that have the Hard Rock logo on the right chest. As of April 22, he is 51st on the PGA Tour's points list.



Kevin Johnson

**GAME TIME:** As they get ready for their game, Koda Osceola, left, and Nikolai Shaffer walk past a Seminole Tribe of Florida banner that hangs on a fence at the Sugarland Park in Clewiston on April 9. They play for the Double Trouble baseball team in the Clewiston Little League. The team is one of six teams from Big Cypress Recreation in the league.



SMP

**COUNCIL IN LAKELAND:** On April 14, the Tribal Council held its first-ever meeting on the tribe's Lakeland Reservation. The meeting was held at the Ruby Tiger Community Center. On April 13, the Council held its business briefing at the center. Before the center opened in August 2025, the Council held two meetings off reservation in Lakeland at the Bonnet Springs event venue. From left to right are Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, Vice Chairwoman Holly Tiger, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie.

Kevin Johnson

**VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION:** The Moore Haven High School softball program honored Alice Billie during its senior night pregame ceremony April 17. The Terriers presented Alice with a variety of colorful flowers and praised her for all the volunteer work she does for the program, including helping in the concessions stand. She is the mom of Terrier senior first baseman Tahnia Billie.



Kevin Johnson

**KEEP ON TRUCKIN':** A Seminole Petroleum tanker truck makes its way along the Florida Turnpike in Broward County on a rainy afternoon April 17.



Kevin Johnson

**SOUNDPROOFING:** Installation of highway noise barriers on the Florida Turnpike behind tribal headquarters in Hollywood continued in April (shown at left on April 15). The 22-foot walls are part of the state's Turnpike widening project from Griffin Road to Miramar Parkway. They are also being installed behind tribal residential areas along the west side of the Turnpike and have already been installed on the Turnpike's eastern border of the reservation.



Elon Music Theatre

**HONORING AUBEE:** Aubee Billie was featured in a "Senior Spotlight" on social media by Elon University's Music Theatre program, which highlighted the program's graduating seniors from the class of 2026. Billie, from the Brighton Reservation, is majoring in arts administration and musical theatre at the North Carolina school. A musical production titled "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" was listed as Billie's favorite show to be a part of. As for what's next: "Being with my family, going on adventures, and working with Native youth this summer," Billie said on the profile.



Tampa Wine & Food Festival

**TRIUMPHS IN TAMPA:** Seminole Hard Rock Tampa was well represented at the Tampa Wine & Food Festival in April. Chef Diego Gonzalez (above), from the Rez Grill at Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, won the Battle Truffle. Trinity Shapiro, also of Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, was named the first-ever Bartender Showdown champion. The festival included the Rock the Range with Robert Irvine & Friends event at Hard Rock Tampa. Proceeds benefit the Robert Irvine Foundation, which supports veterans, active-duty military and first responders.

# NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

## State-tribal relations strain in dispute between Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma House Speaker

Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation Chuck Hoskin Jr. is no longer welcome to speak on the [Oklahoma] House floor, after he advocated for Medicaid expansion during the tribe's legislative day on April 8.

An Indigenous policy expert said this move highlights a gray area of rules in what is acceptable on the House floor during a day set aside to recognize a specific tribal nation. And it further highlights a strained relationship between state leadership and the tribes, who have had several recent, public spats with Gov. Kevin Stitt.

In this most recent incident, Hoskin Jr. used the tribe's annual legislative day at the Oklahoma State Capitol to address his administration's top priorities. Among them were education, infrastructure and healthcare, specifically the essential role Medicaid has played in the tribe's growing healthcare system — the largest in Indian Country.

"\$222 million, that's the economic impact just from the Cherokee Nation's reimbursement of Medicaid expansion dollars," Hoskin Jr. said during his speech. "All of these dollars that come out of Medicaid expansion go straight back into communities that I know this legislature cares about. My friends, I know that there are concerns about the cost of Medicaid. ... My conclusion is that this state can't afford to lose Medicaid expansion, and I will do everything I can to try to protect it."

His speech came amid Oklahoma lawmakers' deciding whether or not to change voter-approved Medicaid expansion, which covers healthcare for 228,000 Oklahoma residents.

Currently, Oklahoma has Medicaid expansion enshrined in its constitution, but two legislative measures are trying to change that.

While Cherokee Nation citizens and leadership cheered Hoskin Jr. during his speech when he mentioned the growing healthcare resources being brought to the northeast Oklahoma reservation, made possible through third-party revenue such as Medicaid, others found it problematic.

One day after Hoskin Jr.'s speech, Oklahoma Speaker of the House Kyle Hilbert sent a letter to the Cherokee Nation Principal Chief, condemning his rhetoric and saying that other forums would have been more appropriate for the type of advocacy his speech conveyed.

"It was quite inappropriate and contrary to our House Rules for an invited guest to delve into political matters," Hilbert wrote in a letter obtained by Oklahoma Voice. "I was particularly concerned with the tone and tenor of the speech, which was in direct contrast to the public position of an overwhelming majority of the members of the House of Representatives."

Mel Fillmore, an assistant professor of Sovereignty, Governance and Policy at the Department of Native American Studies at the University of Oklahoma, said the House Rules Hilbert references in the letter are a bit murky.

"When we study sets of rules, particularly for institutions such as the legislature, of course, the rules matter," Fillmore, who is Hunkpapa Lakota, said. "But the formal rules don't necessarily state that non-members [of the House] can't discuss political matters, but it does indicate that there are unmet expectations for non-members to adhere to, perhaps, informal rules. And informal rules are also very much socially a part of the norms and expectations that we have whenever we enter those spaces."

The formal rules Fillmore referenced are in the floor privilege section listed in the Oklahoma House Rules.

"In this context, where we have a day set aside for Cherokee Nation Legislative Day, it's clear that members, non-members, and tribal citizens would understand Chief Hoskin's purpose and role on April 8th to embody the highest office of governing leadership chosen by Cherokee people to speak on behalf of their nation before the Oklahoma State Legislature," Fillmore said. "This is a government-to-government relationship that is recognized and is unique, and that relationship also operates under its own formal rules and informal rules that are constituted by the Cherokee Nation and the state of Oklahoma."

Keeping the historical context of the Cherokee Nation and Oklahoma in mind when thinking critically about this situation is important, Fillmore noted. But in moving forward, they said the key is being able to share space and develop shared expectations.

"In order to have relationships, you have to keep them going," Fillmore said. "You have to maintain them and be present for them, and miscommunications are inevitable. And that's just part of the process of collaboration."

During a press conference with Hilbert on April 16, a reporter asked the House Speaker whether he had requested that Hoskin Jr. not discuss Medicaid expansion in his April 8 speech. Hilbert responded, saying, "No, I mean, it was not expected that that would even be the case."

Hilbert went on to say that he appreciates that his letter to Hoskin Jr. was leaked to the press, as it means more conversations about Medicaid expansion and the cost of healthcare for taxpayers will continue.

Hoskin Jr.'s brief, public response to Hilbert's letter said it "illustrates the great challenges for tribes in engaging with the State of Oklahoma."

- KOSU (Stillwater, Oklahoma)

## Wisconsin governor signs bill to allow sports betting

Gov. Tony Evers signed a measure into law April 9 that will pave the way for people to place bets online in Wisconsin.

The bill would allow bets to be placed anywhere in Wisconsin as long as the computer servers are located on the property of one of Wisconsin's Native American tribes. In the final days leading up to Evers' signature deadline, all 11 recognized tribes said they backed it.

In a statement accompanying his signature, Evers said the law reflected "every Tribal Nation's right to do what is best for its people," but added that he has concerns about "the important work that lies ahead of us."

Evers said that it was up to the tribes to determine how best to implement online betting, according to their needs and sovereignty.

"Each of the 11 Tribes must now work diligently—and together—to shape the future of sports betting in Wisconsin," he said. "What I will not accept is a plan that fractures this opportunity into unequal pieces, allowing some Tribes to reap great benefits while leaving only crumbs for others."

The governor is responsible for negotiating compacts with the tribes, and according to the state constitution, only tribes can administer gambling.

Throughout the bill's journey through the Capitol, Evers expressed reservations about signing it if only some tribes were on board. Some of the earliest supporters of the bill, like the Forest County Potawatomi Community and the Ho-Chunk Nation, run established casinos. On April 9, WisPolitics reported that all 11 tribes had submitted a letter to Evers requesting his signature.

"This legislation was approved with bipartisan support and has our support," the brief missive reads.

Indeed, the legislation invited a strange mix of supporters and detractors, with its Republican authors in both chambers struggling to drum up enough GOP support. It was pulled one time from the Assembly calendar — an unusual move — and it passed out of the Senate only because Democrats voted for it.

Its critics vary in their concerns. Some social conservatives and Christian groups reject the expansion of gambling as a whole.

And the legislation received pushback from major online sports betting outfits, like DraftKings and FanDuel. In committee testimony, a lobbyist for those companies said it would force them to pay 60 percent of their revenue to tribes, arguing that would disincentivize them from entering the state, which could lead to less regulated betting processes.

The conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty has argued that the Wisconsin Legislature doesn't have the authority to change state gambling laws and that the structure of the law hands an unconstitutional race-based monopoly to tribes.

In his signatory statement, Evers said he would support a "joint venture—with each Tribe contributing, and each Tribe benefiting in equal shares."

"Wisconsin cannot afford to continue to leave any Tribal Nation behind," he wrote.

- Wisconsin Public Radio

## New Mexico U.S. Rep. Vasquez says unregulated sports betting hurting tribal sovereignty

U.S. Rep. Gabe Vasquez (D-N.M.) on April 1 gathered with Isleta Pueblo leaders at the Pueblo's Head Start center to decry online prediction markets that he said are not only illegal and corrupt, but also deprive Indigenous people of their right to self-determination.

The Isleta Pueblo, which has more than 3,000 enrolled members, relies on its gambling operations to pay the 20% cost-share required to receive federal funds for the Isleta Head Start and Child Care center, according to Isleta Pueblo Gov. Eugene Jiron.

Vasquez, whose 2nd Congressional District includes the Pueblo south of Albuquerque, toured classrooms on April 1 and learned from Pueblo leaders about how the center is incorporating Tiwa language preservation and other culturally relevant education into its curriculum. But Vasquez and Isleta leaders said tribes and pueblos across the state anticipate steep drops in revenue at their casinos due to unregulated prediction markets.

In doing so, they are bypassing hard-fought, highly regulated gaming compacts that tribes and pueblos in New Mexico and elsewhere rely on to fund vital services, leaders said.

"We're regulated. We've got to report everything through our compact and vendors that are out there," Jiron said during a discussion with Vasquez after the tour. "We don't have any information or knowledge of what revenue they're making. So that's going to be a lot of impact down the road on our programs here."

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. Isleta Pueblo reported a little more than \$26 million.

[In April], Vasquez, who is a member of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, secured a commitment from Committee Chair U.S. Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-Pennsylvania) that the committee would

consider prohibiting prediction market companies from offering sports betting services.

Vasquez invited Isleta Pueblo members April 1 to testify before the committee in Washington, D.C., about the impacts the platforms are having on tribal casinos. The Mescalero Apache Reservation previously called on the New Mexico Department of Justice to crack down on platforms enabling illegal sports betting. Mescalero and Laguna officials, in a statement earlier this month, applauded Vasquez's efforts to bring the issue to the House Agriculture Committee.

In addition to concerns about sports betting, prediction markets like Kalshi and Polymarket are increasingly under scrutiny for the amount of money users are making on well-timed bets on world events, including the war with Iran.

Vasquez also announced April 1 he was co-sponsoring legislation that would prohibit members of Congress and the White House from trading on the platforms.

"I think what we're seeing is a very dangerous level of corruption taking root in Washington, DC, and prediction markets and digital currencies have facilitated this corruption at a level that we've never seen before," he said told Source NM.

- Source New Mexico

## Advocates protest outside Air Force base where Lakota woman was allegedly killed

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE, S.D. — Sahela Sangrait's family, friends and community aren't done demanding justice for her.

Roughly one dozen community members gathered outside Ellsworth Air Force Base on April 17, in 30-degree weather and snowfall, to insist on accountability and transparency in her case.

Federal prosecutors have charged United States Airman Quinterius Chappelle with first degree murder in the 2024 homicide of Sahela "Toka Win" Sangrait, who was Mnicoujou Lakota. Prosecutors believe the crime took place at Chappelle's residence on the Air Force Base. Sangrait's remains were found on March 4, 2025 in a remote area near Black Elks Peak in the Black Hills National Forest. Black Elk Peak, also known as Híhǎñ Kága or Heháka Sápa, is significant to the Lakota people. Sangrait was found under a distinct coffee table which law enforcement traced to a matching set in Chappelle's residence.

Chappelle was charged on March 17, 2025. He has since pleaded not guilty and is awaiting trial.

"There's this lack of transparency," said Darlene Gomez, an attorney representing Sangrait's family. "We've seen a whole slew of women being killed and their families have to seek that justice because the federal government is not going to seek that."

The protest, organized by a Rapid City-based advocacy organization called the Medicine Wheel Ride, was done in an effort to push for openness and communication from the base. Advocates say officials on the base could have prevented this crime.

"We're being left unheard and nobody wants to take the time to listen to us," said Rhamie Light Bone, a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe who participated in the protest.

Light Bone said she did not know Sangrait personally but felt called to the event to help stand up disproportionate levels of against violence against Indigenous women nationwide.

"I want her voice to be heard because she cannot speak for herself," Light Bone said.

The night of Sangrait's homicide, Box Elder law enforcement responded to reports of a domestic dispute at Chappelle's on-base residence. Officers left the property without contacting anyone inside, according to court documents filed in the Chappelle case.

Sangrait's friends and family attempted to report her missing on Aug. 11, 2024 and again in January 2025, but Box Elder Police did not report her missing until Feb. 10, 2025.

Air Force supervisors required Chappelle to report to Rapid City Police on August 12, 2024, when he arrived at work with scratch marks on his face, according to court documents.

Before the homicide, several Airmen sought protection orders against Chappelle claiming he made threats to shoot up the Air Force base, according to federal court documents. An internal investigation revealed an alleged "hit list" made by Chappelle listing fellow Airmen and supervisors.

Chappelle was involved in a separate domestic violence case handled internally by Air Force authorities. He was court-martialed in February 2024, according to Jesse Fagerland, a sergeant with the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. He was disciplined in November of that year, two months after the alleged murder. Chappelle also violated no contact orders twice, according to Fagerland.

Fagerland testified during Chappelle's March 28 arraignment in the Sangrait case.

Community members worry that Box Elder law enforcement officials were not aware of domestic violence charges made within the base against Chappelle, and if they were, they could have responded differently.

"I do have a lot of questions because it appears that there were a lot of steps missing and inconsistent with police policies," said Gomez, the Sangrait family's attorney. "The fact that Quinterius already had a history of domestic violence and strangulation and in this case was pending some type of court martial and was out and about doing his

thing."

Sangrait's autopsy report completed on March 10, 2025, showed three separate sets of DNA under Sangrait's fingernails, one set of female DNA and two sets of male. Drew Durand, a 25-year-old Box Elder woman, has since been charged with accessory after the fact and misprision of a felony in connection with Sangrait's homicide. Gomez said she wants to know why the other man has yet to be charged.

"I haven't seen any kind of follow up," about him, Gomez said.

A federal jury trial is scheduled to begin May 26 for Durand. Chappelle's trial was previously scheduled for the same date, but has since been postponed with no new trial date set.

Gomez said the family plans to file a civil lawsuit in the case, but did not say who the defendant or defendants might be.

"The more people that know Sahela's story, the less likely she is to be forgotten," Gomez said.

- ICT

## Native American remains found at UC Berkeley construction site. What happens next?

The Confederated Villages of Lisjan will work with UC Berkeley to care for Native American remains found at a construction site on the south side of campus last week, Corinna Gould, chair of the Ohlone group, said April 20.

Construction workers discovered the skeletal remains of at least one Native person while building a new beach volleyball court at the site on Bancroft Way and Fulton Street, according to the Berkeley Scanner, which first reported that remains were found. The Alameda County coroner subsequently identified them as likely historic and not connected to any crime, university spokesperson Janet Gilmore said.

Gilmore declined to say whether the site appeared to contain the remains of more than one person, and but said the university had paused construction in the immediate area of the discovery.

Under California law, county coroners must report discoveries of historic Native American human remains to the state's Native American Heritage Commission, which then identifies and notifies the most likely descendants — usually a tribe with roots in the area. The descendants will then confer with the landowner to determine the next steps.

Gould said Confederated Villages of Lisjan had not yet met with university officials to come up with a plan.

Options in such cases could include giving the remains to the descendants, leaving them where they are to minimize disturbance, or moving them to another area on the site, said Gabriel Duncan, founder of the Alameda Native History Project.

There are hundreds of Native American ceremonial and burial sites in the Bay Area alone, Duncan said, many disrupted by construction over time as the area became densely developed. Strawberry Creek, which runs through the UC Berkeley campus, was once the site of a village inhabited by Chochoyeno-speaking Ohlone people, he said.

"The idea of finding remains pretty close to the village is just indicative of the fact that there was a thriving community in the East Bay, specifically in that area, and that a lot of these buildings were all built a long time ago before people were really keeping track," Duncan said.

A decade ago, workers building stores and a beer garden in Berkeley's Fourth Street area unearthed two sets of human remains, raising questions about the boundaries of the West Berkeley Shellmound, a historic burial site that the city had designated as a landmark.

One of the challenges in assessing what to do with remains, which Duncan described as "heartbreaking," is that sometimes tribes don't have land on which to rebury ancestors.

The naming of most likely descendants can also be contentious. Bernadette Quiroz, executive director of cultural resources management for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, said her group believed they should have been named due to their status as a previously federally recognized tribe. "UC Berkeley sits on our ancestral homeland," she said.

The California Native American Heritage Commission did not return a message seeking comment.

- Berkeleyside (Berkeley, California)

## Oklahoma governor calls for elimination of council dedicated to Native American education

Gov. Kevin Stitt vetoed a bill April 20 that would extend the sunset date of the Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education for five more years, calling the council "redundant" and "dormant."

House Bill 3006, by Rep. Gerrid Kendrix, R-Altus, and Sen. Micheal Bergstrom, R-Adair, would have extended the lifetime of the council until July 1, 2031. State agencies and boards often have sunset dates to ensure they remain necessary and effective.

The measure to extend its sunset date was enrolled and sent to the governor last week.

Lawmakers created the board in 2010 to advocate for Native American students and improve their educational quality by offering recommendations to the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In a veto letter, Stitt wrote the council has not acted transparently or effectively, and that its work overlaps with the Office of American Indian Education.

"If the goal is smaller, more accountable government, there is no reason to keep extending a dormant, redundant advisory council that lacks transparency," Stitt wrote. "It should instead be eliminated."

Kendrix and Bergstrom did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The council's website lists four meeting dates in 2026. Its most recent meeting on April 15 was canceled, according to a list of archived meetings.

In a previous interview, the OACIE Chair and Cherokee Nation Chief of Staff Corey Bunch said the council made great strides while discussing topics such as mascots in public schools and wearing tribal regalia at graduation. He argued that the council should exist indefinitely.

"Councils like these give a voice to our Native American students and our communities," Bunch said in January. "And it's very important that we keep these voices because varying administrations have varying priorities, and we want to make sure Native American students are always at the top of the priority list."

This is the first bill Stitt has vetoed in the current legislative session, according to Legiscan. He vetoed dozens of measures in 2025, and lawmakers ultimately overrode many before the session ended.

The legislature has until the end of the session to override the veto with a two-thirds majority across both chambers.

- Oklahoma Public Media Exchange

## New Mexico investigation into forced sterilization of Indigenous women could be delayed

New Mexico's investigation into the forced sterilization of Indigenous women will take longer than expected, advocates warn.

State lawmakers approved a measure directing the Commission on the Status of Women and the Indian Affairs Department to create a "statewide plan of action" to interview victims and consult with Indian Health Service to find all cases of coerced sterilization between 1907 and 2018.

The investigation has until December 2027 to release its findings, according to the New Mexico Senate Memorial 14, providing the team with just under two years of work time.

"December 2027 sounds like a far way away, but it's not. It's going to go really quick," Josett Monette, the cabinet secretary for the New Mexico IAD, said. "Some of the investigation will be a little difficult and time consuming. I'm not sure if we're going to get everything done in time."

Due to the investigation relying significantly on the testimonies of Indigenous people, it may take years until the community is fully comfortable sharing their stories, said Rachael Lorenzo, the executive director of Indigenous Women Rising, an advocacy group for reproductive rights within the Indigenous community.

According to a briefing released by the New Mexico Memorial & Truth and Reconciliation Commission, over 70,000 forced or coerced sterilizations were performed by the IHS and contracted physicians between 1960 and 1978.

"By the mid-1970s, preliminary evidence showed that 25-50 percent of Indigenous women of childbearing age had been sterilized, with a disproportionate number of procedures carried out in New Mexico," according to the document.

Lorenzo said the organization was approached by Elena Giacci, a historical trauma education specialist on sexual violence, and human rights advocate Keely Badger — two researchers for Senate Memorial 14 — to assist with the project.

"Considering the history of forced sterilization and the distrust that our native communities have of the Western medical system and doctors, it could take a long time," Lorenzo said. "It could take up to a year just to get the word out that this investigation is happening, and recruitment could take a while, getting people together to share their stories and getting them comfortable with sharing their stories."

For Giacci, "the biggest piece is to ensure confidentiality" a priority to make her sources more comfortable sharing their stories.

In addition to confidentiality, Lorenzo emphasized that speaking to victims may take time, as the stories told will contain traumatic and sensitive information.

"We believe the work goes at the speed of trust," Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo expressed doubt of the IHS's capacity for efficiency: "When it comes to any kind of government entity ... that can be a lengthy process, but there are other avenues that we could come by the information we need to make decisions and hopefully make sure that this never happens again."

Monette said she was concerned how her IAD team would obtain the documents needed for the investigation, anticipating it would be a main challenge for the team. She said this may cause the department to rely even more on public participation for answers.

"We're going to need to hear from community voices," Monette said.

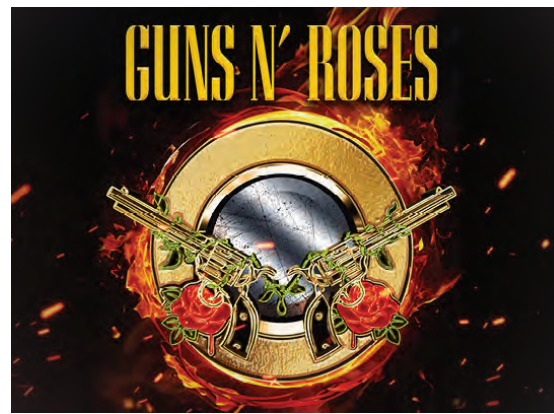
The IHS denied a request for comment, as they do not comment on ongoing investigations, according to a written statement sent to Cronkite News.

- Cronkite News (Phoenix, Arizona)

# SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



**MAY 1**  
KANE BROWN, NELLY  
WITH SPECIAL GUEST  
MARSHMELLO



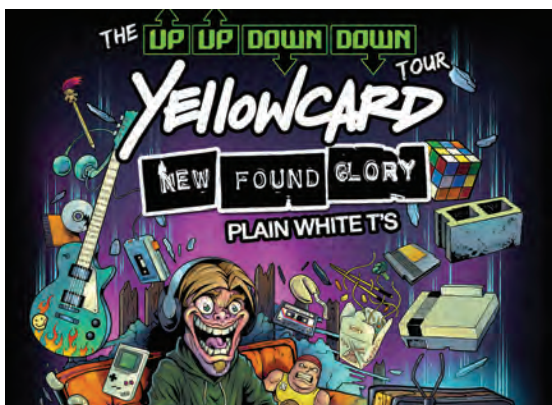
**MAY 5**  
GUNS N' ROSES



**MAY 6**  
STING



**MAY 7**  
GAVIN ADCOCK



**MAY 8**  
YELLOWCARD



**MAY 12**  
BUSH



**MAY 13**  
EAGLES



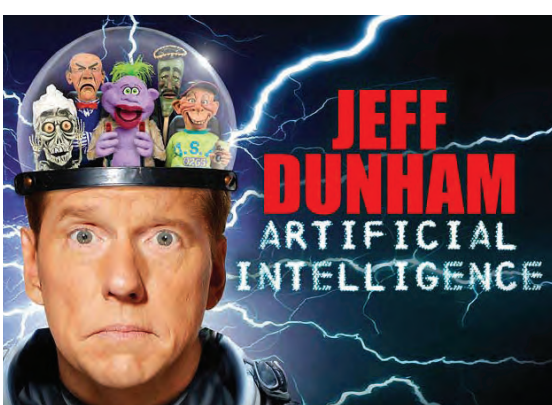
**MAY 15**  
BILL BURR LIVE



**MAY 17**  
WE THEM ONE'S  
COMEDY TOUR



**MAY 21**  
CAZZU



**MAY 24**  
JEFF DUNHAM



**MAY 26**  
WEIRD AL YANKOVIC



**MAY 29**  
KEITH URBAN



**MAY 30**  
THE BLACK CROWES  
AND WHISKEY MYERS



**GET TICKETS!**  
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HOLLYWOOD, FL

# Education



## Tribal members represent at Lynn University program

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal members Cheyenne Kippenberger and Pedro Zepeda participated in a panel discussion at Lynn University in Boca Raton about the historical and contemporary experiences of Native Americans. About 100 people attended the April 8 event.

The panel, which was part of the university's annual Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Program and moderated by American history professor Robert Watson, also included Adam Soulor of the Mohegan Tribe. The discussion focused on common misconceptions about modern Native Americans.

Kippenberger told the audience there are more than 570 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. with different cultures, languages and histories. Zepeda talked about the tendency to see Native Americans only as people from the past.

"It was eye-opening for a lot of people to learn about the Native American experience historically and in contemporary times," Zepeda said. "We got questions about myths,

misconceptions and Hollywood's portrayals. We also touched on the Seminole Wars and the Indian Removal Act."

The audience was comprised of students, university staff, professors and individuals from the community, who Kippenberger said were very curious and engaged.

"A lot of them only had surface information about the Seminole Tribe," Kippenberger said. "They learned a lot about Florida that they didn't know. I think it's great when you can teach people something new about the place they've lived for most of their lives. They were a group of people that exemplify life-long learners."

Lynn University is located on Military Trail. Zepeda told the audience the road was named during the Seminole Wars. He said cities in Florida that start with the word "fort" were mostly Seminole War forts, including Fort Lauderdale and Fort Myers. Miami was founded as Fort Dallas and Tampa was Fort Brooke.

The panel discussion lasted about 45 minutes and went by quickly, according to Zepeda, who thought they could easily speak for another 20 or 30 minutes.

"I always appreciate the opportunity



Cheyenne Kippenberger and Pedro Zepeda participate in Lynn University's Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Program April 8 with Adam Soulor, Mohegan Tribe, far right, and American history professor Robert Watson, at the podium.



From left, music professor Roberta Rust, Lakota descendant; Pedro Zepeda, Seminole Tribe; Adam Soulor, Mohegan Tribe; Cheyenne Kippenberger, Seminole Tribe; and American history professor Robert Watson at Lynn University's Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Program.

to teach about not just our history, but where we are now," Zepeda said. "It was pretty awesome to be able to speak about the challenges we face today as Native Americans and Seminoles."

The panelists mentioned that school curriculums mostly have superficial coverage of Native American history, which led to some uncomfortable classroom moments while they were students.

"The truth is uncomfortable," Kippenberger said during the panel. "But if we don't have an open dialogue about what this country was founded on, you don't really know who we are."

Despite those negatives, the discussion emphasized Native American resilience, pride and the importance of preserving Indigenous culture.

"I encourage people who listen to us to

continue learning from other Native people and learn from authentic and accurate sources," Kippenberger said. "We shared the excitement we feel for our own community, the beauty of our diversity, culture and tradition. Despite the violence of our past, we are still a thriving people."

## Red Lake Nation College plans to establish permanent endowment fund with \$7M donation

BY MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO

Red Lake Nation College announced April 9 that it received a \$7 million unrestricted donation. It says the gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott's foundation, Yield Giving, is the largest in the college's history.

The tribal college has two campus locations — one in northern Minnesota and another in Minneapolis.

The school's board and president say the school will invest the money into a permanent endowment fund, which they say will guarantee the school's financial stability well into the future — following Ojibwe teachings to visualize how today's decisions will impact the next seven generations.

"This is historic and this fund will end the poverty cycle for our college. The key is to put it all in a new fund, and let it grow and build, so we can get it to a point where we can use it to support us for anything we need," said RLNC board chairman Delwyn Holthusen Jr.

Holthusen says the money in the endowment will only be used in "extreme emergencies." If money were to be taken out, school leaders say it will be paid back with interest, to allow the fund to continuously grow over the next several decades.

Tight internal restrictions have also been placed on withdrawals. According to a press release, college board members must all agree to taking out funds from the endowment.

Chief Dan King is RLNC's president. He says the endowment is the start to "ending poverty" for the college, which receives a quarter of its funding from private donations annually.

"I am so proud of our RLNC Board for having the courage and vision to look out for the long-term financial sustainability of our current and all future RLNC students," King said.

After 35 years, the school estimates the endowment will reach \$224 million.

## PECS sixth graders explore St. Augustine

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

The sixth-grade class of Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School took its annual trip to St. Augustine March 24 and 25, accompanied by teachers and chaperones.

Founded in 1565 by the Spanish, St. Augustine is the longest continuously occupied European settlement in North America. The English colonized Jamestown 42 years later and the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock 55 years after St. Augustine was established.

The Seminole leader Osceola was imprisoned at the Castillo de San Marcos fort in 1837 during the Seminole Wars, before he was sent to Fort Moultrie in South Carolina.

The 16 PECS students received a hands-on view of history during the trip, as they toured the Old Jail, the Fountain of Youth, Castillo de San Marcos Fort National Monument, did a walking ghost tour, visited a pirate museum and shopped on historic St. George Street.



Sixth grader Elakaih Collins with some information about Osceola at the fort.



PECS sixth graders in front of the Castillo de San Marcos Fort in St. Augustine March 25.



Above, PECS students at the St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum. Below, Willena Tommie gets water from the Fountain of Youth.



Students learn about the Castillo de San Marcos Fort and its cannons.

# Egg hunting season at Ahfachkee



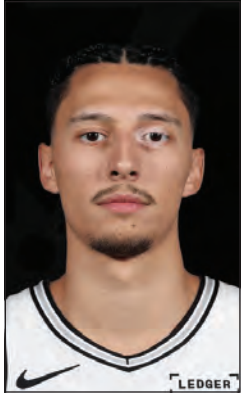
Calvin Tiger

Ahfachkee School students joyfully sprint to pick up eggs at the start of the school's Easter egg hunt April 2. The event featured three sessions and was for all grades.

## NBA player, chef headline UNITY conference

STAFF REPORT

United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) will hold its national conference July 10-14 in Oklahoma City. NBA player Lindy Waters III and acclaimed Indigenous culinary artist Chef Pyet DeSpain will be the keynote speakers. The conference, which is expected to feature 2,500 Native youth, tribal leaders, educators, and community members, also marks UNITY's 50th anniversary.



Lindy Waters III

The event's honorary co-chairs are Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., Cherokee Nation, and Principal Chief Sena Yesslith, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, the Tribe's first female chief.



Pyet DeSpain

"Perseverance, cultural pride, and an unwavering commitment to lifting up the next generation — Lindy and Chef Pyet are the embodiment of all of it. They are living, breathing proof of what Native youth can achieve when they are seen, supported, and celebrated. This is our 50th anniversary year, and the thousands of young people who walk through the doors of this conference deserve nothing less than to be inspired by the best. That's exactly what they're going to get," said Mary Kim Titla, UNITY's executive director.

After Waters (Kiowa and Cherokee) finished his college career at Oklahoma State University, he worked his way up from the semi-pro ranks and earned an NBA contract with his hometown Oklahoma City Thunder. He also played for the Golden State Warriors. In 2025, he signed with the San Antonio Spurs. Waters founded the Lindy Waters III Foundation, which supports Native youth in sports, health, wellness, and leadership.

Chef Pyet — short for her inherited Native American name, Pyetwetmokwe — is a member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. She is the first-ever winner of Gordon Ramsay's television series "Next Level Chef." She was named one of the Top 25 best private chefs in Los Angeles by Entrepreneur Magazine in 2021. Her life's work bridges her Native American and Mexican heritage, using food and storytelling as powerful tools to uplift and preserve Indigenous culture and traditions. Her keynote will speak directly to UNITY's mission — reminding young people that their culture is not only something to be proud of, but a powerful foundation from which to build a meaningful life and career.

The conference will also feature a college and career expo, more than 40 workshops designed for Native youth, and a 3v3 basketball tournament.

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

## FSU honors tribe at Seminole Heritage games

STAFF REPORT

The Florida State University baseball and softball teams made sure their Seminole Heritage games would be triumphant ones.

The baseball team blasted Notre Dame, 11-0, in seven innings April 17 in Tallahassee. As part of the Heritage game, Seminole Tribe Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola threw the ceremonial first pitch and Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford, who is an FSU student, sang the National Anthem.

The following day, the softball team took a group photo with FSU graduate D'Anna Osceola and then went out and beat North Carolina, 6-1.

The baseball team wore turquoise hats in their game and the softball team wore turquoise visors. Both teams are having solid seasons and are ranked in the top 15 in the nation.



FSU (2)

At left, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. throws the ceremonial first pitch before the start of Florida State University's baseball game against Notre Dame on April 17 at Dick Howser Stadium in Tallahassee. Above, Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford sings the National Anthem.



Miss Florida Seminole Bailey Marie Latchford chats with FSU baseball head coach Link Jarrett.



FSU

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., center, is joined by, from left to right, FSU Board of Trustees members Peter Jones and Brian Murphy, FSU President Richard McCullough, FSU Board of Trustee Chair Peter Collins, and FSU Vice President and Director of Athletics Michael Alford at FSU baseball's annual Seminole Heritage game April 17.

FSU graduate D'Anna Osceola, from the Brighton Reservation, joins the FSU softball team prior to its Seminole Heritage game against North Carolina April 18 in Tallahassee.





Beverly Bidney  
Tyse Osceola and Manny Estrada descale some fish which will be cooked for lunch.



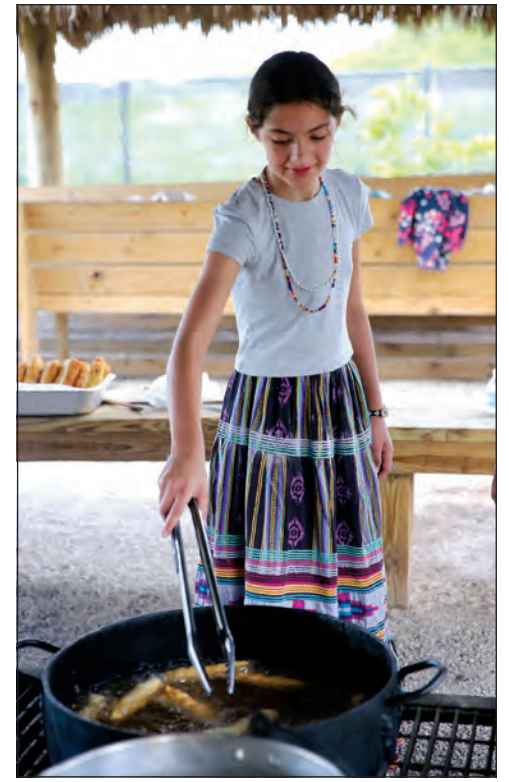
Beverly Bidney  
Serenity Bishop blanches tomatoes to be used for the ground meat with tomato dish, which was served over rice during lunch.



Beverly Bidney  
Clarissa Urbina, student Maielle Bonilla and teacher Carl Silva cook together.



Beverly Bidney  
Hendrix Osceola carves a knife out of wood with a knife made of steel.



Beverly Bidney  
Aali Castro tends to the Indian hot dogs cooking over the fire.

# Culture days provide vital learning experience for PECS students

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — Pemayetv Emahaky Charter School students learn and practice Seminole culture every day in history and Creek language classes, in addition to their academic classes in English, math and science. But once a year they spend an entire day living the culture and learning the ways of their ancestors at the school's hands-on culture days.

On April 14, the Immersion program and fifth and sixth grade students spent the day immersed in culture, including cooking, carving, canoeing, and archery.

Culture days are unique to PECS, which was founded in 2007 with the purpose of helping to revitalize the Seminole Tribe of Florida's culture and language.

"We are teaching the old ways," said Jade Osceola, Immersion program culture manager. "We realize that we might not have to do some of these things now, but it is because of our ancestors that we can have a steak dinner today. It's important to know the old ways to truly enjoy the new ones."

Students formed a circle around Immersion program teacher Jewel Lavatta, as she said a prayer with a drum to begin the day.

Conventional gender roles were adhered to during the culture day activities. Boys cleaned fish and carved knives from a piece of wood while girls made fry bread, Indian hot dogs, helped in the cooking chickee, cleaned and cooked a water turtle and learned to create a traditional Seminole hairdo.

All the students learned what it takes to carve a dugout canoe from a cypress log, canoed from one end of the lake to the other, tried to catch piglet and watched a slightly older peer expertly wrestle an alligator.

Every culture day activity is done because they are all tied to Seminole culture. Canoeing, fishing and preparing meals over a wood burning fire are all integral to survival in the wild, as the ancestors lived.

Students also need to know how to chase and catch an animal while hunting, hence the piglet chase. That skill was put to the test when the piglets escaped the enclosure and all the students ran after the speedy little pigs. They were finally caught and returned to the pen.

Chandler Demayo, who brought a 13-foot dugout canoe he made from a cypress log, explained to the students how it was made when ancestors used canoes before there were roads in the Everglades. Demayo began carving canoes as a child and slowly worked his way up from small ones to



Beverly Bidney  
Girls display their skill at creating a traditional Seminole bun on the top of their heads.



Beverly Bidney  
In the traditional Seminole way, girls serve the boys on the lunch line.

large ones. The canoe he brought can hold about two adults or an adult and a couple of children.

"In the past, trees were large enough to make canoes that could hold more people," Demayo said. "If they were traveling long distances, they would take fire with them. If there were no tree islands nearby, they would cook right over that fire."

Milo Osceola, Jr., 15, brought an alligator to show the students how to handle one. With the creature's mouth taped shut, he brought the alligator around so every student could touch its tough skin. Then he released the tape and wrestled the alligator as his father, Milo Osceola, watched closely inside the fenced enclosure.

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

When all the food was cooked, which included those Indian hot dogs and fried fish, the girls served it to the hungry community members and teachers.

"Food is life and it brings people together," Osceola said. "It's a lot of hard work and effort. It's important to know where you come from to know where you're going. We are here so this won't be a lost art."



Beverly Bidney  
Milo Osceola Jr. shows students how to wrestle an alligator.



Beverly Bidney  
From left to right, Culture teacher Jade Osceola, former PECS student Brydgett Maldonado, PECS principal Tracy Downing and assistant principal Stephanie Tedders in the prep area of the cooking chickee.



Beverly Bidney  
Students learn to row a canoe across the lake on the PECS campus.

# Younger Otter, Chapter 2

BY ELGIN JUMPER

*Author's note: Several months ago I submitted the first chapter of the Younger Otter story, an autobiographical work-in-progress, to which I've received numerous kind expressions and urgings to continue on and see the project through. So I've been working hard, researching with the staff at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's Community Archives - Thank you! - and allowing the characters to unfold the story, as they see fit, rather than inflicting a plot-line upon them, as I was likely to do in the past. Its certainly been a welcome change of pace for me, as a writer, and a wonderful way to go. Some of my influences for what you are about to read are: Magical Realism, Memoir, Fantasy, History, and Myth. Sho-Na-Bi-Sha.*

School was daunting for me, just as I had thought it'd be. Conflicts and disputes prowled the classrooms and halls. I longed for Kai's gorgeous blue eyes, Calusean eyes, like azure blue miracles, ancient, lovely, to allay my fears. But new friends were made, and bullies were met, that much I can recall. Who-hoo! Fun for all! And there were the usual learning routines, walking in lines everywhere, times for lunch and times for snacks, making new friends, group meetings with the entire class, so the teacher could talk to us somehow, stuff like that.

Here's some of the exploits I experienced: I started by meeting two great friends on the bus, Dove and Hawk, who we'll meet later on, but where I also made the acquaintances of the villains of this piece, who we'll also hear more from in due course, as we move forward. Suffice it to say, we went round and round as far as opposing forces go, engaging in skirmishes and battles, kids-style, don't you see. Our wars were heck, especially if we didn't make it home in time for supper.

So I did that with different grades and different schools, different routines, till about 1977, when I was 12 years old, but it wasn't too bad, proceeding on from Sterling Elementary to Driftwood Elementary, and then, Driftwood Middle School; it was tolerable, I might add, even the dad-gum math part, all in all.

On one Saturday - on the rez - in the summertime, my brother, Joshua motioned me over to the kitchen where he was. We were scarfing down snacks and red kool-aid, (like a lotta kids did and still do,) and he said, "Let's cruise our bikes on the rez, see if anything's going on."

"Okay," I replied. "Just let me get my hat." I was usually wearing a black cowboy hat back in them days, I should say, with a wide brim sorta bent down in the front at right angles.

I had a cheap bike back then, too, I can't begin to remember the name or model, though, but the sprockets made the peddling

way too easy and tired you out, real gradual-like, so I was looking for a larger one for the front crank, but, at least, it did the trick of getting me around. My brother's bike was the opposite, interestingly enough, that is, the sprockets were both way too big, which made the peddling into one heckuva task. We called em, "Franken-bikes," because they were made from scavenged bike parts. I'd say to myself on numerous occasions that one day we'd have bikes that would be the absolute talk of the rez, in a good way, mind, and even on into the outlying communities.

Presently, Joshua, who was in the midst of poppin a wheely down the road, said, "I've got it! We gonna do the purse trick! So, if you're cool with it, let's stop by the house again and pick up one mom's old purses, and some fishing string."



'Younger Otter' by Elgin Jumper.

I smiled and nodded. "Hey, yeah! You see, that's why you're the older brother. Right there."

So then we were back at home, rummaging through my mom's older purses, finding a suitable one, and then ransacking Malcolm's tackle box for a generous length of fishing string. Oh, the reeking smell of fish his tackle box jettisoned out! We made sure to pick up a couple old t-shirts to put inside the purse, so as to make it look as if it was filled with precious belongings, and significant monetary assets.

Now I should probly let you in on just what we were plannin - i.e., "the famous purse trick" - which was a little trick we'd come up with a year or so earlier where we tied the fishing string to the purse strap, the t-shirts within so as to give the grand illusion, right. The idea was to pick a spot near a street

that had an alliance with the bushes, and shrubs, sorta letting em hang out with each and others and suchlike for concealments of ourselves, and then we'd cast the purse out to the middle of the street. As an unsuspectin driver come down there, stoppin when traffic allowed, he goes to investigatin the purse in question - and bamm! Execution of the deception! Yippy! The Laughter just a-issuin forth from Seminole kids within the yellow-green shrubbery.

On the battlefield, then, on the western edge of the rez, we set up shop, having already reconnoitered and selected the terrain. Our people came in from the east that day, a bike ride unequalled in the course of history, unrivaled in reservation lore. As we moved, other rez kids had joined our march, the word having spread. They happily rode along side us, much-encouraged by our plans.

The yellow sun was up high, a-lookin downwards on us, as though we were wild, and we were, for the sun, the blessed sun saw fit to causing warmth and brightness to visit upon us. Why, if you wanted, you could imagine yonder US Army columns - well over a century ago! - with heavy, clamorous baggage trains, searching the swamps and marshes for us, and moving at an ever-slow pace through the sub-tropical wilderness.

But ne'er could we be found. When everyone was ready, and waiting, a cobalt blue Chevy van was on its way in. So I casted the bait out into the street, and we kept silent and waited some more. Soon, very soon, the van slowed and stopped. Hazard lights blinked on and off, on and off, and a blonde-haired kid bolted out from the passenger-side and looked about in both directions. Then he bent down, and tried to pick up his prize, the much-vaunted purse, but to no avail! For right then, as he was surging forward, I pulled that fishing string lickety-split! (He was okay!)

Our hidden forces erupted into elated giggles and howls aplenty! I could see the driver and the kid scanning the bushes thereafter, taking thought, and donning astonished expressions, abundantly aware now of their blunder. We enticed several other cars and trucks into our trick, before we had our fill, all of us having pitched in to run the operation, and then, we withdrew, (some of us making plans to sneak out and watch movies at The Drive-In Theater later that night,) then, me and my brother, moving off to the north. I glanced off in the distance to the west, and saw a shadowy group of Seminole horsemen, mystifying and dark and ominous-looking, next to a neighborhood treeline, observing us.

◆ See OTTER on page 6C

# A retelling of Seminole history: 'Osceola: Passion for Freedom'

BY DANIELLA HAKIM  
Staff Reporter

Thomas Gallaher's recently published historical fiction novel has been a six-year labor of love. Upon crossing paths with the Seminoles in 1981, Gallaher was certain he would write a book on the venturesome tribe's history. It wasn't until 2020 that the author set out on relaying a story unknown to many.

"Way back then, I knew one day I would write a book about the Seminoles, to try to tell the world about their unbelievable history," said Gallaher.

Throughout the 1830s, Osceola led a valiant effort to resist the U.S. Army's efforts to forcibly remove the Seminoles to a reservation west of the Mississippi River. Born to Polly Copinger, a Talisi Creek woman, and William Powell, an Englishman, Osceola's birth name was Billy Powell.

Gallaher's "Osceola: Passion for Freedom" follows the story of a manuscript penned by George Catlin, a 19th century Pennsylvanian artist who specialized in portraits of Native Americans, titled "My Prince of the Forest." The granddaughter of the artisan's sister, Alice Tressler Olson, passed down the manuscript in which Osceola's life was revealed.

"To me, the story of Osceola and the Seminoles is fascinating," Gallaher said. "George Catlin spent the last two weeks of Osceola's life at Fort Moultrie and painted his famous portrait. So, I thought, what if Osceola related his life to Catlin, who later wrote the story of Osceola?"

The Seminole warrior was first imprisoned in October 1837 at Fort Marion in St. Augustine and transferred to Fort Moultrie in South Carolina alongside 237 Seminoles, far from their homes in Florida.

Suffering from poor health, Osceola spent his final month as a prisoner of the U.S. Army. In the weeks leading up to his death, Catlin painted Osceola in his full Seminole attire.

Gallaher's retellings of Osceola at Fort Moultrie display the valiant leader in a different light.

"A primary oversimplification is thinking of Osceola as one-dimensional and stereotypical, the quote 'fierce red man,' in many Native American books and films," he added.

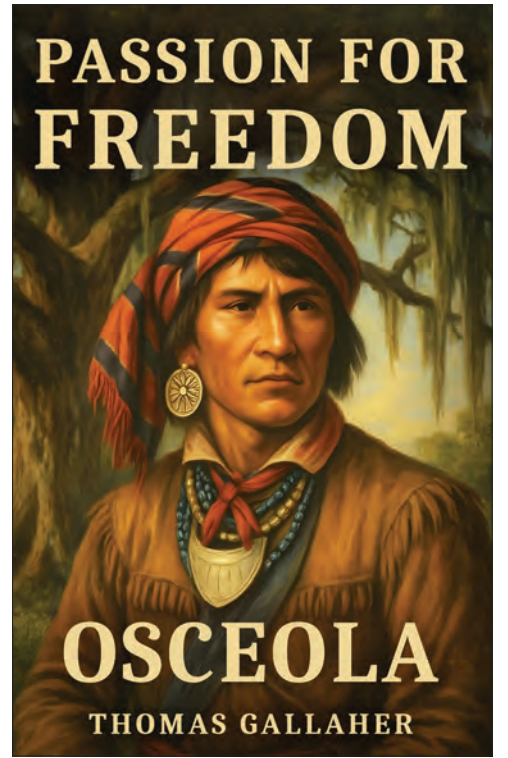
Pieces of literature on Osceola tend to dwell on his years as a war leader during the Second Seminole War. While Osceola's childhood remains unknown to many, including Gallaher, the author strove to show readers that the valiant man was just like other young men, only altered and moved by the circumstances of his life.

"I definitely had creative freedom regarding Osceola's childhood, because we don't know many details about it," Gallaher said.

Born and raised in Lebanon, Tennessee, Gallaher first met the Seminoles while working for the Chicago Housing and Urban Development Office of Indian Programs.

"I began reading about the history of the Seminoles, such a historic struggle, and I was amazed that I had never heard about them," Gallaher said.

Gallaher was instrumental to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's opening on the Big



The cover of "Osceola: Passion for Freedom."

Cypress Reservation on Aug. 21, 1997. Having worked with Billy Cypress, and later with Joel Frank in the Grants Department, Gallaher arranged Prince Albert of Monaco's visit to the Big Cypress Reservation in October 2002, arranged a special screening of "Wind Across the Everglades" with guest Christopher Plummer, and traveled with the Seminoles to the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia. He worked for the Seminole Tribe of Florida for 21 years.

"I believe working closely with the Seminoles for 20-plus years gave me knowledge that a historian simply wouldn't have," he added. "For example, I use the expression 'eh-lah' throughout the novel. I'm assuming that Seminoles of 200 years ago said 'eh-lah' similarly to how the expression is used today." Eh-Lah is often used to express surprise or disbelief.

It wasn't until Gallaher's retirement that he was able to spend five to six years typing away from his window overlooking Chicago, where he resides today.

When asked about his experience writing "Osceola," Gallaher resonated with Daniel Day Lewis's takeaway from his role as Abraham Lincoln for the 2012 film "Lincoln," saying, "I've never, ever, felt that depth of love for another human being that I never met."

Named in honor of Patrick D. Smith, author of "A Land Remembered," the 2026 Florida Historical Society Patrick D. Smith Award was awarded to Gallaher at the Florida Historical Society's Public History Forum this spring.

"I want the world to learn about the heroic struggle of a great people," Gallaher said. "I hope readers learn that Native Americans, like Osceola, are like everyone else—human beings with feelings, hopes, and dreams."

"Osceola: Passion for Freedom" is available for purchase on Amazon.

# A healing story of voice, power, and homecoming

BY DANIELLA HAKIM  
Staff Reporter

Unaware of her Indigenusness until late adulthood, Lorraine Martinez-Cook spent her early years longing for a story she could resonate with—when that search proved to be fruitless, she forged her own. "Autumn's Grace" centers on Frances, an elderly mystic pursuing her soul's journey of decolonization.

As a young adult, the Chicana author desired to be wholly American.

"All I wanted was to not be ethnic," Cook said. "As I got older, I started to see the beauty of my heritage."

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Cook grew up in El Sereno, a neighborhood that translates to "The Serene One" in English.

After marrying and trekking across several continents in the nineties, Cook found herself living under an oppressive dictatorship in Indonesia.

"Relocating to Java was a culture shock for me," Cook said. "All my rights were stripped away. I couldn't even drive. Living there, however, allowed me to tap into my ethnic identity. Observing the Javanese and Balinese and their Indigenous traditions pushed me to discover who I really was."

Much like her fictional novel's protagonist, Cook was unaware of her Apache heritage until her early 40s; her great uncle confessed this revelation in his passing.

"I always felt that I was Indigenous," Cook said. "But growing up in LA, you

never talked about your Indigenusness. You were taught to deny that. My father didn't even know."

Arriving at the autumn phase of Frances's life, a period in which a woman possesses wisdom from all her lifelong experiences, she feels firm in her beliefs and convictions. "Autumn's Grace" embarks readers on the journey of life's ongoing spiral of circles—the sacred hoop of birth, death, and rebirth.

"As I got older, I started to see the beauty of my heritage," Cook said. "It's a journey I share with Frances, as she searches for her own Indigenusness. In "Autumn's Grace," Frances ends up going to Sundance with the Lakota people, where she sees and feels and is reminded of who she is."

Cook has been writing for decades, noting experiences that have shaped her identity. She'd always aspired to be a novelist. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Cook found herself writing reflections of an elderly woman. These reflections unraveled and Frances became an amalgamation of the mature women she knew and respected.

"For years, it also occurred to me that many books I read were about young protagonists and coming of age stories," Cook said. "I wondered if there were books written from an elderly woman's perspective, and if she was a protagonist who could be one who engaged in the classic sense of the hero's journey."

◆ See HEALING on page 6C



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LAW OFFICES OF DAVID A. FRANKEL

# PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM EXTREME HEAT

## Know The Signs



As temperatures rise, it's important to be aware of the early warning signs of heat-related illness. Heat illness can develop quickly, especially during physical activity or prolonged exposure to high temperatures. Recognizing the early symptoms can help prevent serious medical emergencies like heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Common early signs include muscle cramps, headaches, excessive sweating, a rapid pulse, flushed or red skin, nausea, and dizziness. These symptoms are the body's way of signaling that it is struggling to regulate its temperature. Ignoring these signs can lead to more severe health issues.



Excessive Sweating  
Flushed/Red Skin



Nausea  
Weakness



Dizziness  
Headaches

## How To Help



If you or someone else begins to experience muscle cramps, headaches, excessive sweating, a rapid pulse, flushed or red skin, nausea, and dizziness, it's essential to act right away. The first step is to move to a cooler place. Seek out shade under trees, rest near a water station if one is available, or go indoors to an air-conditioned building.

## Tips For Staying Safe During Extreme Heat



- Walk in the early morning or late afternoon. Avoid doing outdoor activities mid-day.
- Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water.
- Cool down in A/C after exercising, or at night if you have been outside all day.
- Look for shaded areas to walk or run.
- Exercise with a group or partner, watch out for signs of heat related illness.
- Don't wear trash bags or sweat suits.
- Try other activities that keep you cool, like swimming, yoga and other indoor fitness classes.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle. Rolling down windows or being shaded does little to cool down the vehicle.



## Want To Learn More?

In 2020, the Seminole Tribe of Florida launched a Climate Resiliency Program to understand and address the multiple risks climate change poses to the Tribe's community, environment, and economy into an ever-changing future. We work across departments to create climate resiliency strategies using indigenous-led science and community decision-making. Together, we can protect future generations, repair a broken system of relationships, and heal the land and ecosystems we depend on.



CLIMATE RESILIENCY  
STRENGTH. COMMUNITY. SURVIVAL  
\*\*\*\*\*



SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA  
RISK MANAGEMENT



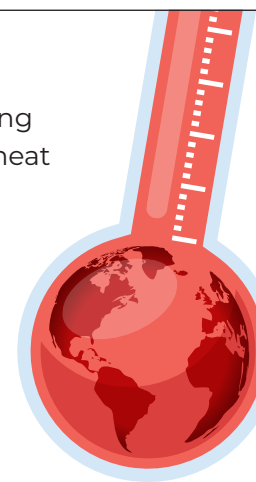
## What Is Extreme Heat?

Extreme heat is the "silent killer" of the climate crisis, contributing to 5,600 deaths in the United States each year. Even moderate heat can be dangerous for older adults, children, athletes, pregnant women, and anyone who spends a lot of time outdoors.

In Florida, temperatures above 88°F significantly increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, respiratory illness, and heat stroke. In combination with high humidity, we experience a high number of days with "feels like" temperatures above 105°F. These days are more than uncomfortable, they are dangerous.

Currently, the Tribe faces 30-40 extreme heat days every year. Due to the compounding effects of climate change, however, the next generation of Seminoles could see up to 100 extreme heat days per year. It is critical, therefore, that we prepare for and recognize the dangers of extreme heat.

See how your community is impacted on the STOF **Extreme Heat Dashboard**.



## STAY ALERT!

Look out for notifications from the Tribe during Heat Season:

### May 1 – October 31.

The Tribe will issue:

#### Extreme Heat Watches

Expected Feels Like temperature of **100 degrees**

#### Extreme Heat Warnings

Expected Feels Like temperature of **105 degrees**



#### EXTREME HEAT WATCH

An Extreme Heat Watch is issued when **dangerous heat is possible**. Reschedule outdoor activities in the coming days. Make sure that children, the elderly, and pets have a place to cool off during the heat.

**Be Prepared.**

#### EXTREME HEAT WARNING

An Extreme Heat Warning is issued when **dangerous heat is happening or about to happen**. Avoid heavy activity and direct sunlight. Stay hydrated, find a cool indoor place, and check on children, elderly and pets.

**Take Action!**

## What To Do In Case Of Emergency



**CALL 911** if symptoms do not improve quickly or begin to worsen. Prompt medical attention can be life-saving in cases of severe heat illness. Staying aware and taking early action can help keep you and those around you safe during hot weather conditions. It is important to take steps to help keep the person safe and comfortable.

1 First, move the person to a cooler, shaded area or indoors if possible. Remove any tight or heavy clothing to help their body cool down. Encourage them to drink cool water if they are conscious and able to swallow, but avoid giving fluids if they are confused, vomiting, or unconscious.

2 Next, lie them down and elevate their legs slightly to improve blood flow. Use cool, damp cloths or wet towels to help gently lower their body temperature, on areas like the neck, armpits, and forehead. You can also use a fan or spray water to aid cooling.

3 Lastly, monitor their breathing and level of consciousness closely. If they become unconscious, stop breathing, or have seizures, be prepared to perform CPR if you are trained.

Stay calm and reassuring to help reduce panic. Keep a close watch on their symptoms until professional medical help arrives.

### Get In Contact With Your Nearest Clinic

#### Hollywood Betty Mae Jumper Clinic

111 W Coral Way Hollywood, FL 33021 | 954-962-2009

#### Big Cypress Clinic

31055 Josie Billie Hwy, Clewiston, FL 33440 | 863-983-5151

#### Brighton Clinic

17201 Civic St. Okeechobee, FL 34974 | 863-763-0271

#### Immokalee Clinic

850 Seminole Crossing Trail, Immokalee FL 34142 | 239-867-3400

IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY CALL 911.

### Stay connected and get involved!

Email us at [climateprogram@semtribe.com](mailto:climateprogram@semtribe.com)

Follow us at [instagram.com/stof\\_climateprogram](https://www.instagram.com/stof_climateprogram)

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# Sports



## Moore Haven softball honors trio from tribe

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**MOORE HAVEN** — There have been plenty of positive vibes around the Moore Haven High School softball team this season. It's not just the 15-4 record or 10-game winning streak earlier in the season that's responsible for the happiness in Moore Haven.

Dig a little deeper and it's evident that this year's club is a close-knit, unified unit.

"I'm so happy with the way we've played this year. I love our camaraderie. I love the team. I love my coaches," said third baseman Teena-Maree Covarrubias.

"The team this year has had a really good bond, so we've been able to work together on the field," said first baseman Tahnia Billie, who has played softball with Covarrubias since they were T-ballers.

With things going so well it's too bad the team has to say goodbye to Seminole Covarrubias, Billie, and Truley Osceola, as well as JoEllen Erskin. The amount of tears shed by the Terriers for its four seniors on Senior Night served as proof of a special cohesiveness.

The four soon-to-be graduates from

the class of 2026 were treated to bouquets of flowers. They walked under a softball bat salute from teammates during a pregame ceremony with their coaches, including head coach and tribal member Preston Baker.

"He's one of the best coaches I've ever had," Billie said. "He understands how to coach us and how to be a mentor toward us. He pushes me to be better, every practice, every game."

No doubt the coaching has had an impact on the team's ability to win close games. The Terriers have had their share of lopsided wins, but it's the one-run victories against Vero Beach, Frostproof, Immokalee, and two against Glades Day that stand out.

Moore Haven didn't have a close game on Senior Night as the Terriers cruised past Clewiston, 16-1.

After recently reagravating an injury from her volleyball season, Billie wore a walking boot on her right foot and was unable to play. Although her playing time has been limited, Billie has made the most of her trips to the plate with four multiple hit games, including three in a win against Seacrest Country Day.

The other three seniors provided plenty of fireworks against Clewiston. Covarrubias,

who will be heading to Illinois to play for Concordia University Chicago next season, had only one official at-bat with a hit-by-pitch and walk, but she scored both times she reached base. Osceola drove in two runs in the first inning by blasting a double that hit the base of the centerfield fence. She also scored two runs. Erskin had two hits and one RBI.

Moore Haven sophomore Neska Blissett, from the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, raced all the way around the bases on a double with errors that also brought home Osceola.

It's been a banner year for shortstop/left fielder Osceola, who ended the regular season tied with Erskin for the team lead in RBIs with 24. Osceola also has a team high eight doubles. She bats in the middle of the order.

"It's the best season I've had," she said. Moore Haven headed into district playoffs with hopes of keeping those good vibes and its season alive.



Kevin Johnson

The tribe's three seniors on the Moore Haven softball team, from left, Teena-Maree Covarrubias, Tahnia Billie and Truley Osceola, are honored on Senior Night April 17.



Kevin Johnson

Truley Osceola and her family are honored on Senior Night.



Kevin Johnson

Teena-Maree Covarrubias scores a run against Clewiston on Senior Night.



Kevin Johnson

Teena-Maree Covarrubias and her family are honored on Senior Night.



Kevin Johnson

Tahnia Billie hugs assistant coach Mona Baker during the Senior Night ceremony as Alice Billie, Tahnia's mom, watches.



Kevin Johnson

Neska Blissett safely slides into home plate against Clewiston as Truley Osceola and Teena-Maree Covarrubias are ready to congratulate her.

## Basketball standout Kash Cooper continues to trend in the right direction

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

Kash Cooper's trajectory on the basketball court continued its ascension this high school season.

Cooper, a 5-foot-9 guard/small forward and Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal member, put up big numbers in her sophomore season at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School in Oklahoma City.

"Kash had a great season," said Bishop McGuinness coach Jade Carter. "She improved her defense tremendously and averaged 3 steals a game and was 4th in our district in scoring at 15.6 points per game. She played inside and out and was consistent all season."

Cooper's consistency helped the young Bishop McGuinness squad — only one senior — compile a 22-7 record and reach the Class 5A state tournament for the first time since 2019 and only the fourth time since 2000.

"I think our season went well overall," Cooper said. "We had some really good moments, and even though there's things we could've done better, I'm proud of how we

played together."

After previously playing for Heritage Hall, this was Cooper's first season at Bishop McGuinness. She made quite an impression.

"Kash's ability to post up and bring the ball up is by far her most recruitable trait. She can post up the smaller defenders and break the bigger defenders down with her ball handling," Carter said.

It didn't take long for Cooper to become acclimated with her new team, and to make an immediate impact. She scored in double digits six times in the first month of the season, and it only got better from there. When the calendar turned a page, so did Cooper. In just over a month in the new year, Cooper scored 20 or more points at least five times, and had a couple of massive games (27 points, 13 rebounds vs Elk City; 25 points, 14 rebounds, 3 steals vs Classen).

One of her top games came in a crucial late season win against Altus. She scored 32 points and grabbed five boards.

She finished the season averaging 15.6 points, 6.2 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 3.1 steals. She led the team in total points, 3-point makes, and most 20+ point games.

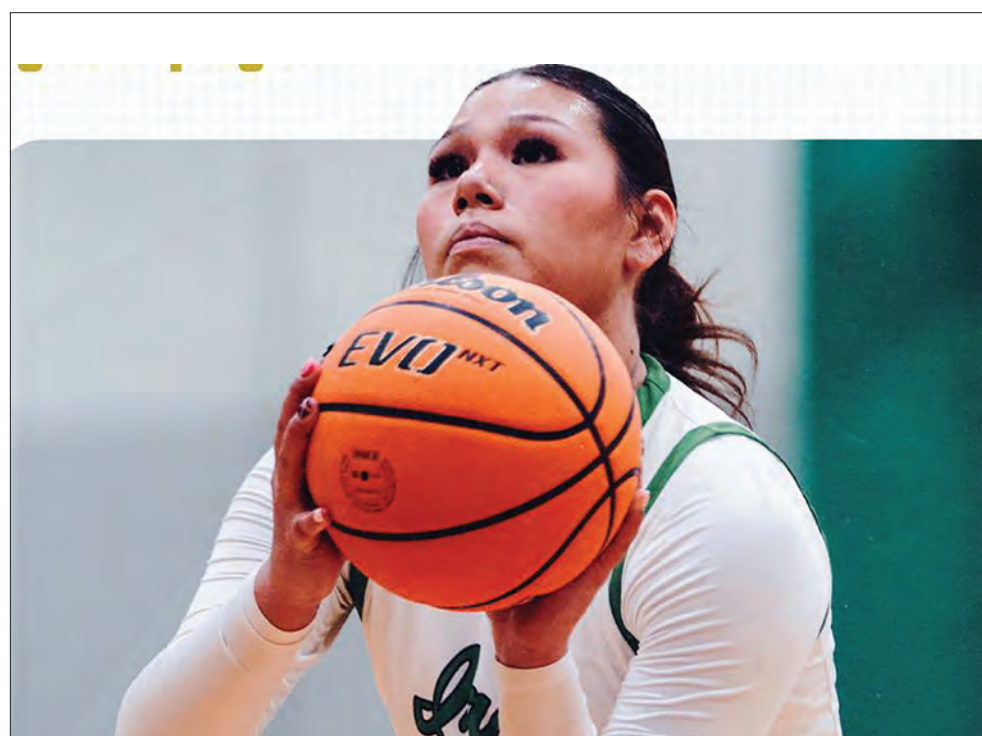
"I'm happy with my season, but I know I can still get a lot better. I feel like I improved and learned a lot, so I'm excited to keep working," Cooper said.

Carter said Cooper's leadership comes through her relentless work ethic on and off the court.

"She demonstrates hard work by staying after practice daily, setting up training sessions, and lifting weights. She is a non-stop competitor and works out religiously," he said.

This summer Cooper plans to attend summer camps and play AAU as she continues to do what it takes to increase her appeal to colleges. In July, she will play for the Seminole Tribe-based Native Soldiers in the Native American Basketball Invitational in Phoenix.

"She has college basketball aspirations, and had quite a few schools come visit her at practice and a few games and this next year will be big for her recruitment wise," Cooper said.



Bishop McGuinness

Kash Cooper



Kevin Johnson

Allie Billie - Diamond Cutters softball



Kevin Johnson

Loraine Jumper - Wild Spirits softball



Kevin Johnson

Braxton Cypress - Double Trouble baseball



Kevin Johnson

Amelia Cypress and Kai Vasquez - Tiny Tots T-ball



Kevin Johnson

Sawyer Jumper - Triple Trouble T-ball

# Fun on the field for tribe's youth baseball, softball players

## STAFF REPORT

**CLEWISTON** — Teams from the Seminole Tribe play a big role in the Clewiston Little League.

Six teams organized and coached by the Big Cypress Recreation Department are part of the spring season. Most of the players are from BC; a few are from Immokalee.

On April 9, five of the six teams were in action at Sugarland Park. The teams that played are: Diamond Cutters (softball), Wild Spirits (softball, machine pitch) Double Trouble (baseball), Triple Trouble (T-ball) and Tiny Tots (T-ball). The only team not in action was Zoned Out (baseball, machine pitch).

The season started March 23. The teams play two games each week.

In recent games, Nickolai Shaffer, from Double Trouble, and Zalanie Bear and Azy Gutierrez, from Wild Spirits, were saluted by the league for hitting home runs.



Kevin Johnson

Wild Spirits softball celebrates a victory.



Kevin Johnson

Zamani Flournah - Triple Trouble T-ball



Kevin Johnson

Kai Vasquez, Nellie Osceola, Taz Bear - Tiny Tots T-ball



Kevin Johnson

Shalyn Koenes - Wild Spirits softball



Kevin Johnson

Koda Osceola - Double Trouble baseball



Kevin Johnson

Roger Jumper - Triple Trouble T-ball



Kevin Johnson

Double Trouble - Clyve Bowers-Billie



Kevin Johnson

Laylah Cypress- Diamond Cutters softball



Kevin Johnson

Newton Shaffer - Triple Trouble T-ball



Kevin Johnson

Danasue Bear, left, and Natalie Shaffer - Diamond Cutters softball

# No championships, but solid showing by Seminole teams at NAYO

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**CHOCTAW, Miss.** — Seminole Tribe teams didn't return home with any top three finishes from the NAYO basketball tournament, but there were strong performances. Hosted by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, the annual tournament features girls and boys teams. Divisions were

in a game against the Cherokee Trailblazers. "When we needed points, rebounding, defensively, he picked it up," Billie said. Tito Billie also showed plenty of potential. "He showed some surprising growth. He showed me he's very coachable; I know him from the gym. He has lot of upside to his game," Billie said. Derrick McQueen, Noah Billie, Waylon Osceola and Artis Clemmons, from Mississippi, were among those who had



Kevin Johnson

Coach Howard Jimmie and the Brighton Seminole bench keep an eye on the action at the NAYO basketball tournament April 3 in Choctaw, Miss.



Kevin Johnson

Derrick McQueen has plenty of space for a layup for Shades of Red.

broken into 12-14 and 15-17 age categories. Shades of Red (12-14 boys) generated one of the better showings for a Seminole team. The team won its first two games before losing to Flights and EBCI Elite. Shades finished fifth out of 19 teams in its division.

"I was pleased with that. It's not first, but it's something to look forward to, especially [having put] the team together within a week and a half," said Shades coach Ivan Billie, who coached in the same Choctaw Central High School gymnasium that he played in as a high school junior and senior in Choctaw, even winning a state championship in the late 1990s. He went on to play football at Mississippi State. A new high school is being built that will replace the current one.

Several Shades of Red players had big games or moments, including Storm Osceola, who had four blocks in one game.

"He came up with some real nice plays and shots. He kept us in a lot of the games. His defense was amazing; he was staying on the ball," said Billie.

Captain Osceola was also a standout as one of the top scorers. He poured in 17 points



Kevin Johnson

Coach Ivan Billie cheers for his Shades of Red team.

impressive tournaments. Coach Billie said he hopes to have a team to take to Arizona for a major Native

but YNAB responded with a late bucket and held on at the end. Johns finished with 14 points, including three 3s. In a game on Good Friday, he scored 19 points.

Osceola said he hopes his players benefit from playing in a pressure-packed game that came down the final seconds in a loud gym.

"The main thing is pressure, and knowing that they got it in them to compete at a high level," he said. "[YNAB is] one of the best teams in the tournament. They beat us in the beginning. For [Rez Ballers] to come back from the losers' bracket to get to where they were at, it's all on them. They played hard and played their heart out but came up short."

### Seminole Hooperz

In the girls 12-14 bracket, Seminole Hooperz lost its first game, but came back and defeated No Excuses in the losers' bracket before being ousted by Native Hoops.

"They did good. They didn't do two and a barbeque," said coach Adrian Baker.

In its win against No Excuses, the Hooperz' relentless defense didn't permit any easy shots for No Excuses. The Hooperz built a 21-7 lead at halftime and continued to pull further away for a 40-21 win.

The team worked a picture perfect fastbreak starting with a defensive rebound by Natanya Allen, who fed the ball to Kanae Jumper, who hit Dalysse Baker for a layup. Kaliyah Hodge was a force at both ends throughout the game and finished with a team-high 16 points. Baker had six points.

In the team's final game, Madelynn Garza had an outstanding game on defense and offense. She made two steals early in the game. She had 12 points, including two 3-pointers. Baker hit a pair of 3s in the opening minutes that kept her team close; she finished with eight points.

### Brighton Seminole

The Brighton Seminole (12-14 boys), coached by Howard Jimmie, lost both of its games, including a 35-27 setback against RWE on Good Friday. Damahni Bonilla had two 3-pointers and scored a team-high 12 points. Nakoa Smiley did his best to try to keep his team alive. In the final minutes, he made a late putback, sank a free throw and hit a 3-pointer with 33 seconds left to bring the team to within six points, but those were the team's final points of the tournament. Other highlights from the game included



Kevin Johnson

Brighton Seminole guard Damahni Bonilla dribbles past a defender.



Kevin Johnson

Jeremy Smith drives the baseline for the Brighton Seminole.



Kevin Johnson

Seminole Hooperz's Madelynn Garza battles to keep possession of the ball.

a 3-pointer from Miguel Estrada and a block by Jeremy Smith.

###

The Brighton Seminole (12-14 boys) and Native Elite (15-17 boys) both went 0-2.

###

### Winners

#### Girls 12-14

Champions: Antisgili  
Finalist: N8V Dreams

#### Boys 12-14

Champions: Dream Hoops  
Finalist: Flights

#### Girls 15-17

Champions: Mamba  
Finalist: Haudenosaunee Shooters

#### Boys 15-17

Champions: Dem Boys  
Finalist: DBG



Kevin Johnson

Rez Ballers guard Louis Billie puts up a shot while defended by three opponents.



Kevin Johnson

Kaliyah Hodge wins the opening tip for Seminole Hooperz.

tournament.

### Rez Ballers

Rez Ballers (15-17 boys), coached by Erick Osceola, won its first game and then lost its second and got sent to the losers' bracket. But the Rez Ballers didn't exit quietly. They won three straight in the losers' bracket and came within inches of advancing to the bracket's final. Trailing by one point against YNAB from Mississippi, Rez Ballers had a couple chances in the final seconds to go ahead, but the ball bounced around the rim and out. It was Rez Ballers' second loss to YNAB.

"We played these guys the first game we lost," Osceola said. "We started off slow and couldn't recover. We got a good team. I was happy we got this far. I'm super proud of them."

Jeremiah Johns, Antonio Tosco and Christian Shaffer and Louis Billie were among the standouts on a strong team.

In the second loss to YNAB, Johns made a layup with 26 seconds left in the last game that gave Rez Ballers a 44-43 lead,



Kevin Johnson

Christian Shaffer lines up a 3-pointer for Rez Ballers.

# Ila Trueblood helps Oxbridge softball compile outstanding season

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**DELRAY BEACH** — Ila Trueblood is one of those softball players who can excel no matter where the coach puts her.

Trueblood, a junior at Oxbridge Academy in West Palm Beach, has had occasional starts this season in the infield and even one game behind the plate, but it's a starting role in the outfield where her coach likes the speedy Seminole the most, and with good reason.

"She has a lot of speed. She's got a cannon. She's got a good arm," said

Oxbridge coach Kevin Drake.

Oxbridge started the season hot — no runs allowed until its seventh game — and hasn't cooled off. Oxbridge finished the regular season with a 14-2 record and earned the No. 1 seed in the Class 2A-District 15 playoffs, which was scheduled to begin April 28.

Similar to her team, Trueblood got off to a fast start, which included a 3-for-4 night with five RBIs and two runs in a win against Treasure Coast in February.

She came off the bench and belted a triple in a comfortable win against American Heritage-Delray April 16.

She saw plenty of familiar faces in the opposing dugout April 17 when Oxbridge visited Okeechobee, whose roster is loaded with tribal members. Trueblood shined at the plate, going 2-for-3 with a double, RBI and run scored as Oxbridge emerged with a 7-1 win.

In the final regular season game, Trueblood upped her batting average to .263 by going 2-for-2 with four RBIs and two doubles in a win against Palm Beach Central.

"She's doing very good," Drake said. "Hard worker. Listens good. Very good athlete."



Kevin Johnson

Oxbridge Academy's Ila Trueblood safely slides into third base with a triple at American Heritage-Delray April 16.



Kevin Johnson

Ila Trueblood, center, during pregame player introductions in Oxbridge Academy's game against American Heritage-Delray April 16.



Courtesy photo

Ila Trueblood, center, joins her fellow tribal members on the Okeechobee High School softball team April 17 when Oxbridge visited the Brahmins.

# Champions crowned at annual Herman L. Osceola Basketball Tournament

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Senior Editor

**BIG CYPRESS** — A team known as the Seminoles — with a roster full of Seminoles and talent — captured first place in the men's division at the 37th annual Herman L. Osceola Basketball Tournament March 21.

The Seminoles finished the two-day tournament undefeated. They faced a tough test from RFM in the championship. Krishawn Henry provided an early spark for the Seminoles. He had 12 points, including two 3's, in the first quarter on his way to a team-high 16-point night. Brothers Hunter and Bryce Osceola each had 3-pointers in the opening session as the Seminoles built a 20-18 lead after the first quarter.

After leading 37-33 at halftime, the Seminoles pulled away in the second half. This time it was Greg Carter, who provided a big boost with 11 points in the third quarter. He finished with 15 for the game.

The Seminoles also received solid 3-point shooting from Bryce Osceola and Ricky Garza to squash any comeback hopes by RFM.

The Seminoles won 71-50. Hunter Osceola finished with 14 points, Bryce Osceola had nine points on three 3s, and Garza had six points on a pair of 3s. DeForest Carter chipped in with four points.

The Seminoles earned the first-place prize money, championship trophy and red zipper hoodies featuring the tournament logo and Lance Cpl. Herman Osceola's photo.

### Women's Division

The women's championship game was close for the first half before Purple Reign pulled away for a 48-32 win against Lady Hoopers.

Purple Reign featured one Seminole, Chelsea Mountain, who scored on a layup late in the game to help seal the win.

The Lady Hoopers featured a few Seminoles, including Tatum Billie, Charli Frye and Nicki Osceola.

The Lady Hoopers led 10-8 after the first quarter, but the Purple Reign took a 19-15 lead at halftime and never relinquished it.

### 14U

In the 14U boys final, Hutch and Friends, coached by Wild Bill Osceola, won



Kevin Johnson

This year's tournament T-shirt.



Kevin Johnson

Seminoles - 1st place men's division with Herman Osceola's mom Ruby, and sister Veldenia.



Kevin Johnson

Purple Reign - 1st place women's division



Kevin Johnson

Lady Hoopers - 2nd place women's division



Kevin Johnson

Greg Carter from the Seminoles team.



Kevin Johnson

Hutch and Friends - 1st place 14U division



Kevin Johnson

RFM - second place men's division with Herman Osceola's mom Ruby, and sister Veldenia.



Kevin Johnson

Hunter Osceola, from the Seminoles men's division team, drives the lane for a layup

## Golf tournament named in memory of Ernie Stevens Jr.

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Indian Gaming Association (IGA) joined tribal leaders, community members, and partners at the 13th annual NABI Founders Golf Classic at Whirlwind Golf Club at Wild Horse Pass in Arizona on the lands of the Gila River Indian Community, in a day centered on community, youth, and the lasting legacy of Ernie Stevens Jr.

Chairman Stevens legacy with NABI was long standing. He was a former chairman of the NABI board of directors and continued as a mentor and advisor to the organization.

During the event, organizers announced that the tournament will now be known as

the Ernie Stevens Jr. Memorial Golf Classic. The change reflects Chairman Stevens' lifelong commitment to Native youth and his belief in creating opportunities for the next generation to grow, compete, and lead.

Hosted in partnership with the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI), the tournament raises support for the Ernie Stevens Jr. Legacy Basketball Court and the NABI College Scholarship Fund, helping expand access and opportunity for Native youth across the country.

Gila River Indian Community Governor Stephen Roe Lewis welcomed participants to the Community.

"We are honored to host this gathering on our homelands," said Governor Lewis.

"Chairman Stevens showed us what it means to stand up for our people and to lead with purpose. His spirit is still with us and today is about carrying that forward for our communities and our young people."

Brandon Stevens spoke on behalf of the Stevens family and reflected on his father's deep connection to youth and athletics.

"My father believed in our young people," Stevens said. "He believed in creating opportunities and in showing up for our communities. This is what he stood for. This is about our kids and helping them grow into strong leaders. We are grateful to everyone who continues to support that vision."



Courtesy photo

The NABI golf tournament will now be known as the Ernie Stevens Jr. Memorial Classic.

## Top 25 finish for Anna Harmon

STAFF REPORT

Anna Harmon, a Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal member who is on the Sacramento State University track and field team, finished 22nd out of more than 200 runners in a 1500 meter race at the Bryan Clay Invitational in Azusa, California.

Harmon's time of 4:31.63 was a personal best. Her previous best was 4:34.15.

## Army names aircraft in honor of Cheyenne people

FROM U.S. ARMY

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — On April 15, the U.S. Army announced its Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft to be named the MV-75 Cheyenne II during the Army Aviation Association of America's annual conference.

The MV-75 Cheyenne II represents a new era of Army aviation, with capabilities that far exceed the current fleet. This medium-size, vertical lift, multi-mission aircraft combines the vertical agility of a helicopter with the speed and range of an airplane, allowing it to fly twice as fast and twice as far.

These tactical characteristics enable "full squad insertion at extended range, expanding medevac reach well beyond today's golden hour, and enabling large-scale, long-range air assault operations that can reshape the battlefield," said the Hon. Brent G. Ingraham, assistant secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology.

The aircraft's capabilities are supported by an adaptable digital backbone built on a modular, open-systems approach. This design allows for the rapid integration of new technologies to counter emerging threats and avoid costly redesigns, while also enabling the aircraft to self-deploy globally via strategic airlift, which reduces complexity and shortens response times during a crisis.

The Army went through a deliberate process in evaluating more than 500 Native American tribes and found that the MV-75's speed, range, and adaptability mirrored the historical attributes of the Cheyenne tribes.

The name of the MV-75 Cheyenne II "reflects more than heritage - it reflects identity," said Ingraham. "The Cheyenne people represent a resilient warrior culture and embody the key attributes of the MV-75 - speed, reach, lethality, and adaptability."

The Cheyenne people inhabited the Great Plains for 400 years, adapting to a harsh and unforgiving environment as highly proficient hunters and gatherers. Their way of life required constant mobility, organized around nomadic buffalo hunting, enabling them to assemble, disassemble, and move quickly to meet the demands of their environment.

"In many aspects, that same ability to rapidly organize, reposition, and operate with precision is reflected in the MV-75 platform," Ingraham said.

Today, the Cheyenne are represented by the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in Montana and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in Oklahoma, whose legacy reflects a proud and enduring warrior tradition ground in protection, provision and leadership. Their spirit of mobility, resilience, and disciplined strength is what the name Cheyenne II represents.

The name was previously used in the late 1960s for the AH-56 Cheyenne, an advanced, high-speed attack helicopter. Although that program did not proceed, its legacy of innovation and speed continues with the new tiltrotor platform.



U.S. Army

Cheyenne II Army aircraft

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# Micosukee Tribe hosts ultramarathon

BY DANIELLA HAKIM  
Staff Reporter

The Micosukee Tribe hosted its second annual Micosukee Glades Runner Ultramarathon March 14. Held in the heart of the Everglades with the Micosukee Indian Village serving as the hub, the race proffers distances for every runner—from a 5-kilometer to a 50-mile ultra.

Beginning at 7:30 a.m. on U.S. 41, “Tamiami Trail,” the route followed the iconic Shark Valley and portions of the Big Cypress National Preserve’s Loop Road. Each race distance was supported by a combination of fully stocked aid stations and water stops, with on-course support from race monitors and tribal police.

Each runner completing their distance received a Micosukee Glades Runner finisher’s medal, race shirt, runner goodie bag, and food at the finish line.

With a six-minute mile time, 15-year-old Ziyon Osceola-Jones, from the Micosukee Tribe, placed first in the ultramarathon’s 5-kilometer distance run. Laurence Kidd, from Nashville, Tennessee, placed first in the 16.5-mile run, and Rafael Alejandro Cuza Villarreal, from Davie, who came in first in the 50-mile ultra.

Participants are ranked by distance, age group, and divisions. The preliminary results from last year’s inaugural run and this year’s race can be found on gladesrunner.com. Runners and volunteers can register for Micosukee’s 2027 Glades Runner Ultramarathon until race day.



Tuan Nguyen

Caryn Lubetsky runs the 50-mile course at the Micosukee Tribe’s Glades Runner Ultramarathon.



Tuan Nguyen

The signs say it all at the ultramarathon March 14.



Tuan Nguyen

Petties Osceola Jr., Micosukee Tribe Lawmaker, speaks during the registration meeting before the race.

## ◆ HEALING From page 4B

Among being a source of representation for older Native women, “Autumn’s Grace” also challenges concepts such as ageism, sexism, and racism. “I have always felt that we as women need to write our own narrative—minority women especially,” Cook said. “Much is written about us from a male perspective; much I do not agree with. As I wrote, I found that issues of ageism, sexism, and racism could be expressed through Frances. Her character was emboldened in the process.”

Throughout lockdown, Cook’s external world, like so many of us, became the internet. It was through an online writing workshop organized by the Awaken Village

Press that she met a publishing team that believed in her from the start.

“I met my publisher, Amanda Johnson, and editor, Elizabeth Gudrais, who believed in me right from the beginning of this art piece,” Cook said. “They encouraged me in such a gentle, yet firm way that I needed to complete this project. I learned how to be open and vulnerable in the most human way possible through their guidance.”



Courtesy photo

Lorraine Martinez-Cook

For many years, Cook was mentored as a medicine keeper of the North and South American traditions. An activist on issues relating to the Earth, women’s rights, and Indigenous boarding schools, she was recently awarded a Senate Certificate of Recognition for her volunteer work at the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center. She co-authored “Yo Tambien: Stories of Hope and Healing” and became a commissioned artist at Burning Man.

“Art is prayer,” Cook said. “As Native Americans, we are so gifted as creators. Don’t be afraid to create art.”

“Autumn’s Grace” is available for purchase on Amazon and Barnes and Noble, and available for listening on Spotify and Apple.

## ◆ CLEAN ENERGY From page 5A

“In our last session, an attendee shared information about homes being denied solar because of the tribe’s cultural beliefs,” Holiday said. “Sometimes clean energy projects “die an early death” because of

conflict between cultural leadership and environmental aspects.”

“You want to have formal meetings because you want to be able to give people information,” added Cole. “And you want to hear their feedback, but relying just on formal hearings to communicate with folks doesn’t work.”

Politics within Indian Country vary

greatly from the rest of the United States; alliances within tribal nations can be complex but the best approaches can be effectively evaluated with preparation and knowing the community “inside and out.”

Watch the Kerretv Webinar on Youtube, <https://youtu.be/qa-7qzOVyIM>.

## ◆ YOUNGER OTTER From page 4B

Not long after the purse trick action we rode like an arrow from a bow, to The Seminole Okalee Indian Village (where my mother was assistant manager, incidentally), at Sterling Road and 441, traversing over Sterling bridge and passing The First Seminole Baptist Church, and coming in behind the Okalee establishment. I reckon our rivals never even knew we were out there, operating behind their lines.

Me and my brother stashed our bikes in some Calusa firebushes, immediately behind The Seminole Okalee Indian Gift Shop. Then we made our way in, like Green Berets, crouching, cat-walking it, into the establishment to see our mom, who had worked there for four, five years now. I thought that was so powerful cool. We were plenty hungry and it was lunchtime.

We walked in, didn’t see anybody up front, and so continued on into the back of the large gift shop. There she was, Mom!, in a turquoise blue Seminole dress and graceful white blouse, colorful beaded necklaces round her neck. It was as if she had been waiting there for us. I was pleased to see her, she had such a welcoming demeanor about her. Well, she went to talkin to us about things up-and-comin, and she asked how the hot summer was being endured?, and how things at the tribal gymnasium were?, were they going on field trips yet?, and was we getting meals over there?, and so on.

“Oh, and you know there’s a tribal celebration next month, right?” she continued, checking a receipt from an earlier sale. “Are you submitting any artwork for it?”

I nodded. “Uh, yeah, I do have ideas and

studies for drawings.”

“Me too,” my brother said.

“Portraits?” she inquired. “Landscapes? Still life? Just do your best, okay, both of y’all. I can’t wait to see them.”

My brother cleared his throat, and chimed in. “We’re hungry, mom,” he said, smiling. “Can we have money for the snack bar?”

“Sure, they have the Cheeseburger Deluxe Special today.” She handed my brother a twenty. “Get two of those. Comes with soda and fries.”

“Okay!” we said, the sheer excitement in our voices.

“Oh, and son!” momma exclaimed. I turned around and went back. “Yeah?” I replied.

She reached down under the glass display case. “I bought a book for you yesterday. Yard sale. But it looks good.”

She handed it to me, and I read the cover: “Heroic World War II Stories” Edited by Major General Reed A. Story (Ret.), I believe it was, lookin back now, as I do, from the big hill of the past. But I was mighty elated to receive the book, so I went behind the counter and gave my mother a loving hug and thanked her with all my heart. I should tell all, if you haven’t already guessed it, I loved (and still love!) History, particularly Military History.

My brother had been waiting, fidgety all the while, so as I held the book tight, like a cherished football, we raced outside to the snack bar. We were Connoisseurs of Cheeseburgers and Fries! And sodas! after all - a tangy and delicious taste of poetry. At the snackbar, we placed our orders, paid and waited. There were tables with yellow vases and sunflowers and 4 comfy chairs to a table and wooden stools lining a long snack bar, and a cook and workers posted within,

all of this enclosed by a red wooden wall with windows. Soft Rock emanated from several speakers. There was something like 8 to 10 other patrons, Seminoles and non-Seminoles, utilizing the site.

Presently, I turned around, away from the snack bar, and beheld in the far corner of the room the old man what professed seven-years earlier, when we first left out of Big Cypress, that he’d been present - front and center - for The Seminole Wars of the 1800s. He’d’ve been well-over a hundred and fifty years old in 1977. So there he sat, elegantly-dressed from top to bottom, in silk white pants and silk white shirt, with an exquisite white Seminole jacket, with colorful designs. And all finalized by a white Fedora hat. I could’ve sworn that material was of a glorious and divine origin. It was such a first-rate fiber, that much I can tell you. The old man’s faithful chauffeur sat at the table with him. He too was impeccably-dressed.

I told my brother, hold up, I’d be just a moment, and then, I walked over to the old man’s table, to sorta acquaint myself with him.

“Hi,” I began, extending my hand. “Long time.” It was amazing to see him after seven years.

“Yes,” he agreed. He shook my hand, as did his chauffeur. The old man recognized me right off. Making eye-contact, he smiled, and said, “Ah, Younger Otter, yes, yes, it’s certainly been a long while, hasn’t it? Seven-years?”

“Yes, something like that,” I estimated, taking a seat. “I remember you speaking with dad in front of the general store in BC. I know of your great deeds - my father told me - and so I owe you much-reverence, sir. Your fame has proceeded you. Thus I and my brother are at your service.” Joshua came

up with our food. He smiled. “Thank you, my son,” the old man said, clearing his throat. “I think a story is in order: Long ago, when the Red Sticks were forced southward - by civil wars and harsh treaties - crossing down into the heavily-wooded peninsula, which, itself, had already endured continuous warfare, and down into the old magic towns, there, there was a time like no other, when the thick forests were filled to an abundance with game, and a sufficient haven found in the tall pines and mysterious swamps, with which to survive and adapt to the crucial changes taking place.

“Then came, Tuko-See, my father, war-leader, strategist, and eloquent speaker, fighting in the forefront of warriors during the First Seminole War, and then, to lead his people ever-southward into a panoramic wilderness. I myself was born in a secret cove, in 1819, and then, at 16, coming of age just in time for the Second Seminole War. Since then it’s been a running battle of good versus evil and of survival. Your father never told you? Quite understandable. He was probably concerned you’d just join me on some prodigious quest or journey, fighting the battalions of evil. Myths and Legends coming to life. That’s the reason I was in Big Cypress seven years ago. Now that was a memorable contest. You were born to help bring an end to this extreme oppression, once and for all. We have watched and protected you from the time of your birth . . . You didn’t know that, did you? The Calusas long ago agreed to protect you, as well. The fight has been going on for centuries. Oh yes, Younger Otter, I have stories to tell you, formidable and tragic stories. But all in due time, my son. First, we have master plans to decide on, which we’ll share with you before long. Consequently, we must take our leave, and yet, we will be in touch . . .”

“Okay,” I said. “We’re ready.” Then the old man nodded, drank some water, clapped his hands once, and then, the two men shape-shifted into otters, with waterproof brown coats, aquatic, streamlined, scurrying away out the door, afar off, rapidly, into The Seminole Okalee Indian Village.

“I’m hungry,” my brother remarked. As for me, all I could think of was, I didn’t even get a chance to shake their paws, nor bid them farewell, till next time.

Oh well . . . Such is life.

Seminole author, artist and poet Elgin Jumper is a contributor to the Seminole Tribune.

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### Answer Key

#### BRAIN CORNER



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F	B	R	E	A	T	H	I	N	G	B	B
I	M	S	G	A	J	L	S	K	A	B	A
T	E	G	K	D	C	M	W	A	H	I	L
H	U	T	R	I	T	I	O	N	A	I	A
E	T	U	M	D	H	E	A	L	T	H	N
S	L	E	E	P	R	J	F	S	M	S	C
S	K	F	S	U	L	S	G	U	J	L	E
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