



The Seminole Tribune

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Officials remain concerned about omicron

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — As the new year begins, health officials at the tribe and across the country have been monitoring the severity and spread of the Covid-19 omicron variant. South Florida has seen a sharp increase in cases as people seek testing and hospitals cope with more patients and crowded emergency rooms.

The tribe's executive director of Health and Human Services, Dr. Vandhana Kiswani-Barley, said she had been concerned about such a spike occurring during the holiday season when people tend to congregate with family and friends.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said it is working with state and local public health officials to monitor omicron's spread, as it's been detected in most states and territories and is rapidly increasing the proportion of Covid-19 cases it is causing.

"We don't yet know how easily it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, or how well available vaccines and medications work against it," the CDC said in a recent statement.

"What is known is the new variant, omicron, is highly contagious," Kiswani-Barley said.

Kiswani-Barley added that the symptoms of omicron are similar to those of the common cold — runny nose, sneezing and congestion among others — which is one reason why testing has dramatically increased. The flu virus also shares some common symptoms.

Kiswani-Barley said the tribe has seen an increase in flu cases as well, and is encouraging tribal members and tribal employees to get their flu shot. Those six months and older are eligible for it, she said.

"We are administering full services [at tribal clinics] but that may change if the [Covid-19] numbers continue to climb," Kiswani-Barley said. "The main message is to be very cautious and don't drop your guard."

Last October, HHS returned to normal service at its clinics after being open for essential visits only. The tribe had seen a decline in cases after its steepest increase over the summer.

The tribe continues to encourage those who have not received a Covid-19 vaccine or booster shot to do so. The tribal population is considered high risk. Vaccines and booster shots are available for tribal members and tribal employees. The vaccine is available to those five years and older, while the booster shot is approved for those 16 years and older. There are eligibility restrictions.

Editor's note: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has information on the symptoms and differences between a common cold, the flu and the Covid-19 virus. Go to cdc.gov for more. Tribal members can call their local clinic or the HHS hotline at (833) 786-3458 for more information about the Covid-19 vaccine, booster shots, antibody treatments and the flu vaccine. Tribal employees can call the hotline for vaccine information as well.

Hard Rock buys Mirage operations To build Guitar Hotel on Las Vegas Strip

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Hard Rock International's guitar-shaped hotel could be coming to the Las Vegas Strip. In a massive deal announced Dec. 13, MGM Resorts International said it has agreed to sell the operations of the Mirage Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas to HRI for \$1.075 billion in cash.

In addition to acquiring the operations, HRI plans to build a guitar-shaped hotel. A rendering of the hotel provided by HRI shows its prominent presence on the Strip. The rendering also shows the Hard Rock name on the current Mirage. HRI's first guitar-shaped hotel — known as the Guitar Hotel — debuted in October of 2019 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The Seminole Tribe of Florida is the parent entity of HRI.

"We are honored to welcome the Mirage's 3,500 team members to the Hard Rock family," Jim Allen, chairman of HRI and CEO of Seminole Gaming, said in a statement. "When complete, Hard Rock Las Vegas will be a fully integrated resort welcoming meetings, groups, tourists and casino guests from around the world to its nearly 80-acre center-Strip location."

The Mirage features more than 3,000 hotel rooms, an entertainment venue that currently features "The Beatles Love" by Cirque du Soleil, casino, sportsbook and lagoon-style pool. It also includes a volcano eruption show and dolphin habitat.

"This transaction is a significant milestone for MGM Resorts, and for Las Vegas," Bill Hornbuckle, CEO and president



Hard Rock International plans to build a guitar-shaped hotel on the Las Vegas Strip as seen in this rendering.

of MGM Resorts International, said in a statement. "As part of the team that opened the Mirage in 1989, I know firsthand how special it is, and what a great opportunity it presents to the Hard Rock team. I want to thank all of our Mirage employees who have consistently delivered world-class gaming and entertainment experiences to our guests for more than three decades."

According to MGM Resorts

International, the transaction is expected to close in the second half of 2022 and will be subject to regulatory approvals and other closing conditions.

The Mirage was acquired by MGM Resorts International in 2000.

HRI said it plans to enter into a long-term lease agreement with VICI Properties for the real estate property of the Mirage.

HRI venues, including cafes, casinos,

and hotels, are in 67 countries. A Hard Rock Hotel & Casino opened in Las Vegas in 1995, however, HRI was not associated with the property until 2020 when HRI purchased the licensing and naming rights to Hard Rock in the city from Juniper Capital. The former Hard Rock Hotel & Casino is now Virgin Hotels Las Vegas.

Tribe hires Native American from Maine as head of emergency management

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe has named Paul Downing its new director of emergency management. Will Latchford, the tribe's head of public safety, made the announcement Dec. 14.

Emergency management is one of three departments under the public safety umbrella at the tribe, along with Seminole Fire-Rescue and the Seminole Police Department.

Downing, who is a member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township in Maine, is the first Native American to lead the department.

"He has demonstrated throughout his career his commitment to service in Indian Country and the United States," Latchford said in his announcement. "[He] is an emergency response professional with more than 37 years of experience."

Downing served in the U.S. Army for 22 years, retiring as a first sergeant. He is a graduate of the U.S. Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and the National Emergency Management Advanced Academy (NEMAA), both of which fall under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Downing's specializations are in the areas of crisis/emergency and disaster management.

Downing, 56, was previously the emergency management director for the Passamaquoddy Tribe, where he was

responsible for implementing all emergency management planning, mitigation, response coordination and post-disaster recovery efforts.

"He has demonstrated his innovative skills over the course of his career and I am confident he will continue to while serving the Seminole Tribe of Florida in his new management role," Latchford continued in the announcement.

'My heart is in Indian Country'

Downing and his wife are new to Florida, but he said he's been aware of the tribe for years — particularly after meeting Latchford at a United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) conference soon after Hurricane Irma hit the state in 2017. Downing was the chair for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security emergency services committee for USET and Latchford was giving officials an overview of the hurricane's affect on the tribe.

Latchford soon learned about Downing's experience and his efforts to push nationally for tribes to receive equitable emergency management funding. The two stayed in contact with each other for the next few years, occasionally meeting up at other USET meetings.

"He'd tell me I need to come visit Florida, kind of joking around, but then when the pandemic hit we had even more communications," Downing said.

As time went on, Downing said he

became more and more impressed with the tribe's public safety programs and strategies.

"When you look at Indian Country as a whole, the most robust programs are Seminole," he said. "Often the other tribes look to the Seminoles for guidance."

Downing finally gave in to Latchford's requests that he visit Florida, and last year he and his wife, a nurse, took the trip. Latchford gave them a tour of the Hollywood and Big Cypress reservations, and after many hours of discussion with his wife, Downing said the process of accepting the job began.

"I'm very humbled to work with the Seminoles. It's a career progression and the best place to work," Downing said.

Downing said that while the Passamaquoddy Tribe has about the same number of tribal members, a big difference is the Seminole Tribe's geographic footprint across Florida.

"And hurricanes are a new phenomenon I'll have to deal with," he said.

However, Downing said that there are natural disaster events in Maine that mirror some of the effects of a hurricane — high winds, rain, fallen debris and so on.

"In emergency management a natural disaster is a natural disaster. You use many of the same response mechanisms," he said.

And Downing is very familiar with tribal processes. He is a former Passamaquoddy tribal council member.

"My heart is in Indian Country. Tribes are inherently resilient, but how many tribes



Paul Downing

Courtesy photo

can say they're unconquered? One. To be able to work for a community like that ... what the Seminoles do resonates through the rest of Indian Country," he said.

Downing has two sons and nine grandchildren, all currently living in Maine.

Lakeland Reservation project moves along at steady clip

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Big development projects like the one taking place on the new Lakeland Reservation — about 37 miles east of Tampa — take years of planning and construction. People are eager for its completion: from tribal members waiting to move into new homes to planners at the tribe who work behind the scenes.

While officials say such projects never wrap up as quickly as many would like, the work at Lakeland has been marching forward steadily.

Harvey Rambarath, the assistant director of Community Planning & Development at the tribe, said phase one infrastructure — roads, water, sewer — has been completed and tribal members have accepted 39 new rental homes, while seven more are being finished.

Phase two's infrastructure work is now underway. Rambarath said it's 14% completed and is expected to be finished by the end of 2022. Construction of homes as part of phase two is expected to begin in April 2022. In addition, phase three infrastructure work is now in the early planning stages.

The Lakeland Community Building

is also in the planning phase, but a design consultant has been selected and the contract for the work has been approved, Rambarath said. The consultant is expected to begin working on the building's design in early 2022.

The structure is to include the Lakeland Community Center, which will have a gymnasium, swimming pool, various support services and a dedicated parking area. Rambarath said the hope is for the building to be under construction by the end of 2023 and completed by 2025.



Courtesy Community Planning & Development

Development on the Lakeland Reservation continues — phase one homes have been built and phase two infrastructure work has begun.

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Editorial

Infrastructure bill funding starts new chapter for tribal communities

• Portia Kay[^]nthos Skenandore-Wheelock

For generations, Native communities in the United States have faced a dire situation when it comes to infrastructure.

Amenities that many Americans take for granted, like transportation access and sanitation facilities, have either been left to crumble or were never available to significant portions of Indian Country. Tribal advocates have long called for federal funding to address these failings, but their calls were too often ignored.

Now, finally, lawmakers have taken a major step to right this wrong. On November 15th, President Joe Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) into law. This \$1 trillion dollar bill allocates \$11 billion for infrastructure needs in Indian Country, representing the largest investment tribal nations have seen in American history. It is nothing short of historic.

Some of the most essential provisions include \$3.5 billion for the Indian Health Service, \$3 billion for the Department of Transportation Tribal Transportation Program, \$2.5 billion to address congressionally-approved Indian water rights settlements, and \$2 billion to expand broadband access on tribal lands and Hawaiian homelands.

This funding has the potential to change countless lives in tribal communities across the country. Perhaps more importantly, it represents a significant step towards fulfilling the federal government's trust responsibility.

Through numerous land exchanges, the government made promises to maintain and support the needs of Native communities, up to and including infrastructure. But these promises were consistently broken if not ignored outright. By making an investment of this scale in Indian Country, Congress is taking a marked step in the right direction. As Senator Brian Schatz (HI) put it, "Strong federal investment is critical to fulfilling our trust and treaty obligations to Native communities."

And the funding couldn't come a moment too soon. According to the Federal Communications Commission, 628,000

tribal households lack access to standard broadband, a rate more than four times that of the general population. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this disparity proved devastating, with virtual schooling nothing more than a fantasy for thousands of tribal students.

Native communities also find themselves on the front lines of the climate crisis, which places unprecedented stress on key infrastructure. "As the effects of climate change continue to intensify, Indigenous communities are facing unique climate-related challenges that pose existential threats to Tribal economies, infrastructure, livelihoods, and health," said Interior Secretary Deb Haaland in a recent statement. By investing in climate resilience efforts, the infrastructure bill will allow tribes to lessen the impact of wildfires, floods, droughts, and other climate-exacerbated events that place a unique burden on Indian Country.

To be sure, this is just a start. The deep disrepair that afflicts tribal infrastructure will require more than one bill to correct, and decades of inaction have already created irreversible consequences. Furthermore, infrastructure is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to Congress fulfilling its obligations to Indian Country. As lawmakers work to pass the Build Back Better Act, they must ensure that further investments are made in healthcare, education, and housing for tribal communities. These provisions, included in the president's framework, cannot be left on the cutting room floor.

But the passage of the infrastructure bill is a moment worth celebrating. Let's hope that it's the start of a vastly improved nation-to-nation relationship between tribal nations and the federal government.

Portia Kay[^]nthos Skenandore-Wheelock, a citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, spent her formative years traveling back and forth between the Oneida Indian Reservation in Wisconsin and the Oneida homelands in upstate New York. She manages the FCNL Native American Advocacy Program, lobbying on legislation to address critical issues in Indian Country. This editorial was published on NativeNewsline.net.

Honoring traditional ecological knowledge is critical

• Kirk Francis Sr.

Indigenous peoples have coexisted with the lands of the Americas since time immemorial. Our existence is inextricably intertwined with our homelands.

Our lands are the foundation and heartbeat of who we are as a people and as such, we have tended to them with the utmost respect and reverence. We have lived sustainably in our ancestral homelands for countless generations, relying on our traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), a body of information built upon observations, experiences and lessons derived from living in a sustainable manner with the natural environment.

Our traditional ecological knowledge systems evolve out of a spiritual framework that acknowledges humans are a part of nature, that there are interconnections among all things, and because of this, humans have responsibilities to live in harmony with all of creation.

Traditional ecological knowledge worldview and lifeways have been passed from one generation to the next, often in oral traditions in which elders transmit important traditional knowledge — including ecological knowledge — reflecting discovery, practical application and best practices for sustainability.

Traditional ecological knowledge is a practice that promotes environmental stewardship and sustainability through relationships between humans and environmental systems that have evolved over millennia, continue to evolve, and have been passed from generation to generation.

While we are speaking of traditional ecological knowledge in the singular, it is important to stress that our knowledge and

experience are not a monolith. Scientific methodology, by definition, involves observation, hypotheses and testing, which in this case, has been completed and refined over generations by Indigenous communities.

Through testing theories and applying results in different cultures, environments and locales, we have crafted sustainable solutions to common issues such as land usage, water conservation, and ecological recycling.

The application of traditional ecological knowledge in forest management and cultural burning, for example, has reduced the risk of catastrophic wildfires and contributed to habitat restoration, as well as resilience to climate change.

Traditional ecological knowledge has also led to practical solutions for improving wildlife corridors and dealing with sea-level rise and changing shorelines. However, traditional ecological knowledge must be respected and protected as proprietary knowledge, as tribal nations and cultures carry the responsibility of its application for the well-being of our communities, homelands and seascapes.

On occasion, traditional ecological knowledge has been applied in ways that did not benefit tribal communities or, at worst, were applied in ways that were detrimental to our well-being.

Indigenous peoples have been marginalized and invisible — both historically and in modern times — including here in the United States. This involves the exclusion of our Indigenous knowledge, as it is often denied or misunderstood by Western culture and the mainstream scientific community.

♦ See **ECOLOGICAL** on page 3A



Beverly Bidney

Sheri Trent was recently named the new Seminole 4-H/agriculture extension agent.

Q&A with Sheri Trent, 4-H/agriculture extension agent

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Sheri Trent is the Seminole Tribe's new Seminole 4-H/agriculture extension agent. Her first experience in 4-H was as an 8-year-old in Okeechobee. The experience had an impact on her life and the lives of her four children who are all in 4-H. Trent earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural education from the University of Florida, spent about eight years managing a horse farm and then taught math at Okeechobee High School for 10 years before joining the tribe in October.

What are your responsibilities as 4-H/agriculture extension agent?

Mostly I do 4-H with a little agriculture. The 4-H staff, Kimberly Clement, Sheli Tigertail and Dionne Smedley, and I support the clubs as they plan to get back to face-to-face meetings. We are also planning for the show and sale in March. I'm still learning things and figuring out where I can grow the program a little bit.

What does the Seminole 4-H club do?

4-H has different clubs on every reservation. We have swine and beef clubs at Brighton, Immokalee, Big Cypress and Hollywood. We are also in the process of starting a horse club in Hollywood for kids who like to ride. We'll do whatever they want to do like showing, trail riding, ranch riding, barrels, roping. There are horse shows in areas around the state. It's an amazing program. Hollywood and Brighton also have small animal clubs for children ages 5 to 7. 4-H kids are working daily to keep their animals warm, safe and healthy. Clubs have

been meeting, electing officers, deciding on community projects and having fundraisers for their clubs. 4-H is a great way for children to have opportunities to interact with others, develop their public speaking and leadership skills, learn about agriculture, health and well-being of animals and, of course, have fun.

We are very excited to have a face-to-face show and sale in Brighton March 10 and 11. The show will also have a country fair in which any age 4-H member can enter different kinds of projects: photography, sewing, cooking and drawing.

What are your goals for the program?

To develop a horse program over the next few years. I think it's a great opportunity because a lot of kids are already doing it. I'd like to let them show off their skills and do something they already love. Animals teach so many things to kids: responsibility, time management, success. Kids need a goal; they need to be busy to stay out of trouble. If you don't keep them busy doing something productive they will find something else to do. There are all kinds of programs in 4-H that give them opportunities to excel and learn about the world. We want to keep these kids busy and get them involved.

What is the most important aspect of your job?

Motivating kids and parents to show up. A lot of people are interested, but getting them together can be a challenge. Families are large and everyone is going in so many directions; time is very valuable. We want to get everyone involved.

What challenges do you anticipate?

Not that many. Kim, Sheli and Dionne do a great job. For me, it's getting to know everyone and learning about the culture.

What is it like working with the tribe?

I love it; it is way better than I even imagined. Everyone has welcomed me with open arms, offering to help with whatever we need. I learned that the culture is evident throughout all the reservations and the older tribal members love to talk about tradition and history. The wealth of knowledge they possess is astounding.

From what I've witnessed, family is the most important thing in the tribe. Parents focus on their kids and want what is best for them at all times. We need parents to raise their kids with morals and appreciation for history everywhere in this country. I only hope that I can assist these families to keep their kids busy, help them form goals with either animals, plants, leadership, public speaking and the many other activities through 4-H.

Agriculture is very important to the tribe; this makes me so happy. Agriculture is the backbone of this country; it keeps food on our table, clothes on our back and shelter above our heads. I love that the Seminole Tribe appreciates the importance of agriculture and is instilling these attributes into [the tribe].

I am very proud to be the new 4-H/agriculture extension agent for the Seminole Tribe of Florida and am very excited to see what 2022 holds for us.

Judge from Navajo Nation nominated for U.S. District Court

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

A Native American was among nine new federal judicial nominees announced by President Joe Biden on Dec. 15.

Judge Sunshine Sykes, a member of the Navajo Nation and descendant of the Coyote Pass-Jemez Clan, was nominated for the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

According to the White House, Sykes would be the first Native American Article III judge in California, the first Article III judge from the Navajo Nation, and the fifth Native American Article III judge actively serving in the United States.

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez described the nomination as historic.

"Judge Sykes' extensive experience demonstrates her commitment to serving the public and the justice system. We wish her well in this new capacity with the U.S. District Court and we thank her for being an inspiration to our young Navajo people," Nez said in a statement.

Sykes has served as a California Superior Court judge on the Superior Court of Riverside County since 2013. She currently presides over a civil litigation department and is the presiding judge of the appellate division. From 2005 to 2013, Sykes served as a deputy county counsel in the Office of County Counsel for Riverside,



Courtesy photo

Sunshine Sykes

handling litigation on behalf of government entities and serving as a juvenile dependency trial attorney representing the California Department of Public Social Services on matters concerning abused and neglected children. From 2003 to 2005, Sykes worked as a contract attorney for the juvenile defense panel at the Southwest Justice Center. She was also a staff attorney for California Indian Legal Services.

Sykes received her law degree from Stanford Law School in 2001 and her bachelor's from Stanford University in 1997.

Her nomination received praise from Indian Country.

"[The National Congress of the American Indians] strongly supports President Biden's nomination of Sunshine Suzanne Sykes, a citizen of the Navajo Nation and descendant of the Coyote Pass-Jemez Clan, to be the first-ever Native American judge to sit on the federal bench in the state of California," NCAI President Fawn Sharp said in a statement. "As the third Native woman in history to be nominated as a federal judge, Judge Sykes will bring unparalleled experience in law and policy to our justice system. NCAI urges the swift confirmation of Judge Sykes as the nomination moves before the U.S. Senate."

"Judge Sykes possesses excellent qualifications to be a federal judge," Native American Rights Fund executive director John Echohawk said in a statement. "She has extensive judicial experience and a strong record of public service. We applaud her nomination and urge her confirmation. She will be a strong addition to the federal judiciary in California."

Sykes and the other nominees must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

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Community



Sweat lodge a source of healing for Martha Tommie, others

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The sweat lodge in Martha Tommie's backyard on the Brighton Reservation is unlike anything else on the property. It was built in April by some of her Cree and Northern Arapahoe friends from Wyoming. Since then, the small, domed structure has become an important part of her life.

"It feels good and gives you an uplift," Tommie said. "You can go in with all these miseries and it brings them down. The heat takes its course and it feels good. This is my healing. It's not a Seminole tradition, but it helps me."

Tommie and the builders requested that photographs of the sweat lodge not be taken.

The "sweat" is about 10 feet in diameter, can hold about 20 people and is constructed on a frame covered with blankets and tarps. A pit in the center holds pieces of cedar wood which are burned to heat large stones. Once the stones are hot, water is poured on them to create steam. Rugs surround the pit for seating.

"We always honor the water by putting it on the rocks," Tommie said.

A traditional Native American sweat lodge is used for spiritual ceremonies, prayer and healing. The sweat plays a significant role in many communities and the ceremony is said to offer physical, psychological, social and spiritual wellbeing.

Tommie goes in the sweat often, whenever she feels she needs it. Friends are invited and join her often. Recently they saw an odd occurrence in the pit.

"There was a light in the coals, it was crawling around the side of the pit," she said. "We didn't know what it was, but we knew the spirits were in there."

Daniel Nunez Jr., of Brighton, was in the sweat that night and also saw the light. He's been coming to the sweat since shortly after it was built.

"After my first time, I knew I needed this," Nunez said. "It helps me grow spiritually, mentally, physically and I even lost weight."

Nunez recently brought his daughter to the sweat for her fourth birthday.

"She loved it and thought it was the coolest thing in the world," he said. "That was a moment when all my kids were together in the same place."

Participants in the sweat usually stay about an hour or more, depending on how much heat they can tolerate. Tommie can handle the heat of the sweat, but not always the heat of the sun. She says the sweat is the best place for healing.

"If someone's feeling down, we just go in the sweat," she said. "Let it drip off of you, it gets the bad energy out of your body."

Tommie has been in sobriety for 13 years since she spent time at The Refuge — a treatment center in Ocala. Since then, she has tried to stay away from negative influences.

"It's been one tough road," she said. "I'm so proud of myself; I changed my life at (age) 45 and dealt with the trauma."

Sometimes Tommie goes weeks without going in the sweat; but if someone asks, she obliges and gets the fire started. Men sit on one side, women on the other.

"Whenever someone's got something heavy on their shoulders that they can't shake off, we come in here," she said. "The sweat lodge is something that makes you just breathe and let it go. Daniel used to look stressed before he came here. Now look at him, he's just glowing and he smiles a lot. I wish more people would come and try it



Martha Tommie, right, stands under the oak trees at her Brighton home with her niece Jazmin Morales and Daniel Nunez Jr.

Beverly Bidney

out."

"I used to be mad at people in the world," Nunez said. "Now people come and do random acts of kindness to me. That has to be because I'm coming here, it sure didn't happen before this. I had all kinds of drama and nonsense. Now it's all settled down and I can focus on my dreams and goals."

Tommie visited Wyoming to learn about sweat lodges from a friend who is a

healer. The friend travels to help people by leading ceremonies in sweat lodges. Tommie listened to what they did in the sweat and stayed inside when it was too hot for most people.

"I stayed in because I needed it," she said. "I couldn't move, but I felt a lot of relief. It's been a great healing journey for me."

When the friend came all the way from

Wyoming to build her sweat lodge, Tommie saw it as a blessing.

"I believe in anything that will bring you blessings," she said. "It's been a blessing having this sweat here, it makes me humble. I feel everybody's pain and what they are going through. I wish I could just touch them and say, you know what, it's gone."

♦ ECOLOGICAL From page 2A

In failing to recognize this wisdom, our people and nations are further silenced, and the truths that we have cultivated and protected for thousands of years go untapped as we barrel toward ecological catastrophe.

The announcement by President Joe Biden on Nov. 15, "Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Federal Decision Making," regarding an initiative to honor and incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into federal action, represents a significant advancement by this administration in deepening our nation-to-nation relationships.

This action moves us beyond the platitudes commonly associated with Native American Heritage Month and serves as an example of substantive and meaningful Indian Country inclusion and visibility.

While this announcement alone does not correct our larger invisibility challenges, it represents an acknowledgment that we co-exist as sovereigns and therefore, should

have a vested interest in the lands we share, including working in partnership to face our mutual challenges, such as the protection and stewardship of our lands and environment.

Ultimately, if we fail to act timely and appropriately, the resulting climate impacts may be far too great to overcome, and we will all suffer.

This announcement by the president sets the foundation for the traditional ecological knowledge effort's initial framework. It will be critically important for Indian Country to engage in forthcoming consultations to ensure that this administration gets the details correct and that the end product reflects a free, prior and informed consent model.

At this time, we call upon our greatest experts in this area, and for the creation of a necessary tribal advisory body, to help lead the way to a mutually agreeable traditional ecological knowledge partnership framework.

Since each sovereign tribal nation has its own scientific and resource management entities, it is also important that they exist on a

level playing field with federal, university or state-sponsored scientific communities, with respect to data usage, funding for essential programming and autonomy in consultation that respects cultural and practical needs.

Traditional ecological knowledge must be accorded respect and equal standing with other scientific methodologies. Western science and its knowledge holders are highly valued in academic and scientific institutions. Those who share it are expected to be properly cited, valued, compensated, and provided secure employment for their time and contribution — i.e. tangible benefits for knowledge sharing.

Recipients of traditional ecological knowledge, whether individual, organizational, or governmental, must also accept the responsibility to apply the knowledge in beneficial ways that do no harm to the environment or to the tribal nations and cultures that share this traditional ecological knowledge.

Guidelines for obtaining and applying traditional ecological knowledge should reflect how to achieve mutually beneficial

outcomes, how to navigate federal laws and interagency processes to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge, how to ensure traditional ecological knowledge projects are adequately supported through both capital investment and meaningful collaboration, how to appropriately respect the knowledge holders' rights to decline participation, and how to assure proprietary rights to data and findings are also respected.

Guidance should also be designed to complement, not supplant, existing agency guidance related to traditional ecological knowledge and should build on past efforts to recognize and incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into federal scientific and policy decisions. Should tribal nations decide to share traditional ecological knowledge, the federal government should ensure that the application of that knowledge and complementary collaborative efforts benefit Indigenous communities, the United States, and our planet.

Working collaboratively on climate change and the preservation of ecosystems is essential to sustain our existence within

the "web of life."

True partnership across nations, domestically and internationally, will help heal the planet and set a more positive direction for generations to come. While we are encouraged by these developments, Indian Country has a long memory — one that is full of violated treaties, broken partnerships, and even well-intended initiatives that have been unexecuted, neglected, or unfunded.

As such, it is our hope that this traditional ecological knowledge initiative, and subsequent actions from the Biden Administration, will continue on a positive path toward equitable collaboration and tangible outcomes.

We will be at the table, and we are also prepared to lead.

Kirk Francis Sr. is chief of the Penobscot Indian Nation, a member nation of the Wabanaki Confederacy. He is also president of the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) Sovereignty Protection Fund.

The Best Is Yet To Come.

The Board Of Directors & Staff
Wish Everyone A Happy, Healthy,
Prosperous 2022




New Seminole writing group strives to inspire

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — A group of Seminole writers convened for the first time Dec. 8 to discuss their passion for writing and how a group of like-minded people could be inspired by one another.

Led by Elgin Jumper, the group shared stories of why and how they write. Jumper, who says he writes every day, started by reading classic novels by Mark Twain, John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway.

"Books took me away to different places," he said. "I want to write like that." Jumper also reads a lot of poetry, which puts him in the mood to write poems.

"I write one or two poems a day," he said. "When I get to 200 poems, I go back and edit. Writing is about rewriting and revising."

Young starters

One common aspect shared among the group is that everyone began writing at a young age.

Crystal Bowers started writing at age 12. She bound the first book she wrote. As an English major at the University of Miami, Bowers enjoyed her creative writing classes. Ultimately, she earned a master's degree in biology and started doing technical writing.

"I'm trying to get back into creative writing," Bowers said. "It's hard to do without a deadline."

Wilson Bowers, who is also a visual artist, writes hip-hop. He is working on a graphic novel. He took creative writing classes at Broward College.

"I structure verses and words as a visual," he said. "This is good because it lets me see things and gets my mind working in another way."

"I also took fiction and poetry workshops at Broward College," Jumper said. "I didn't know the rules until I took them. It's helped me a lot."

Michael DiCarlo started writing rhymes at age 9, moved on to hip-hop and developed a style.

"I wanted it to be read, not just a song," DiCarlo said. "I love writing, it was an outlet for me when I was young. I like being around other people who like to write."

Morgan Frank, who also started writing as a child, writes music and loves to sing.

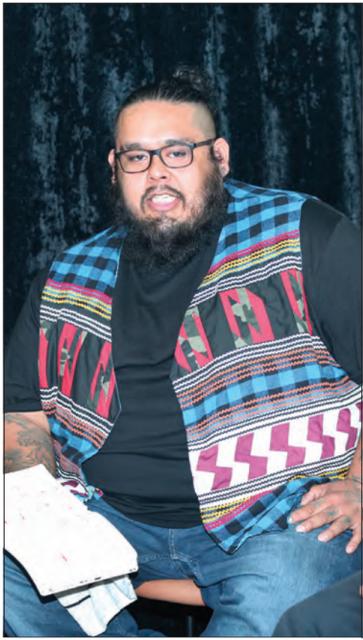
"Writing has always saved me," he said. "In order for me to tell my story to my children, writing is all I have. It's about expressing myself and my feelings."

"Writing is a way to get that stuff out," said the tribe's Heritage and Environment Resource Office's (HERO) community engagement manager Quenton Cypress, who hosted the meeting at the To-Pee-Kee-Ke Yak-Ne Community Center in Big Cypress. "It's therapeutic."

Gordon "Ollie" Wareham's writing stems from his storytelling. He started writing down Seminole legends and wrote some from his own experience. One was about



Participants in the first Seminole writers group pose for a photo after the first meeting Dec. 8. From left are Gordon "Ollie" Wareham, Elgin Jumper, Cypress Billie, Wilson Bowers, Crystal Bowers, Marcella Billie, Tucomah Robbins, Quenton Cypress, Michael DiCarlo and Morgan Frank.



Morgan Frank reads one of his poems to the group.



Cypress Billie writes a short story with 10 words given by the group.



Crystal Bowers uses 10 random words given by the group to write a short story.



Elgin Jumper, with laptop, reads poems he wrote to members of the writers group.

a 15-mile walkathon that, because of an injury, took him and his companions five and a half hours to complete. When they reached the finish line, people were waiting for them.

"I turned the characters into their clan animals," Wareham said. "A bird, a panther and a deer. The story is special to me; writing our history and what it means to us is special."

Cypress Billie started writing songs when he was 13 and still writes and performs today.

"I view them as a picture, a moment in time, that helps me deal with my emotions," Billie said. "I just leave them in the song instead of carrying them with me. That's how I cope with things."

Ready to grow

Marcella Billie doesn't consider herself a writer, but she loves to read. She believes reading will help

her become a better writer. Jumper, Frank and diCarlo read some of their poems and stories.

Crystal Bowers suggested a writing prompt. Each of the 10 participants in the group gave a random word. The words were corn liquor, atrocious, shiny, existential, euphoria, tremendous, pencil, hat, responsibility and imagery.

The writers had 10 minutes to incorporate those 10 words into a story or poem. Furious writing ensued. When time was up, they all read what had been created.

The group departed the first meeting optimistic that their writing skills will continue to improve with ensuing gatherings.

"This is a start and it can only get better," Jumper said. "Let's come back and share our writing, books and techniques."

The group shared ideas for future meetings. Jumper would like to have professional writers attend as guest speakers. Crystal Bowers would like to create a writing workshop and critique each other's work. Wareham suggested the group could publish a book in the next year or so.

They agreed the meetings would be open to anyone who is interested and can be moved from Big Cypress to other reservations. They said the next meeting will likely be in mid-January.

Bret Michaels to headline Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Multi-platinum recording artist Bret Michaels will headline the 2022 Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The annual event, which attracts Native Americans and non-Natives from throughout the country, will be held Feb. 25-27, 2022. The event will mark the 50th anniversary of the Seminole Tribe's celebration of Native culture and arts.

The cultural festival will feature Native American dance and drum troupes, Native Reel Cinema Fest showcasing Native American films with meet and greets, live Native American musical performances, alligator wrestling demonstrations, as well

as Native arts, crafts, and foods.

"We couldn't be more excited to welcome Bret back to the Seminole Hard Rock," Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola said in a statement. "He represents so many good things, in addition to his iconic music. Bret is a lifelong supporter of diabetes research and education, which is a huge challenge for the Native American population. That's how we originally clicked and became friends over the years. When Bret comes out to do something with us, he always goes above and beyond, giving a thousand percent to make sure fans get an incredible show. He brings so much excitement to his generations of fans in South Florida. We're thrilled to have him at our event."

"I could not be more honored to be the musical guest at Seminole Tribal Fair and

Pow Wow 50th anniversary for the Pow Wow's closing night concert and party," Michaels said in a statement. "I am going to be playing all the hits and bringing nothing but a good time to all of our friends, fans and family at the Seminole Hard Rock on Sunday, Feb. 27 to close out this incredible Tribal Festival. There is a true friendship there with all of the Seminole Tribe. I am bringing big hits, 100% good energy and the fun, beach show vibes fans have enjoyed all year long."

Michaels has sold over 100 million records, digital copies and streams worldwide, is a reality TV superstar with some of the highest-rated reality shows in history and is a lifelong Type 1 diabetic.

Michaels' conglomerate — Michaels Entertainment Group — oversees his other

business endeavors, such as his Bret Michaels Suite at the Hard Rock Riviera Maya and a marketing campaign with Hard Rock International.

A Pennsylvania native and son of a veteran, Michaels also is a longtime supporter of the military and frontline workers. He has been named humanitarian of the year from the Hollywood (Calif.) Christmas Parade two years in a row. He was also selected for the American Diabetes Association's Chair Citation Award.

For more information about the event go to semtribefair.com.



Bret Michaels

LAKELAND From page 1A

The Lakeland Reservation is being built for Tampa-area tribal members. More than a

decade ago, the tribe purchased nearly 900 undeveloped acres in unincorporated Polk County with the intention of creating a new reservation for those who had once lived on the land where the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa now sits.

Once completed, the reservation will

have about 150 single-family homes for rent and purchase on one-acre lots. The area and the land has a rural feel with abundant water features, trees and other vegetation.

NLC to host annual conference

HOLLYWOOD — The fourth annual Seminole Tribe Renewable Energy & Sustainability Conference will be held Feb 22-24, 2022, at the Native Learning Center in Hollywood. Chairman Marcellus

W. Osceola Jr. is scheduled to give opening remarks at the start of the conference.

For more information go to nativelearningcenter.com.

Seminole perspective

Indigenous voices needed in battle for climate justice

BY DURANTE BLAIS-BILLIE

In November, I had the privilege to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, referred to as COP26, as part of a delegation of queer, trans, two-spirit, Black and Indigenous youth. My delegation, titled Weaving our Paths, was a group of 12 people from all across Turtle Island representing various communities. Our collective goals included ensuring queer, trans, two-spirit, Black and Indigenous youth leaders had agency, space and a platform to make an impact within the global stage of the climate talks. We also sought to show how our communities-lived experiences have proven that climate change and colonial exploitation are interconnected, as well as demand that climate justice include Indigenous land stewardship and Indigenous sovereignty.

This year was my first time attending the UN Climate Change Conference and my first time leaving the country since the global pandemic began. Though the health precautions required to attend were not surprising, the pandemic deeply affected my initial impression of COP26, as it also shaped who had access to the conference. Inequities such as unequal vaccine distribution in the Global South restricted many of the communities most impacted by climate change from attending. At the same time, COP26 was well attended by the corporations responsible for high emissions and lobbyist groups representing extractive industries such as fossil fuel. The UN deciding to move forward with the conference without accessibility for the communities at the frontlines of climate change spoke volumes to me about what COP prioritized.

Going into COP26, one of the biggest areas of concern for Indigenous communities and organizers was Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. This article upholds carbon markets that are controlled by a centralized, elite group as a solution to global climate change. Article 6 allows corporations to offset their pollution through market transactions. These transactions are regulated in a way which often benefits economic growth over actual emission reduction. Not only does this article fail to truly address the root of the climate crisis, but it allows corporations to continue to exploit Indigenous communities by finding ways to, in the eyes of the UN, make up for the destruction of our homes and ancestral lands. The climate solutions proposed by Article 6 reward obtaining carbon credits even if, by getting them, corporations ultimately displace and harm Indigenous communities.

Unfortunately, the negotiations of COP26 did little to actually address the exploitative nature of Article 6. This means flawed nature-based solutions can continue, such as offsetting the destruction of natural forests with tree plantations. This policy deeply affects Indigenous people all over by setting a global precedence for how climate change is addressed by world leaders.

Similar types of ineffective nature-based solutions and their effects on Native people have long been familiar to our Seminole community. Article 6 of the Paris Agreement mirrors our own local struggles, as corporations who have historically exploited the Everglades now parade their man-made marshes as the solution to the loss of our homelands.

A direct comparison is Florida Power and Light's Mitigation Bank, a privately owned and essentially man-made water bank which FPL uses to sell mitigation credits to companies harming natural wetlands so they may claim they're offsetting the destruction of land and water. This allows



Durante Blais-Billie, far right, stands in solidarity with other Indigenous youth in November as Cheghajimixw Blaney addresses the final People's Plenary at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland.

the corporations to benefit from false climate solutions without ever needing a real commitment to ending their impact on the wetlands.

While the outcomes of COP26's negotiations are discouraging, I believe there is still much to be gained by both keeping an eye on the climate summit and speaking up. A huge part of understanding how to protect ourselves against these tactics of false climate solutions is learning how to spot deceptive language such as "carbon neutral" or "nature-based solutions." We can also claim space for ourselves at these world conferences so we may shift their platform of global attention toward the communities actually protecting biodiversity rather than the corporations that pretend they don't harm it.

What struck me the most while attending COP26 is just how much Indigenous voices are needed at this global level. As a Seminole, I know that thousands of community-specific Indigenous practices and Indigenous knowledge systems are the long proven way to ensure the health of the world. I believe COP26 ignores Indigenous land stewardship as a path forward. Instead, COP negotiators assume the way to combat climate change is to create new colonial one-size-fits-all structures to maintain ever growing extraction levels. COP26, like false climate solutions, is designed to impact the narrative around climate change rather than actually find a solution.

However, even in choosing to engage with COP through this perspective, we can still have an impact by attending. Though I personally do not believe COP is a system that can actually solve climate change, I think there is much to gain from Indigenous people having a presence at this global level. Indigenous people should be there, not just to participate in the UN's agenda, but to recenter our own systems and knowledge in the eyes of the world.

This being said, I am still hopeful

change and uphold our tribal sovereignty.

Durante Blais-Billie, whose two-year reign as Miss Florida Seminole recently ended, is a former assistant director of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. She has worked with the Future Indigenous Leaders of South Florida, collaborated with History Fort Lauderdale as a co-curator for an art exhibit and is an advocate for the Indigenous LGBTQ community. She earned a master's degree in art history and management from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. She recently returned to Scotland for COP26.



Durante Blais-Billie at the COP26 action hub.

change and uphold our tribal sovereignty. Within and outside of the conference, I met amazing people looking to create long-lasting networks of solidarity with other communities affected by climate change and colonial exploitation. I saw so much potential for not just the healing of our lands and water, but the liberation of our knowledge and people. I believe a powerful next step forward for our tribe in fighting the climate crisis is connecting with other Indigenous communities, not just here in the Southeast but globally, so that we may understand how to support one another and work together to create ways to collectively approach climate

change and uphold our tribal sovereignty.

Durante Blais-Billie, whose two-year reign as Miss Florida Seminole recently ended, is a former assistant director of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. She has worked with the Future Indigenous Leaders of South Florida, collaborated with History Fort Lauderdale as a co-curator for an art exhibit and is an advocate for the Indigenous LGBTQ community. She earned a master's degree in art history and management from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. She recently returned to Scotland for COP26.

Tribal ally remembered for influential work

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Historian Harry Kersey Jr., who had a close connection to the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes, died Nov. 7 at his home in Boca Raton at age 86.

Kersey was widely recognized as an expert on the history and culture of Florida's Native Peoples, and he worked with tribal leadership in various capacities.

Paul Backhouse, the senior director of the Heritage and Environment Resources Office (HERO) for the Seminole Tribe, said he informed Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. of Kersey's death and also reached out to his wife of 62 years, Ruth Dyer Kersey.

"I expressed the sorrow of the whole tribe in hearing the news," Backhouse said. "[She] recalled Harry's last trip out to Big Cypress and the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum four years ago when he gave a [scholarly] paper to many of his friends at the tribe that he hadn't seen for some years."

Kersey wrote extensively on issues affecting Indigenous People in general and the Seminole Tribe, specifically — 11 books and 75 scholarly articles and book chapters.

He consulted with the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes during the development of their respective governmental structures decades ago and at the request of the Seminole Tribe, he served on the Florida Governors Council on Indian Affairs from 1978 to 1988. Kersey also assisted the tribe on its federal land claims and water rights cases.

Backhouse noted one of Kersey's influential books — "An Assumption of Sovereignty: Social and Political Transformation Among the Florida Seminoles," which covers the years from 1953 to 1979.

"Which is one of the most important works of his kind," Backhouse said.

Another of his profound works, Backhouse said, is "Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades," which he coauthored with legendary Miccosukee leader Buffalo Tiger.

His most recent book, which he coauthored, was published in 2010: "Seminole Voices, Reflections on their Changing Society, 1970-2000."

Kersey also taught in the history department at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton until his retirement in 2003.

"We are sad to announce the recent passing of professor emeritus Harry Kersey," the department posted on its Facebook page soon after his death. "He was an eminent scholar of Seminole and Indigenous histories, an inspiring teacher, and a beloved colleague."

According to his obituary, Kersey was born in Jacksonville in 1935. He attended Landon High School in Jacksonville and received multiple degrees from the University of Florida in Gainesville and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Kersey also served in the U.S. Air Force as an intelligence officer from 1958 to 1961.

Along with his wife, Kersey is survived by daughters Karen Kersey Wynne and Laura Lynn Kersey, sons-in-law Michael Wynne and Joseph Mir, and granddaughter Shaina Nicole Kersey Wynne.

A memorial service was scheduled to take place Nov. 20 at the Glick Funeral Home in Boca Raton.

Glimpse of past sits on Everglades' western edge

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Seminole history and culture is seen in many places in Florida — some more out of the way than others. The Smallwood Store at Chokoloskee Bay near Everglades City is one of those

that's a bit out of the way: it's been called the southernmost point of the west coast of Florida. The store and the area offer a slice of Florida's Native influences and pioneering history.

The store first opened in 1906 by pioneer Ted Smallwood. His descendants still operate it today. Over time the structure has served as an Indian trading post (where Seminoles used to camp), Post Office, general store — and, today, a gift shop and museum.

The "Tigertail Gift Shop" is named after the Seminole Tribe's Charlie Tigertail, who has been described as the first Native to run a trading post and store in the Everglades. The Smallwood family says he and Ted Smallwood were good friends. The gift shop



The gift store carries items created by Seminoles.

sells Seminole crafts, carvings and artwork, among other items.

The Ten Thousand Islands that surround Chokoloskee Bay also carry stories of mysterious disappearances and ancient Calusa Indian burial grounds. The area was even once the home of alleged serial killer Edgar "Ed" Watson.

Watson, who was born in 1855, once sought refuge from the law in the Ten Thousand Islands. It was reported that residents who thought he was killing their neighbors later killed him at the Smallwood Store. The gift store has books for sale on Watson and his life.

The Calusa Indians lived in the Chokoloskee Bay area about 2,000 years ago where they built mounds and canals to travel in dugout canoes. Descendants of the Calusa expanded the mounds and fished, hunted and farmed the fertile soil.

Meanwhile, white settlements in the area began near the end of the 19th century with hide and fur hunters and archaeologists among the first to visit. Settlement brought the need for goods and mail, which both



The Smallwood Store at Chokoloskee Bay was founded in 1906.

were met by the Smallwood Store.

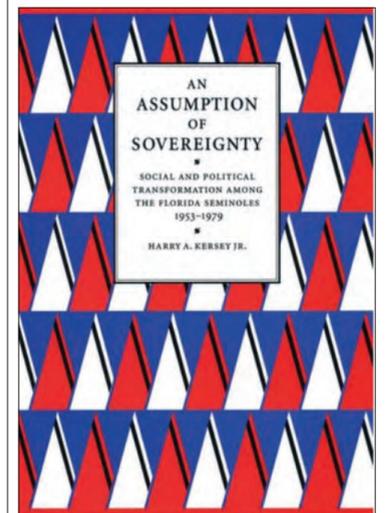
The Smallwood Store was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and was a working store until 1982. In 1990, Smallwood's granddaughter added the museum to the store. Today, visitors come for the history, to fish off the back deck, and to paddle kayaks in the Ten Thousand Islands wilderness.

The site is near to other attractions to round out a South Florida day trip. In addition to fishing and kayaking, there is picnicking, hiking, boat tours, the Collier-Seminole State Park, the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge and eateries that serve stone crab and other seafood. The area also isn't far from the Shark Valley entrance to Everglades National Park and also the Big Cypress National Preserve.

If you go

The Smallwood Store is located at 360 Mamie St. in Chokoloskee. It is open seven days a week: from December to April the hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from May to November the hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (239) 695-2989 for more information or visit smallwoodstore.com. Admission is \$5.

Editor's note: Some information for this article has been gathered from online sources and the Smallwood Store's website. If planning a visit, it is suggested to call ahead to verify hours of operation.



University of Nebraska Press

Harry Kersey Jr.'s "An Assumption of Sovereignty: Social and Political Transformation Among the Florida Seminoles."

Reservations mark Christmas holiday



Kevin Johnson
Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie visits Santa Claus during the reservation's drive-thru Christmas celebration Dec. 17 in a parking lot at the Billie Swamp Safari.



Beverly Bidney
Skeeter Bowers stands in front of the manger scene he built by the large Christmas tree on the Brighton Reservation on Dec. 7. He harvested pine trees from the reservation for their trunks and boughs and used old wooden pallets for the roof. The structure is 12 feet wide, eight and a half feet tall, and five feet deep.



Beverly Bidney
Michelle Ford drives her festively decorated vehicle as she enters the Immokalee drive-thru event with her family Dec. 17.



Damon Scott
William Osceola and his pups were the first to go through the line at the Hollywood Christmas drive-thru event.



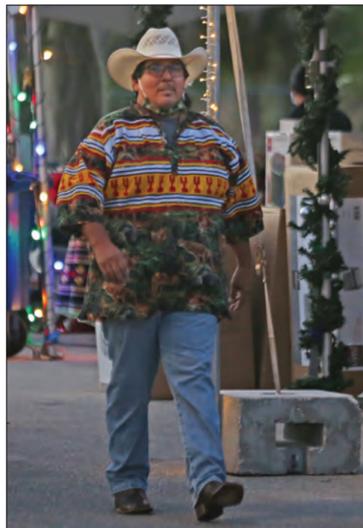
Beverly Bidney
Clarissa Garza greets a driver at the Immokalee drive-thru event with a basket filled with numbers for the driver to pick, which indicate which gifts the driver will receive.



Damon Scott
Jay Holata and other volunteers from the We Do Recover program helped with many tasks at Hollywood's Christmas drive-thru celebration Dec. 16 at Seminole Estates.



Kevin Johnson
From left, Avahny Jim, Leighton Jim and Teena Maree Covarrubias help spread holiday cheer at one of many display stops during the Big Cypress drive-thru event.



Beverly Bidney
Immokalee Council liaison Ray Garza takes a final look at the tents, gifts and decorations before the Christmas drive-thru event begins.



Damon Scott
Francine Osceola, who helped organize the drive-thru event for the Hollywood Council Office, distributes items as vehicles go through the event route.



Kevin Johnson
From left, Seminole Fire Rescue's Hans Melius and Frank Rodriguez and Big Cypress Recreation Department's Vera Herrera and Marcus Thompson hand out to-go meals at the drive-thru event in BC.



Beverly Bidney
A giant community Christmas tree and other festive decorations greet residents and visitors on the Brighton Reservation.



Beverly Bidney
Immokalee elves, from left, are Amy Yzaguirre, Krystal Rodriguez and Amy Garza. The three made sure all the presents were ready to distribute at the drive-thru event

NYC hotel to open as Hard Rock eyes casino, too

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Hard Rock Cafe operates one of its flagship locations in the center of New York City in Times Square, but there's never been a Hard Rock Hotel option for the city's visitors until now.

Hard Rock International (HRI) said in a November news release that the highly anticipated Hard Rock Hotel New York, in the heart of Midtown Manhattan, is expected to open in April 2022. The hotel, located at 159 West 48th Street, is near to Times Square, Broadway, Rockefeller Center, Bryant Park and iconic Fifth Avenue shopping.

"This is a monumental moment for Hard Rock International and a true milestone in our journey to elevate our lifestyle hotels portfolio," Dale Hipsh, senior vice president of hotels, said in a statement. "New York City is the culture capital of the world, and as a brand we have been eagerly anticipating the right opportunity to bring our entertainment-infused hospitality experience to this market."

The hotel features 446 rooms and specialty suites. The "Rock Star Suite" is on the top of the 34th floor – a two-level glass-enclosed penthouse with city views, contemporary artwork, music memorabilia, and a large terrace for entertaining.

Notable memorabilia displays throughout the hotel include a classic leather motorcycle jacket owned and worn by Joey Ramone; a pair of silver patent leather boots worn by Lady Gaga; a record player with built-in microphone and cutting lathe for making direct-to-disc recordings from Les Paul; and handwritten lyrics from John Lennon's 1972 ode to his adopted home, "New York City."

Restaurant options include NY Steak – a partnership with the New York Yankees baseball franchise – and the RT60 rooftop bar, which also offers entertainment. Hard Rock Hotel's signature Sessions Restaurant & Bar is another food and entertainment option available for visitors.

But officials said the hotel's "show stopping feature" is The Venue on Music Row, a flexible entertainment space with capacity for up to 400 guests. "The Venue will play host to A-list performances as well as fashion shows, after-parties, and gala dinners," a statement said.

Casino chatter continues

Meanwhile, HRI officials have said they would also like to build a casino in or near New York City – even though plans



An exterior rendering of the forthcoming Hard Rock Hotel New York.

have been in the works to build a casino in northern New Jersey about eight miles away.

HRI Chairman and Seminole Gaming CEO Jim Allen said at a recent gaming conference in Atlantic City that Hard Rock was submitting an "expression of interest" to New York officials by a Dec. 10 deadline set by the New York State Gaming Commission.

New York has three remaining casino licenses to be awarded in the downstate region, which includes New York City. Allen said Hard Rock has been planning a New York project ever since the possibility

was announced seven years ago, but that it also wasn't abandoning a plan from 2015 to build a casino-resort at the nearby Meadowlands Racetrack. Hard Rock would need permission from New Jersey voters to build in the Meadowlands.

HRI opened its \$500 million Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City in 2018. Allen has said the New York and northern New Jersey market can support numerous casinos.

The Seminole Tribe is the parent entity of HRI. More information is at hardrock.com.

Elton John to perform at Hollywood's Hard Rock Live

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Elton John and his Band are coming to Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood on Feb. 27, 2022, at 7:30 p.m. In celebration of the announcement, the 450-foot Guitar Hotel façade featured a special Elton John display Dec. 17 and Dec. 22.

For ticket information visit myhrl.com. John is one of the top-selling solo artists of all time. In the UK and US charts alone he has one diamond, 32 platinum or multi-platinum, and 21 gold albums as well as more than 70 Top 40 hits. He has sold more than 300 million records worldwide.

Among the many awards and honors bestowed upon him are six Grammys, including a Grammy Legend award, a Tony, two Oscars, a Best British Male Artist BRIT Award, induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Songwriters Hall of Fame, the Kennedy Center Honor, Legend of Live Award, 13 Ivor Novello Awards, and a knighthood from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for "services to music and charitable services."

In 1992, John established the Elton John AIDS Foundation, which today is one of the leading non-profit HIV/AIDS organizations and has raised more than \$515 million to date in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. In June 2019 President Emmanuel Macron presented John the Légion d'honneur, France's highest



Seminole Hard Rock

Elton John's name was featured on The Guitar Hotel light display Dec. 17. John will perform at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood on Feb. 27, 2022.

award, for his lifetime contribution to the arts and the fight against HIV/AIDS. John was awarded the Companion of Honour in the 2021 New Year Honours list.

HRI executive named chair of Canadian Gaming Association's board

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Ilkim Hincer, executive vice president and chief legal officer for Hard Rock International, has been named chair of the Canadian Gaming Association's board of directors. CGA, which made the announcement Dec. 23, is a national trade association that represents operators and suppliers in Canada's eSports, gaming, lottery and sports betting industries.

"I am pleased that Ilkim has accepted the role of chair of the board of directors," Paul Burns, president and CEO of the CGA, said in a statement. "I've known Ilkim for years and have followed his notable career in the gaming industry. Ilkim has a strong track record with some of the world's largest gaming operators, both here in Canada

and in the United States. I look forward to working alongside him as we bounce back from the pandemic and position the CGA to capitalize on all of the exciting technology, iGaming, and sports betting developments across Canada."

"I'm honored to serve as chair," Hincer said in a statement. "The CGA has played a key role in helping our industry weather this incredibly challenging pandemic. I want to thank Carrie Kormos for her transformational leadership during her term as chair, and look forward to working with Paul, the board and our many diverse stakeholders as we recover and continue to grow in these rapidly evolving times."

Hincer earned a law degree from the University of Windsor and a bachelor's degree from Queens University. Both universities are in Ontario, Canada.

Hard Rock fills two high-level positions

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Officials at Hard Rock International (HRI) have hired two new employees to fill key positions at the company.

Daniel Earle is director of global travel industry sales for Hard Rock Hotels & Casinos. He is based in South Florida where HRI has its two flagship properties – the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood featuring the Guitar Hotel – and the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa. The Seminole Tribe is the parent entity of HRI.

Earle has more than two decades of experience in the hospitality industry in 11 countries. He was previously the regional director of sales and revenue management for Fort Lauderdale-based Performance Hospitality Management.

Earle began his career in the United Kingdom where he worked for Hilton Worldwide Holdings and later for the

Waldorf Astoria & Towers in New York City. In Florida, he has held positions with the Loews Miami Beach Hotel and The Diplomat in Hollywood.

In addition, HRI has hired Kevin Zhao as regional director of global sales for the hotel division in the Asia Pacific territory.

Zhao has 15 years of experience in hospitality, including destination marketing and hotel commercial management. He previously worked at the Qatar Tourism Authority in the Middle East and with hotel brands and groups such as Swire, Conrad, Ritz Carlton and Preferred Hotels.

"[The] Asia Pacific [territory] has always been an important component in our global sales strategy," Danielle Babilino, senior vice president of global sales and marketing at HRI, said in a statement. "I believe Kevin will support us in increasing market share as well as amplifying our volume in this region."

More information is at hardrock.com.



Hard Rock

This rendering shows a view of the entrance of the future Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol in Bristol, Virginia. In the meantime, Hard Rock is opening a temporary casino at the site.

Hard Rock plants roots in Virginia for first time

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Hard Rock's entry into the Virginia market in Bristol is set to materialize in 2022 as construction is now underway on a temporary casino in the city while plans for a permanent Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol take shape.

The temporary casino comes about a year after voters approved a referendum to allow casino gambling in the city of about 20,000 residents. Bristol, in southwest Virginia, is nicknamed the "birthplace of country music." The Birthplace of Country Music Museum is located there – a musical connection that's appealing to Hard Rock officials and country music fans. It is also the twin city of Bristol, Tennessee – just across the state line.

Jon Lucas, the chief operating officer of Hard Rock International, said in a statement that the temporary casino should open sometime in the second quarter of 2022. The permanent development is expected to open in the next year and a half to two years, he said. Both projects are the first for Hard Rock in Virginia.

The temporary casino – at a Women'sBelk department store in the former Bristol Mall – is expected to have 30,000 square feet of gaming space, including 900 slot machines and 20 table games. Plans include a new restaurant, sports bar and lounge, retail store and entertainment area. Hard Rock officials said the temporary casino would create 600 jobs.

The permanent site – a \$400 million expansion of the entire former Bristol Mall site – will, of course, be much larger in scale

with more than 2,700 slot machines and more than 100 table games – not to mention a 750 room hotel, seven restaurants and bars. Once completed, Hard Rock Bristol will feature a 3,200-seat Hard Rock Live indoor entertainment venue with an outdoor option that can accommodate 20,000 people.

Country music memorabilia will be displayed throughout the complex, including pieces by legends Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn, Garth Brooks, Taylor Swift, Carrie Underwood, Buck Owens and Hank Williams.

Once completed and in full operation, Hard Rock expects the development to attract more than four million visitors each year; create up to 2,000 jobs; and generate between \$15 and \$20 million in annual tax revenues for the city.

Hollywood and Seminole Casino Coconut Creek. The progressive jackpot starts at \$1 million at each property.

This is the second \$1M jackpot to hit on the slot game at a Seminole property in less than 60 days.

Seminole Hard Rock Tampa has paid out over \$1.5 billion in jackpots to more than 55,000 individuals thus far in 2021.

\$50 bet lands winner \$1.2M at Seminole Hard Rock Tampa

STAFF REPORT

TAMPA — A Clearwater resident named Gloria (last name not available) hit a \$1,241,642.26 jackpot while playing Aristocrat Gaming's Dragon Link progressive slot game with a \$50 bet Dec. 22 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa.

"All I wanted for Christmas was to hit

that progressive jackpot," the winner said in a statement. "I still can't believe my holiday wish came true."

In celebration of the jackpot, all 642 slot players who had their Seminole Wild Card properly inserted into a machine within 15 minutes of the jackpot each won \$100 bonus free play.

In addition to Tampa, the Dragon Link \$1 million progressive jackpot is offered at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino



Daniel Earle



Kevin Zhao

Live at Coco to feature Gary Allan

FROM PRESS RELEASE

COCONUT CREEK — Country music artist Gary Allan will perform at Seminole Casino Coconut Creek's outdoor concert

venue – Live at Coco – on March 3, 2022, at 8 p.m.

Tickets priced at \$200 (VIP) and \$50 (general admission) are available at Ticketmaster.com.

The Spinners to perform free outdoor concert in Brighton

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON — The Spinners will perform its R&B hits in an outdoor concert at Seminole Brighton Casino on Jan. 12, 2022, at 8 p.m. Gates will open at 7 p.m.

Presented by Gold Entertainment, the free concert is open to the public. Attendees must be at least 21 years of age and a

Seminole Wild Card Member (a valid ID is required to sign-up). Guests can sign up on the day of the show. The Wild Card is also valid at all Seminole Casinos and Seminole Hard Rock Casinos in Florida.

Attendees at the show should bring their own chairs for seating in the viewing area. Additional information is available online at seminolebrightoncasino.com.

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

A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

Historic sources reveal colonial attitudes

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Collections Manager

BIG CYPRESS — A research project is underway at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum that will expose cultural bias and racism in some historical sources of information. Specifically, we are focusing on historic 19th century newspapers in the museum's collection. The project has been funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and through them we've been able to hire research assistant Joseph Gilbert to complete this project.

As we embark on this journey, we are uncovering many intriguing snapshots

of history. One in particular struck us as incredibly relevant, both to the holiday season and in our work to highlight the travesties of history, in particular the history that is written in newspapers. One of the newspapers features a short article that claims to explain the origin of the phrase "talking turkey." Nowadays we tend to only hear this phrase in reference to Thanksgiving. It has a pretty literal meaning. But this was not always true. Originally this phrase meant "talking to a man as he wants to be talked to." The first recorded use of the phrase was in 1824, so it seems that it became a common English idiom during the period that the U.S. government was colonizing Native American lands and perpetrating unjustified

wars on the populations that lived here before Europeans claimed the land.

While the phrase has fallen into disuse during the past several decades, it was quite common to hear it in spoken English for over 100 years. The internet claims that the origin of this phrase is not a historical certainty, and the story in this paper is one of the possible origins. The story is that an Indian and a white man went hunting and only came back with a turkey and a crow. The white man tried to negotiate with the Indian, suggesting he take the crow while the white man went off with the turkey. The Indian then rightfully accuses the white man of trickery and dishonesty by not "talking turkey" with him. The accuracy of this

anecdote is not a sure thing. Nonetheless, the tale of disregard and deception is one that was repeated time and time again by the U.S. government and its citizens in their dealings with Native Americans.

Not only do the details of the incident shed light on the difficulty of fair dealings with the colonizers, other aspects of the story are equally disturbing. For example, the Indian's name is Wampum. Since wampum is a culturally important shell that was misunderstood and trivialized by European colonizers, the Indian character's name in the newspaper is meant to be culturally offensive. The Indian character's identity and language are also insulted by the stereotypically and inaccurate language he uses at the end of the story, "Ugh! You no talk turkey to me a bit." Even this small paragraph in the newspaper is full of the kind of racism and one-sided history that we are exposing by doing this project. It is also worth noting that this paragraph appears among seemingly unrelated and sometimes fantastical snippets of news. One such nearby paragraph tells of a "Gigantic Infant," a one-year-old that is the size of a grown man. This tabloid style piece is shocking and it should inspire us to read the rest of the paper with a discerning eye. No historical sources should be taken at face value. It is always a good idea to think about who produced the paper and what was going

on in the world when it was published.

We are exposing the colonization inherent in these historical sources so that this part of the museum's collection will be a valuable educational resource for the Seminole community. It is only by examining history in this way that we can understand why our country is how it is today. It is our hope that with open eyes, future generations will work together to address historical injustices and hopefully prevent history from repeating itself. By the end this project in summer 2022, explanatory information will be added to our online collections database, and you will be able to better understand historic newspapers from the comfort of your own home. Until then, you can still learn a lot and experience Seminole history on the museum's website, at semtribe.pastperfectonline.com/

Just let us know if you want to see anything in our collection in person. Call (863) 902-1113 or email museum@semtribe.com.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Service FY21 Program.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

The museum has nearly 600 historic newspapers that date to the 1800s and were published throughout the young and expanding United States.

DOMESTIC CHRONICLE.
"Talking turkey." The Oneida (N. Y.) Democrat, gives the following as the origin of this quaint phrase:
"Talking turkey," "as we understand it," means to talk to a man as he wants to be talked to, and the phrase is thus derived. An Indian and a white man went a shooting in partnership, and a wild turkey and a crow were all the results of the day's toil. The white man, in the usual style of making a bargain with the Indian, proposed a division of the spoils in this way: "Now Wampum, you may have your choice: you take the crow, and I'll take the turkey; or, if you'd rather, I'll take the turkey and you take the crow." Wampum reflected a moment on the generous alternative thus offered, and replied—"Ugh! you no talk turkey to me a bit."

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Talking Turkey: This excerpt from a 1837 newspaper tells us a lot about the relationship between Native Americans and European colonizers.



Gathering of Nations, Miss Indian World to return in 2022

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Organizers of the massive Gathering of Nations powwow and Miss Indian World competition recently announced that the event would return in person next year after a two-year pandemic hiatus. The event is scheduled to take place April 28-30, 2022.

While a version of the powwow has been held in a virtual format the past two years, the Miss Indian World competition has been on hold. The last titleholder was Cheyenne Kippenberger, who made history when she won the competition in 2019 – a first for the Seminole Tribe. Kippenberger agreed in 2020 to extend her reign by a year due to the pandemic.

Kippenberger's reign officially ended in April of this year. She was the 36th Native woman to wear the crown and the first to serve for two years.

Organizers are currently accepting Miss Indian World applications for next year's competition. Durante Blais-Billie, the most recent Miss Florida Seminole, has said she will not participate in the 2022 pageant.

Gathering of Nations has been held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, since its inception almost 40 years ago. It is described as the largest powwow in North America, drawing hundreds of dancers, musicians and singers from many Tribal Nations. The powwow coincides with the Miss Indian World pageant and ancillary events such as Stage 49, the Traders' Market and the Horse & Rider Parade. The event attracts tens of thousands of spectators to Tingley Coliseum on the Expo New Mexico fairgrounds in Albuquerque each year.

NMAI to present 'The Art of Oscar Howe'

FROM PRESS RELEASE

NEW YORK CITY — The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in New York will present "Dakota Modern: The Art of Oscar Howe" on March 11, 2022. The retrospective exhibition traces the artistic development of painter Oscar Howe (1915–1983). The arc of his career began with early conventional work created while he was in high school in the 1930s and continued through the emergence of his own innovative and abstract approach to painting in the 1950s and 1960s.

The exhibition will be on view through Sept. 11, 2022. After it closes in New York, it will be on view at the Portland Art Museum (PAM) in Portland, Oregon, Nov. 5, 2022–May 14, 2023, and the South Dakota Art Museum at South Dakota State University in Brookings June 10, 2023–Sept. 17, 2023.

One of the 20th century's most innovative Native American painters, Howe committed his artistic career to the preservation, relevance and ongoing expression of his Yanktonai Dakota culture. He proved that art could be simultaneously modern and

embedded in customary Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux) culture and aesthetics—to him there was no contradiction. Howe challenged the art establishment's preconceptions and definitions of Native American painting. In doing so, he catalyzed a movement among Native artists to express their individuality rather than conforming to an established style that limits artistic expression. His legacy of innovation and advocacy continues to inspire generations of Native artists to take pride in their heritage and resist stereotypes.

The exhibition was developed in collaboration with PAM and curated by Kathleen Ash-Milby (Navajo), PAM's curator of Native American art.

"We are finally at a point in the 21st century where we can recognize the impact and complexity of Oscar Howe's incredible work as both Native American and modern American art," Ash-Milby said. "This project is a long overdue recognition of his contribution to the field that we hope will establish Howe's place as a 20th-century modernist."



Oscar Howe (Yanktonai Dakota, 1915–1983), Umine Dance, 1958. Casein and gouache on paper, mounted on board.



Seminole holiday art

Courtesy image

Digital art by Effie Cypress showing a decorated chickee was featured on a tribalwide holiday greeting from Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. Cypress' work is on Instagram @effiedrawsthings.

2 artists charged with faking Native American heritage

FROM KINGS-TV
Seattle, Wash.

SEATTLE — Two western Washington artists face up to five years in prison after being charged with pretending to be Native American carvers to sell goods at Pike Place Market in downtown Seattle.

The investigation into the two men, 67-year-old Jerry Chris Van Dyke (aka Jerry Witten) of Seattle and 52-year-old Lewis Anthony Rath of Maple Falls, began in early 2019, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

In February 2019, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, which helps American and Alaskan Natives through the expansion of the Indian arts and crafts market, received a complaint about Van Dyke representing himself as a Nez Perce Indian artist.

He is not an enrolled tribal member, according to the criminal complaint.

Investigators with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service then made undercover purchases at a gallery in Pike Place Market where Van Dyke's pendants were being sold as Native

American art.

Investigators questioned Van Dyke, who admitted to knowing about the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which makes the misrepresentation of Native-produced goods illegal.

Van Dyke also admitted that he is not a tribal member.

Van Dyke had sold more than \$1,000 in carved pendants through the Pike Place gallery, claiming the pendants were Native American artwork based on Aleut masks, according to the complaint.

Van Dyke was charged with two counts of misrepresenting Native goods.

Then in May 2019, another complaint to the Indian Arts and Crafts Board led investigators to Rath, who was falsely claiming to be a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe.

Undercover agents purchased a carved totem pole and necklace from Rath at the same Pike Place Market gallery for more than \$1,300. Another shop on the waterfront sold agents another carved totem pole and a mask.

At both stores, Rath's artwork was falsely advertised as Native

produced with biographies of Rath saying he is Native American.

Additionally, internet sites that Rath used to sell his artwork also falsely claimed that he is a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe.

A search of Rath's home and studio found that he was also in possession of feathers from protected birds including golden eagles, hawks and jays.

Rath is being charged with four counts of misrepresenting Native goods and two misdemeanor counts for possessing feathers from protected birds.

"By flooding the market with counterfeit Native American art and craftwork, these crimes cheat the consumer, undermine the economic livelihood of Native American artists, and impairs Indian culture," Assistant Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement Edward Grace said.

Misrepresenting Native goods is punishable by up to five years in prison. Rath's misdemeanor counts could result in up to a year in prison.



RICHARD CASTILLO
FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE 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.

Health

Cherokee Nation leader named chair of health advisory council

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Chuck Hoskin Jr., Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, was recently elected chair of the Health Resources and Services Administration's Tribal Advisory Council.

The Health Resources and Services Administration established the council in 2021 as a forum for elected tribal officials and Health Resources and Services Administration staff to exchange views on emerging public health issues for Native Americans and urgent public health resources and service needs.

"I am honored to have been elected chair of the Health Resources and Services Administration Tribal Advisory Council," Chief Hoskin said in a statement. "This council is essential to bringing awareness to health needs of Native American communities all around the country. Together with the Health Resources and Services Administration and other tribal leaders we are dedicated to promoting effective change to these communities. I am pleased to be a part of this council and am hopeful for the progress to come."

The Health Resources and Services Administration supports more than 90 programs throughout the country to people who are geographically isolated, underserved or financially vulnerable. The agency funded more than \$12 billion in the 2021 fiscal year in areas including health centers, health workforce, training, HIV/AIDS, organ donation, maternal and child health and rural healthcare.

"We appreciate Chief Hoskin's willingness to serve as Chair of Health Resources and Services Administration's first Tribal Advisory Council and look forward to working together to improve



Cherokee Nation
Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr.

the health of Indian Country," said Health Resources and Services Administration Acting Administrator Diana Espinosa. "Chief Hoskin will provide critical advice and guidance in the government-to-government discussions around advancing tribal health services and resources, including areas such as strengthening the health workforce, ending the HIV epidemic and improving the health of parents and children."

The Health Resources and Services Administration is an agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, a cabinet-level federal agency. Chief Hoskin also serves as a delegate to the HHS Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee.

Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation establishes tribal agriculture department

FROM UCONN TODAY
University of Connecticut

In the years since University of Connecticut Extension Educators began working more extensively with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, the project has been fruitful. There has been growth in agricultural production, food security, and health for the members of the nation.

Building on that success, the Tribal Nation recently reached another exciting milestone—the creation of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Department of Agriculture. The MPTN Department of Agriculture formalizes the education, nutrition, and farming work already done in collaboration with UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources Extension, with Extension Educators Joseph Bonelli and Shresh Ghimire, who are leading the efforts along with Tribal Nation Councilor Daniel Menihan and others.

"Menihan has been actively involved in this project from the get-go and has helped us remarkably achieve the grant goals and strengthen the relationship between UConn and the tribe," said Ghimire.

Jeremy Whipple, tribal member and executive director of the Tribal Department of Agriculture said, "That first step of building the program is doing what we hoped it would accomplish, and that is getting people back to an agricultural way of life, which has been the challenge for us."

The existence of a department of agriculture in the community now makes it easier for tribal members to access the information they need to conduct extension and other programs such as UConn 4-H in

the tribal reservation.

"Now people call Extension and ask us for assistance and advice and that has been very helpful for the community," Whipple said. "I see a lot more tribal members gardening throughout the community."

From the outset, the program has included a variety of projects where extension educators work closely with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, from conducting youth development programs to further developing the nation's farm, called Meechooök Farm.

"The tribal nation was interested in increasing the agricultural operation and each year we are seeing great progress. The hope was to create a long lasting and sustainable agricultural sector at the tribal nation," said Bonelli, who helped write the Tribal Nation's agriculture business plan. "The first few years of the project have helped to bring that process along."

Whipple said the help from UConn Extension has been instrumental in emphasizing the need to build sustainability within the nation: "The main challenge was just getting the people to get back into believing this is who we are culturally, that's been our main focus."

Engaging the community is a big part of that.

"Every step of the way we are working with tribal youth and education with tribal members," said Bonelli. "Through the leadership from Whipple and others at the tribal nation and with help from Extension educators, they are expanding by planting additional crops, such as vegetable crops, growing from seed, putting in fruit trees. Every year there has been a progression, and

♦ See PEQUOTS on page B3

Tribal members laud decision not to appeal Rosebud Sioux Tribe lawsuit

BY MICHAEL NEARY
Rapid City (S.D.) Journal

The United States Department of Justice is no longer planning to appeal the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's case against Indian Health Service, part of the U.S. Department Health and Human Services.

Tim Purdon, one of the attorneys representing the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, tweeted Dec. 20 that he and Brendan Johnson, another attorney on the case, were "just told by DOJ that the United States will not seek rehearing of the 8th Circuit's decision here."

The case, along with this most recent decision, may help to focus attention on health inadequacies in tribal communities across the country, according to tribal leaders and attorneys on the team that represented the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe filed a lawsuit in 2016 against the IHS for inadequate health conditions, using the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty as a basis for legal action. A South Dakota federal court ruled in favor of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in 2020, but the U.S. Department of Justice, under the Trump Administration, appealed the ruling to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

The suit was filed after patients were diverted, in 2015, from the Rosebud Indian Health Service hospital emergency room to hospitals at least 50 miles away, said Lisa White Pipe, council representative for Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

White Pipe said the emergency room was closed for months due to conditions that did not meet health standards as patients were diverted to hospitals at least 50 miles outside of the reservation.

"During that diversion we lost nine tribal members," she said.

Bruce Finzen, one of the attorneys representing the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, said the emergency room closure was "part of a longstanding problem with inadequate (health) service" extending beyond the emergency room.

The tribe based its argument on the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, which included provisions for competent health care. Finzen said the treaty applied primarily to tribes of the Great Plains, but he said the effects could be felt elsewhere.

"Problems persist nationwide," he said. "Other tribes are going to be able to look at this decision and then point to the language of Indian Health Care Improvement Act ... and for once get the attention of the Congress to start funding the quality and quantity of health care that's required."

Finzen said that he, Johnson, Purdon and Tim Billion represented the Rosebud Sioux Tribe pro bono for Robins Kaplan LLP Law Firm. Johnson noted that all four have worked extensively on tribal issues.

"I think numerous tribes across the country sent letters to the Biden Administration," said A. Gay Kingman, executive director of the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Council, in a telephone interview.

Kingman also expressed thanks to South Dakota legislators who supported the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's suit.

Kingman said she hoped the decision not to appeal would focus attention on health conditions faced in many Native communities. She stressed that the implications of the case range beyond the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

"We're hopeful that now that attention has been called to it, Congress might put more money into the budget for Indian health care," she said.

Hit hard by the pandemic, Oneida Indian Nation brings message of remembrance with 'Passage of Peace'

FROM WBUR (BOSTON, MASS.)

Nearly two years since the pandemic first hit the U.S., Indigenous Americans and Alaska Natives continue to be disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

According to the Indian Health Service, Native Americans have more than 3.5 times the infection rate and are four times more likely to be hospitalized than white Americans. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention points to "persisting racial inequity and historical trauma" as to why the health and socioeconomic disparities exist among tribal communities.

To get the public's attention, the Oneida Indian Nation — which is located in central New York — unveiled seven large illuminating tipis in an art installation called "Passage of Peace."

"We chose the tipi because it's a recognizable, very universal symbol of Native American identity. It also represents the traditions of Indigenous nations in the Western part of the country, many of whom have experienced tremendous loss these last two years," said Ray Halbritter, leader of the Oneida Indian Nation.

Located on Oneida Indian Nation lands, the tipis were unveiled in conjunction with Native American Heritage Month and were scheduled to be in place through December.

Although the tipi pays homage to Western Tribal Nations, it was also chosen to reflect the seventh generation principle.

"We're told in our culture to make



A shot of the "Passage of Peace" art installation

decisions as a people, as a government," Halbritter said. "considering the decisions affect onto the seventh generation to the future of our children."

Halbritter has been personally impacted by COVID-19, pointing to his family and friends who have come down with the illness.

"One day you're talking to them on the phone. The next day they're calling you from a hospital," he says. "The next day

they're telling you they're feeling better, and the next day they pass away."

COVID-19 amplified health inequities in Native communities, he says. For instance, Native people have a greater chance of having diabetes than any other racial group in the country. It's equally the same for life expectancy, infant mortality and suicide rates.

But despite the pandemic taking a disproportionate toll on Native communities,

Halbritter remains hopeful. Over the past decade or so, he's worked to help Native people gain access to resources.

"We now have resources to be able to do the kind of things we were never able to do. We weren't able to hire lobbyists, lawyers and people who could advocate," he says. "It didn't give us the ability to access decision makers the way we can now."

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SEMINOLE SCENES



HOLIDAY HELICOPTER: The vintage Vietnam-era Huey helicopter at the Florida Seminole Veterans Building on the Big Cypress Reservation is decorated for Christmas with a simple, yet festive, wreath.

Beverly Bidney



SWING TIME: The Immokalee Boys & Girls Club playground was busy with kids enjoying the swings before a Christmas drive-thru event Dec. 17. From left are Caleigh Fuller, Elana Kendrick and Faith Billie.

Beverly Bidney



Above and below, tribal headquarters in Hollywood was colorfully and creatively decked out inside and outside to celebrate the holidays.

Kevin Johnson (3)



TERRIER TEAMMATES: Moore Haven High School basketball player Kayden Warrior, left, receives a hand tap on the sideline from teammate Pherian Baker during a game Dec. 7 at Clewiston High School. Baker and Warrior are among four Seminole players on the boys team. See page 6B for story.

Kevin Johnson



FESTIVE GYM: The Immokalee gym resembled the North Pole with its abundance of Christmas decorations. The recreation staff posed in the snowy scene Dec. 17.

Beverly Bidney



(Left photo: Monkeeslivealmanac.com/Rhino Records; right photo: Hard Rock Live Orlando)

MONKEE MEMORIES: In 1995, The Monkees received a platinum record award during a ceremony at Hard Rock Cafe in Hollywood, California. Guitarist Michael Nesmith, second from left in the photo at left, died Dec. 10 at age 78. Other band members are Peter Tork, far left, Davey Jones, far right, and Mickey Dolenz. Jones died in 2012; Tork died in 2019. Nesmith and Dolenz recently completed The Monkees Farewell Tour, which included a performance Oct. 10 at Hard Rock Live in Orlando (right photo). Nesmith is at the right.



NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Tribe, environmentalists sue U.S. over geothermal plant

A lawsuit was filed against the federal government over its approval to develop a geothermal energy project in the Dixie Meadows desert oasis in Nevada.

The Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe along with the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) sued the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) [in December] over its approval of a geothermal energy plant that will be built and operated in Churchill and Pershing Counties, approximately 43 miles northeast of Fallon, Nev. on BLM-administered land.

Geothermal energy is considered a renewable energy source because it draws heat that's continuously produced inside the Earth and can be used for heating buildings and generating electricity.

In announcing the Dixie Meadows Geothermal Project, BLM said the project includes developing two 30-megawatt geothermal power plants with the drilling, testing, and operating of up to 18 geothermal production and injection wells. The goal will be to establish pipelines to carry geothermal fluid between well fields and power plants.

It feeds into Nevada's renewable energy portfolio standard which requires the state's utilities procure 25 percent of their energy from renewable sources by 2025. It also stands to fulfill President Biden's executive order on tackling the climate crisis at home and abroad.

However, the Fallon Paiute-ShoShone Tribe and the CBD have argued that the project could dry up nearby springs and harm a rare species, the Dixie Valley toad, that is found nowhere else on Earth and was described as a distinct species in 2017.

The Tribe also claims that the Dixie Meadows is an enormous wetland ecosystem and a sacred site, "with immense spiritual meaning and value to the Tribe's culture, religious, history and way of life," said the lawsuit, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters.

The lawsuit also argues that the Dixie Meadows Geothermal Project will permanently degrade the land's hot springs and the associated ecosystem, citing another BLM project 40 miles away in Jersey Valley, Nev. that caused hot springs to stop flowing entirely.

"We strongly support renewable energy when it's in the right place, but a project like this that threatens sacred sites and endangered species is definitely the wrong place," said Patrick Donnelly, Nevada state director at CBD.

"The BLM's inadequate analysis of this project and its potential harms endangers the future of this beautiful wetland and the creatures and people who depend on it," said Donnelly.

According to CBD, documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act indicated that other government agencies including the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nevada Department of Wildlife expressed "significant concern" to BLM about the Dixie Meadows project.

Government hydrologists warned the federal government of the potential for springs to dry up, harming the Dixie Valley toad and the rest of the wetland ecosystem that lives in the Dixie Meadows.

It's not yet clear if BLM or any other federal agency has responded to the lawsuit.

- The Hill

Tribe, forest products company agree to land transaction

TUMWATER, Wash. — Two agreements between the Squaxin Island Tribe and the forest products company Port Blakely will result in the tribe acquiring about 1,000 acres of its ancestral land, including 125 acres at no cost. The agreement, which was reached earlier this year and announced Dec. 14, includes timberland, shoreline and tidelands in Washington state on the Little Skookum Inlet in Mason County.

The tribe will purchase approximately 875 acres of upland working forest from Port Blakely. The purchase price was not disclosed. In a second agreement, the company agreed to return the adjacent two miles of waterfront acreage and 125 acres of tidelands to the tribe at no cost. According to a press release, the transfer of the shoreline and tidelands restores the tribe's direct access to the Puget Sound, including productive shellfish beds in the region, a key reason their ancestors made it home for thousands of years.

"We are honored and grateful to reclaim these lands and for the return of the shoreline. The Squaxin people lived and stewarded this very land and waterway for thousands of years before it was taken from us in the mid to late 1800s," Squaxin Island Tribal Chair Kris Peters said in a statement. "It is honorable of the leadership at Port Blakely to recognize this injustice and offer this land to come back to us. These beautiful and bountiful tidelands and beaches will be something all Squaxin's can enjoy. It will undoubtedly be a place to reconnect with our ancestors in ceremony, harvest, and other tribal gatherings. My spirit is singing today. Hawadubš cəlap, thank you."

- Staff Report

Developer asks to reinstate energy lease on land sacred to tribes

The last energy developer still seeking to drill on the Badger-Two Medicine area south of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation has asked a federal court to reinstate its canceled leases.

Louisiana-based Solenex LLC saw its leases voided in 2016 after the Department

of Interior reached settlement agreements with other companies to cease exploring for oil and gas in a region considered sacred by the Blackfeet Indian Tribe. A federal appeals court upheld the decision in 2020.

Solenex founder Sidney Longwell, who died last year, bought the 6,247-acre lease in 1982 but never drilled on the site. He was one of roughly 45 developers who took leases on U.S. Forest Service land that were later found improper because they weren't made with necessary environmental reviews or in consultation with the Blackfeet.

The tribe and several local conservation groups challenged the leases, and the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation declared the 130,000-acre region a Traditional Cultural District in 2015.

In its declaration, the advisory council noted that drilling there "would be so damaging to the (Traditional Cultural District) that the Blackfeet Tribe's ability to practice their religious and cultural traditions in this area as a living part of their community life and development would be lost."

Solenex attorneys, including former acting head of the Bureau of Land Management William Perry Pendley, claimed that then-Interior Secretary Sally Jewell overstepped her authority in canceling the leases. They also argued that Longwell faced unreasonable bureaucratic delays in seeking approval to exercise his drilling claims.

Interior Department spokesperson Tyler Cherry declined comment on the case.

Solenex's lawsuit is being waged by the Mountain States Legal Foundation, a Colorado-based firm that pursues cases involving property rights, gun rights and other conservative causes.

Pendley led the foundation before joining the Trump administration as a deputy director of policy and programs. However, he was forced to leave the leadership of BLM after Trump failed to officially nominate him to the post.

- Montanarightnow.com

Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe can retain reservation land

MASHPEE, Mass. — In a decision released Dec. 22, the U.S. Department of the Interior reversed a Trump administration order that rescinded the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's right to 321 acres of reservation land that helped establish them as a sovereign government. Approximately 170 acres of that land in Taunton had been earmarked for the building of a casino.

"I think it is important for people to understand that the land was still in trust. Trump tried to take it away, but this reaffirms that (it remains in trust)," said Brian Weeden, chairman of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council.

"I think the tribe is just really excited about the new year and this new chapter that we are headed in," Weeden said when asked to comment on the decision to restore tribal lands.

Just as the pandemic was descending upon the Cape in March 2020, shutting down life as we knew it, then-Mashpee Wampanoag chairman Cedric Cromwell learned in a phone call that then-Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt had ordered the tribe's land taken out of trust and the reservation disestablished.

At the time, Cromwell said it felt "like we've been dropped off into a new world we've never seen before" and a "direct, hardcore blow to dissolving and disestablishing the tribe."

A series of court decisions at the state and federal level on whether the land could be put into trust and whether the Mashpee tribe qualified as a tribe placed the case back in the hands of the Interior Department for a decision.

The tribe gained a powerful ally when President Biden appointee U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland became the first Native American to serve as interior secretary. U.S. Rep. William Keating, D-Mass., had worked alongside Haaland during the Trump administration to help pass bills to protect Mashpee Wampanoag and other tribes' reservation lands.

Keating said the decision Dec. 22 was historic in terms of avoiding what could have been "for all practical purposes, the extinction of the Tribe of the First Light, the tribe that dealt with the Pilgrims."

"This news is so welcome, so important and it strikes a blow for justice in a history marred by this country's treatment of Native Americans," Keating said. "A decision to the contrary would have perpetuated clearly what was a darker moment in our country's history."

Keating said that without the land the Mashpee tribe would also not be able to access funds from the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill recently signed by Biden.

"There are great opportunities for the tribe to pursue much needed infrastructure funding that would have been more difficult without this decision," Keating said.

Weeden said a decision on whether the tribe will pursue development of the casino remained up in the air.

"At this point, we're not really sure," he said. "It's wait-and-see. The tribe is going back to the drawing board."

- Cape Cod (Mass.) Times

Manitoba chief: Approval of \$8B settlement in First Nations' drinking water class action a 'historic moment'

Thousands of people who have been affected by years-long drinking water advisories could see compensation, after courts approved an \$8-billion class-action

settlement in what one chief called a "historic moment" for First Nations in Canada.

Canada's Federal Court and Manitoba's Court of Queen's Bench issued a joint decision Dec. 22 approving the settlement in two national class-action lawsuits launched against the federal government by First Nations living under drinking water advisories.

The settlement in the two class-action suits was first agreed upon in July. The class included any member of a band whose land was subject to a water advisory that lasted at least one year, at any point from Nov. 8, 1995, until the present.

In addition to compensation, the suits also sought to force the government to immediately construct, or approve and fund the construction of, appropriate water systems for the class members.

The agreement approved Dec. 22 will offer compensation to individuals deprived of clean drinking water and modernize Canada's First Nations drinking water legislation.

Doreen Spence, chief of Tatakweyak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba, said she is "extremely pleased" with the courts' decision to approve the settlement agreement.

"This is a historic moment for Tatakweyak Cree Nation and First Nations across the country. First Nations will now be able to work with Canada in a more meaningful way, and have access to water standards on reserve that have never existed before," Spence said in an emailed statement to CBC.

"We look forward to seeing the day where all First Nations have access to safe water, now and forever."

Tatakweyak Cree Nation, which has been under a drinking water advisory since 2017, and two Ontario communities — Curve Lake First Nation and Neskantaga First Nation — led the class-action lawsuits, which could see approximately 142,000 individuals from 258 First Nations compensated, along with 120 First Nations.

Michael Rosenberg, a lawyer from McCarthy Tétraut LLP, was lead counsel for the three plaintiffs.

The settlement in the case, which he started working on in 2019, is "a game-changer" for First Nations communities that have been affected by long-term drinking water advisories, he said.

"On the one hand, it will provide compensation so that they can begin to heal from harms that they should never have had to suffer. On the other hand ... it provides a path forward and hope for the future and infrastructure commitments to ensure that they will not continue to be plagued by long-term drinking water advisories," Rosenberg said.

"They will ... have access to safe drinking water that so many Canadians take for granted."

In addition to an infrastructure commitment of at least \$6 billion to support reliable access to safe drinking water on reserves, the settlement agreement includes \$1.5 billion in compensation to individuals deprived of clean drinking water, the creation of a \$400-million First Nation Economic and Cultural Restoration Fund and the creation of a First Nations Advisory Committee on Safe Drinking Water.

Curve Lake First Nation Chief Emily Whetung hasn't known clean drinking water — that didn't have to be boiled — for most of her lifetime.

The Dec. 22 decision is "monumental" and "is going to change so many things," she said.

"It gives the agreement a legal enforceability that First Nations have never had in the conversation about access to clean drinking water," Whetung said.

"It didn't feel like a reality until I had the decision in my hand and could say, 'Look. This is going to be something that's going to be enforceable. This is going to be something that's going to actually meaningfully change access to clean drinking water for First Nations across Canada.'"

Rosenberg said the current water advisories will be lifted as soon as possible.

"Some should be lifted in the coming weeks, months, and the hope is that ultimately we close the infrastructure gap in these First Nations communities so that we don't come back to a situation like we see presently and have seen," he said.

There is a 60-day appeals period, but following that the next step will be the implementation of the settlement.

Rosenberg said each First Nation in the settlement will have to decide as a community whether or not they wish to participate in the settlement, agree to it and accept its terms.

- CBC News

Sports gambling approved for Wisconsin tribal casinos

HERTEL, Wisc. — Leaders of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin say sports gambling will add a new dynamic to what their casinos can offer — and will hopefully be ready by Super Bowl Sunday.

On Dec. 21, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers announced he has paired with the tribe to approve wagering on professional sporting events at the St. Croix-operated casinos throughout the state.

In Turtle Lake, just a 90-minute drive from downtown Minneapolis, tribal leaders understand the importance of location.

"When we look at sports betting, we want to pull from other states," said Chairman Bill Reynolds. "Minnesota is a great state to pull from. They're right next door."

Reynolds says expanding into the realm of sports wagering is something the St. Croix

have wanted to do for years, but the timing was right in the partnership with Gov. Evers.

"This just happened to fall in our lap," Reynolds said.

Now, he says the focus is on building a one-of-a-kind sports book at the Turtle Lake casino location — something he says could potentially bring in millions of dollars of economic impact.

"I look at it helping tourism and all our communities that we reside in," he said. "People need to stay places. People need to eat. Gas, food, vacation time. And that's what I hope to bring, you know, with this new adventure."

While it's not quite a full legalization of sports wagering for the state of Wisconsin, it now means every state bordering Minnesota, along with Canada, allows gambling on sports in some capacity.

"We can provide what Vegas has," said Georgia Cobenais of the St. Croix tribe. "We have the Vegas-style gambling right here. We have the carnival games. We have the live poker, we have blackjack, roulette, craps. Sports betting is just something that should have followed."

For Minnesota lawmakers who have been trying to legalize the practice statewide for years, it's a frustrating reality.

"It's a symptom of Minnesota government moving slow," said Rep. Pat Garofalo, R-Farmington. "I am optimistic that we're going to pass legalized sports gambling this year, but as every Vikings fan knows, sometimes optimism is unjustified."

Rep. Garofalo says legalizing the practice statewide could lead to defunding the underground network of illegal gambling, while creating up to \$35 million for state revenue.

Rep. Zack Stephenson, D-Coon Rapids, says it would also add a level of consumer protection for Minnesotans looking to place a bet.

"If you place a bet at that casino in Wisconsin, you can be sure you're not being cheated and you're going to get your money back if you win. If you're doing it on some shady website outside of the United States, you don't have any of those protections," Stephenson said. "Minnesotans deserve those same protections."

- WCCO-TV (Minneapolis, Minn.)

Supreme Court to decide whether it will reconsider McGirt ruling

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Supreme Court could make a decision on whether to keep or overturn its McGirt ruling by early January.

The Court will discuss and consider questions about the State of Oklahoma v. Victor Manuel Castro-Huerta case. Castro-Huerta was convicted and sentenced to 35 years in prison, but the conviction was thrown out based on the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals' interpretation of the McGirt ruling.

The State of Oklahoma filed a petition in September asking for further discussions about the 2020 ruling. They are asking the Court to reconsider the McGirt decision or narrow it so that it does not apply to convicted criminals like Castro-Huerta, who is a non-Native American but harmed a Native American victim.

Oklahoma courts have ruled McGirt does not apply to past cases or convictions.

As it stands, the landmark case determined most of eastern Oklahoma is still considered tribal land. It changed the jurisdiction of criminal cases on that land or if it involved Native American individuals. This meant taking the prosecution of crimes on that land from local authorities and handing it to federal authorities.

Multiple petitions have been filed by the state of Oklahoma and current Attorney General John O'Connor to overturn McGirt. These petitions were written based on a report saying fewer than 20 percent of nearly 1,500 cases referred by the DA's office had indictments.

Tribes have spoken out against overturning the decision, including the Cherokee Nation. They said the state's petitions have been filled with errors, mostly in support of the state, and the petitions don't rely on correct information but rather unsupported anecdotes.

The tribe says the report also only looked at cases filed before McGirt applied to the Cherokee reservation so its conclusions could be misleading to the court.

The Cherokee Nation also argues that McGirt has enhanced their justice system with additional funding and jobs, as well as providing resources and support to victims.

The nine justices will conference on Jan. 7 to discuss taking on new cases, including whether to uphold or overturn its McGirt ruling.

- KJRH-TV (Tulsa, Okla.)

Fiscal update will set aside \$40B to compensate First Nations kids in Canada, minister says

The Liberal government is preparing to spend \$40 billion to compensate First Nations children harmed by Ottawa's underfunding of child and family services on reserve, as well as on reforming the current system.

Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller made the announcement Dec. 13, the day before the government planned to release a fiscal update where the money will be set aside.

The spending is contingent on Ottawa and child-welfare advocates reaching an agreement over compensation the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has ordered the federal government to pay First Nations children and their parents or grandparents.

In a historic ruling, the tribunal found they suffered as a result of the government's inadequate funding for child and family services in their communities, which resulted in families being separated.

"This is 30 years of the cost of failure — and that cost is high," Miller said.

Negotiations began after the federal government announced in late October it wanted to reach an out-of-court settlement on the matter, as well as have an agreement to address outstanding issues within the child-welfare system and cover the costs of related class actions.

The parties had until the end of December to reach a deal.

Cindy Blackstock, executive director of First Nations Caring Society, which is one of the litigants in the case, says Ottawa has known for years about its unequal funding for First Nations children and is now paying the price for that delay, which has hurt kids.

"Over 20 years ago, fixing the inequalities would have only cost hundreds of millions," she said in a statement Dec. 13.

Miller said Dec. 13 about half of the \$40 billion would fund long-term reforms, while the remainder would cover compensation costs. He said he's "cautiously optimistic" an agreement will be struck sometime [before the end of December].

"I want everyone to be conscious of the fact that there still are some very fragile discussions underway," said Miller.

"There's issues of costing, there's issues of sorting out amongst the parties what that proper allotment of compensation is. Again, we're not done."

- Canadian Press

Colorado River conference hears calls for tribal inclusion as crisis deepens

A big conference about the shrinking Colorado River — the main source of water for millions of people in the Southwest — [was held in December] in Las Vegas. Discussions among dozens of scientists and government officials focused on the West's historic drought.

The Colorado River Basin is in dire straits. Opening remarks at the Colorado River Water Users Association meeting focused on the severe and prolonged drought that's brought two of the nation's largest reservoirs to their lowest levels on record.

The first day of the three-day conference also heard calls for more collaboration and less infighting among Western states and tribes who rely on the river. But Christopher Tabbee, a councilman for the Ute Indian Tribe, said that currently isn't the case in his home state of Utah.

"Anything that has to do with water, we've been totally blocked out," he said. "We've never been consulted on any decisions."

The Utes have treaty rights to a significant amount of Colorado River water. But Tabbee said Utah is ignoring those rights and using some of that water. A new report from the nonprofit environmental group Utah Rivers Council suggests the state is using about half of the tribes' allocated water.

"The only water left in the state of Utah is tribal water and they're using that water, too," Tabbee said.

The Utah River Councils report also suggests that, overall, Utah and other states in the Upper Colorado River Basin are using more water than they are currently allowed. That overuse is likely to only grow as the changing climate continues to deplete river flows across the basin.

Gene Shawcroft, the Utah representative for the Upper Colorado River Commission, pushed back on that report. He pointed out that Utah and other upper basin states such as Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico have made their required water deliveries to the lower basin states.

"The important thing to recognize is that this claim of overuse is not scientifically based," he said. "I don't know how we're overusing it when we have delivered more ... than what we are obligated to deliver."

Shawcroft also noted that the state has created a new agency devoted to the crisis, the Colorado River Authority, and would invite tribes to join advisory councils, which have not been formed yet. Critics have pointed out that the agency doesn't include any tribal members on its board.

Across the Colorado River Basin — home to 30 federally recognized Native American tribes — tribal leaders are pushing for a more significant seat at the table in water negotiations. In October, as the White House hosted a summit of tribal nations, a group of 20 tribes within the basin wrote a letter to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland asking for an "integral role" in the next round of river negotiations.

In the letter, tribal leaders said they were "cautiously optimistic" that they'll be recognized as separate sovereigns on the same footing as states in the basin. Those 30 tribes hold rights to about a quarter of the river's average annual flow, though many lack the infrastructure or funding to use their full allotments.

In Las Vegas on Dec. 14, Becky Mitchell, director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, said her state is committed to involving tribes in future negotiations. Looming over this conference is the need to establish new guidelines for managing the river, as the current set of rules expires in 2026.

"Creating a framework for this engagement should be the first step as the negotiations begin," Mitchell said.

- Boise State (Idaho) Public Radio

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Education

B

PECS student wins statewide Hispanic heritage contest

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Five-year-old Eziel Juarez wasn't nervous at all when he went to Tallahassee to meet Gov. Ron DeSantis and shake his hand in November.

Eziel is the only kindergarten student in the state to win an award in this year's Florida Department of Education's Hispanic Heritage Month art and essay contest.

Eziel, a student at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School on the Brighton Reservation, won the art contest for his drawing of an influential person in his community. That person happened to be his mother, Eduarda Lala Anselmo, a teacher at the school.

"The theme was influential Hispanics in your community," Anselmo said. "We are a prime example of the American dream."

Anselmo teaches English in the Creek immersion class and was recently named the school's teacher of the year (see story on page 2B). She had her students enter the contest after she taught a section about Hispanic heritage. Eziel, who loves to draw, also entered the contest.

Born in Mexico, Anselmo's family moved to the U.S. in 1990. Education played a big part in her life. She earned an associate of arts degree before she graduated from Okeechobee High School. She embarked on a teaching career after she graduated from Florida Atlantic University.

Eziel's drawing is about Anselmo because he said she works hard and helps other people. She is also his best friend.

"I'm happy that I won," Eziel said. "I was excited to see the governor. I like him."

The trip to Tallahassee was Eziel's first time staying in a hotel. He was impressed by the big beds and the television. He was also impressed by the governor's mansion.



Eziel Juarez's winning drawing shows his mother, father, brother and himself along with the flag of Mexico.

"It was big and had a lot of flags and books," he said. "There were a lot of people there."

A few fun facts about Eziel: Halloween is his favorite holiday followed by Christmas. He also likes the fall and July. His favorite

part of the school day is the time he spends in the play centers. He likes recess and going to the park and he wants to be a policeman when he grows up.

Eziel also plans to keep drawing.



Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School kindergarten student Eziel Juarez, front and center, with his mother Eduarda Lala Anselmo, Gov. Ron DeSantis, his father and brother in the governor's mansion after Eziel was recognized for his winning drawing in a Hispanic Heritage Month contest in November.

Education staff hosts 'pop-up' outreach event

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The Education Department, formerly known as the Center for Student Success and Services (CSSS), held its second annual "drive-thru popcorn pop-up" event Dec. 1.

Students and parents came to the Dorothy S. Osceola (DSO) complex on the Hollywood Reservation to receive information on Education's programs (K-12 education, higher education, tutoring, library services and tribal professional development) from several staff members who were onsite.

Rollie Gilliam III said the goals of the drive-thru were not only to disseminate information but also to reinitiate the community's engagement with the

department, and for the department's outreach methods to be evaluated. Gilliam, who is the quality assurance analyst for the department, said those goals were met.

There were raffles, prizes and giveaways, too. Tammy Osceola, Ciara Billie and Rhonda Shell all won gift baskets.

Gilliam developed the pop-up series with the help of Tiawannah Calhoun, Hollywood's K-12 adviser.

Damon Scott

From left to right are Kajir Harriott (Education), Onesimus Stockton (Hollywood Recreation), Rollie Gilliam III (Education) and Hurvens Monestime (Education) at the drive-thru event.



Native American student makes history at Harvard

BY LIZ MINEO
Harvard staff writer

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Growing up in a family dedicated to preserving her Indigenous nation, the Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe, Samantha Maltais received a primer in legal education. Her grandmother helped the tribe gain federal recognition. Her mother is its chairperson. As a young girl, Maltais attended tribal council meetings, consultations with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and self-governance workshops.

This fall, she is continuing her education at Harvard Law School.

The significance of Maltais' arrival at HLS is not lost on her. The Wampanoag Tribe has inhabited the island of Noepe — the Wampanoag name for Martha's Vineyard — for more than 10,000 years, and they still occupy their aboriginal land at Aquinnah (Gay Head) on the southwestern end of the island. Maltais is the first member of her nation to enroll at the Law School.

It was a long time coming, she says. Harvard's history is entangled with that of Maltais' tribe in multiple ways. The Harvard Charter of 1650 stipulated the College's commitment to "educate the English and Indian youth of this country in knowledge and godliness," with the intent to "civilize" and assimilate Indigenous students into mainstream European and American cultures and values. The first Native American student at Harvard was Caleb Cheeshahteumuck, a member of the

Wampanoag Tribe, who graduated in 1665. "Looking back, we understand that assimilation was part of the larger process of colonization in what is now known as the United States," said Maltais. "Now it's an important time to note that Native students are using education not as a tool of assimilation to strip us of our identities, but instead to uplift and advocate for our own tribal communities. That's what I intend to do with my law degree and my legal education."

For Jason Packineau, interim executive director of the Harvard University Native American Program, Maltais' enrollment at HLS brings "both renewed energy and an opportunity to reflect on Harvard's obligations to Native American communities." Packineau is an enrolled citizen of the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara) of North Dakota. He is also Pueblo of Jemez and Pueblo of Laguna.

"The significance of having a Wampanoag student at Harvard means the dialogue surrounding the language of the Charter can elevate beyond historical interpretation and instead become a conversation rooted in real relationship-building for tribal communities and Native students," Packineau said.

Native American students make up a tiny minority at Harvard. Only 1.1 percent of students admitted to the Class of 2025 were Native American. Some progress has been made over the years, but it has been slow-going. In 2011, Tiffany Smalley became the second Wampanoag to graduate

from the College, 346 years after Cheeshahteumuck did it in 1665. In 2018, Harvard hired the historian Philip Deloria as its first tenured Native American professor. There are now three other full-time Native American faculty at Harvard.

Maltais, a Dartmouth College graduate who won a three-year law scholarship from the American Indian College Fund, would like to see the University do more to increase the number of Native American undergraduates, courses in Native American studies, and Native American faculty, both at the College and at the Law School.

"I don't think there is ever a point where Harvard can do too much for Native students," said Maltais. "Harvard's origin story is inextricably intertwined to the education of Indigenous youth."

As for her post-Law School future, Maltais plans to work at "the intersection of Indigenous rights, tribal sovereignty, and environmental justice." For her and the 340 tribe members who live on Martha's Vineyard, climate change is a major concern. Rising sea levels, severe storms, and coastal erosion are causing burial and sacred sites to be washed out to sea, and some of the clay cliffs that were part of the background in



Kris Snibbe - Harvard Staff Photographer
Samantha Maltais, from the Wampanoag Tribe, is a Harvard law student.

Maltais' childhood have vanished. "These are just moments of climate reckoning that shaped my understanding of not only environmental justice and the urgent need to combat climate change, but also the need for Indigenous peoples and tribal governments to be able to protect their own homelands," she said.

Maltais takes pride in having made history for her tribal community, but she is aware of the sacrifices of those who came before her. She hopes to inspire other Native students to follow in her steps, the same way she was inspired by the examples of her mother and grandmother.

Maltais' grandmother Edith Andrews, who is 93 years old, worked in historical preservation, and often gave talks at Harvard as part of a long relationship with the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology. She was thrilled when her granddaughter enrolled at the Law School, said Maltais.

"Harvard was always a place where my mother, grandmother, or members of our community could be invited to educate students," said Maltais. "But the doors of Harvard were never open to my mother or grandmother as a place to get an education. When I was admitted to Harvard Law School, for my grandmother, it was just a moment of wow."

This story is from the Harvard Gazette. It was published online Nov. 23 at news.harvard.edu/gazette/

New tribal agriculture fellowship for Native students

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) announced Dec. 22 the development of the Tribal Agriculture Fellowship (TAF). TAF will award fellowships to Native American, Alaska Native and Native

Hawaiian students pursuing technical, undergraduate, and graduate degrees in agriculture with the goal of strengthening the flow of Indigenous professionals into tribal agriculture. The fellowships include scholarship funding for the pursuit of career, technical and educational certificate and

degree programs. TAF will be managed by the Native Agriculture Education Fellowship Program (NAEFP), a nonprofit organization supported by — but separate from — NAAF.

"In order for Native agriculture to thrive, we need to invest in our future through the next generation. We are thrilled

to provide a space for Native students to engage in agriculture in both career and technical certificate and traditional academic certificate and degree seeking programs through this new fellowship," Toni Stanger-McLaughlin, CEO of NAAF, said in a statement.

The fellowship is a collaboration with leading Native agriculture industry groups including Farmer Mac, John Deere and Farm Credit. In addition, NAEFP's proposal for matching funds to create TAF is in the final stages for approval from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research.



Beverly Bidney

Eduarda "Lala" Anselmo with some of the tools she uses to teach English in the PECS Creek immersion classroom.

Eduarda 'Lala' Anselmo named PECS teacher of the year

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Eduarda "Lala" Anselmo is Pemayetv Emahaky Charter School's teacher of the year for 2020-2021.

Anselmo teaches English language arts in the school's Creek immersion program. She has been with the program since its inception in 2015 and helped to develop the English portion of the curriculum. She teaches students English for one hour and 45 minutes every day, the rest of the immersion program is in Creek only.

Anselmo is state certified in foreign languages and in elementary education. She taught Spanish at Okeechobee High School before joining PECS. The 13-year veteran teacher also coaches Creek teachers in how to teach a foreign language.

"The goal of the immersion program is to develop Creek speakers from infancy and give them the tools to be able to thrive in society," Anselmo said.

The children have been together since they were babies or toddlers. The program has eight students, including six in second grade and two in first grade. The immersion students are separated from the rest of the school and are grouped according to their skill level.

Anselmo and Jade Osceola, a Creek

language teacher in the program, coordinate their curriculums together. The same lessons are reinforced in both languages.

"The program has the same curriculum as the rest of the school, but in Creek," Anselmo said. "These kids are getting all that plus the extra enrichment of the language. They are getting the experience of a lifetime."

The students are given a comprehensive education, including math, science and social studies, which are incorporated into the program in Creek. Next year, statewide standardized tests will be given to the immersion students for the first time.

Anselmo's ethnicity is Mexican. She enjoys being able to help the tribe save its language.

"It's so enriching," she said. "I've always wanted to do something for my people. Our native language died and I don't even know what it was. I wish someone would have done that for my people."

Anselmo does what she can to pass along her heritage to her own children and feels lucky that she gets to learn about the Seminole culture and language.

"I love listening to these immersion kids," she said. "I try to incorporate as much Seminole culture as I can into my lessons. I love this school, it feels like a family."

College Fund among recipients of Chan Zuckerberg Initiative grant

STAFF REPORT

DENVER, Colo. — The American Indian College Fund is one of two Indigenous organizations named as grant recipients from the charity organization of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan.

The College Fund announced Dec. 7 that it received a \$1 million grant from Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) to support the College Fund's work helping Indigenous students access a higher education.

Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, whose focus is on the self-determination and sovereignty of Native nations, also received a grant. In all, 25 organizations were awarded grants.

According to CZI, the grants support organizations that are "leading the way to advance racial equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts."

"Embedding a racial equity lens across CZI's philanthropic areas of focus will help us drive the impact and results that

we are all working to achieve," Belinda Stubblefield, CZI's head of diversity, equity, and inclusion, said in a statement. "As part of this critical work, we are engaging change-makers, community members, and movement builders with deep expertise and lived experience as partners, helping to shape our strategies and actions. We are dedicated to this work for the long term."

The grants are part of a multi-year, \$500 million investment CZI announced in December 2020.

The College Fund, based in Denver, Colorado, is the nation's largest charity that supports Native higher education.

"Native students give back to their communities through their deep commitment to improving their well-being and that of their families; through their entrepreneurship and work ethic; and through their creative and transformative vision. CZI's support of equity through this grant helps us support our students as they build better lives," Cheryl Crazy Bull, president and CEO of the College Fund, said in a statement.

Hollywood preschoolers show Christmas spirit



Julia Ritter (5)

The students and staff at the Hollywood Preschool put their best foot forward, or in some cases, their best hooves, as they dressed up for the annual Christmas show Dec. 16. Christmas trees, reindeer costumes and green, red and white patchwork were among the festive items worn.



ASU project to expand clean water access for Navajo Nation

FROM ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY NEWS

TEMPE, Ariz. — Access to clean water is a dire challenge for one third of the world's population, including people living in the southwestern United States. Approximately 20% of households in the Navajo Nation lack indoor plumbing, meaning thousands of residents haul water in tanks they fill from a mixture of regulated and unregulated sources. The latter are susceptible to contamination and therefore pose a threat to human health, so more safe water sites are desperately needed.

Toward that end, the CDC Foundation, an independent nonprofit that supports the work of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has awarded \$1.8 million through the Arizona State University Foundation to Construction in Indian Country, or CIIC, which is part of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering at ASU. The

funds will be used to install new permanent water loading stations across the Navajo Nation as part of Covid-19 response efforts.

"We started the project in mid-October, and we're targeting completion by the end of 2022," said Marcus Denetdale, program manager for CIIC, which operates within ASU's Del E. Webb School of Construction and supports infrastructure development on tribal land as well as expanded construction management capabilities within Native American communities. "Right now, we're collecting data."

When that analysis is complete, Denetdale and others on the project team will submit a report for relevant Navajo Nation authorities and local utilities to consult in deciding where to proceed with the new stations.

"Our goal is eight, but if we can squeeze the budget or if other donors are able to add funding, we could build 10 or maybe 12 new stations in total," said Denetdale.

2022 Native American coin honors Native U.S. Army officer

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — The United States Mint announced Nov. 21 the design for the 2022 Native American \$1 coin. The coin will commemorate Ely Parker, a U.S. Army officer, engineer and tribal diplomat, who served as military secretary to Ulysses S. Grant during the U.S. Civil War. When Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia, on the morning of April 9, 1865, Parker rendered the formal surrender documents in his own hand.

Designed by U.S. Mint artistic infusion program designer Paul C. Balan and sculpted by chief engraver Joseph Menna, the reverse (tails) design features Parker, depicted in Army uniform, with a quill pen and book, along with a likeness of his graceful signature, as symbols of his experience as an expert communicator. The inscriptions “Tonawanda Seneca” and “Ha-Sa-No-An-Da” recognize his tribe and the name given to him at birth. Additional inscriptions include “United States of America” and “\$1.”

The obverse (heads) of the coin will continue to feature the central figure “Sacagawea” carrying her infant son, Jean Baptiste, by sculptor Glenna Goodacre. The Native American \$1 coin program recognizes the important contributions made by Native American tribes and individual Native Americans to the history and development of the United States. Public law mandates a new reverse design with an image emblematic of one important Native American or Native American contribution each year.

The 2021 coin paid tribute to Native Americans who have served in the Armed Forces of the U.S.



The U.S. Mint's 2022 Native American \$1 coin honors the Tonawanda Seneca's Ely Parker, who served in the U.S. Army during the Civil War.

NCAIED honors '40 Under 40' class

STAFF REPORT

MARICOPA, Ariz. — The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) held a reception Dec. 10 at Harrah's Ak-Chin Hotel & Casino in Maricopa, Arizona, to honor its

newest class of Native American 40 Under 40. According to NCAIED, the honors go to emerging American Indian and Alaska Native leaders under 40 who have demonstrated dedication, initiative and leadership and made significant contributions in business and/or in their community.

“Every year we recognize 40 young Indian Country leaders who are paving new paths and opening new possibilities for their communities,” Chris James, NCAIED president and CEO, said in a statement in November. “The 2021 40 Under 40 class is showing future generations of Native leaders

how hard work, perseverance and dedication to your community and profession can pay dividends.”

Here's a look at eight of the 40. Bios of all 40 are on NCAIED's Facebook page.



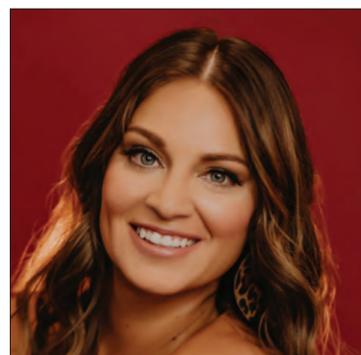
Anpotowin Jensen (Oglala Lakota Tribe)

Anpotowin Jensen is an environment and health consultant for the International Indian Treaty Council and a member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe. Passionate about the intersection of environment and health, Jensen was one of the first Indigenous persons to sit on Stanford's Global Health Board, has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine and Journal of Climate and Health, and is a freelance writer for climate-focused publication Grist.



Brian Tanner (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes)

Brian Tanner is a citizen of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation and is the director of development at Potlatch Fund. Tanner is charged with securing grant funding, with the goal to continue Potlatch's mission well into the future. He was recently selected to sit on the Philanthropy Northwest board of directors. He has served on Washington Gov. Jay Inslee's All in Washington task force to raise Covid-19 funds.



Candace Schmidt (Ponca Tribe)

Candace Schmidt is director of communications at Norfolk (Neb.) Public Schools and a citizen of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. Schmidt has worked in the Norfolk community since 2009 in roles in both economic development and communications. A staff coordinator for the mayor's diversity council, Schmidt helped turn the council into an effective community institution.



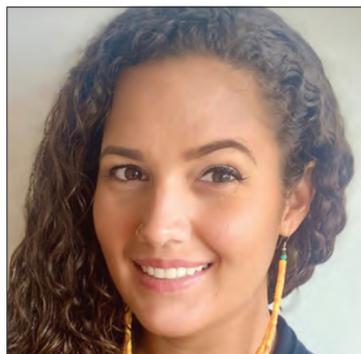
Cynthia Connolly (Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians)

Cynthia Connolly serves as director of programming for the City Club of Cleveland and is a citizen of the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians. Connolly is an active member of the Cleveland Native American community, tutoring Native youth and serving as a member of the Lake Erie Native American Council



Dr. Jonnie Williams (Navajo Nation)

Dr. Jonnie Williams, Psy.D., is a citizen of the Navajo Nation, Tóóich'í'nií Clan, Diné Nation. Williams serves as a clinical psychologist at American Indian Health & Services, one of 41 nonprofit Urban Indian Health Organizations that provides culturally competent care. Williams was the primary author of “Changing Tides System of Care Report” that serves as a model for expanding services for urban American Indians and Alaska Natives in the region.



Elizabeth Rule (Chickasaw Nation)

Elizabeth Rule, PhD, is an assistant professor of critical race, gender and culture studies at American University and is a citizen of The Chickasaw Nation. This year, Rule created an app called ‘Guide to Indigenous DC’ that tells the Indigenous history of the United States' capital. Some of her research includes an analysis of The Chickasaw Press.



Heather Doran (Choctaw Nation)

Heather Doran is chief of staff/global director for Industry, Apps, and Data Marketing at Microsoft. A citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Doran has used her position to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives, including being a strong voice for Native American hiring and serving as a member of the Native and Indigenous Employee Resource Group



Julian Guerrero Jr. (Comanche Nation)

Julian Guerrero Jr. is director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. A citizen of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, Guerrero works to build relationships with local, state, and federal tribal entities, and collaborates with Native American subject matter experts to ensure a strong educational base for Native youth. Previously, he served as a tribal gaming commission for his tribe, ensuring compliance with federal regulations.

Hard Rock sets Pinktober fundraising record

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock announced Dec. 23 that its 22nd annual Pinktober campaign raised more than \$700,000, representing the largest amount Hard Rock has fundraised since the program began in 2000 and donating millions of dollars toward breast cancer research throughout the history of the campaign. All company divisions worldwide including Hard Rock cafes, hotels and casinos participated in the campaign with limited-edition merchandise, food and beverage menu items, local events and more. Charitable partners included the American Cancer Society, Caron Keating Foundation, Asociacion Espanol Contra el cancer Madrid, Gweke's Caring for Women, and the Breast Cancer Support Group Johor Bahru.

“We are thrilled to announce that in the 22nd year of the Pinktober campaign we were able break our fundraising records to continue in our steadfast support of breast cancer awareness and research,”

Jon Lucas, chief operating officer of Hard Rock International, said in a statement. “It's amazing to watch our company divisions come together and put their hearts into fundraising efforts. We hope that in addition to raising money we're also able to amplify the message of courage and hope among fighters, survivors and their loved ones.”

At participating Hard Rock Cafes, \$1 from every limited-time Pinktober burger sold went towards the cause amounting to more than \$60,000. The three Pinktober burgers - the Mushroom & Bourbon Onion Burger, the Ultimate “Pub” Burger, and the Blue Cheese & Bacon Burger - were so well-received that they will be added to the permanent menu in January 2022.

Sales from this year's Pinktober-themed Hard Rock T-shirt and newly designed Pinktober pin raised more than \$35,000. Additionally, players on Hard Rock Digital's free “Hard Rock Social Casino” game determined how much was donated in honor of Pinktober. The more players spun, the more the donation amount increased

for a total of \$10,000 raised benefitting the American Cancer Society.

On a local level, several Hard Rock properties around the world supported community driven events:

- The American Cancer Society recognized the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City as the number one fundraising group in the country raising close to \$125,000
- The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa was once again the Pink Premier Sponsor for their local Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Raymond James Stadium at the amount of \$50,000
- The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood, Florida, along with two of its in-state sister properties, hosted a Real Men Wear Pink Event with all proceeds benefitting the American Cancer Society
- The Hard Rock Hotel Desaru Coast in Malaysia hosted a Pinktober Takes the Stage event and rewarded five brave survivors with all-inclusive stays to the hotel
- The Hard Rock Hotel Sacramento



The American Cancer Society receives a check from Hard Rock's record-setting Pinktober campaign.

donated \$50,000 to the Gweke's Caring for Women Foundation, hosted pink swag giveaways every Wednesday in October, and served pink food and beverage items throughout the month

• Hard Rock team members worldwide contributed personal time and donations through their pay checks, as well as other fundraising initiatives.

Melinda Micco, Native tenured professor who wrote about Seminoles in Oklahoma, passes at 73

FROM LEGACY.COM

Melinda Micco, Professor Emerita of Mills College and alumna of the University of California at Berkeley, whose primary work explored the intersection of Seminole Indians and African Freedmen in Oklahoma, died Dec. 5 surrounded by family in Oakland, California. She was 73.

Melinda was born in Richmond, California on Dec. 21, 1947 to Harry and Frankie Coker. She was a registered tribal member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and the second eldest of four daughters. She moved to San Mateo in middle school and graduated from Aragon High School, one of only two people of color, in 1966. She married, had two children, and

only after getting divorced did she consider continuing her education. Despite being offered admission to numerous Ivy League institutions, she chose U.C. Berkeley for its proximity to family. Melinda returned to school at the University of California at Berkeley as a single mother at the age of 39 and excelled academically. She earned a BA, MA, and PhD in Ethnic and Native American studies, and graduated with three degrees, with honors, in less than seven years.

After graduation from Berkeley in the spring of 1993, she was hired at Mills College as All But Dissertation (ABD) which she had to complete in order to begin her tenure track position in the fall. She completed her dissertation in just under three months at a time when the national average was 8.2 years. When she arrived at

Mills there were only a handful of faculty of color and she was the only American Indian faculty member. In 1994, Melinda became chair of the Ethnic Studies Department and the first Native American woman tenured since the school founding in 1852.

Melinda's early scholarship focused on the often overlooked intersection between American Indian and African American histories. She conducted numerous oral history interviews with Seminole leaders to uncover the history of the Black Seminoles and published an important work “Blood and Money”: The Case of Seminole Freedmen and Seminole Indians in Oklahoma based on these interviews.

She later became interested in violence against women and women's spiritual activism, and co-directed a film about the

forced sterilization of Native American women entitled “Killing the 7th Generation: Reproductive Abuses Against Native Women.” She also founded the Brave Hearted Women Conference and was a founding member of Idle No More, a group of grandmothers who lead environmental justice and spiritual activism movements and worked to raise awareness about the health impacts of the Richmond refinery corridor.

Melinda was a featured speaker at Oxford, the Smithsonian, Harvard, U.C. Berkeley, the De Young, and many other prestigious institutions. What is most noteworthy however was her ability to weather extreme hardship and remain bright and positive. She was a staunch advocate for and mentor of female scholars of color. She focused on inclusivity within the context of

higher education and was one of the first educators to incorporate different learning styles into her pedagogy to accommodate and celebrate neurodiversity.

Melinda was a guiding light and mentor to many women of color over her storied career, but beyond her academic and social advocacy work, she was a friend, sister, daughter, mother, and grandmother. Melinda was loyal, fierce, witty, irreverent, compassionate, and more than anything else, loving and deeply loved by her close family and friends. There is no greater testament to a life well lived, than the love of others left behind. She is survived by her son Sean, daughter Megan, grandchildren Finlay and Sophia, her son-in-law Jeffrey, and her cousin David and his wife Aileen.

PEQUOTS From page 9A

Whipple says there are plans to expand the sugar shack offerings, which currently sells maple syrup that is sold to Foxwoods Casino.

“The farm the Tribal Department of

Agriculture oversees is going to continue growing produce and eventually become a winery,” Whipple says. “We are planning to raise cattle as well. The business is continuing to grow, and all of this will benefit the community.”

Ghimire adds that UConn Extension will continue to play a role with the Tribal Department of Agriculture, including

to continue serving as a resource for questions and expertise related to vegetable production, nutrition, farm business management, youth education, and beyond. The FRTEP funding also provides salaries for two part-time employees who will help the Tribal Department of Agriculture accomplish their goals.

The tribal nation is currently working

toward one of those goals by converting two high tunnels into a hydroponic growing operation, with the help of Extension specialists.

“That's going to be a huge revenue stream for us because we will be able to grow year-round,” says Whipple.

The experience and knowledge gained through the process of establishing

the Tribal Department of Agriculture is invaluable, and Whipple says they are eager to share their knowledge with other tribes in the region.

“We plan to keep going and want to get all of the tribes in the Northeast on the same page, supplying each other with our products.”

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Sports



RayQuan Evans radiates influence from Indian Country to FSU

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

RayQuan Evans knows that his pursuit of a third college degree is not just about personal accomplishment. He also realizes when he pulls on the No. 0 jersey for the Florida State University men's basketball team that he's doing it for more than himself.

Evans is a 6-foot-4, 200-pound senior guard for the Seminoles, who were scheduled to be in Broward County on Dec. 18 to face Central Florida in the Orange Bowl Classic at FLA Live Arena in Sunrise, however the game was cancelled due to Covid-19 protocols.

Evans, a member of the Crow Tribe in Montana, has already produced some impressive numbers early in the season, such as 14 points, five assists, three rebounds and three steals in the season opener against Penn. He had nine points, six rebounds, one steal and three blocked shots against Syracuse.

It is rare that someone from the Crow Tribe plays Division I college basketball, especially in an upper echelon conference such as the Atlantic Coast Conference. Evans realizes what he does on the court as well as in the classroom stretches far beyond the Tallahassee campus.

Evans has embraced being a role model for his family, his reservation 2,000 miles away and for Indian Country. The degrees — graphic design, social science and, in progress, international affairs — and the stats — seven points per game and team leader in blocks per game — show that Evans is setting an admirable example for young Natives. Team accolades help, too, such as the academic achievement award and unsung hero award he earned after his first season with FSU.

When he is on the reservation, he talks about the value of education to his younger cousins who play sports and to other kids.

"It's very important to be able to come to the reservation and set an example for younger kids that school is very important,

and if all else fails with sports, you have your degrees to rely on. It's very important to me. I'm very thankful to have the opportunity to have multiple degrees. It means a lot to me and my family," Evans said in a phone interview with the Tribune.

Honoring big brother

Recently, the determination to succeed academically and athletically took on additional meaning for Evans with the passing of his brother. Tye LaFranier died Nov. 21. He was in a battle against leukemia and HLH (an immune disorder) when he passed at age 27.

"He was able to watch my games when he was in the hospital; now he has a front row seat to all my games," Evans said. "I honor him. My purpose is greater now when I am playing and with everything I do. I try to represent my brother when I am playing."

As a high school athlete, LaFranier excelled in basketball, cross country, football and track in Montana. He competed in the World Indigenous Games in Brazil. He has a six-year-old son, Bryson.

"My brother was really a great guy. It's devastating that he passed at such a young age," Evans said. "I couldn't have asked for a better bigger brother, somebody I really looked up to as a man."

Development as a player

Evans comes from a large family. His Native roots are from his mom, LaVern Old Elk Evans; his African-American roots are from his dad, Israel Evans, who played basketball for the University of Montana.

As a kid, Evans moved around quite often. He lived on the Crow reservation and a few other places around the country, but one constant was basketball. His dad made sure he not only played, but that he played against tough — and often older — competition in order to improve.

"My experience of playing with older kids and playing with men really kind of built the player that I am a lot quicker at a



Florida State Athletics
RayQuan Evans (0), from the Crow Tribe in Montana, is in his third season with Florida State University. He leads the team in blocks per game.

younger age," Evans said.

Evans was an All-State player at Skyview High School in Billings. In the summer before his senior year, he played in the Native American Basketball Invitational. It is the largest all-Native tournament for high school players that annually attracts more than 100 teams to Phoenix, Arizona, from throughout Indian Country.

"It was a great experience, probably one of the best experiences of my life. To see kids come from different reservations to play in this one tournament, it was amazing," Evans said.

The tournament not only focuses on games — and there's more than 400 of them culminating with championships in the Phoenix Suns arena — but also stresses education. Native speakers from a variety of career-backgrounds meet with the players. College admission representatives are present.

Getting noticed on the basketball court by colleges can be challenging for Native players, partly due to the rural locations of many reservations. The talent is there, but often the eyes of recruiters are not.

"There's a lot of great talent on the reservation, but it's just really hard for the kids to get seen. That's something I share with [kids], don't be afraid to leave home and get out there. Home is always going to be there, but to get yourself noticed, you're going to have to leave home," Evans said.

Evans has participated in a Zoom program that allows kids to ask him questions; he hopes to do more.

First Native

Before he made it to FSU, Evans played two seasons of junior college ball at North Idaho College, where he earned his first degree. It was a route that helped him gain exposure to D-I programs. He caught the attention of FSU and joined the Seminoles in 2019. He said there's additional significance in suiting up for FSU because of the school's connections to the Seminole Tribe.

He is also the first member of a Native American tribe to play for the FSU men's team, according to the athletics department. "I take more pride in it for my family



RayQuan Evans

and for my reservation back home," he said. "It's just amazing I [get] to play for the Florida State Seminoles."

In recent years, FSU has worn special uniforms once or twice a season that promote Native culture. They will wear them in the game against UCF.

"We have N7 jerseys and things like that, little representations of Native American culture. It's really awesome to be able to represent that, but also bring my culture to this program, kind of educate my teammates and my coaches what Native American culture is like," he said.

Evans has had little contact with anyone from the Seminole Tribe, but he said he wants to learn more about the tribe and meet tribal members. If the opportunity ever arises to work with Seminole kids at a clinic, for example, he'd be there, ready to share his story for the next generation.

"I would love to," he said. "Anything that is involved in helping the youth on reservations, I'm 100% invested."

Editor's note: A GoFundMe page has been established to help with the expenses of Tye LaFranier's funeral and for a savings account for his son.

Hard Rock Atlantic City to hold esports wagering tournament

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Esports Entertainment Group has formed a new partnership with Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City to host an esports tournament Jan. 22-23, 2022. According to the New Jersey-based EEG, it will be the first sanctioned esports skill-based wagering event in the United States. The tournament, which will be held in the Seminole Ballroom, will feature LANDuel, a player versus player wagering platform, with future plans for more esports betting events and permanent installations at the property.

"We are extremely excited to partner with one of the top global hotel and casino venues to kickstart the world of regulated peer-to-peer wagering in esports," Grant Johnson, CEO of EEG, said in a statement. "This partnership and event are a tremendous accomplishment for our brand and creates a wide variety of opportunities for our groups to explore more innovative esports events."

Esports is a form of competitive video gaming whose popularity has soared in recent years. According to a report released earlier this year by Newzoo, a company that provides analytics, data and research about the games market, including esports, the global games live-streaming audience will reach about 730 million by the end of 2021.

The launch at Hard Rock will include a 256-player in-person tournament. Participants will be allowed to wager on themselves in each round of the event. Players will check-in and create a LANDuel account. Once they're assigned to a computer, they will begin tournament play.

"We are extremely proud to offer a one-of-a-kind esports wagering experience in partnership with EEG," Joe Lupo, president of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City, said in a statement. "We are confident that this innovative and highly regulated partnership will prove to be a success, contributing to our market-leading gaming offerings."

An area will also be set up with computers for non-tournament participants to compete in side matches on LANDuel, allowing eligible tournament spectators or casino guests the ability to side-wager in their own matches outside of the tournament.

Haskell men's basketball to play in Florida

STAFF REPORT

The men's basketball team from Haskell Indian Nations University is scheduled to come to Florida for two games in January. The team is slated to be in the Tampa area Jan. 7 to face Florida College at 6 p.m. in Temple Terrace. The next day Haskell is scheduled to be in West Palm Beach to play Keiser University at 4 p.m.

Haskell, from Lawrence, Kansas, had a 3-6 record as of Dec. 30.

College and professional sports continue to be disrupted with postponements and cancellations due to Covid-19. Visit haskellathletics.com for updated information.



Florida State Athletics

RayQuan Evans has earned two college degrees and is pursuing a third at FSU.

Charlotte football welcomes 'Fresh' Walters among new signees

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

As he described each of his dozen new signees, University of North Carolina at Charlotte football coach Will Healy said there's a lot to like about Roger "Fresh" Walters.

A special athlete who doesn't lack confidence is how Healy described Walters, a 5-foot-10, 170-pound senior wide receiver and ESPN three-star recruit. In addition to being one of the Treasure Coast's top scoring threats, Walters also excelled on defense as a cornerback and on special teams as returner in his two seasons at Centennial High School

in Port St. Lucie.

Walters, the son of Seminole tribal member Sheree Sneed, spent much of his youth living on the Seminole Tribe's Fort Pierce Reservation, known as Chupco's Landing. He now lives in Port St. Lucie; his next stop for school will be Charlotte and Division I football in the American Athletic Conference (AAC).

In a post on Twitter, Walters thanked God and his high school coaches, including head coach Josh Watkins and assistants Aaron Gluff and Trey Page.

"Without them, I wouldn't be here," Walters posted.

He also praised Healy and Charlotte's wide receivers coach Perry Parks "...for this

great opportunity. They believed in me and they were the first to believe in me."

Healy spoke about his incoming recruits Dec. 15 in a video on Charlotte's website on national signing day's first day for its early period signees in football. He caught a preview of what Walters brings to the football field earlier this year.

"He came to camp for us this past summer and we fell in love with him there," Healy said. "Just a competitive leader that people follow. [He] has an incredible amount of athletic ability. It's fun to watch him play both football and basketball; [he's] also a track guy."

Healy saw firsthand the dynamic that Walters possesses on a basketball court.

"An unbelievable basketball player. I got a chance to go down and watch him play basketball and he was dunking on everybody," he said.

Indeed, Walters is a proven scorer who can provide highlight-reel material. He averaged more than 17 points a game last year.

Similarly, Walters put up big numbers on the gridiron this season with a team-high nine touchdown catches. He's also an elusive kick/punt returner, having returned a few for touchdowns in his career. Healy said in a tweet that Walters "brings some explosiveness and versatility."

♦ See WALTERS on page 6B



Courtesy photo

Roger "Fresh" Walters

Defense plays big role in success of Adryauna Baker, OHS

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

FORT PIERCE — On a night when her shots weren't falling as they normally do, Okeechobee High School senior guard Adryauna Baker still managed to have a significant impact on the outcome of the Brahms 59-33 win against Lincoln Park on Dec. 15.

When Lincoln Park trimmed a 26-point halftime deficit to five points in the third quarter, Okeechobee realized the second half in Fort Pierce wasn't going to be a breeze.

"Me and coach agreed that we should slow it down. We were rushing too fast and we didn't have to rush. Once we started slowing everything down, everything started flowing nicely," Baker said.

With the lead at five, Baker's back-to-back plays ignited a big Brahman run that put the game away. First, it was a nifty assist. Then came a steal that led to another basket. Just like that, Lincoln Park's comeback hopes ceased.

"That's what I was really focusing on, starting plays," said Baker, who is the only tribal member on the varsity team.

Defense has been a key part of the Brahms' 10-2 record as of Christmas Day. Individually for Baker and as a team, the focus on defense has paid off.

Okeechobee's defense has been suffocating for most of the season. Port St. Lucie scored just three points in a Nov. 19 game. Central-Fort Pierce (seven points) and South Fork (15) didn't fare much better.



Okeechobee High School senior Adryauna Baker launches a 3-point shot against Lincoln Park on Dec. 15 in Fort Pierce. The Brahms reached Christmas Day with a 10-2 record.

Kevin Johnson



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee High School senior guard Adryauna Baker controls the ball against Lincoln Park.

Perhaps more impressive, though, are the wins against Lincoln Park, Centennial and Westwood, all of which beat Okeechobee last year.

"I'd say our defense is probably the reason we win by such large margins," Baker said. "We try to get kills, which is where you stop the ball and you score and then you stop the ball again. We try to get at least 10 a game."

Baker is averaging more than seven points a game. She poured in 15 points, including four 3-pointers, in a win against

Treasure Coast the day after the Lincoln Park game. Throughout her four-year varsity career, she has been among the team leaders in rebounds. This season she is third with an average of five rebounds per game, trailing Semaj Jasper and team leader McKenzie Neal, a freshman.

"[Defense] is more of my focus now than my offense," Baker said. "It's nice to shoot a 3 every now and then, but I think defense is what wins championships and that's what we need to focus on."



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee High School coach Jovanny Torres talks to his team during a break.

Kendra Thomas earns volleyball honors

STAFF REPORT

Avant Garde Academy volleyball player and tribal member Kendra Thomas has been named 2021 Sun-Sentinel Class 5A-2A top players honorable mention. She was also selected as Avant Garde's most valuable player.

Thomas, a sophomore, is the team's setter and outside hitter. According to Avant Garde, she ranked second in the FHSAA District 3A-13 with 100 assists and was in the top 100 in the state for serving aces with 50. She also racked up 66 kills this season.



Kendra Thomas

Gabby Lemieux comes up short in LPGA Tour bid

STAFF REPORT

Gabby Lemieux (Shoshone-Paiute Tribe) came up short in her bid to secure an LPGA Tour card for the upcoming season.

Lemieux reached the marathon eight-round qualifying tournament that was held in the first two weeks of December in Dothan, Alabama. She shot 76-70-71-74 for a 291 total that was four strokes shy of making the cut for the final four-rounds.

Forty-five players, including ties, earned their cards.

Lemieux competed on the Symetra Tour in 2021. She finished 49th in earnings.

Determined effort points Moore Haven basketball in right direction

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

CLEWISTON — The comeback effort by the Moore Haven High School boys basketball team came up short against Clewiston, but it didn't go unnoticed.

In fact, before the officials departed Clewiston's gym, one reached out with praise to Terriers coach Preston Baker.

"Way to fight, way to fight," the official said to Baker, whose team turned what had the early markings of an ugly night into a decent second half run in a 71-51 loss to the Tigers on Dec. 7.

Moore Haven, which lost most of its players from last year's 3-6 team, features a young squad, which includes only three seniors.

In addition to Baker, who is in his second season at the helm, there is a considerable Seminole presence on the roster. Four players from the tribe — senior Jaytron Baker, junior Pherian Baker, junior Corey Jumper and freshman Kayden Warrior — are getting plenty of playing time, although Jumper has missed games — including versus Clewiston — due to an injury.

Moore Haven could have used Jumper, a 6-foot-2 forward.

"Jaytron would have been a big factor tonight," coach Baker said.

Despite four losses in its first five games, efforts like the one versus Clewiston keep Baker believing the team can attain lofty goals.

"Our goal was to go to states. We still can as long as we keep practicing and playing hard and don't give up," he said.

Indeed, Moore Haven played with plenty of determination even after being on the wrong end of a 20-0 run in the first quarter

as Clewiston found its rhythm early. Pherian Baker, who is more accustomed to being a physical presence on Friday nights as a lineman for the Terriers football team, sent Clewiston players airborne on a couple occasions while driving toward the basket.

"He's a football player. He drops that shoulder and goes to it," said coach Baker, who is also Pherian's dad.

The younger Baker showed how extra effort pays off. He dove for a loose ball and, while still flat on his stomach, managed to dish off a pass to a teammate for a basket. It was one of the team's highlights, but there were others.

The smooth-shooting Warrior didn't look like a freshman when he sank a three-pointer from the corner in the first half and then made another one from beyond NBA range in the



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven's Kayden Warrior grabs control of the ball with help from teammate Pherian Baker during the Terriers' game at Clewiston on Dec. 7.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven's Corey Jumper (2) blocks out Clewiston's Liam Davis.

second half.

Moore Haven trailed by 28 at halftime, but led by Jumper, who was strong at both ends of the court, the Terriers didn't fade away quietly. They trimmed the deficit to 10 points a few times, including on a 3-point play from Jumper late in the third quarter. In the fourth quarter, Jumper scored after winning a battle in the paint for an offensive rebound that again put the deficit at 10.

"CJ kept us in the game," coach Baker said.

Moore Haven never pulled to within single digits, but the Terriers departed with

some much-needed momentum.

"We did good in the second half. We had first half jitters; the second half we came out stronger," Baker said.

Jumper finished with 12 points and six rebounds. Warrior had six points, two rebounds and an assist.

Clewiston generated balanced scoring, including 14 points from Chauncey Cobb.

Moore Haven's lone victory so far came Dec. 1 against Donahue Catholic from Ave Maria. Jumper scored 11 points in the 48-43 victory.

♦ WALTERS From page 5B

A signing ceremony with Walters and family members is scheduled to be held in February.

Charlotte went 5-7 this season and did not qualify for a bowl. The 49ers started fast with a 3-1 mark that included a win against Duke. They split against two South Florida teams, notching a win against Florida International in Miami but then suffering a lopsided loss to Florida Atlantic that started a 1-5 slump to finish the season. Charlotte

is among six schools, including FAU, that departed Conference USA this year and are now newcomers in the AAC. The 49ers' 2022 schedule includes non-conference games against Maryland and South Carolina, according to fbsschedules.com.

As for basketball, Walters has picked up where he left off last season. He is again averaging 17 points a game and has helped Centennial to an undefeated record through nine games. The winning streak remained alive thanks to his game-high 20 points in a 63-60 win against Central-Fort Pierce on Dec. 10.

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