## Seminole Tribune Voice of the Unconquered

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## Tribe opens new casino, hotel in Brighton

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY Staff Reporter

**BRIGHTON** — A new era for the Brighton Reservation dawned Feb. 6 with the grand opening of the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino. The ceremony drew more than 1,000 people, and included tribal leaders and gaming executives cutting a red ribbon before the doors opened to the public.

The large porte-cochere in front of the casino entrance is embellished with tribal references including medicine colors and stylized patchwork to create a welcoming driveway area. For the grand opening it was transformed into an event space complete with stage, band, a huge video screen and podium for speeches.

The ceremony opened with the Seminole Honor Guard followed by students from Pemayetv Emahakv Charter school, who said the pledge in Creek and English. Medicine man Bobby Henry led a stomp dance consisting of Seminole tribal members down the center aisle.

Former Brighton princesses guided a parade of former Seminole princesses from the very first one, Connie Gowen in 1957, to the present-day Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola. Each princess was announced by name and date of their reign and they gave royal waves as they made their way down the aisle.

Although they were a hard act to follow, Tribal Council members did just that. Each spoke to the standing-room-only crowd.

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. thanked their ancestors who sacrificed so the tribe could exist today.

"Without the Creator, this is not possible," Chairman Osceola said. "This has been a monumental task. This is a truly amazing place.



From left to right, Seminole Gaming COO David Hoenemeyer, Seminole Gaming CEO and Hard Rock International Chairman Jim Allen, Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino General Manager Marty Johns, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola, President Holly Tiger, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola celebrate after cutting the ribbon to officially open the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino on Feb. 6

The history of gaming in Brighton began with Josiah Johns, who in 1980 opened a bingo hall in a small red barn and served as its first general manager. His son,

Marty Johns, helped his father build it and took over as general manager when he died in 1983. Johns has been general manager ever since, including at the previous location

a few miles away and he will continue in the same role at the new property, which is located on Reservation Road, near the Trading Post and RV Resort.

See BRIGHTON BAY on page 6A

## **Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference** hosts largest audience yet

BY TATUM MITCHELL **Staff Reporter** 

**HOLLYWOOD** — With more than 25 sessions, multiple vendors and exhibitors, and about 200 registered attendees from 50 tribes and First Nations – the Seminole Tribe of Florida's seventh annual Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference saw some of its highest numbers in attendance this year.

Sessions ran from Jan. 27 to Jan. 29 at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, and topics ranged from renewable energy to funding breakdowns. The Native Learning Center team organized the conference.

Some common themes included building climate resilience, involving tribal government and communities in strategies and finding renewable energy solutions that best suit certain communities. Many sessions covered challenges with climate change and climate solutions in tribal communities

Jill Horwitz and Krystle Bowers from the tribe's Environmental Protection Office presented on policy development and a climate action plan on Jan. 29. Their program goals include climate change education,

peer learning, representing tribal interests, research, communication strategies and community engagement.

The Climate Resiliency Department received a grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and they recently hired two people to assist with the climate action plan. Their next steps to construct the plan includes meeting with tribal members in the community.

"We want the community and departments to be involved in it and figure out what we need to do and what we want to do. A lot of tribes [will] have climate impacts in their climate action plan and how it will affect certain things that are important to them in their community. Some will do surveys on what the community thinks about what they should be doing," Bowers said. "I think we're going to be working on building codes and landscaping and food sovereignty issues and solar, of course. And then reaching out to the community and seeing how we can do all that, because each community, each reservation is going to have a different opinion on it."

See CONFERENCE on page 9A



Jill Horwitz, right, and Krystle Bowers, both from the tribe's Environmental Protection Office, present at the Seminole Tribe of Florida's seventh annual Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference on Jan. 29 in Hollywood.

## Hoop dancing plays big role at pow wow

BY TATUM MITCHELL Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — Eric Michael Hernandez, a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, is a Native American hoop dancer with more than 20 years of experience. He brought his talents to the Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood for the second time on Feb. 2.

"I loved it. It's always really fun. We have so many friends from the Seminole Tribe, and we have so many friends that go to that pow wow. It's also one of the few pow wows where I get to see a lot of other Lumbee people from my tribe," Hernandez said. "It's a really great, energetic pow wow. They put on a really great event. And I love how they - it's not many pow wows you go to where they have a jumbotron above you with a live feed. It was really fun.

The hoop dance comes from the Taos Pueblo tribe from New Mexico, Hernandez

"It was originally used as a healing ceremony, and the hoops were originally made out of willow. And when, originally, when they were finished dancing, they would only use the hoops once, and then they would set the hoops on fire. That's a lot of the tradition that I share with the dance. And we believe that every time that the hoop passed through our body, that we added time to our life," he said.

At Tribal Fair, Hernandez hoop danced with a full audience and an emcee, who was acting as a hype man and helping with the energy of the crowd.

'Sometimes there's different kinds of crowds, depending on where I am. There's non-Native, there's non-Indigenous crowds, there's Indigenous crowds. There's people who have seen what I've done before, and they've seen other hoop dancers before or there's people who have never seen the hoop dance before, and this is the very first time they're ever gonna see it," Hernandez said. 'And I felt like that audience [at Tribal Fair], it was a good blend of both. I felt like there were a lot of Native people from the Pow Wow there and Seminole people. And then there also were, what we call allies, non-Natives there that maybe got to see the hoop dance for the first time. So it was a great blend of an audience. And it was an amazing audience.

Hernandez brought out volunteers from



Eric Michael Hernandez hoop dancing at Tribal Fair on Feb. 2.

the crowd, mostly children, to learn some parts of the hoop dance.

"That seems to be one of people's favorite part. I think that they can understand the difficulty of the dance, and they can also feel the human aspect of the dance. When they're able to touch the hoops and see the way that they move," Hernandez said. "Some people think that I interconnect the hoops with one another, and I have a bunch of little tricks that I'm doing to keep them together, but it's nice for them to come try the hoops and see how they work. It is something that I do pretty often. I do a lot of school assemblies, and I often let the kids come up and try the hoop.'

In June 2023, Hernandez gave a TEDx talk about his personal story. This was different from previous work he's done since he would perform and leave the stage when he was with Cirque du Soleil, and during assemblies he said he would normally cover the history and meaning of the hoop dance. Giving a TEDx talk about his messages was a stepping stone into another version of storytelling, Hernandez said.

"My TED talk was the first time that I

ever got to dig deep into my story and find ways that my story can help others and find you know moments where people can feel like they can relate to my story, and I feel like it kind of went past just being in entertainment or being a history lesson. ... I wanted to be able to have people take my story, take the message, and apply it to their life. And the TED talk really gave me the opportunity to do that. ... And the greatest value that I took away from that experience was just the process of understanding the parts of my story that resonate with people and now I carry that into every show that I

A part of that story is how his uncle Terry Goedel taught him the hoop dance, which he seriously picked up at 12 years old.

"I didn't really understand what he was giving me, what he was teaching me. And it wasn't until I got a little bit older that I started to realize how powerful it is to be able to express myself and to share my culture through this dance," Hernandez said.

See TRIBAL FAIR on page 4A

# Editorial

## **Beyond the icon: Seeing Leonard** Peltier return home

Levi Rickert

hortly after 9 a.m. [on Feb. 18], Leonard Peltier (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) was released from the Federal Correctional Complex in Coleman, Fla., and driven to the Leesburg airport to be flown to North Dakota.

President Joe Biden made freedom possible for the American Indian Movement (AIM) member when he granted Peltier a commuted sentence just before he left office.

[On Feb. 18], under a bright sun but bitterly cold conditions, with temperatures plunging to 8 degrees below zero and winds sweeping across the Great Plains, I stood alongside other journalists amid a growing crowd of over 100. Their vehicles lined Highway 281, just east of Belcourt, North Dakota, on the reservation side of a green sign with white lettering that read, "Welcome to the Turtle Mountain Reservation."

To keep warm, people moved in and

out of their vehicles well-wishers honked their horns while passing by. The loudest sound, perhaps, came from a propane delivery truck. Others relied on packets of hand warmers that had been distributed to fend off the cold.

After waiting for more than an hour, a crowd of family, friends, and fellow tribal members welcomed home the most famous citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of

Chippewa Indians, Leonard Peltier. The atmosphere along Highway 281

was celebratory. Some of Peltier's relatives waved signs, a few reading "Welcome Home, Grandpa" and "Welcome Home, Cuz." Over 100 signs featuring an iconic image of Peltier and the words "Miigwech, Leonard Peltier" were handed out.

Standing there [Feb. 18], I realized many of his grandchildren had never met their grandfather because Peltier had been incarcerated for 49 years. Convicted of killing two FBI agents during a shootout at the Jumping Bull Ranch in Oglala, S.D. on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Peltier was coming home.

The moment carried historical significance — seeing such an iconic figure return to the reservation where he spent much of his childhood. Having read multiple books about him and written opinion pieces advocating for his release through the years, I now witnessed his long-awaited homecoming that, to be quite frank, many doubted would ever happen.

I observed this moment among his family, friends, and fellow Turtle Mountain tribal members, alongside other journalists.

Another realization emerged: while many AIM leaders have died, Leonard Peltier lives on. I spent time with AIM co-founder

Dennis Banks (Leech Lake Ojibwe) before his passing, covering his 2011 Longest Walk—Reversing Diabetes journey from California to Washington, D.C. during the launch of Native News Online. I also hosted Clyde Bellecourt (White Earth Ojibwe) at a Grand Rapids symposium during my time leading an urban Indian center, and interviewed Russell Means (Oglala Sioux

gone, yet Leonard Peltier remains. He is no longer in federal prison, where he endured years of solitary confinement and lockdowns, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

many around the world-recognize Peltier primarily as an icon. They know his image from posters and bumper stickers that read "Free Leonard Peltier," picturing him with long dark hair and a mustache. But seeing his family lining Highway 281 made him more

This reminded me of something Nick Tilsen, founder and CEO of NDN Collective,

said last December, the day after the White House Tribal Nations Summit. Speaking to a group of tribal leaders at the Indian Gaming Association, he noted that during Peltier's parole hearing last June, the only time Peltier was truly humanized was when his Indian boarding school experience was mentioned.

As the caravan forward, its pace reduced to a crawl, the back windows of a white Jeep Wagoneer were

I saw Tilsen seated on the right in the back seat. Beside him sat Holly Cook Marcarro, NDN Collective's government affairs coordinator. And then, I saw Leonard, sitting

me. In that instant, I saw beyond the icon. I saw Leonard Peltier, the man.

confined—this time to house arrest. I want to than a thin prison-issued one.

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

opinion appears nativenewsonline.net.

## Tribe), one of AIM's most recognized voices. That [Feb. 18], I reflected: They are

I considered how most Americans—and



behind the driver. Holly shouted, "Levi!" Then I heard Leonard echo, "Levi!" The moment humbled

Now 80 years old, he sat with a smile on his face, his fist clenched in triumph. Though no longer behind bars, he remains learn more about the man behind the legend no longer subjected to solitary confinement, finally able to rest on a real mattress rather

Levi "Calm Before the Storm" Rickert nativenewsonline.net.

## **Deb Haaland announces bid to** become New Mexico governor

**Leonard Peltier** 

FROM KUNM

Former Interior Secretary and New Mexico congresswoman Deb Haaland made a long-rumored run for governor official early Tuesday morning, posting a twominute video announcing her intent to be the first Indigenous woman governor of the

Haaland, a Democrat and member of the Laguna Pueblo, said in the video posted on social media Tuesday morning that she would soon begin a listening tour across the

"The problems we face now are bigger than ever, and we must be fierce to solve them," Haaland said. "That's why I am running for governor of the great state of New Mexico. New Mexico is rich in tradition and spirit, rich in natural resources. So why can't our families pay our bills?"

She cited rising costs as major problems facing New Mexicans, along with crime, poverty, homelessness and addiction. She

also touted her successes in Congress and the Interior Department, where she said she helped small businesses, boosted solar power use in the state, plugged old oil wells and partnered with rural communities to protect their water.

Haaland introduced herself in the video as the child of military parents who moved around a lot, and as a single mother with 35 years of sobriety who worked at a bakery and sold homemade salsa before getting into

As the Interior Secretary under former president Joe Biden, she was the first Indigenous cabinet member in United States

The government's role, she said in the video Tuesday morning, is to make success easier for small businesses, lower costs, prevent crime, strengthen schools and make rent and housing affordable. "The solutions are there if we are fierce enough to choose them," she said.

## **New Department of Conservation update on Burmese pythons on Big Cypress Reservation**

BY SERGIO GONZALEZ Wildlife Biologist, Dept. of Conservation **CRAIG VAN DER HEIDEN Director, Dept. of Conservation** 

The story of the Burmese python (Pvthon molurus bivittatus) invasion in South Florida is not a new one. The first documented Burmese python capture in the Everglades was in 1979. Burmese python establishment in the Everglades is believed to have resulted from a combination of multiple intentional pet releases and accidental escapes over several decades. The released individuals, being well adapted to life in a marsh environment began breeding and increasing in numbers. In such a vast wilderness, with few roads crossing it, early detection was nearly impossible until their numbers were large enough to be detected with increasing frequency. Biologists and outdoor enthusiasts also noticed declines in native wildlife populations by the 2000s. Today, small mammals, such as marsh rabbits, opossums, and raccoons are rare in the southern Everglades. In 2013, the Federal Government banned the importation and interstate transport of pythons. Despite this, the species still remained popular in the pet trade and among collectors in Florida, until the State of Florida declared it (and other large snakes) a prohibited species in 2021.

The establishment of the species in Florida has been problematic because of the sheer amount of prey they need to consume to reach their enormous adult size. Adults captured in Florida are typically between 13 and 15 feet long and can weigh over 100 pounds. While we have many species of snakes in Florida, our native wildlife did not evolve with large constrictors and have no natural strategy to avoid being eaten by pythons. Analysis of the gut contents of euthanized pythons has revealed that they consume just about anything they can capture, including rodents, rabbits, raccoons, wading birds, smaller alligators, deer, and even panthers. The larger the snake, the larger the meal.

The python breeding season extends from December to April. Females begin nesting between May and June, laying 50-60 eggs that hatch in about 60 days (July/ August). Over the years their numbers have increased exponentially, and the range of the population has spread throughout the northern Everglades and westward across Big Cypress. Individuals are being captured with increasing frequency in the Fort Myers area, around Lake Okeechobee, and approaching Fort Pierce. Other captures have occurred farther North, but it is difficult to know which individuals are part of an expanding population and which are a result of isolated releases or escapes.

Concerted efforts to combat the spread of Burmese pythons in Florida go back nearly two decades. Early research focused on road and levee surveys, trapping methods, employing detector dogs, and tracking females to remove potential mates during the course of the breeding season. Around 2010, various agencies and partners began



DOC biologists Joe Andreoli, Tommy Kelly and Jon Pinkas work as a team to gradually pull the pythons

recruiting volunteers to search for pythons across south Florida. In 2017, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission launched a "Python Contractor" program, hiring individuals to search and remove exotic snakes. The South Florida Water Management District followed suit, rolling out a similar program a couple of years later. Despite the thousands of pythons removed from roadsides and levees each year, the impact to the population as a whole is still in question. Vast expanses of relatively inaccessible marshlands exist between the frequently surveyed contractor routes.

The presence of pythons was formally documented on adjacent state lands northeast of the Big Cypress Reservation ten years ago. Environmental DNA samples collected on the reservation in 2019 came back positive for python, confirming their presence, and chance encounters with live pythons occur around the Big Cypress community multiple times per year. The Seminole Environmental Protection Office (EPO) created the Department of Conservation (DOC) to focus on documenting and understanding the ecology of the Tribe's natural resources. Within the new department is a Fish and Wildlife Section, which includes two Invasive Species biologists. The team is focused on documenting the presence of invasive species, removing them when encountered, and understanding the impacts invasive species are having on native wildlife on Tribal lands. This includes surveying for native species to determine the status of what's present and to determine what may be missing.

In January, the newly formed team captured its first python on the Big Cypress Reservation. A month later, on February 26, five pythons were captured on the L-28 levee. One snake was caught on its own

(male, weighing 48 pounds), but the other four were found together in what is known as a "breeding ball". During the breeding season, females leave a pheromone trail that attracts nearby males and results in a tangle of snakes as males vie for the female. The increased movement during the breeding season sometimes aids in the detection of this cryptic species and also presents the opportunity to remove reproductive females before they can lay eggs.

As DOC Fish and Wildlife staff pulled up to the breeding ball, the snakes took shelter in a small cave on the side of the levee. The team took turns crawling into the hole with a flashlight to be able to get an initial hold of a snake. Then it took a group effort to wrestle each one out. It took the team four hours to remove four pythons from the cavern. The largest was a 12'10" long female, weighing 79 pounds. The rest of the snakes were males between 5'2" and 10' long and weighing between 13 and 23 pounds (total combine weight 193 lbs. and combined length 46 feet). The gut contents recovered is being examined to determine what they had been eating.

Fish and Wildlife Staff are aware that members of the community encounter and capture pythons from time to time and would like help in getting data from some of these animals. This data will help the team to identify hotspots, potential nesting areas, impacts to native wildlife, and helps to improve removal efforts, overall. At this time, a mobile reporting data sheet has been developed for EPO staff that are in the field and feel comfortable with capture and data collection. If you would like to report a sighting or a captured python to the Invasive Species team, please text or call at 863-441-

### First ERMD director remembered as "passionate leader" who helped protect STOF water rights

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY **Staff Reporter** 

Craig Tepper, the first director of the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD), died Feb. 5.

Tepper, 70, worked at ERMD for nearly 26 years from 1987 to 2013. He served as director of the Water Resources Department later renamed ERMD,

"Craig was very much a force that believed strongly in service to the Tribe," Paul Backhouse, Environmental Protection Office (EPO) senior director, wrote in an email to staff and others. "Craig's history with the Tribe covers some fundamentally important firsts, not the least of which being the Water Rights Compact. I want to also recognize the human that gave much of himself to serve the Tribe.'

A graduate of the University of Florida, Tepper had experience in governmental processes as well as hydrology, life sciences, conservation, agribusiness, regulatory compliance and the National Environmental

"Craig was a passionate leader that

provided direct support in protecting the Tribe's water rights established through the Water Rights Compact between the Seminole Tribe of Florida, South Florida Water Management District and the State of Florida," Whitney Sapienza, Environmental Resources Department director, wrote in an

During his ERMD career, Tepper coordinated with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the tribe to have the authority to administer the EPA's Water Quality Standards Program and subsequently established its water standards within the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations.

Tepper developed an integrated environmental resources process to protect and regulate environmental impacts to tribal lands while establishing a program that identified, responded and assessed releases of hazardous materials within the reservations.

As the programs under Tepper's leadership grew, in 2008 the name of the department was changed from the Water Resources Department to ERMD to reflect the additional responsibilities assigned to



the department including invasive species management and hunting and fishing

"The foundation of many programs within the EPO structure today are attributed to the efforts put forward by Craig during his multi-decade leadership of the ERMD, Sapienza wrote.

### Pitbull to perform at Hard Rock Live and **Hard Rock Beach Club**

FROM PRESS RELEASE

As part of Formula 1's Miami Grand Prix race weekend, Grammy-award winner Pitbull will perform in concert at Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood on May 1 at 8 p.m. For ticket information go to myHRL.

Pitbull will also perform trackside at Hard Rock Beach Club on May 4. The beach club area is situated in part of the Miami

International Autodrome on the Hard Rock Stadium campus in Miami Gardens. For tickets to the beach club area, go to https:// f1miamigp.com/tickets/club/beach-club/.

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## **Q&A** with John Anderson

BY TATUM MITCHELL Staff Reporter

Prior to his appearances and performances at the Indigenous Arts & Music Festival in Big Cypress and the grand opening of the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino, both on Feb. 6, the Tribune had the opportunity to talk with country music artist John Anderson about his career and 1992 hit song, "Seminole Wind." Anderson was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2024.

Quotes and questions have been edited for clarity.

**Tribune:** What do you remember about the writing process of "Seminole Wind"?

Anderson: I was driving down - we just passed over the Suwannee River - and we're heading that a way. As far as writing that song, it was a trip down here to see my grandmother, who was ailing, and she was 96 years old. ... This title, 'Seminole Wind,' came to me. My sister was riding with me, and I remember asking her, 'Do you know if Will McLean wrote a song called 'Seminole Wind'?' Because I thought I must be getting that from somewhere. Will McLean was an old songwriter and singer who wrote songs pretty much specifically about Florida. So, she said, 'No, John, he didn't. But boy, you should.' And I thought, I've got this idea, and I started working on it. I remember thinking to myself, I'd like to write a song that I can be proud of, being from Florida, and maybe all my old buddies can relate to it and would like it too. And I really wasn't looking for the song to be nearly the commercial success that it was. I wrote the song out of a love of Florida and the Seminoles and the people in Florida, and a love of all that.

**Tribune:** In what ways did Seminoles inspire or influence your thoughts with the song?

Anderson: When I was very young, I remember riding through the Big Cypress Reservation, and I was just so intrigued seeing the way that the Seminoles lived at the time – mostly all chickees. I remember it being just beautiful on the ride. The landscape and the lifestyle of the Seminoles has always been a real inspiration to me.

**Tribune:** After the song was released, what kind of response did you receive?



Beverly Bidne

John Anderson shakes hands with Seminole medicine man Bobby Henry at the grand opening of the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino on Feb. 6. Henry appeared in Anderson's 'Seminole Wind' music video in 1992.

Anderson: It was a wonderful response, and I made many friends in the tribe. Among them being [former Seminole Chairman] Jim Billie, who, without him, none of the video would have been possible at all. He and I have become friends. I'm hoping to get to see him down on this trip. I hope he's doing well enough, but maybe we get together and say hello. But also Bobby Henry from over in Tampa. He's the one that brought the dancing group over in the video, which is such a strong part of that video. As well as us riding the air boats. We did several shows for the Seminoles in the 10 years that followed 'Seminole Wind.' And I always remember the wonderful, wonderful experience and great people.

**Tribune:** What else do you remember about making the music video?

Anderson: It was a chance for me to go down and spend four or five days in one of my very favorite parts of the world. I say I made some dear friends during that time. And the video was up for a [Country Music Association] video of the year.

**Tribune:** Do you still have the Seminole patchwork jacket that you wore in the video? Is there a story behind it?

Anderson: I do have it, yes. We were fortunate to get booked at a tribal Christmas party. It was right after 'Swinging,' which was about 10 years before 'Seminole Wind.' We went and we played, and that night, a couple of elderly ladies from the tribe presented me with that jacket and said, 'We want to give you this. And it's part of all the joy that your song brought to the children.' And that was 'Swinging'. So, they gave me this jacket, which I treasured very much. In fact, it's still one of my lifetime treasures. And I kept thinking, I need to do something for the Seminoles. And maybe that's a big part of how 'Seminole Wind' eventually came about.

Those were great times. I was almost in disbelief when they presented me with this jacket. I'll never forget, one of them said, 'Try it out and see if it fits. We're pretty sure it will fit.' I put it on, and it fits perfect. And I wondered, 'How did y'all do that?' And they just smiled. It was very sweet.

**Tribune:** In what ways did "Seminole Wind" help your career?

**Anderson:** I won a pop award for 'Seminole Wind' as a songwriter. Also, the American Lung Association sent me one of their real, prestigious annual rewards. It's



Beverly Bidne

John Anderson performs at the grand opening for Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino.



Beverly Bidne

John Anderson and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. enjoy a conversation at the grand opening.

called the Blue Sky Award, for making a difference in how people perceive ecology and the well being of nature.

There were many, many other musical awards as well. 'Seminole Wind' the video, went number one in the charts, went number one in several music charts, went number two in Billboard, and it ended up selling close to 3 million albums, which was very, very speakable at that time.

**Tribune:** How does that make you feel that it's kind of become an iconic song within the tribal community?

**Anderson:** Only hope that they'll continue and keep it. I'm very honored that the tribe accepted it like they did and helped me with it like they did. The video could have never been possible without the help of James Billie and the tribe.

**Tribune:** What do you like about performing down here?

Anderson: I love performing anywhere. But being down here is one of my very



Via YouTu 'Seminole Wind' video from 1992.

favorite places in the world, and has been since I was a little boy, so I always look

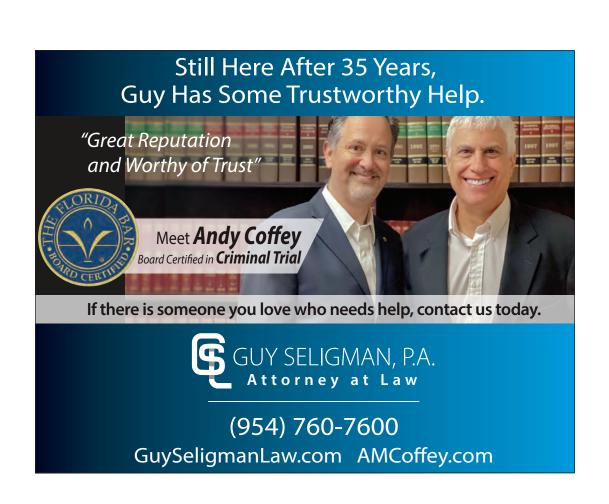
forward to coming down that way.

I want to say how honored and proud we always are to play for the Seminoles. I thank them for all their support and friendship through the years.



Beverly Bidney

John Anderson, far left, enjoys a lighter moment with the Tribal Council at the grand opening.





#### TRIBAL FAIR From page 1A

"My Uncle Terry is known for a hoop dance style that is very smooth and very graceful. Hoop dancers that come from different regions all have different styles. If you watch a lot of dancers from the southwest, they'll dance a little bit faster, a little bit harder. My uncle, you can kind of tell who has learned from my uncle, because they dance with a constant flow. And a lot of people have looked up to my uncle and his style, and he really is one of the legendary hoop dancers at the moment."

Hernandez said his uncle was impactful in keeping hoop dancing alive and sharing it.

"My uncle taught me to focus on the positive things of our culture. There's a lot of things that are frustrating about history. There's a lot of things that we can focus on, that can be hard to talk about. My uncle has always taught us to focus on shining a light on our culture and representing our people in a graceful, beautiful way," Hernandez said.

As a freshman in high school, Hernandez was asked to share his hoop dance with other students. He said the experience performing in front of his entire school gave him a lot more confidence, and that he didn't need to blend in.

"I want others to be able to have that same courage as well. I've learned that it's not about me getting the accolades or having this title and being this person. Most of the fulfillment comes through others telling me how they felt [or] telling me that they've been inspired to dig deeper into their story. Or they saw my TED talk, and then they went and they asked their grandmother some questions and learned a little bit about themselves," Hernandez said. "And that that's where I get the greatest fulfillment, and that is where my mission is. That's my mission, to have an impact on others, to have an impact on specifically the youth, the next

generation, because that's when it was really important for me. ... I want the youth who are going through those moments - these eighth graders, these freshmen – those years where you're finding who you are. And I hope that my story, and now also my short film called 'Courage', I hope that it can have an impact on them and give them some of the confidence that I was able to find."

For updates and to learn more about his short film, 'Courage', see @couragethefilm on Instagram.

Hernandez said, while he was with Cirque du Soleil, he was focused a lot on performing arts. After his time there, he realized he wanted to dig deeper with his purpose and add more activism for Indigenous people.

"I'm very, very honored and very happy to say that I get to share my culture and dance and advocate for my people full time as a full-time artist. And it feels like a dream come true," he said.

One of the challenges of what he does, besides the physical demands, is the narratives people have surround Native American people.

"A lot of people have a certain narrative around Native people. A lot of people see Native Americans as in a stereotypical way," Hernandez said. "They feel like they should look a certain way, they should talk a certain way, they should dress a certain way. ... I think my biggest challenge is that I'm trying to rewrite this narrative for a lot of people and kind of change their vision and their mindset around Indigenous people in the fact that they are not only something of the past, but present, and our songs and our dances and our traditions and our and our ways of living are still alive and they are valuable. There's valuable lessons within them that can be applied to today's modern way of living."



The arena-like room at the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow fills with Natives during the grand entry Jan. 31.



On Feb. 1 at Tribal Fair, the annual Native Reel Cinema Fest's panel discussion featured, from left to right, Eugene Brave Rock, Jhane Myers, Jessica Matten, Martin Sensmeier, Wes Studi and the Seminole Tribe's Justin Gopher, who rode horses as a stuntman in the TV show "Yellowstone."

**Tatum Mitchell** Kyle Doney, left, and Evangelina during the fashion show at Tribal Fair.



Women's fancy shawl dance.



A clothing contest at Tribal Fair.





Cameron Osceola, from The Osceola Brothers, performs at Tribal Fair.





#### **Bobby Frank recalls being part** of 'The Last of the Mohicans'

**BY CALVIN TIGER** Staff Reporter

**HOLLYWOOD** — The announcement that "The Last of the Mohicans" would be shown at the Native Reel Cinema Festival in Hollywood brought back memories for Bobby Frank.

Frank, a tribal member from Hollywood, was among a handful of Seminoles who appeared in the movie, which was released in 1992 and stars Daniel Day-Lewis when the three-time Academy Award winner for Best Actor was in his early 30s.

The showing on Feb. 1 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood included an appearance by Wes Studi, whose role as Magua in the film was among the Cherokee actor's first few films in a career that has spanned more than 80 movies and TV shows and includes an Honorary Academy Award.

Frank, who was unable to attend the showing, appeared in "The Last of the Mohicans" as an extra, portraying a member of the Huron Tribe. Other Seminoles who also appeared as extras include Luke Tiger, Roger Tucker, Alex Tucker and Marl Osceola. Most of Frank's scenes from the

the Mohicans," circa early 1990s.

movie took place in various parts of North

We caught the bus. We went to North Carolina, and we ran into a whole bunch of

other Natives from out west," Frank said. Frank recalled the different aspects of training for the movie, including how to shoot and reload a musket rifle.

We did a lot of training on site. We had to learn how to run, load, and shoot the muskets. We had to be efficient," he said.

One of Frank's vivid memories from working on the movie was called "camera time," which meant extras who wanted to be in the background of a specific scene would have to spend most of the day outdoors.

"The Last of the Mohicans" was also the first film role for Russell Means (Oglala Lakota), who stars as Chingachgook. Means went on to appear in about 30 films and several TV shows in a career that also included being an artist, writer, and a wellknown activist for Native American rights.

The movie won several awards, including an Academy Award for Best Sound. It is available on several outlets, including AppleTV, Amazon Prime, Google Play and Tubi.







From left to right, Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Amy Johns and James E. Billie testify in February during the court trial in Fort Lauderdale involving the Seminole



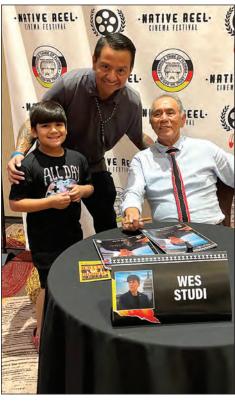
Plaintiffs Lewis Gopher Jr., far right, Nancy Jimmie, second from right, and Quentin Tommie, center, stand at the plaintiffs table during a break on Feb. 12.

After hair and outfitting on the set, Bobby Frank poses for a photo during the making of "The Last of

## **Native Reel Cinema Fest** hosts meet and greet



Patrick Doctor, center, enjoys being in the company of, from left to right, Wes Studi, Jhane Myers Martin Sensmeier, Jessica Matten and Eugene Brave Rock during the Native Reel Cinema Fest's meet and greet Feb. 1. The Cinema Fest is held during the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.



Kevin Johnson

Edward Aguilar and his son, Izayah, meet actor Lenora Roberts meets actor Eugene Brave Rock. Wes Studi at the meet and greet.



## STOF minors' trust trial against Wells **Fargo starts in Fort Lauderdale**

BY KEVIN JOHNSON Senior Editor

FORT LAUDERDALE — Seminole patchwork filled six rows of benches on one side of a courtroom on the 15th floor of the central courthouse Feb. 12 as a trial involving the Seminole Tribe of Florida minors' trust started its first week.

In a show of unity, about 30 tribal

members - including three members of the Tribal Council – attended in support of the plaintiffs' suit against Wells Fargo Bank and others in the 17th Judicial Circuit in Fort Lauderdale. Represented by law firm Conrad Scherer, the named plaintiffs are Providence First Trust Company, the current manager of the Seminole minors' trust; tribal members Lewis Gopher Jr. and Quentin Tommie; and Nancy Jimmie, a mother of tribal children.

In 2005, the tribe entered into an agreement with Wachovia Bank (Wells Fargo purchased Wachovia in 2008) to manage the minors' trust as the sole investment authority. In its opening statements, the lawyers for the plaintiffs said the bank charged unauthorized and mishandled fees

investments for more than 10 years. The lawyers said the bank breached its fiduciary duties to the beneficiaries, paid itself more than \$7.1 million in unauthorized fees, and mismanaged the trust investment resulting in upwards of \$800 million in damages.

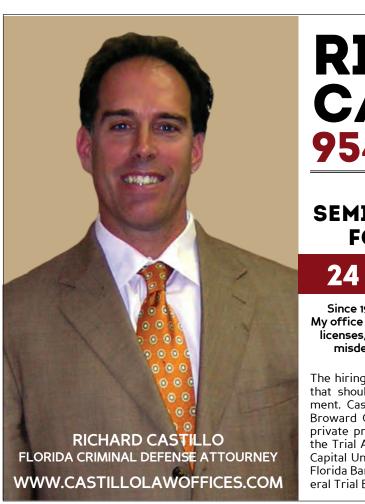
In the first few weeks of the trial, the 10-person jury heard testimony from current or former tribal leaders including James E. Billie, Andrew J. Bowers Jr. and Amy Johns as well as plaintiffs and former STOF CFO

Jim Raker. Attendance by tribal members has varied from a few on some days to more than two dozen on other days. All sit on the plaintiffs side of the room with STOF General Counsel Jim Shore in the first row.

The trial was expected to last about four to six weeks.



Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola and STOF General Counsel Jim Shore (front row) and President Holly Tiger (second row) watch opening arguments Feb. 12 in a Fort Lauderdale court room.



## **RICHARD CASTILLO** 954.522.3500

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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.

#### BRIGHTON BAY From page 1A

"Marty, thanks to you and your family and the legacy your father has left," Chairman Osceola said. "This wouldn't be here if Josiah didn't build that bingo hall. Without this, we aren't able to feed, educate and provide for our children and give them a strong future. Be mindful when you walk inside that our children are the beneficiaries of this. Get ready Brighton, this place is about to explode.'

President Holly Tiger was raised in Brighton and worked at the original red barn bingo hall and casino.

"This spot was always going to be held for future gaming opportunities," President Tiger said. "Now it's your turn Brighton."

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, who previously served on the Board, said he brought up building a hotel in Brighton in about 2011. He was elected to Tribal Council in 2017, and made sure it got done.

"We were talking about our projects around the world, and I said why don't we take care of our own backyard?" Councilman Howard said. "I feel proud to be a part of this. At the end of the day, folks around us will appreciate what we have done. But it took the vision other leaders – Howard Tommie, James Billie and Marcellus Osceola, who works relentlessly for this tribe 24/7, and then some.'

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola said he enjoys the slower pace of Brighton.

"Brighton is my second home; I love it out here," he said. "You guys deserve this. When you put Larry into this office, he really pushed. We got it done and here we are today in this beautiful facility. This is our livelihood; we are building for our future and creating jobs for the surrounding communities. This place would not be here if not for Marty Johns. I remember his dad, he was a rough cut. Marty, I bet he's looking down on this today and couldn't be more proud of you."

Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas thanked everyone who has been part of the process of bringing the casino to fruition.

"The tribe is making a better future for all tribal members," she said. "I'm very thankful for what you have given me and everyone else.'

CEO of Seminole Gaming and Chairman of Hard Rock International Jim Allen thanked Tribal Council for supporting him through his 24 years working for the

"This is an emotional and beautiful day," Allen said. "The building is a tribute to the tribe and its culture. Hundreds of people were on this job site and we made a commitment to get this done before Field Day. Everyone came together, even with the

Finally, Marty Johns had his moment to

speak. He thanked Tribal Council for their support and mentioned Allen's meticulous attention to detail and thanked him.

"You have entrusted me and said this is my baby, you do it," Johns said. "I wanted to bring our culture out. To tribal members and my family, we are giving this to you. The first high-stakes bingo hall was at the Classic Casino in Hollywood. The little red barn was the second one. My grandmother was there every night."

After the ribbon was cut, the doors were opened and everyone streamed inside. At a luncheon for tribal members, country music star John Anderson performed. He introduced his final song, "Seminole Wind," by stating his love for the Seminole people. He has had a relationship with the tribe for 33 years and said the video for the song would not have happened without the help of Bobby Henry.

Later that evening, legendary rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd performed.

#### Seminole Brighton Bay **Hotel & Casino**

The Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino replaces the Seminole Casino Brighton a few miles away.

The property has a 38,000-square foot casino, a 24-hour restaurant, steak house, fastservice carry-out café and a pizza kitchen. There is also an event space for banquets and performances and a bowling alley. The hotel is a first for the Brighton Reservation. The property has become one of the Lake Okeechobee area's largest employers with more than 500 team members.

The four-story, 72,000-square foot hotel has 100 guest rooms, including three suites, a fitness center and a swimming pool in the shape of the tribe's Man-on-Horse patchwork design. The pool area includes a bar and entertainment stage.

The event space can hold 400 seats for banquets or bingo games and 900 seats as a performance hall.

The 10-lane, 7,044-square foot bowling alley is a first for any Seminole casino.

Several dining options are available. Josiah Steakhouse is a classic American steakhouse featuring steaks cooked on a wood fire grill. The atmosphere is upscale and offers wines, beer, spirits and handcrafted cocktails.

EE-TO-LEE-KE Grill is an American diner with fresh seasonal ingredients. The menu features all-day breakfast, skillets, salads, burgers, sandwiches and classic Diner entrees.

Marketplace is a quick service restaurant space that offers pizza, sweet snacks and coffee. The casual sit-down or grab-and-go restaurant also has sandwiches and freshly made pastries and chocolates.

Center Bar is a high energy atmosphere and entertainment hub on the casino floor.



From left to right, Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino General Manager Marty Johns, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, S.R. Tommie and Mitchell Cypress enjoy the the grand opening Feb. 6 on the Brighton Reservation.



The grand opening draws a big turnout.



**Beverly Bidne** 

A 10-lane bowling alley is part of the new property.

the audience.



From left to right, the Honor Guard's Paul Downing, Curtis Motlow, Gary MacInturff and Sallie Josh





Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, left, and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard walk through the entrance shortly after cutting the ribbon.



## **Brighton Bay emphasizes Seminole culture**

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY AND CALVIN TIGER **Staff Reporters** 

**BRIGHTON** — The Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino acknowledges its heritage even before guests enter the building. Seminole culture's iconography is integrated into the design of the structure itself with patchwork designs on the exterior walls, over the front door and on the overhead chandeliers in the porte-cochere.

Seminole artwork and photography, which chronicles the history and culture of the tribe, are displayed throughout the property. Paintings by Jimmy Osceola and Noah Billie as well as prints of old Seminole postcards grace the walls. Patchwork designs are integrated into the décor throughout, including on the seats in the Center Bar and on many walls in the casino. Artifacts including sweetgrass baskets and patchwork clothing are safeguarded in niches and

behind glass for guests to admire.

The swimming pool is constructed in the shape of Man-on-Horse patchwork and chickees line the pool deck.

Culture is what general manager Marty Johns had in mind for the property. This is the third version of Brighton's casino Johns has managed. The first was at a little red barn

started by his father Josiah in 1980 and the second was a few miles down the road from the new property.

"It's about the culture, keeping that alive," Johns said.

During a speech before the ribbon cutting, Johns recalled going to Tribal Council meetings over and over to present his ideas for expanding the casino. He said one day Chairman James Billie mentioned his persistence. Johns thanked Billie for his support. Billie, who was seated in the audience, smiled and nodded.

After the doors opened to the public, members of the Brighton community said they were pleased with the new property.

"This is a step in the evolution of our reservation," said Wendy Riley. "We aren't that small reservation back in the woods anymore. We said here we are, come and see

"It will bring a lot more to Brighton," said Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge. "It will expand our culture to visitors and open their eyes to the Seminole people. And now we have a lot more food options here.'

"It's a place where everyone can enjoy themselves," said former Chairman and President Mitchell Cypress. "The hotel will help a lot; it's Brighton's gold mine."



The hotel pool is designed in the shape of Seminole Man-on-Horse patchwork. Chickee huts, another staple of Seminole culture, provide shaded areas.



A display in the casino features Seminole baskets used to make the fine corn grain for sofkee, and men's patchwork

A painting by renowned Seminole artist Noah Billie appears to stand guard over the wine and diners in the Josiah



**Beverly Bidney** 

A painting by prolific Seminole artist Jimmy Osceola graces the wall in the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino.



A display of tribal patchwork and sculptures is located in the casino near the entrance to



Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall, a former Miss Florida Seminole, waves to the audience during the parade of former princesses.



Former Brighton Miss Seminole Clarissa Randolph Urbina leads the parade of former Seminole princesses during the grand opening ceremony.



A group of women who served as Miss Florida Seminole gather together after the ribbon cutting. The first princess, Connie Gowen, is in the center of the front row. The current princesses, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola and Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, are wearing the crowns.

## **Genus Crenshaw's Super 8** tapes and the importance of personal histories

BY CONOR ANDRICH Registrar

**BIG CYPRESS** — Genus and Carolyn Crenshaw requested an assignment as missionaries to Florida's Indigenous population from the Florida Baptists' Home Mission Board in 1951 and spent the next five decades stewarding Baptist churches on the Hollywood, Brighton, and Big Cypress reservations, along the Tamiami Trail, and across Florida. They involved themselves in the community and raised a family. During that time, Reverend Crenshaw also made home movies.

Over the past year, the Crenshaws' four daughters, Carol, Martha, Mary, and Beth,

have donated dozens of reels of Super 8 film taken by their father to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. They are an incredible time capsule of life in the Seminole community in the 1960s and early 1970s and are significant for the personal touch they give to history. For those who were there, they may breathe new life into fond memories. For those of us who weren't, it can often be difficult, using only historical records, to imagine what it might have been like to experience a given period of time. The footage in these reels puts us right at the heart of it all, as if we were really standing there watching it unfold.

For one, they give us an idea of what it would have been like to be on the ground at major events of the time. You can see



Women and children outside what is believed to be an old schoolhouse on Big Cypress

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people's reactions, sense their emotional states, and gauge the general mood. These personal elements - laughter at a sad time, say, or fanfare at a rodeo - which may not have been noted in official records or reporting of the event, can give us essential historical context even if they seem inconsequential. It is important to consider not only the facts but also how people respond to events and the emotions that they bring about in order to understand their full significance. Events featured in the tapes include Christmas 1966 on Big Cypress, the 1970 Brighton Family Pow Wow, the 1971 Trail Mission Rodeo, and Easter 1972 in Hollywood.

The footage also gives us a more realistic idea of people's daily lives and routines - children wrestling in the grass, climbing trees, and catching snakes, women doing their hair and preparing food in cooking chickees, new construction and older dwellings, school days and church on Sunday. These intimate moments often slip through cracks in the historical record, especially when looking back on an era most widely documented through postcards and other products of tourist camps or the work of non-Tribal visiting photographers and researchers. They are just as important to our understanding of a given historical period as names, dates, and places.

Personal histories like those contained in the Crenshaw reels and other home movies, or, similarly, personal photographs and even oral histories are an integral part of a truly comprehensive and representative historical record. The little things have great importance and are always welcomed by the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

The Crenshaw Super 8 reels are digitized and available to be viewed upon



An unidentified woman enjoying herself during an after-church communal meal on Big Cypress

request. Also available, are recordings of a few church services held by native pastors like Wonder Johns and featuring hymns in the Creek and Miccosukee languages, as well as several episodes of Reverend Crenshaw's Indian Baptist Hour radio show

from 1971. Please contact the Museum's Registrar Conor Andrich at conorandrich@ semtribe.com or 863-902-1113 ext. 12210 for more information.

## Seminole artists shine in the 'Spotlight'

**BY CALVIN TIGER Staff Reporter** 

**HOLLYWOOD** — The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum presented a Seminole Artist Spotlight at Okalee Village on Jan. 29 for a celebration of Seminole artists Erica Deitz, Gordon "Ollie" Wareham and Wilson

The artists appeared on a panel moderated by art curator Tara Chadwick. The artists discussed their inspirations and unique artistic styles.

The artist celebration was held in collaboration with Nova Southeastern University, which in turn brought members of the NSU Museum team and 30 dignitaries to attend the event. In December 2024, NSII. held its own Art Basel displaying Indigenous artwork and hosted members from the Ahtahthiki Museum.

"I was influenced by my grandmother, and she was a seamstress. She made dolls, sweet grass baskets, and that's what they did to use that as a form of income," Erica Deitz

Deitz spoke about the positive impacts of the artist celebration and how it keeps traditions moving forward while also bringing in new artistic ideas for displaying Indigenous artwork.

Wareham, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum director, played his flute during the panel discussion which was well received by the audience. Wareham talked about his origins in photography and artwork. He mentioned working together with other Seminole artists such as Bowers. Their collaborative artwork was on display during the artist spotlight.

See SPOTLIGHT on page 9A



From left to right, Seminole artists Gordon Wareham, Erica Deitz and Wilson Bowers are joined by art curator and moderator Tara Chadwick.

#### March 2025

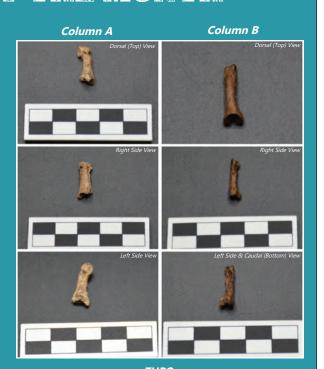
#### ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Some think of raccoons (Procyon lotor) as cute critters, while others disdain them as pests. Regardless of personal opinion, these creatures are among the most widespread mammals in the U.S. throughout the country, from cities to wetlands (National Wildlife Federation). Therefore, it is unsurprising that raccoon remains have wound up within our collection. While teeth and jaw bones are the most frequently recovered raccoon bones, we have also found some phalanges, or finger bones.

Being such small bones, phalanges are quite uncommon for us to find. What makes this month's artifact even rarer is its condition, which you can observe by looking at the photos in Column A to the right. Next to these in Column B are photos of another raccoon phalanx from our collection. Looking at the two phalanges side by side, you might notice differences in shape between them.



Skedaddle Humane Wildlife Control



**THPO** 

The phalanx in Column A is warped and curves to the side, rather than pointing straight like it is supposed to. The phalanx in Column B shows what it should look like when it is pointing straight. The phalanx in Column A also has a thicker, more bulbous head. Compare it to the phalanx in Column B, which has a more slender head. The deformities in phalanx A were caused by a fracture that occurred along the shaft of the phalanx when the raccoon was alive, and pressure on this fractured bone resulted in it healing improperly.



McDaniel D. J., Rehman U. H. (2023). Phalanx Fractures of the Hand. StatPearls Publishing. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from https://

Raccoon (Wildlife Guide). National Wildlife Federation. Retrieved February 5, 2025 from https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide,



## **SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - MARCH 2025**

## SEMINOLE WAR: INVASION

While there can be debate over what is the start of the Seminole War, when the United States invaded Florida in March of 1818 the war was undeniable. The army was made up of regular military and local civilian militias under the command of Andrew Jackson, as well as American-allied Lower Creek led by William McIntosh. Ostensibly Jackson had been given authority to "pacify" the Seminole threat, but not to enter Spanish-claimed

The invaders first targeted prosperous Seminole towns in the Florida panhandle. The towns of Anhaika, also known as Tallahassee, and Miccosukee Town were home to thousands, and the center of large farm and ranching communities. Both were sacked and razed to the ground by the American forces. The army then captured San Marcos de Apalache (Saint Marks), a Spanish Fort, before moving to occupy Pensacola. From there, they proceeded to the Suwanee River, leading to large battles against the residents of Bowleg's Town and Nero's Town, one of the largest free African settlements in Florida.

How much of Jackson's invasion was sanctioned by Washington is unclear. Jackson claimed he had been given the authority, but the attacks on Spanish settlements and his executions of British citizens in Florida surprised Washington D.C. and created multiple international incidents. Jackson was accused of starting a war for his own profit, both in land and recognition, charges that followed him into his presidential campaign.

For the people of Florida, Indigenous, free African, and Spanish, the invasion was the end of an era. The Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819 would give possession of the territory to the United States of America. What had been prosperous Seminole land was claimed by officers in the American army and other connected Americans as the new colonization of Florida began.



An illustration of the capture of Hillis Hadjo, artist unknown, also know as The Prophet. He was captured by American forces at San Marco, shortly after he returned from a diplomatic mission to England to try and secure their aid against the USA. He had been tricked onto an American ship falsely flying the British flag. He was hung without trial soon after



Part of an illustration depicting Army Soldiers in combat with Seminole in the first part of the Seminole War, drawn in 1848. Illustration from John Frost's "Life

of Jackson." Courtesy Florida State Library and Archives.

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





## ···· Health

#### 'Hydrate Your Hustle' campaign promotes healthy hydration among Native American youth

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation, founded by 4-time PGA Tour winner Notah Begay (Navajo), will launch the "Hydrate Your Hustle" campaign.

With the growing awareness of the health risks associated with sugar sweetened beverages, the campaign offers a proactive, youth-centered program designed to empower Native youth to make healthier drink choices. By reaching youth at a time when habits are forming, this initiative can help them make better decisions about what they drink, setting them up for better health in the long run. The campaign will provide online resources, education and exclusive promotional items to help motivate youth to fuel their unique hustles by drinking water.

"Hydrate Your Hustle" builds on years of dedicated work focused on promoting healthy hydration and combating the impact of sugar sweetened beverages within Native communities. Rooted in the cultural value

of water as a life source, the campaign encourages youth to stay hydrated with water, infused waters and traditional natural teas. This initiative extends our commitment to uplifting Native communities, promoting positive health outcomes and ensuring future generations are equipped to stay healthy and strong in their daily hustles.

The foundation invites youth and families to take the "Hydrate Your Hustle Pledge." By committing to choose water as their primary drink, participants can contribute to a healthier community. Native youth are encouraged to share their stories about why they are choosing water, highlighting personal motivations and cultural connections that inspire them.

Go to https://www.nb3foundation.org/ hydrateyourhustle/ to take the pledge, which includes ways to share stories, spread the word and receive incentives.

A livestream event will be held March

#### NIHB testifies on tribal health priorities before Senate committee

FROM NATIONAL INDIAN HEALTH BOARD

On Feb. 12, William "Chief Bill" Smith (Valdez Native Tribe), Board Chairman of the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs during the "Native Communities' Priorities for the 119th Congress" oversight hearing. The hearing provided a critical platform to advocate for the health needs of American Indian and Alaska Native communities and reinforce the federal government's trust responsibility for Indian health.

In his testimony, Smith emphasized urgent needs for:

- Mandatory, Full Funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS): Predictable, long-term funding is essential to address chronic underfunding and ensure reliable

 Investments Healthcare Infrastructure: Many Tribal health facilities are outdated or insufficient to meet growing community needs. Increased infrastructure investments will improve access and quality

- Behavioral Health Resources: The demand for mental health and substance use services continues to grow. Expanding culturally appropriate behavioral health programs is critical to supporting Tribal

- Workforce Development Initiatives: Tribes need resources to recruit, train, and retain healthcare professionals to serve in Tribal health systems.

Public Health Infrastructure: Strengthening public health capacity ensures Tribal communities are prepared to respond

Smith also underscored the importance of upholding tribal sovereignty and engaging tribes as equal partners in health policy development.

"Indian health is not a discretionary program," he said. "It is a trust obligation. We need Congress to act with urgency to close the persistent health disparities that have long affected our people."

### Panthers fatally struck by vehicles near BC, Immokalee reservations

Since the first of the year, two endangered Florida panthers have been killed by vehicles on roads near the Immokalee and Big Cypress reservations.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation's Panther Pulse database, a male panther, who FWC believes was less than two years old, was killed by a vehicle on Immokalee Road about two miles east of Oil Well Grade Road in Immokalee on Jan. 10.

The database also lists a 10-year-old female that was fatally hit by a vehicle on Josie Billie Highway (County Road 833) near McDaniels Ranch Road, just a few

Bowers also spoke about his beginnings

SPOTLIGHT

From page 8A

miles north of the Big Cypress Reservation, on Feb. 24.

Florida panthers have been listed on the Endangered Species Act since 1967. There are estimated to be only 120 to 230 of the animals left in the state. Panthers normally live in remote, undeveloped areas but with the number of panthers and people in Florida growing, the chance of an encounter becomes more common.

Vehicle strikes are the leading cause of panther deaths at 59% of all fatalities. The number of panthers killed on rural roads have increased since 2000, when the numbers went from fewer than four per year to between six and 34 annually.

in art and what drew his inspiration into his

artistic creativity. Some of Bowers' artwork

consists of a graffiti style while embodying

Seminole colors and themes.

## **Krystle Bowers strives to** educate tribal members about climate resiliency

BY TATUM MITCHELL **Staff Reporter** 

the Climate Resiliency Department is working on a climate action plan, among other things, there are actions at the community level that can positively contribute to the environment.

"I hope we're able to educate a lot more tribal members on how to be more sustainable and honestly, to break some of those long held beliefs shaped by propaganda and ads honestly, get them to eat healthier, grow your own food like you have full control a little bit. You're deciding what you're growing, and you can grow a lot of foods that aren't in the grocery store," climate resiliency policy coordinator Krystle Bowers said.

Aside from the work the climate resiliency department is doing on the Climate Action Plan, Bowers has some insight on actions people can take to combat climate change.

Bowers explained that there can be some confusion differentiating between climate and weather. She said she uses a graph from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that shows the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere and raises the global temperature, contributing to climate change. According to an article from the NOAA, atmospheric carbon dioxide has increased by 50% since the industrial revolution.

Her position currently includes a lot of research and outreach regarding climate action plans and climate threats, Bowers

"Talking to other people, educating and trying to get people to understand the importance of preparing for climate change. And I feel like even in the environmental department, it's kind of hard to talk to people about these huge changes that we have to make as human beings. The scale of what we need to do differently is too big for people to understand, but it's huge. We have to make huge changes on what we do and what we eat and how we live, pretty much," Bowers said.

Bowers said everything, from sea levels to chocolate and coffee beans, is impacted by climate change. Native communities have been systemically put into lands that have poor soil and other factors that cause climate change to disproportionately affect them, she said, especially in South Florida with rising sea levels and saltwater intrusion.

"There's going to be a larger climate impact for most tribes, especially here in South Florida all of us were pushed down here and excluded from our ancestral range, which includes like seven or eight states," she said. "... I think most people want to live with each other, right? ... I don't want to leave Hollywood, but I know that's going to be what is going to happen someday. It may not be in the next 10 years, but I think it's definitely going to be in my lifetime where it's just really they have to change the way I expect to live in Florida, or have to leave."

Solutions that climate scientists suggest not only using renewable energy, but using less energy, Bowers said. This includes building cities differently, transitioning to mixed-use homes, and creating more walkable and bikeable areas.

On an individual level, diet changes, reducing plastic use and growing your own food is helpful for the environment. In addition, voting for elected officials who advocate for and support climate solutions is important, she said.

Reducing meat-based meals to twice a week is more sustainable for the planet and one of the most impactful actions a person can take, Bowers said. Animal agriculture is one of the leading causes of deforestation

#### CONFERENCE From page 1A

Their presentation made points of the importance for integrating Indigenous values into climate strategies and actions and viewing ecological resources as

and causes greenhouse gas emissions.

"If we do everything else we need to do, and we don't change the way we eat, we'll still be headed towards climate catastrophe. Animal agriculture is a leading cause of deforestation, especially cattle production in the Amazon. It's led to a lot of Native tribes there to losing their land and their lives protecting their land from cattle encroachment and soy farms," Bowers said.

Another helpful action is growing food at home and planting more trees, Bowers said. Trees are a source of shade to cool down areas since temperatures are rising. To get started with a garden at home, Bowers suggests going to Tree Amigos in Davie, a company that practices organic gardening.

'And they only sell plants that can be grown in Florida at the time that you're trying to buy it, and they'll help you figure out how much you need for beds," she said. "And they have beds there if you need some. And I would suggest growing in a bed, because, especially if you live in Hollywood, you're not sure about the soil. BC and Brighton, you should be able to grow in ground and be a little bit safer. But I would suggest getting your soil tested before growing in the ground, because you don't know what's in the soil."

Bowers said gardening at home organically is a lot better for the environment and helps give gardeners an appreciation for plants and nature. She hopes the community can start growing more of their traditional

"You're building up the soil, so it'll be healthier for future plants that you're going to grow. And while it may never be cheaper than just going to the store and buying it, you'll know exactly what's in your fruits and veggies. And, honestly, you're helping the environment just by having foods in your garden and in your yard and area to provide for the bees and the pollinators," Bowers

Constructing actual bike lanes – not just a painted section on the road – promotes safety of pedestrians and bikers and could encourage more people to use those modes of transportation, Bowers said.

With creating more walkable and bikeable cities, it not only is better for the environment, Bowers said, but it gives more freedom to people who may not be able to

"A lot of these solutions are for climate solutions, but they also touch upon diversity solutions and equity in a community."

Bowers said it can be challenging to get people to understand what aspects of life need to change to combat climate change.

"All these changes are going to be huge. It's a huge lifestyle shift from what we are used to, and sometimes it can be overwhelming knowing how much we need to change. But I mean progress happens every year, every day, and hopefully we can go from a city or a tribe that's less dependent on fossil fuels and carbon dioxide."

Though being in the climate and environmental line of work can be disheartening, "you gotta keep trying," Bowers said.

"Each of our generations have lived through times of great change, and now climate science is telling us what our grandparents and great grandparents told us: we must go back to traditional ways of eating, living, and caring for the environment,' Bowers said via email. "Our traditional corn was the foundation of our diets. We lived in walkable communities that valued people over cars. And above all, our people were part of the environment and ensured our native plants and animals had room near our camps. While we can't get back to that exactly, we can make progress toward that

relationships.

The main things the department wants to work on with the climate action plan includes food sovereignty, building codes, safe communities, solar energy and building codes. A strategy of building to conserve energy is to ensure they are well insulated to preserve air conditioning, Bowers said.

#### **Seminole Brighton Bay announces** trio of hires

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON -The new Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino announced three personnel moves in February.

Aaron Mollura

has been named director of Marketing Promotions. Mollura started his casino career in 2004 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa in the Players Club. After a stint as Player Development manager, transferred the former Hard Rocksino Rock Northfield, Ohio, where he was the director of Marketing. He

in Ohio. A n d r e w Poliquin has been named director of Food and Beverage. Poliquin will oversee the resort's diverse dining experiences, including the EE-TO-LEET-KE GRILL,

helped make it the

number one property



**Aaron Mollura** 





**Eduardo Rodrigues** 

Josiah Steakhouse, Constant Grind and Slice. His career includes roles as Chef de Cuisine at the Renaissance Vinoy and as part of the early growth team for Bonefish Grill.

Poliquin continued to refine his craft in leadership roles, including executive chef and Beverage manager at the Westin Tampa Harbor and executive sous chef at Loews Don CeSar. He later joined the Marriott Crabtree Valley in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he enhanced the property's contemporary Southern restaurant, Braise, by incorporating fresh, local, and seasonal flavors.

Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino also named Eduardo Rodrigues as executive chef. Rodrigues will be involved with the resort's dining venues, including EE-TO-LEET-KE GRILL, Josiah Steakhouse, Constant Grind and Slice.

Rodrigues, who moved at an early age from North Carolina to Florida, has an extensive background leading upscale resorts, iconic hotels, and private clubs in South Florida. He has mastered various cuisines including Portuguese, Italian, French, Spanish, American Southern, Caribbean, and Latin American.

With 18 years of experience, Rodrigues was most recently at the Sheraton Miami Airport Hotel & Meeting Center. Additionally, he worked at the Islamorada Resort Collection in the Keys, where he led Islamorada's famous Tiki Bar and the Ciao Hound Italian Bistro. He also worked with the raw bar restaurant and catering department within the resort.

#### **Native conferences to be** held at California resort

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Four Native conferences will be held June 10-11 at Pechanga Resort Casino in Temecula, California. The purchase of a ticket for one conference allows the attendee access to all four conferences.

The conferences are: 18th annual Native American Economic Development Conference

Cannabis and Hemp Conference

• 15th annual Native American Healthcare Conference 10th annual Native American

Conference

Tribal Emergency Management

For more information go to nativenationevents.org.



Above, Wilson Bowers stands in front of his art. At right, Gordon Wareham plays the traditional flute.





# SEMINOLE SCENES \*



SMILES AND WAVES: Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, above, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola, below, wave to the audience during princess introductions that were part of the grand opening ceremony at Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino on Feb. 6.





STUDENT EXCELLENCE: Moore Haven High School student Tim Urbina was recogized by the school in a Facebook post on Feb. 6. The post explained Urbina earned a positive office referral for demonstrating responsibility. The post included a quote from Ms. Aragus: "Timothy has been doing an excellent job in class. His effort to take notes, pay close attention, and actively participate is impressive. These habits showcase his dedication to learning and set a positive example for his peers. Keep up the great



**Courtesy photo** 



CONCERT NIGHT ON THE REZ: A view from a drone shows spectators watching a concert at the Brighton Field Day on Feb. 15. Country music's Brantley



GROOVY GALS: These modern day "hippies" are actually members of the Immokalee Education Department who turned out for the tribalwide Fun Day on Jan. 31 in their finest 1960s-style garb and granny glasses. Together they enjoyed lunch, without the 60s-style brownies for dessert. From left to right are



ANTHEM ATTENTION: The Okeechobee High School softball team, which includes eight Seminoles, lines up for the playing of the National Anthem before its game against Centennial High School on Feb.



Kevin Johnson CHARITY AUCTION: This authentic handmade shirt was among several items available in a charity auction at the sixth annual Chairman of the Greens Charity Golf Tournament on Jan. 31 at Jacaranda Golf Club in Plantation. The shirt was

ARTS AND CRAFTS: Stickball sticks were among the award winners in the arts and crafts portion of donated by Jimmy Wayne Holdiness. the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow in Hollywood.

## **NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS**

#### Sault Tribe leaders say they won't pay ransom after cyber attack, casinos reopen in stage

Leaders with the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians are explaining the next steps after a cyber attack.

Nearly three weeks ago, a ransomware attack disrupted government offices, health clinics, casinos and other businesses throughout the Upper Peninsula.

A week after the attack, the tribal community was still running on limited services as leaders worked with cyber security experts.

[On Feb. 28], Tribe Chairman Austin Lowes issued a statement on the next steps of the investigation.

The statement was posted to the Tribe's

Facebook page:

"As you know, cyber criminals have tried to extort a ransom for our Tribe's data since the Feb. 9 cyberattack. Since that time, leadership worked with law enforcement groups, external cyber experts and others to evaluate whether or not to pay that ransom.

After much deliberation, we have determined there is no point in paying their ransom demand. We made this decision based on two key reasons:

First, our internal IT team worked closely with external cyber experts to restore our systems and recover virtually all of our

Second, there was no guarantee we would have received what was promised. We could have paid their ransom and still had our data shared on the dark web."

The Facebook post goes on to explain the impact the stolen information may have on the community and support being offered.

"We've begun the process of reviewing that stolen information so we can reach out to those who have been impacted and provide free credit monitoring services.

This review will take time, though, since our team must manually review hundreds of thousands of documents to determine what information may have been stolen and who that information belongs to.

If we find that your information was compromised, you will receive a letter from the Tribe with how to set up the free credit monitoring service.

However, ENCOURAGE you not to wait and follow the steps posted in the comments to protect yourself now.'

The casinos in the Upper Peninsula reopened in stages.

- WPBN/WGTU (Michigan)

#### Report: Poarch Creek Indians' economic impact in Alabama surpasses \$4 billion

A recent study from the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, also called the Poarch Creek Indians (PCI), shows the tribe generated more than \$4 billion in economic impact across Alabama in 2023.

As one of the state's top employers, PCI has created over 7,400 Alabama jobs in industries such as tourism, technology and manufacturing, contributing to a stronger and more resilient state economy.

Across PCI's U.S. and Caribbean operations, the tribe employs more than 21,000 individuals through more than 40 companies. As a result if these reinvestments, the Tribe pays more than \$1 billion in salaries, compensation, and other personal income, directly impacting families and communities where their businesses are

According to a press release from PCI, the tribe is also a large contributor to the state of Alabama's tax base. PCI has contributed more than \$340 million in Alabama state taxes and an additional \$56 million to Alabama counties, ensuring much-needed funding for public services, infrastructure, and local programs.

In addition to its economic impact on the state of Alabama, PCI prioritizes charitable giving and community support as a key aspect of its mission. Since 2021, PCI has donated more than \$37 million to charitable organizations, educational programs, and community development projects across

In 2024 alone, the Tribe made significant contributions to organizations such as the Birmingham Zoo, Magic Moments, the Alabama Make-A-Wish Foundation, Madison County Senior Center, Alabama PALS Coastal Cleanup and the Dumas Wesley Community Center.

Most recently, PCI spearheaded a statewide supply drive to support disaster relief efforts following Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

"To watch the transformation of our community and see it grow is really humbling," said Stephanie Bryan, Tribal Chair & CEO of the Poarch Creek Indians. "We're able to generate revenue and provide benefits to not just our citizens, but communities and employees. It's a feeling you can't buy when you help people and help their quality of life.'

- Alabama Public Radio

#### **Medford casino ruling sparks** planned appeal by trio of regional tribes

Tribes from Southern Oregon and Northern California plan to appeal a federal judge's second ruling [in February] in favor of a Medford casino.

U.S. District Judge Amit P. Mehta ruled the tribes — the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, the Karuk Tribe, and Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation — failed to

establish how they would be harmed by the Coquille Indian Tribe's Cedars at Bear Creek casino on South Pacific Highway in south Medford.

In January, the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior approved the Medford casino after more than a decade of legal and bureaucratic efforts by the Coquille tribe.

This is the second time Mehta has ruled against halting the Medford casino as part of ongoing litigation.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs placed 2.4 acres around Roxy Ann Lanes in Medford into the Coquille's tribal land, which paves the way for the casino.

Since then, the Coquille, which also operates the Mill Casino in North Bend, has installed more than two-dozen video gambling machines and has continued with planning efforts for a large gaming facility at the former Roxy Ann Lanes.

The Cedars at Bear Creek would require remodeling the Coquille's Roxy Ann Lanes into a gaming facility that would include a 16,000-square-foot gaming floor with gaming machines, a bar and other services.

Class II gaming machines include video gambling based on bingo, which are different than the Class III slot machines in Vegas. The Coquille plan does not include table games such as blackjack, poker or dice.

The three tribes have denounced the Coquille's casino plans, and have filed an intent to appeal after Mehta's recent ruling.

In Mehta's ruling, he found the tribes didn't provide sufficient information to prove they would be economically harmed. Two of the casinos — the Cow Creek and Karuk — indicated they would see revenues decline by more than 20% by 2029.

In an email response, the Cow Creek, which runs Seven Feathers Casino Resort in Canyonville, say the Medford casino is far from the ancestral home of the Coquille on

"This project not only undermines ancestral homeland integrity but the integrity of all tribal gaming by operating illegally without the licenses required under federal tribal gaming regulations," the tribe stated. "It's simple — one cannot restore lands they never had — and the Coquille do not have any ancestral ties to this land."

The Cow Creek stated, "That is not the only illegal part about this casino — the Coquille is operating illegally today, despite records clearly showing the denial by the National Indian Gaming Commission for an expedited license."

The Karuk run Rain Rock Casino in Yreka, California, and the Tolowa operate the Lucky 7 on Northern California coast near the border with Oregon.

A series of letters obtained by the Cow Creek through a public records request describes correspondence between the Coquille and the National Indian Gaming Commission over potential violations of gaming regulations at the Medford casino.

On Dec. 2, 2024, a letter from Sharon Avery, acting chairwoman of the National Indian Gaming Commission, references a denial of a 60-day expedited waiting period for a gaming license instead of a 120-day

The Coquille in the letter disagreed with the Gaming Commission's interpretation of the regulations.

On Jan. 20, the Coquille sent the National Indian Gaming Commission a letter which refers to finding a resolution that avoids any "enforcement action" over a potential violation of the waiting period.

The letter noted that it would voluntarily address "safety concerns the staff raised for the first time in a Jan. 17 email about the roof of the Roxy Lanes facility."

Gaming activities have continued "under the expectation and hope that the NIGC (Gaming Commission) will grant the tribe's requests," according to the letter.

On Feb. 6, the Cow Creek sent a letter to the Gaming Commission urging immediate enforcement action for "unauthorized gaming operations.'

The Coquille, contacted Monday, did not respond for a request for comment and have previously declined to comment because of ongoing litigation.

- Rogue Valley Times (Medford, Oregon)

#### 'Do the right thing': Grassy **Narrows First Nation demands** action on mercury pollution ahead of **Ontario vote**

Judy DaSilva says she can feel herself deteriorating.

grandmother The elder, health co-ordinator environmental Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek, known as Grassy Narrows First Nation, says she has been impacted by mercury poisoning for years.

The contamination in her community dates back to the 1960s and '70s, when the Dryden Paper Mill dumped about nine tonnes of mercury into the English-Wabigoon River

DaSilva was among dozens of people outside Queen's Park on Feb. 25 to hold a vigil for the people they say have died prematurely or been harmed by mercury contamination.

They want the provincial government to stop the mill from "dumping toxins in the water," end all industrial threats of pollution and to compensate affected community members.

Progressive Organizers invited Conservative Leader Doug Ford to the vigil, but he was in Ottawa campaigning for [Feb. 27's] provincial election.

This is the fourth time Grassy Narrows community members have made the trip to Toronto to try and meet with Doug Ford in the last year, and this is the fourth time he has refused to meet with them," Grassy Narrows said in a news release Feb. 25.

CBC News has reached out to Ford for comment but had not received a response by publication time.

"Why is [Ford] ignoring us? Why is he ignoring the community of Grassy Narrows?" DaSilva asked.

An estimated 90 per cent of Grassy Narrows's population has symptoms of mercury poisoning, which can cause issues including tremors, insomnia, memory loss, neuromuscular effects, headaches, and cognitive and motor dysfunction.

While fish are a staple part of the community's diet, they're also one of the main ways the mercury contamination has been transmitted.

A study released in the spring by London's University of Western Ontario suggests the contamination is being worsened by ongoing industrial pollution. Since then, Grassy Narrows First Nation has ramped up lobbying efforts.

"For me, this is really, really hard to keep coming back here and to call on Doug Ford to do the right thing for my community,' said DaSilva.

Fewer than 1,000 people live in Grassy Narrows First Nation, located about 150 kilometres from Dryden near the Ontario-Manitoba border.

In 2017, the Ontario government committed \$85 million to fund mercury cleanup and remediation efforts in the English-Wabigoon River system.

The same year, the federal government promised to build a Mercury Care Home in Grassy Narrows. According to DaSilva, construction is expected to start in March. The work was previously anticipated to begin last summer and take two to three years to complete.

Grassy Narrows Chief Sherry Ackabee told vigil participants she is not impressed with how long it's taking both governments

"I myself have a child who was born sick; my sister's as well," Ackabee said. "It's pretty sad that the Dryden mill's still open and they're still dumping whatever."

CBC News reached out to the owner of the mill, Dryden Fibre Canada, for comment but had not received a response by publication time.

Jeffrey Ansloos is a University of Toronto associate professor of Indigenous health and social policy and a member of Fisher River Cree Nation.

His research has found a direct link between water and security, and suicide, in First Nations across Ontario, he told those attending Tuesday's vigil.

'What does it do to a person to be told over and over again, 'Don't drink this, but we're not gonna do anything about the conditions?' What does it do to a community when the fish relatives they've relied on for generations for food, for survival, are toxic?" he asked.

"What does it do to a child to grow up, knowing that the Ford government sees them as disposable? It's not just physical suffering — which it is — it's also psychological, economic, social, cultural and spiritual harm. This is what colonialism looks like."

Despite the toll it's taken on her mental and physical well-being, DaSilva said she keeps coming out to rallies and other events in hopes of protecting the next generation.

"I count on them to carry on this fight," she said. "If it's gonna take another 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, we're gonna keep coming back — and with each government that comes, you'll be sure that we're gonna be here until justice is done.

- CBC News (Canada)

#### Lac du Flambeau tribe says it won't block disputed roads or issue tickets for trespassing

The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa said it won't block access to roads or ticket nontribal residents for trespassing on tribal lands in a longstanding dispute with the town of Lac du Flambeau.

In January, the tribe said that it would ticket and potentially prosecute nontribal homeowners for unauthorized use of Annie Sunn Lane, Center Sugarbush Lane, East Ross Allen Lake Lane and Elsie Lake Lane. The four roads are at the heart of an ongoing feud with the town.

In a letter Feb. 25, Lac du Flambeau Tribal Vice President George Thompson walked back the tribe's threats amid ongoing litigation. Last year, the federal government sued the town for trespassing on the tribe's behalf.

"On behalf of the Tribal Council, and out of respect for the Court, the Tribe hereby agrees that it will not issue citations to users of the Four Roads during the pendency of this litigation, nor will it use previously collected data to impose any retroactive penalties against users of the Four Roads during the pendency of this litigation," Thompson wrote. "Additionally, the Tribe agrees to keep the Four Roads open during the pendency of this litigation."

In January 2023, tribal officials placed barricades on the four roads after failed negotiations between the tribe, the town of Lac du Flambeau and title companies over expired easements on the four roads that were never renewed. The tribe eventually reopened roads in March that year.

In January, a federal judge in the case ordered the federal government to take immediate action to prevent anyone from barring the four roads after the tribe threatened to once again restrict access.

Since then, homeowners have argued the tribe's warnings of citations and cameras along roadways "are meant 'to restrict' and have restricted — the homeowners' 'access' to the roadways through coercive and threatening measures." They had asked the judge to find the federal government in violation of the court's order or clarify that signs and cameras installed by the tribe violate the judge's ruling.

Lac du Flambeau homeowner Joe Hunt said in a court filing that no trespassing signs are causing the 71-year-old Marine veteran and his wife added stress that have affected their health. Due to chronic health issues, Hunt said it's extremely difficult to walk across frozen lakes to get to doctor's appointments.

"The recent 'No Trespassing' signs are causing me increased anxiety in having no choice but to risk prosecution for using the road," Hunt wrote.

The court scheduled a hearing for March 3, saying that could be avoided if the tribe publicly acknowledged it wouldn't issue citations and would keep the roads open during litigation.

On Feb. 25, the federal government asked the court to cancel the hearing given the tribe's latest letter, which also asked the town to "refrain from derogatory or inflammatory statements" toward the tribe or its members.

The feud over access to roads has resulted in multiple lawsuits. The town of Lac du Flambeau and homeowners have also filed separate federal lawsuits against the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The tribe first sought \$20 million in damages for what it said was trespassing by the town. Since then, tribal leaders have asked for roughly half that amount, and they want to issue annual leases in exchange for a fee equal to 1.5 percent of the fair market value of homes along the four roads.

Homeowners have said the federal government is responsible for resolving the dispute since past federal policies like the Dawes Act broke up reservation lands, resulting in them falling out of tribal

The town previously paid at least \$600,000 to the tribe to maintain access along the four roads.

Tribal leaders have said they're open to a resolution that doesn't involve giving up more of their lands or rights as a sovereign nation, saying in January that the tribe remains open to a "mutually respectful and equitable solution."

- Wisconsin Public Radio

#### Lily Gladstone's Oscar Gowns To Be Displayed at the National Museum of the American Indian

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian will display two gowns worn by Oscar-nominated actor Lily Gladstone (Siksikaitsitapi [Blackfeet]/ Nimiipuu [Nez Perce]) at its museum in Washington, D.C. The special installation, "Making a Statement," opened to the public Feb. 28 and closes in March 2026. Four public programs are planned in March 2025.

Both gowns were a custom collaboration, designed by Gucci and Indigenous artist Joe Big Mountain (Mohawk/Cree/Comanche) of Ironhorse Quillwork. The gowns were worn by Gladstone the evening of March 10, 2024, to the 96th Academy Awards and Vanity Fair Oscars party. Gladstone was the first Native American nominated for best actress for her work in the film Killers of the

"Lily Gladstone has made it her hallmark to showcase Native designers at star-studded events like the Oscars," said Anya Montiel, museum curator. "The elegant designs mark the first Oscars collaboration between an Indigenous artist and a luxury fashion brand like Gucci. We are thrilled to be able to share these amazing works of art with our visitors."

- From press release

of that.

#### Bill to give Ute tribal members free state parks access has other tribes with roots in Colorado asking to be included

The two tribes with reservations in Colorado could gain free access to state parks, under a bill moving through the legislature. But the proposal has been met with frustration from members of other tribes with historic roots in the state.

The bipartisan bill passed its first committee unanimously [in February].

Leaders from the state's two federally recognized tribes, the Southern Ute and the Ute Mountain Ute, were on hand to testify in support of the policy.

We are the original stewards of these mountains," said Chairman Manuel Heart of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

Heart said letting members use their tribal IDs to enter the parks would give them easier access to their aboriginal lands. Under the proposal Colorado Parks and Wildlife would absorb the roughly \$40,000 annual cost, based on an estimated 1,770 tribal members who currently purchase state park passes each year.

Marvin Pinnecoose, the Vice Chairman of the Southern Indian Tribe, also testified in support of the proposal and said it is critical that tribal youth and elders can visit traditional areas within the parks to ensure that their cultural practices are carried

'We are the definition of in-state residents," said Pinnecoose. "We have ancestral and cultural ties to most of the land within Colorado, including many of the lands now designated as state parks, and have served as stewards of these lands.

However, the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee also heard from people whose ancestors had been forced out of Colorado, arguing that not including more tribes in the bill is a devastating and

insulting failure to acknowledge that history of displacement.

"We need to remain connected to our culture," said Lewis TallBull, who comes from the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho people. "They took everything from us."

He said in order to have healing from policies like the government-orchestrated starvation of Plains tribes, tribal members need to remain connected to this land.

Rick Williams, who is Oglala Lakota and Northern Cheyenne, agrees that the bill should not be limited to just tribes with a physical reservation in Colorado.

"What this means to me today is if I go down to Roxboro Park, I have to pay to practice my religion and (visit) my sacred site. If I wanted to have a pipe ceremony down there, I have to pay. That's not right, said Williams.

Williams also referenced the Sand Creek Massacre, one of the most infamous incidents of violence against Native Americans in the history of the West.

One of the worst genocides that ever happened in America happened in the Eastern Plains of Colorado," he said. "That's why you have no reservations here. That's why, in the homeland of the people, you're ignoring us."

More than 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho people, mostly women, children and the elderly, were killed at Sand Creek in an unprovoked attack by the American military, as part of a campaign across the region to suppress Indigenous people and cultures.

For his part, Pinnecoose with the Southern Ute said he strongly believes the free access should not be broadened. Instead, he said, he hopes the bill can serve as an inspiration for other tribes to seek similar relationships with the states that overlap with their reservations.

"We would never approach other reservations or other states to say we want to be a part of what they're going through," said Pinnecoose.

Teddy McCullough, a citizen of the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians in California and a descendant of the White Earth nation, pushed back against that position.

"That sounds a lot like 'go back to where you came from.' What isn't acknowledged is that this is where they came from. This is their ancestral land too," said McCullough.

McCullough's tribes don't have ties to Colorado but he testified at the hearing in support of expanding the bill to those tribes

The bill's sponsors acknowledged the limited scope of the proposal but said it's still an important first step.

"This is as far as we can go this year given our budgetary constraints," said Republican Rep. Rick Taggart of Grand Junction, who also sits on the Joint Budget Committee, which is currently trying to find more than a billion dollars in savings to balance state spending. '

That said, we strive to continue to build relationships and continue discussions related to how the state can support further Indian indigenous communities with ancestral lands and sacred spaces throughout the state of Colorado."

For some lawmakers the final vote was

difficult. "It's just really disappointing to have the tensions from the broader community, especially with our history of harm that we've had here in Colorado," said Democratic Rep. Elizabeth Velasco of Glenwood Springs, whose district is 60 percent public lands and

contains several State Parks. Democratic Rep. Matthew Martinez represents the San Luis Valley and said he'd like to add an amendment to make sure the conversations brought forward in the hearing

"It is a fine needle to thread with this and we want to be respectful to all of those communities that are here, both our federally recognized tribes and those that aren't," said Martinez. "They all have ties to this land and we have to make sure that we're respectful

- Colorado Public Radio

#### Native American woman-owned aerospace company signs partnership

Native American woman-owned Cummings Aerospace signed an agreement Feb. 11 with ATRX to collaborate on the development of high-speed unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). The companies will work together to integrate a high-speed turbo-rocket onto a proven airframe with the goal of developing affordable UAS that can fly at supersonic and hypersonic speeds.

According to the companies, supersonic and hypersonic UAS will give the U.S. military and its allies unprecedented capability against America's near-peer adversary. The companies also said the agreement will give the U.S. and its allies the opportunity to boost stockpiles of hypersonic drones, and the technology paves the way for a spaceplane, which can take off

and land from any runway in the world. Sheila Cummings (Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina) is the president and chief executive officer of Cummings Aerospace. The company's headquarters is in Huntsville, Alabama, and it has facilities in Largo and Niceville, Florida, and Tucson, Arizona.

- From press release

# SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



MAR 1 & 2 ROD STEWART



MAR 6
GLADYS KNIGHT



MAR 7
BRETT YOUNG



MAR 8 IL VOLO



MAR 9
MAGIC CITY
BLUES FESTIVAL



MAR 13 FOREIGNER



MAR 21 DIANA ROSS



MAR 27
BARE KNUCKLE
FIGHTING
CHAMPIONSHIP



MAR 28
ILIZA
SHLESINGER



MAR 29 HAVASI









# Education



## PECS 4th graders visit Battle of Okeechobee reenactment

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY **Staff Reporter** 

OKEECHOBEE Emahakv Charter School fourth grade students attended a reenactment of the Battle of Okeechobee at the Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park on Feb. 21, as part of the state's fourth grade curriculum about Florida's history.

A few students were participants as they made fry bread and shared their culture with fourth graders from other area schools. The event included a reenactment of the Battle of Okeechobee between the U.S. Army and the

Seminoles on Dec. 25, 1837, and exhibits about Florida and Seminole history.

Next to the fry bread making station under the boughs of a large tree, students from grades 1-6 displayed the traditional crafts they made in the PECS Culture Department. A large tent hosted groups of fourth graders who were interested in seeing the beadwork, patchwork and baskets made by the students.

Culture teacher Taylor Johns held up each item and explained that each grade level focuses on a single skill during the year. First through fourth graders learn different types of beadwork including loom beading and daisy chains. Fifth graders learn to make the more complex medallions. Sixth graders make sweetgrass baskets, seventh graders make dolls and eighth graders make patchwork.

"The school has been coming here every year since I've been here, maybe even more," said Culture teacher Marilee Johns, who has been at PECS for 12 years.

During a break, the students who displayed their work in the tent talked about what it was like to show other students who they are and what they do.

"Some kids were disrespectful, but most of them were cool," said fifth grader Kalani

"We want them to learn our ways," added sixth grader Amiliana Osceola. "We get to do things that most kids don't do."

Students toured the exhibits on the site which included a blacksmith who demonstrated making a delicate leaf out of

At the U.S. Army soldier's camp, a surgeon reenactor described what he did on the battlefield and the dangers of not having modern antibiotics to fight germs and infection. A soldier at another tent showed the students all the items they carried on them as they fought the Seminoles in the

swampy terrain. Another soldier showed them how they loaded the muskets they used

At the Seminole campsite, reenactors told students how they ambushed the soldiers by cutting pathways through the hammocks, which the soldiers followed.

After several hours of the Christmas Day battle of 1837, in which many soldiers were killed, the Seminoles retreated down the Loxahatchee River to Lake Okeechobee



PECS fourth graders watch as a blacksmith heats a piece of iron to make a delicate decorative leaf at the Okeechobee Battlefield

PECS students learn about the 1837 Christmas Day Battle of Okeechobee at a reenactment campsite.



Culture teacher Taylor Johns holds a sweetgrass basket made by PECS sixth graders so students from area schools could feel its texture.



PECS eighth grader Ciani Smith displays a beadwork medallion made by PECS fifth

As students watch, U.S. Army reenactors fire their muskets toward a hammock where Seminole reenactors stealthily fired back.

## **Guest speakers engage Ahfachkee students**

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — A high powered attorney, the tribe's water resources director and a noted Native American motivational speaker gave Ahfachkee School middle and high school students a perspective on life not always learned in text books.

Michelle Diffenderfer, Alfonso Tigertail and Chance Rush spent a good part of the day teaching and engaging with the students about what they do for the tribe.

Diffenderfer, an attorney and the president of Lewis Longman Walker law firm, represents the Seminole Tribe of Florida as a lawyer for land development, water rights and cultural resource issues.

She was introduced by Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, who asked the students if any of them know the tribe has water rights. Diffenderfer was ready to enlighten the students about the tribe's water rights. She started at the beginning.

"You are located where the water runs from the sawgrass to the forested cypress domes, Diffenderfer said. "These Everglades have been protected for your people. This is your land. If it doesn't have water, it will die

and so will your people."
In the 1970s and 1980s, the government wanted to redirect water from the Everglades to the east, which would leave the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations with no water flow. Tribal leaders fought so the tribe would be able to flourish. They sued the federal government and the state's South Florida Water Management District to stop those projects and protect the tribe's right to the water.

The result was the Water Rights Compact with the state and the SFWMD, which was signed in 1987. The compact gives the tribe the same rights to the water as anyone else and they can fight for more water if they need it.

"The tribe has always had a seat at the table," Diffenderfer said. "The compact enables the tribe's laws to speak to the state's laws as equals. We are constantly vigilant to make sure the tribe's rights are being Chance Rush and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie address Ahfachkee students Feb. 5.

recognized and understood. If neighbors are doing something that would affect the reservations, the law protects [the tribe]. That's the reason for solar panels outside of Big Cypress instead of the large power plant FPL wanted to build."

As the tribe's water resources director, Tigertail explained how the tribe's water that flows through miles of canals in Big Cypress and Brighton is managed. "Water can be good or bad, either there

is too much or not enough," he said. "If we didn't have the Compact, we wouldn't have water in our homes.'

One of the challenges of Tigertail's job is reducing the time water is on the ground during flooding. Last year, Lakeland had a storm that left 16 inches of water on the ground. It took 10 days for the water to recede. He is working to try to reduce that for the next time it floods.

graders during Culture classes.

"The challenge is being able to manage the water but ensure there is enough water on the reservations," Tigertail said. "We need to be resourceful about our water use. With all the growth on the reservations, we have to learn to manage to make sure we have the water we need."

'Water is very important. This tribe has done a great job and we are the recipients of it," Councilwoman Billie said. "We have these sessions to get you engaged. We all come from warriors. Our ancestors fought for us and we do what we can to protect that.'

See GUEST SPEAKERS on page 3B

## PECS principal, teacher named district's best

**STAFF REPORT** 

The Glades County School District announced its principal, teacher and employee of the year at a banquet held at Moore Haven Middle High School on Jan. 9. Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School was honored twice.

PECS principal Tracy Downing was the district's first Principal of the Year and first grade teacher Tracy Phillips was its Teacher

Downing has been a teacher, reading coach, assistant principal and principal for more than two decades in Okeechobee schools. She has been principal at PECS for six years. Downing is also in the running for the Florida Department of Education 2025 Principal of the Year. The winner will be named by the end of April.

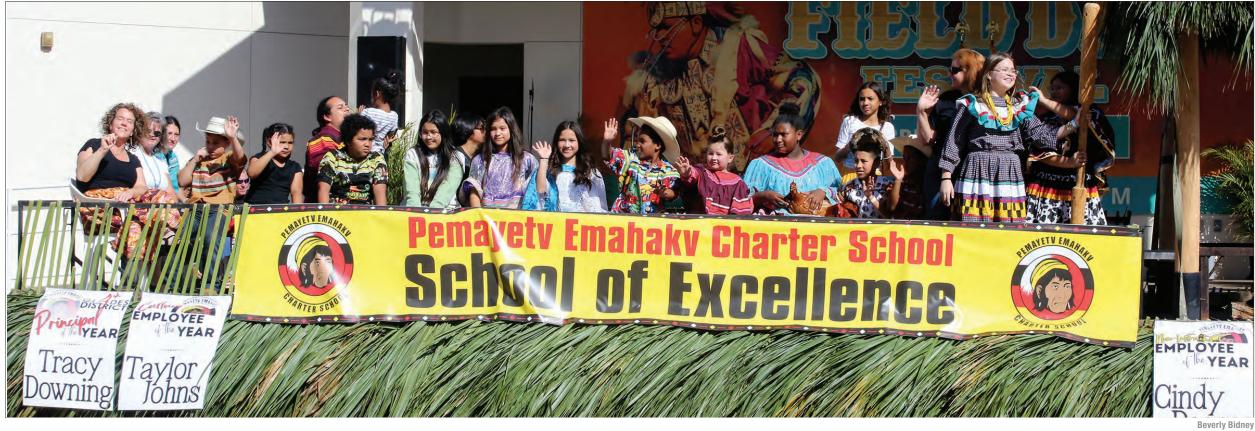
Phillips, who teaches first grade, has been teaching in Okeechobee schools for 24 years. She is in her third year at PECS.





From left to right are PECS staff Michele Thomas, Brande Cobb, Drema Carter, Joy Prescott, Tracy Downing, Tracy Phillips, Cindy Pearce, Cindy Ringstaff and Denise Stratton at the Glades County School District banquet Jan. 9.

## Pemayetv Emahakv participates in Field Day parade



Filled with students, teachers and principal Tracy Downing, the PECS parade float makes its way through the amphitheater during the Brighton Field Day parade Feb. 15.







Beverly Bidney

Miss PECS Ciani Smith and Mr. PECS Kowi-Chito Osceola introduce themselves to the audience during PECS principal Tracy Downing speaks to the audience from the school's float. the Field Day parade.

## **Education Department** meets parents on reservations

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY Staff Reporter

The Education Department recently for parents to acquaint them with what the department offers. The meetings were held in Immokalee (Feb. 18), Brighton (Feb. 19), Big Cypress (Feb. 20) and Hollywood (Feb.

"We do information sessions a few times each year with the same goals for each meeting," said Education director Russ Brown. "We want to find your children's passions so we can help find a path for them. We want them to be successful from year to year."

To help tribal members interact with the department, it has tribal community member liaisons. They are Gary McInturff in Big Cypress and Immokalee, Dana Osceola in

Brighton and Jason Billie in Hollywood. The department handed out flyers and informational pamphlets during the meeting. They included an overview of its programs, which are K-12, exceptional student education [ESE], higher education including GED, college degrees, trade and technical certificates, Tribal Professional Development [TPD], Work Experience Program [WEP], Emerging Leaders Program [ELP], Student Work Experience Program [SWEP] during spring and summer breaks, tutoring program and the tribal library program.

Program managers described what their programs offer to students.

"There are three and a half months left in the school year," said tribalwide K-12 program manager Reginal Belizaire. "It's time to start thinking about next year.'

Immokalee K-12 advisor Magdalie Dumorne outlined the qualifications for private school scholarships, which are only for tribal members, but Ahfachkee is open to descendants. Testing assistance and preparation for all state, ACT and SAT exams is provided for tribal students. High school graduation requirements are a 2.0 GPA, community service hours and a foreign language, which includes Elaponke.

"I speak to the high school students as if I am speaking to my own son," Dumorne

said. "Do what you love to do. There is always something for you in college that relates to your passion...I love to encourage them to find their passion."

Tribalwide higher education manager Jeri Joiner said the scholarships are not available to descendants but she can provide them with resources to find grants and other scholarships available outside of the tribe. The program also provides academic coaching and counseling. Adults who are interested in going back to school may also partake of post-secondary opportunities through the program.

"You're never too old to come back to school," said higher education academic and career advisor Charlene Marsh. "We have had people in their 70s.

If McInturff could go back in time, he said he would consider going into the hospitality industry.

"We have so many properties around the world," he said.

McInturff praised FSU's hospitality management program, which he said is also generous with scholarships.

McInturff mentioned gaming's Tribal Career Development program [TCD], which allows tribal members and descendants to learn as they work in the tribe's casino and hospitality businesses.

'There are so many opportunities to work either on the government side of the tribe or in gaming," added tribalwide Tribal Professional Development program supervisor Kerlande Chrisostome.

Chrisostome promoted SWEP, for students age 14-18, during which they get paid to work and learn about tribal departments and what they do.

"If they take advantage of SWEP, by the time students are out of high school, they will have experience and know more about what suits them," she said. "They can do different things every summer for four years."

The ESE program begins screening children in preschool to identify any issues or deficits early, as well as strengths, weaknesses and different learning styles. There is a state mandate for ESE students to get accommodations in public schools, but

there is no mandate for private schools. "We find ways to help your child,"



Education Department employees explain what the department has to offer to students and parents. At far right is Immokalee K-12 advisor Magdalie Dumorne.

said tribalwide ESE program manager Luis Viveros. "We make sure they get the accommodations they need in school. It's important that families are involved in the ESE process.

Tribalwide tutoring program supervisor Jen Bishop explained the program offers homework help, tutoring, GED assistance for tribal members. Homework help is available for descendants.

Tribalwide library program supervisor Padmini Dukharan gave an overview of the tribe's four libraries, which have more than 50,000 books. The libraries have computer labs and the library stocks reading bins at the clinics so kids can read while they wait. She encourages parents to use the library with their children.

"If your kids see you reading, hopefully they will want to read," Dukharan said.

Parents asked questions during the presentation and huddled with staff afterward. Sarah Carrillo has seven children including one descendant and one community member. Her daughter received a softball scholarship to Miami Dade College's north campus and she didn't know where she should live.

Some members of the education staff were familiar with the school and the surrounding areas. They suggested the coach might have some specific information on where other team members are living. Carrillo said she plans to take that advice.

Another question arose about financial support for home schooling or descendants. The state's Step Up for Students program offers scholarships for expenses such as laptops, tutoring, transportation and more.

Makayla Gonzalez has a child in preschool and said she learned a lot about the department during the meeting and plans to meet with Dumorne soon.

"The best thing about today is I know I can get support and information for my kids to go to private school," Gonzalez said. "I work with Magdalie and I get a lot of support from the Education Department. They are really fast.

Araceli Lucas has two children, ages 4 and 5, who are descendants. She said the information she received during the meeting was very helpful.

"You don't usually hear much about descendants, but I spoke to Luis and he's on top of things," Lucas said. "I want my kids to get the help, I'm open to it. I want them to succeed.'

Mella Billie has four children ages 5 to 13, including one who is autistic. She has been working with Viveros, who helped her with an Individual Education Plan [IEP] meeting for her son.

"It makes me feel a lot better knowing there are options and help available for my three descendant kids," Billie said. "I've had to advocate for my son since he was in diapers.

## Video series addresses Native teacher shortage

FROM PRESS RELEASE

In February, the United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) Teacher Education Program released a series of recruitment videos for a program.

Through the program, partner tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) received

\$200,000-\$275,000 over a two-year grant term to share promising practices that would serve as the basis for exploring solutions to the Native teacher shortage.

The videos include insight from students, tribal elders and education administrators, according to a press release. The program is funded by the American

Indian College Fund (College Fund), through the Wounspekiya Unspewicakiyapi Native Teacher Education pilot program. "Wounspekiya Unspewicakiyapi can be translated from Dakota to describe the purpose of the project as 'teaching teachers," the release said.

#### **Okeechobee Fair runs March 11-16**

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**OKEECHOBEE** — The Okeechobee Fair will be held March 11-16 at the Okeechobee County Fairgrounds in Okeechobee. The fair will feature full carnival midway, food and entertainment, which includes the Amazing Pompeyo

Family Dog Show, the Pirate Man Dan, the Flying Cortes Thrill Show, motorcycles riding on walls at the Wall of Death, and a petting zoo. Shows are free with paid gate admission. On March 15, a demolition derby will take place in the grandstand for an additional \$10.

## Festival in BC highlights Indigenous art, music

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS - The Indigenous Arts & Music Festival opened Feb. 6 and ran

through Feb. 8. The festival included musical performances, clothing contests, vendors, food, carnival games and rides, and more.



The Bearhead Sisters from Canada perform songs and share stories with the audience Feb. 6 at the Indigenous Arts & Music Festival.



Hymn singers from Oklahoma churches sing together at the festival.

experience.

"You are the ones who said you aren't going anywhere," Rush said. "Your ancestors said they are staying here, this is our house. I hope you embrace that; who you are and where you come from.'

it's about who we are.' "The best advice I can give you is to accept, know and be one of a kind," Rush

He said choosing who to spend time with is important since those people can influence who you will become.

'We all have people in our circles who are haters, negative, lazy and don't want you to be successful," Rush said. "Why do we let them at our table? If we keep listening to them, after a while we hear what they

are saying. You will become who they tell you that you are. A lot of people are bullied, overlooked, judged and left out. Life is about finding out who you are and what you want to become."

Rush outlined four steps to having a positive outcome in life. They are spirituality or a some kind of connection; put yourself second, think of others; make a plan for what kind of person you want to become; and find your team, the right people to be in your

"It's all about who you are on the

inside," Rush said, "Get rid of those negative forces. Change your environment and stick with your team which is positive. Be that one of a kind, the one who stands out."

Rush told the students to get their hands on their greatness and love being great and to try a little harder, get up a little earlier, build your own team. He told them about his very structured days.

"I built the lifestyle I wanted," he said.

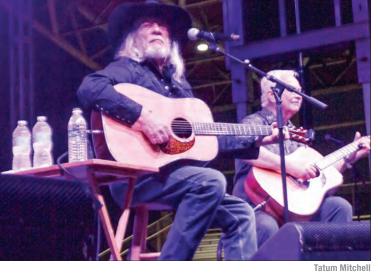


Fellow students enjoy a performance by the Ahfachkee School band.

Tatum Mitchell



The clothing contest at the festival includes various men's and women's categories.



John Anderson, left, performs his song "Seminole Wind" alongside Glenn



Justine Osceola poses with her booth as a vendor at the festival.

## From page B1

GUEST SPEAKERS

Motivational speaker Chance Rush (Hidatsa) grew up in Standing Rock, a small reservation in North Dakota, which was one of the poorest at that time.

For 20 years Rush has traveled throughout North America to work with reservations, communities and organizations as a consultant. He aims to inspire, heal, motivate and energize tribal communities. Much of what he says comes from his life

Rush, who told the students the last time he visited the tribe was about 18 years ago, said he admires the tribe's commitment to its

Rush said one reason he went to school was so he could eat something, like many other tribes with few resources. He told the students that "life isn't about what we have,

said. "Be that one who stands out."

"You build it the way you want it by loving being great. Be patient, persistent, powerful and push through."

### UNITY midyear conference focuses on digital storytelling, culture connections

**FROM UNITY** 

PHOENIX — The United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) Midyear Conference brought together a record number of Native youth, advisors, and tribal leaders for a transformative four-day event centered on leadership development, advocacy, and cultural sharing.

Held Feb. 7-9 at the Sheraton Downtown Phoenix, this sold-out gathering provided a platform for Native youth to develop their storytelling skills, connect with Indigenous leaders from across the globe, and celebrate their cultures through meaningful engagement and learning opportunities.

UNITY introduced a new hands-on digital storytelling curriculum, equipping participants with the skills to produce public service announcements (PSAs) and digital awareness campaigns addressing critical issues in their communities. Participants were supported by Peer trainers, and the Gila River Broadcasting Corporation assisted them with any editing needs that arose. Youth collaborated on multimedia projects, using digital media as a tool for storytelling, advocacy, and cultural preservation.

"Our youth are already leading change in their communities, and this conference provided them with the tools to amplify their voices through digital storytelling,' said Mary Kim Titla, UNITY Executive Director. "From creating PSAs to engaging in cross-cultural dialogues with Indigenous leaders from across the globe, this event empowered our youth to become storytellers and changemakers.'

The conference featured several engaging keynote speakers and panel discussions that inspired youth to take ownership of their narratives. Actor Kusem Goodwin (Coeur d'Alene/Nez Perce), known for his role as "Nataanii Jackson" in the movie "Rez Ball," participated in a live Q&A session, providing insight into Indigenous representation in the media and the challenges of breaking into the entertainment industry. UNITY Drum Alumni Dr. Corey Still (United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee) delivered a keynote address emphasizing the power of Indigenous storytelling and language revitalization, encouraging youth to embrace their voices and experiences to drive change. Additionally, legendary journalists Mary Kim Titla (San Carlos Apache) and Colton Shone (Navajo) shared their journeys in broadcast media, offering guidance to those interested in pursuing journalism and digital storytelling careers.

Throughout the conference, participants collaborated with highly skilled trainers known for their work in Indian Country, including Lovina Louie (Coeur d'Alene/ Colville/Nez Perce), Tommie Ghost Dog (Burns Paiute/Oglala Lakota), Rachel Mosley (Paiute-Shoshone), and J'Shon Lee (White Mountain Apache). Youth also engaged with Indigenous media professionals, including Marcus Guinn (Osage/Potawatomi), "Emcee One," official DJ for the Oklahoma City Thunder, and Shawn Martinez (Navajo), "DJ Tribal Touch" official DJ for the Phoenix Suns, who shared how they integrate Native representation into mainstream entertainment and sports industries.

For the first time, UNITY welcomed an international cohort of Indigenous youth, fostering global dialogue on leadership, governance, cultural preservation, climate resilience, and health equity. The international representatives included:

- Daisy Lahache Canada
- Edna Marly Figueroa Cuc -Guatemala
- Josefina Bautista Peña México Maricelma Francelino Fialho Cândido – Brazil
- Noamby Lucas-Castillo Colombia Silvia Alejandra Miranda Loredo Honduras

This panel provided a space for international and domestic Indigenous youth to exchange strategies on advocacy, creating dialogue on issues impacting Indigenous communities worldwide. The global cohort was joined by U.S. Indigenous youth leaders who brought diverse perspectives from their communities. Bronson (Kainoa) Azama (Kānaka Maoli, Hawaii) shared insights on Indigenous governance, while Derek Capitan (Laguna Pueblo/Navajo, New Mexico) spoke on youth advocacy. Mazie Countryman (Northern Arapaho/Eastern Shoshone/Shoshone-Bannock/Navajo, Idaho) emphasized intertribal collaboration, and Watson Whitford (Chippewa Cree/ Navajo, Montana) highlighted the power of storytelling in strengthening Native identity.

The Native Youth Digital Storytelling Panel featured UNITY's 25 Under 25 awardees, showcasing how digital media is a powerful tool for advocacy. Evelyn Enos (Akimel O'otham/Tohono O'odham) highlighted zine-making as a grassroots method for amplifying Indigenous voices. At the same time, Mariah Hernandez-Fitch (United Houma Nation) shared her work

in filmmaking as a way to document and preserve Native stories. Ian Teller (Navajo) demonstrated how he uses social media engagement to increase voter awareness and civic participation with his When Natives Vote initiative. Their insights emphasized the role of digital storytelling in strengthening cultural representation and driving social

Beyond leadership training and storytelling workshops, the conference was a celebration of Indigenous culture. UNITY hosted two nights of social round dances open to the public, highlighting Indigenous storytelling through song and dance. The first night's Round Dance was filled with energy as dozens of local hand-drummers performed and respected Stickmen, Nathan Littlechild, shared teachings on the significance of the dance. The second night showcased the cultural traditions of the Four Sister Tribes of O'odham, featuring youth-led O'odham Cu:dk social dancing and an energetic Chicken Scratch dance with music from the "Group Passion" youth band. Over 40 singers and 37 dancers from the Tohono O'odham Nation, the Gila River Indian Community, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community participated, creating a powerful celebration of cultural identity and unity.

The National UNITY Council passed two Resolutions at their biannual business meeting to encourage youth to collaborate with international Indigenous youth and host community events to address substance abuse, mental health, and suicide prevention. In recognition of Christopher Porcaro's inspiring completion of the Mountain Lakes

100-mile ultramarathon, HOKA donated 100 pairs of trail running shoes. These shoes were given away at the Midyear Conference to encourage Native youth participation in physical activity and promote wellness. The donation was part of a broader effort to support the health and well-being of Native communities, aligning with the mission of UNITY and organizations like Indigenous Earth.

The conference concluded with a showcase of digital storytelling projects created by the youth throughout the weekend. These presentations demonstrated the creativity, passion, and advocacy of Native youth as they used media to amplify their voices and address issues impacting their communities. Throughout the weekend, several

colleges, Native artists, and Native-focused organizations participated as exhibitors. The Gila River Indian Community was the presenting sponsor for the conference. Other sponsors included Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Arizona State University, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, HOKA, Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation, Oneida Nation, Pechanga Band of Indians, the Quintero Family, REDW Financial Advisors & CPAs, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, San Carlos Apache Tribe, and Tribal Ready.

The next major event is the National UNITY Conference, with an anticipated 2,500 Native youth and advisors to attend in San Diego, California, June 27 to July 1. For more information go to unityinc.org.

## **Brighton celebrates 86th annual Field Day Festival**

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY **Staff Reporter** 

**BRIGHTON** — The Seminole Tribe of Florida opened a window into its history and culture at the 86th annual Brighton Field Day Festival from Feb. 13-16.

The festival offered something for everyone and attracted more than 3,800 people who enjoyed the entertainment, shopping, food, a PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association) rodeo and concert by country music star Brantley Gilbert.

Seminole vendors sold plenty of patchwork, beadwork, baskets, carvings and other traditional items. In the culture camp, visitors were encouraged to watch as tribal women cooked traditional Seminole fare over the open fire in the cooking chickee and enjoy a taste of fry bread and pumpkin fry bread.

"I love seeing people I don't usually see," said Allison Osceola, of Hollywood, who has been coming to field day since she was a little girl. "I just sit in the culture area all day and visit."

Nearby, tribal members demonstrated sewing and beadwork as Billy Walker wrestled an alligator and told the history of Seminole alligator wrestling. In the amphitheater, Osceola's Warrior Legacy group demonstrated tactics of how Seminoles fought back attacks by U.S. Army soldiers during the Seminole Wars.

Feb. 15 began with a parade which included the Florida State University marching band, Osceola on Renegade, Grand Marshall Mitchell Cypress, Tribal Council and Board members, Seminole honor guard, Lakota Women Warriors, Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola.

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School was a big part of the parade with its safety patrol, Mr. and Miss PECS, student council, volleyball team and a float loaded with students, District Teacher of the Year Tracy Phillips, Employees of the Year Taylor Johns and Cindy Pearce, and District Principal of the Year Tracy Downing.

The parade continued with tribal members on floats, swamp buggies, ATVs of all shapes and sizes and horseback in colorful patchwork. After the grand entry, the action in the amphitheater took off with a performance by the White Mountain Apache dancers and Osceola's Warrior Legacy traditional weapons demonstration.

Spectators filled the stands and the open areas surrounding the amphitheater for the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling competition. The wrestlers wowed the crowd with their antics and, ultimately, their control of the

There were plenty of places for visitors to get a bite to eat on the festival grounds, including Seminole food vendors.

Jennie-ology Seminole Bread is a fixture at field day and is run by Diane Smith and her daughters Trisha Osceola, Brittany Macias and Amanda Julian. It is named for Smith's mother Jennie, who started the food booth. Field Day has always been a big part of Smith's life. She skipped one year when her mother had surgery, but she missed being

"My mother did this for about as long as Field Day has existed," Smith said. "I think it's the most popular booth here, but they are all really good at what they do."

Smith's grandchildren also help run the booth that sells Indian tacos, burgers, hot dogs, chicken wings, fry bread and pumpkin fry bread. Brisket on fry bread is the most requested item, which is made by Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Trisha's husband.

This year Chairman Osceola made 32 15-pound briskets over the course of the four day-festival to feed the hungry crowds. He cooks them "low and slow" in a smoker for 12 hours.

"Everyone cooks them their own way," Chairman Osceola said. "I use a mixture of

In her booth, Seminole tribal member Sierra Briggs sold toy flutes, drums, knives and hammers as well as a variety of patchwork and beadwork she made.

"I'm doing well today," said Briggs, from Tampa. "I'm going to have to get to sewing and beading when I get home. I like being a vendor, I can carry on my culture."

Briggs took over the booth after her grandmother, Maggie Osceola Garcia, died three years ago. She has been coming to Field Day for most of her life and enjoys the shows and seeing other vendors' items.

In addition to Seminoles, Native American vendors from around the country set up booths and sold their traditional items

Alex Jalapa (Mayan) created original artwork for visitors at his booth. It was his first time at Field Day, but he and Tiffany Quiles (Taino) travel around the country to sell their art at pow wows. Jalapa creates the spray painted artwork in just four minutes as visitors watch. He uses fire to quickly dry the paint so he can add more layers of color without disturbing the integrity of the base

"Every year it gets bigger, with more people and kids," said Beulah Gopher, of Brighton. "I look forward to seeing old friends. You just never know who's going to be around.

"It's always good to see different faces at Field Day," said Brighton's Martha Tommie, who walked in the parade. "I feel obligated to walk and think about the MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women). I honor the women and represent them. We all know what's going on. I thank God we can keep searching for them."

See FIELD DAY on page 5B



Andrew Wallin, left, portraying a U.S. Army soldier, battles Parker Osceola during a demonstration of how the Seminoles fought the soldiers during the Seminole Wars.



Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola address the crowd during the Field Day parade Feb. 15.



The audience pays close attention as they watch the Freestyle Alligator competition.

Beverly Bidney

During the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling competition, a wrestler shows his brave skills as he examines the inside of an alligator's mouth.





Florida State University's Marching Chiefs perform during the Field Day parade.



Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola.

Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, left, and Jr.



The Indigenous Enterprises Dance Group dances for a packed crowd of students and spectators.



At the Jennie-ology Seminole Bread food booth, Diane Smith, second from left, and her daughters Brittany Macias, Amanda Julian and Trisha Osceola take a moment away from cooking to pose in the Ronnie Billie and Martha Tommie enjoy Field Day.

booth named for Smith's mother.



## **Artist, rancher Brad Phares creates Seminole-inspired art**

BY TATUM MITCHELL **Staff Reporter** 

**BRIGHTON** — Brad Phares, Florida cowboy artist, is a rancher and painter with work inspired by Seminole culture. He displayed his work at Brighton Field Day

His ranch is right down the road from the Brighton Reservation, and he's been coming to events like Brighton Field Day for about 15 to 20 years.

"Our ranch is actually about six miles through the woods and bordered up next to the reservation. Had friends here for years and years, and of course, some of them have come to help us with cows and back and forth, that sort of thing," Phares said.

His paintings capture authentic Florida beauty while displayed in hand-crafted wooden frames, often taken from broken fencing on his ranch. Instead of throwing away the broken parts, Phares reuses them.

"I got started with doing artwork - it

was one of those things I always did as a kid, drawing and doodling in class, that sort of thing. But I never really got serious about painting until much later," he said.

In college, he started working with an artist and picked up painting landscapes, which eventually transitioned into people and ranch scenes.

"And then over time, I realized there was kind of this void with people not really capturing the Seminole Tribe culture on canvas, so I started doing a little bit of that, and over time, it's evolved to where I'm probably doing more Seminole themed and ranch themed work than I am landscapes,' Phares said.

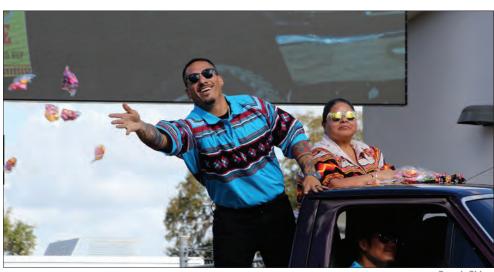
His Seminole-inspired work ranges from people to capturing traditional culture. He said he sometimes looks for photos to use as reference and other times imagines the scenes. To learn more, visit cowhuntersunlimited.com/florida-ranchand-landscape-art.



Brad Phares poses with his work.

#### FIELD DAY From page 4B





Alex Jalapa creates a piece with spray paint and fire.

During the parade, Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge throws candy to the crowd from the truck he shares with Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers



## 'Brave Words, An Essay'

**BY ELGIN JUMPER** 

Author's note: "Brave Words, An Essay" is in part about the writing group I started with Krystle Young Bowers, back in 2021. The essay reflects on our group meetings, and the camaraderie we shared as fellow writers. Consequently, to paraphrase, John Paul Jones, during the Revolutionary War, "We have not yet begun to write! And so, we will be scheduling more writing group meetings, in the near future. Thank you.

For many years, I have agreed with the notion of "sending the elevator back down," so to speak, and of paying it forward, so that others might also come up. That's the central idea behind the "Florida İndigenous Writer's Group," to uplift, to become better writers, to benefit other writers and poets, pure and simple.

And, of course, with egos to be checked at the door.

For we are writing a story here, a poignant Seminole story, moreover, which began long ago, and which Seminole storytellers, in future generations, will be adding their extraordinary chapters to, as

As such, let me share with you, reader, if I may, some of what I ascertained on my own writing journey:

Truth to tell, I learned so much more about writing than I ever had, back in the late-90s, in the poetry and fiction workshops, at BCC's - now BC's - South Campus. I rode back and forth, too, several times a week for close to two years, on a blue cruiser, carrying a backpack of books. Indeed, I had gone back to school, as they say, to further my education, and to do something creative with my life, a re-imagining, if you like, with the goal of earning some kind of degree in Journalism or History. But alas, it was not

Before then, when I took pen to paper, I often wrote poetry and short stories - or what I had percieved to be short stories. Not really from one point of view, but several of them. Always learning, you see. I didn't know to stay in one perspective throughout the story, although I would eventually discover that Hemingway and Faulkner, had utilized several points of view, in their written masterpieces. As for my poems, they were usually rhyming poems, more influenced by Emily Dickinson, among others, and yet, I did start experimenting with prose poems, lyricism, and imagery. It wasn't until the workshops that I learned about sensory

perception and structure, metaphor and simile, exposition and voice, amongst a host of other helpful techniques.

Now my first stories were about little forest animals and the mini-adventures they undertook. I wrote alone in the room I shared with my older brother, now deceased. I thoroughly enjoyed those times. In retrospect, I may've been sub-consciously influenced by Richard Adams', Watership Down books, involving a family of ragtag rabbits searching for new homes, because human developers were encroaching upon their present homes. As an adolescent, I had read those stories over and over again, enjoying them immensely. And, thankfully, words and languages became like cherished

Though the trejectory of my life changed course a handful of times, and some of them, varying in directions which weren't always for the best, I did keep up with my writing - and my reading, too, for that matter. Reading and Writing, and vice-versa, as I see it, compliment one another. You can't have one without the other. Lord knows, you'll do well to have both arrows in vour writing quiver. And for me, there has to be an urgency to writing, an great importance and a deep passion, to be sure.

In our room, I wrote about the songs that the wings of the air sang outside the window, I wrote about the summers of dramatic Florida weather, which could be hot and rainy, both, in a single day, descending on the bluest rivers of life, in seasons that gave performances that displayed a wide spectrum of elements, like a seasoned actor upon the stage, and the intermingled scents of light rain, the tall green pine and stately grey oak and steadfast beige-brown cypress, that had long stood proud, with grey-white mossy beards, in every part of the region, breezes surging, now howling, now murmuring, and consequently, I was transported through writing. Do you see it?

And so, I was a poet in my adolescence. My mother lovingly encouraged my reading, too. She bought me books through the mail, exciting books (that I saw on tv) about different eras in history, where I sought to sound out the words as best I could. In fact, I still seek out new words, even today, even as I write. People ask, where do I get the ideas for my stories and poems from? And I tend to answer that I don't really know from whence they come. On the face of it, I know, but it's something I don't really pry that much into. I see them as gifts from God, that you just don't question. But as I said, I try not to delve too deeply into it, for

fear of losing it. All I can say on the topic is this: they do arrive, shinning brightly, thank goodness!

In 2006, when, "Nightfall," my firstever collection of poetry was published, I also met and became friends with Joy Harjo, Poet Laureate of the United States. I kid you not. The University of Arkansas, upon publication of my chapbook, invited me up to Little Rock, to read and participate in a symposium. Well, feeling honored, I accepted their invitation, and made the long road trip up. It was wonderful! Not only did I get to visit the remarkable sites and ancient mounds along our route, I also got to meet and read with the great poetess, Joy Harjo, the main speaker and reader of the symposium, who was ever-gracious and kind to the upand-coming writers and poets in attendance. We also got to have lunch with Joy! - four or five of us - ask her poetry-oriented questions, and even got to view a private art collection, along with Joy, which was owned by one of the university professors, a vast collection of contemporary indigenous paintings. Years later, I'm still trying to process the sheer relevance and outright importance of the works we got to see. I'll forever be grateful for that. It was my launch party! so to speak. For my poems and for getting up and reading in front of an audience. Not long afterwards, don't you see, we began "open mics" on the Florida Seminole reservations!

So I'm a writer, a poet. That's what I've long wanted to be, and hallelujah!, that's what I am. But it's a work-in-progress, an ongoing process and growth. I work at it everyday. And the blank page is no stop to me. I've written poetry, short stories, articles, essays, theatrical plays, and original screenplays. It's an urgent endeavor, I must say, and it's crucial to who I was, to who I am, and to who I will be. I'm writing everyday now and reading and painting in between. It's so imperative that I write.

I remember quite well the numerous meetings on writing we've had so far, the discussions about favorite writers and wellwritten books, the writing prompts and the sharing and reading of poems and stories, and taking part in discourses on Indigenous writers and poets, all remain clear and memorable to me. They were amazing! I need only think back, to become inspired by the conversations of the participants braves, and warriors. I am a writer, after all, and Seminole.

Seminole artist and writer Elgin Jumper is a contributor to the Seminole Tribune.

## All-Indigenous comedy debuts

BY TATUM MITCHELL Staff Reporter

Celebrating Valentine's Day might not always be a laughing matter, but this year's holiday includes some comedic relief the first all-Indigenous stand-up comedy documentary, "Rez Comedy," premieresd

The stand-up showcases nine Indigenous comedians and is available on SVOD, AAM. tv, and TVOD on Amazon Prime.

Keither Nahanee (Squamish Nation) and Quentin Lee co-directed and produced the film along with Cindy AuYeung. After working together on "Comedy Invasion", which won Best Comedy Special at the 2024 Canadian Screen Awards, Lee visted Nahanee in Vancouver. During the trip, they brainstormed the idea for an all-Indigenous comedy special.

Originally, creating the film was a bit challenging, Lee said. They were dropped from development of a TV series version with Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. Being an independent filmmaker, Lee said he thought to make it a feature film instead.

"That was just when we got nominated for the Canadian Screen Award in [2024], and we actually won it. We were like, well, there's no reason why we should not be making this kind of thing. And especially that being one of probably the first Indigenous comedy specials," Lee said.

Nahanee has been doing comedy since 2014, and he organizes a monthly "Rez Comedy" show in Vancouver. The live show includes an inclusive lineup of comics varying each month. He is also the host in the "Rez Comedy" film.

He said it's exciting to have an all-Indigenous lineup for the film and to get Indigenous comedians into the mainstream.

"For me, personally, it is huge ... But, my partners, Quentin and Cindy, aren't Indigenous. But they believe in Indigenous comedy so much. Of all the money and the time that we put into it to put Indigenous stand-up out there for the world," Nahanee said.

Nahanee said he is proud of all the comedians and their hard work in the film and that it has "no fear." Lee and Nahanee said they gave the comics freedom to do what they believed in without restriction.

With "Rez Comedy" live in Vancouver, Nahanee said he's gotten feedback from audience members saying they appreciate hearing the history of Indigenous people in a comic way.

"I want any age, any Indigenous people to put out their own specials to start getting the Indigenous jokes, Indigenous stories, Indigenous stereotypes, out there," Nahanee said. "I've been not only getting good feedback from the video itself, the movie itself, but we do Rez Comedy live monthly. And I'm getting a lot of non-Indigenous people coming to talk to me after the show of what they liked. ... Instead of just preaching



The comics from "Rez Comedy" are, from left to right: Kevin Shawanda, Brenda Prince, Drea Omer, Chuck Cease, Keith Nahanee, Helena Paul, Wayne Alexis, Janelle Niles and Denise B. McLeod.

about the hardships, when you're telling someone history and having it in a humorous way, I think people will absorb it a little more than just going to a lecture.' Nahanee has done a lot of healing since

getting into stand-up comedy, and he said that contributes to his advice for aspiring "If you want to make people laugh,

take that change to get on stage, because not only will you make them laugh, you'll heal yourself too through the trauma that we've went through and are going through,' Nahanee said.

Nahanee said he hopes people get a little more knowledge of Indigenous history and Indigenous humor from the film, and the audience can do that while having a good time, Lee said.

'That's why it's really fun to work on these projects because I'm always cracking up watching, even though I'm watching the cut for the tenth time, I'm still laughing. And it's just great to be able to entertain and also to educate, which is what artists should be," Lee said.

Lee enjoys working with Keith because he is "such an inclusive kind of person" and always supportive of those around him.

"I think for me and Keith, our vision is more about building bridges, reaching out to different minorities. We band together and to create new combinations, new artistic endeavors. That's why we bonded because we're both really interested in building bridges between our communities and other communities to work together to build a better kind of tomorrow," Lee said.

According to a press release, "Rez Comedy" is qualified for the 2025 Canadian Screen Awards in the following categories: Ted Rogers Best Feature Length Documentary, Best Cinematography in a Feature Length Documentary, Best Editing in a Feature Length Documentary, and Best Original Music in a Feature Length Documentary. To learn more, visit rezcomedy.com.

"I'm just proud that we're able to make [the film] because we were just stacked up against [it]. ... We're just proud that we're able to make it and get it out and then hoping for the best for the Canadian Screen Awards, because we're FYC – for your consideration - right now. The nominations come out in March," Lee said. Also from a release, comics and

producers involved in the film are listed here: Keith "Bubbas" Nahanee (producer and comic from Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw -Squamish Nation, BC).

Brenda Prince (comic from Ojibway, Ontario - currently based in Vancouver, BC). Wayne Alexis (comic from Stó:lō Nation from Cheam band).

Janelle Niles (comic from Sipekne'katik First Nation, Nova Scotia).

Helena Paul (comic from Tkemlúps te Secwépemc (father's side) and from the farm land in Chilliwack (Stó:lō Nation) with added relations from Skowkale First Nations

(mother's side)). Kevin Shawanda (comic from Birch Island, Ontario).

Denise B. McLeod (comic from Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation, north shore of Lake Huron, Ontario).

Colin Bird aka Chuck Cease (comic from Mistawasis Nêhiyawak Cree First Nation, Saskatchewan).

Drea Omer (comic from Saskatchewan). Cindy Au Yeung (producer and editor) Quentin Lee (producer and director).

**Ralph Briggs** helps his mother Sierra **Briggs by** testing out all the toys in their Field Day booth.





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# Sports\*



From left to right, Thaddeus Johns, Shakur Williams and Greg James proudly clutch the championship trophy.



Greg James (23) celebrates with his Moore Haven teammates and coaches after the Terriers won a district championship Feb. 7 in Moore Haven.

## Moore Haven rallies to win district title

BY KEVIN JOHNSON Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — For three quarters it looked like the Moore Haven High School boys basketball team's season would end. But after trailing most of the night, the Terriers clicked when it counted most and surged past visiting Fort Meade High School to win the Rural Class District 8 championship, 51-47, on Feb. 7.

Clifford Love (23 points) and the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Shakur Williams (10 points) helped ignite the comeback for the Terriers, who erased an 11-point deficit in the fourth quarter. Moore Haven coach Ravin Lee said his team played the fourth quarter just like it practices.

"That was epic, but that's the way we practice. We practice 24/7 to be able to finish the game," he said.

In addition to Williams, the tribe is represented by Greg James and descendent Thaddeus Johns. James did not see any playing time against Fort Meade; Johns played a few minutes at guard. Both players lent vocal support from the bench as their teammates mounted a comeback.

Lee won district titles as a player at Clewiston High School. He said he wanted his players to know that same feeling of being a champion.

"These kids work so hard," he said. "I want them to experience what I experienced in high school. They got a memory tonight. I talk about my memory 12 years ago; they're going to talk about this memory for a lifetime. You can't take it away from these kids: they corned it."

kids; they earned it."

For Williams, winning the district title with Lee as his coach brought extra special meaning.

"It means a lot," said Williams, a 6-foot guard who is among the team's strong core of juniors. "I've been with the coach since sixth grade, so for me, it means everything... It's real special to [win the championship] with him because he's been with me for my whole basketball career."

Fort Meade used a balanced shooting attack to dominate the first half, which included a 14-2 lead six minutes into the game. Fort Meade led 27-18 at halftime.

A strong start in the third quarter – led by Williams – showed that Moore Haven was determined to keep its season alive. Williams and Kendavion Holligan hit 3-pointers early that helped trim the deficit to five, but Fort Meade generated a surge of its own and built a 13-point cushion before Williams made a jump shot late in the quarter. Fort Meade led 40-29 heading into the fourth.

Moore Haven played like a different team in the fourth with a ferocious defense that caused turnovers and prevented good looks, and an offense that found its rhythm low and high. Williams and Love ignited the rally. Love was unstoppable with 13 points in the quarter. Williams had a steal and layup, and threw a perfect court-length bomb to Clarence Hunter, who made a layup that gave Moore Haven a 45-41 lead.

Trailing 48-47, Fort Meade had a chance to go ahead but was called for a charge with 20 seconds left. A layup by Holligan and a last second free throw by Hunter sealed the victory for the Terriers.

Williams said playing tougher defense helped fuel the rally.

"We just had to play defense. They were knocking down everything. For us, it was, one stop, a bucket; one stop, a bucket. That's what we needed to do. We perfected it; we executed it; and we won the game off of that," he said.

Five days after the championship victory, the Terriers season ended with a 54-32 regional semifinal loss at home to Hawthorne (Alachua County), which went on to win the Rural Class state championship.

Moore Haven finished with a 13-8

record.

All three players from the tribe played different key roles throughout the season with Williams being an all-around smooth player who starred at both ends; James using his 6-foot-3 lineman-size and toughness in the paint to grab rebounds and draw attention that helped free up space for teammates; and the long-range, sharp-shooting Johns injecting a ton of energy with and without the ball whenever he stepped on the court. The good news for the Terriers is that all three players – in addition to most of the roster – will be back next season as the team should have an excellent chance to defend its title.



Moore Haven celebrates after winning the district championship.





Kevin Johnso Neade

Shakur Williams eyes two points in the district championship game against Fort Meade.

#### **Tribal tandem helps NSU University** School to vastly improved season

BY KEVIN JOHNSON Senior Editor

FORT LAUDERDALE — When the NAYO basketball tournament comes to Hollywood from April 17-19, Tatum Billie and Kenna Osceola will have to get used to seeing each other on different teams.

Billie, who is from the Big Cypress Reservation, will play for a Choctaw team; Osceola, from the Hollywood Reservation, will play for a Seminole team from Brighton.

This winter, however, they thrived as teammates who both enjoyed solid seasons on the NSU University School girls team.

Both are young players – Billie is a sophomore; Osceola is a 7th grader - on a team that is filled with youth.

"Most of the time this year I started two 6th graders, one 7th grader, a 9th grader and a 10th grader," NSU coach Nicole Riscica said after her team's season ended with a 60-45 loss to host Pine Crest in a Class 3A regional quarterfinal on Feb. 13.

Ever since Billie joined the team as a seventh-grader, Riscica has watched her grow and improve. Billie has been a starter and a captain for three years.

"This year she stepped into that leadership role," Riscica said.

Examples of that leadership came in the regular season as Billie led the team in just about every category, including scoring. She scored in double digits nearly every game - including a season-high 32 against West Boca Raton – and averaged about 17 points per game. She also hit a major milestone, scoring her 1,000th career point with two more years of high school ball still remaining. She played a key role helping lead the team to a 16-7 record, far better than last year's 10-14 mark.

Another example of Billie's leadership came in the playoff game against Pine Crest. A couple weeks earlier, Billie hurt her knee against Archbishop McCarthy, but she still provided a determined effort from start to finish while wearing a leg brace in the playoff loss at Pine Crest.

"She played through the pain today," Riscica said.

Billie scored seven points. NSU faced an uphill battle against Pine Crest, which had a huge size advantage with 6-foot-4 Isabella Sangha and 6-foot-3 Franky Garfi.





At left, Kenna Osceola attempts a reverse layup against Pine Crest's Franky Garfi. At right, Tatum Billie takes a 3-point shot.



Kevin Johnson

Tatum Billie, dribbling the ball, and Kenna Osceola head up court during NSU University School's Class 3A regional quarterfinal at Pine Crest School in Fort Lauderdale on Feb. 13.

Osceola spent much of the game with the difficult task of facing Sangha, who is about nine inches taller, four years older and very athletic for her size. Still, Osceola was up for the challenge.

"I was kind of scared to go up [against her], but I still went up," said Osceola, whose strong seventh grade season included scoring in double digits five times.

Sangha, a junior, scored 31 points, which was just about her average during the season.

NSU University School will look to build from its successful season. The Sharks could return nearly their entire team next

"We're a young team, so there was [some] difficulty, but at the end of the day we're individually better," Billie said.

'Our middle school team won districts. We have a lot of young kids, so if they keep working hard and play together, I think we'll be a force to be reckoned with,' Riscica said.



With Pine Crest's 6-foot-4 Isabella Sangha quarding the inbounds pass, Tatum Billie tries to find an open teammate.

### **NSU University School standout** Xavier Osceola wraps up high school career

BY KEVIN JOHNSON **Senior Editor** 

**DAVIE** — – NSU University School boys basketball coach Ron Oliver knows the future is bright for Xavier Osceola, who spent his senior season racking up impressive numbers for the Sharks.

Osceola, a 6-foot-2 guard and the only Seminole on the squad, displayed his offensive skills to the tune of averaging 15 points per game, which was second highest on the team. He led the team in several other categories, including assists and 3-pointers.

He scored a season-high 30 points against Naples and scored at least 20 points six other times.

"He did great," said Oliver, who guided the squad to a 16-9 record. "He carried us all year. He's a great scorer. I think he's

definitely a college basketball player. He's talented enough to go as far as he wants to go. He can really shoot the ball."

The Sharks peaked at the right time, winning 10 of 11 games before losing to Cardinal Gibbons in a district final.

The Sharks regrouped with a win against Somerset Academy in a Class 3A regional quarterfinal. Osceola scored 13 points.

But the final game wasn't indicative of how the Sharks played nearly all season. In a regional semifinal Feb. 17 at home, NSU University didn't match Gulliver Prep's intensity at the start and never caught up, losing 85-69.

Osceola scored 15 points in his final high school game. His final basket came on a running jumper with :29 left in the game. He also dished out a team-high seven assists.



NSU University School senior guard Xavier Osceola takes a 3-point shot in a Class 3A regional semifinal against Gulliver Prep on Feb. 17 in Davie.



Kevin Johnson Xavier Osceola makes a steal in front of the Gulliver bench.



Xavier Osceola leads a fastbreak against Gulliver Prep.



Western's Betty-Lynn Osceola looks for an open teammate in Class 7A regional semifinal Feb. 18 at Doral Academy.

## **Betty-Lynn Osceola makes** strong impression in first season with Western

BY KEVIN JOHNSON **Senior Editor** 

**DORAL** — When Betty-Lynn Osceola joined the Western High School girls basketball team this season, coach Brandie Taylor didn't know what to expect.

"We didn't know much about her," Taylor said.

Western knows all about Osceola now after she made a strong impression in season

"Betty was phenomenal. She's a knockdown shooter, a 3-point shooter, comes in and works hard. Very coachable; a great young lady. I love having her on the team," Taylor said.

One of the highlights in Osceola's season came Jan. 16 when she hit a buzzer-beater to force overtime against Cypress Bay. Western ended up losing in overtime, however, Taylor said getting to that overtime helped her team

a few weeks later when Western and Cypress Bay hooked up for another nail-biter. This time the stakes were higher – a district championship game – and this time Western emerged victorious, 47-45.

Osceola, a junior, averaged five points and three rebounds per game, coming off the bench most nights. She scored in double digits a couple times, including 14 points in a Class 7A regional quarterfinal win against

Ferguson.
"When Betty gets hot, she's definitely hot," Taylor said.

After the team's final game – a 76-30 loss on Feb. 18 to powerful Doral Academy in the 7A regional semifinals – Osceola said she enjoyed her first season with the team.

"They gave me a good chance," she said. "I think we did pretty good. We had a good season.

The district champs finished with a 14-



The 2025 Okeechobee High School softball team includes Seminoles, from left to right, Daliyah Nunez, Adeline Garcia, Alyssa Madrigal, Dyani Kayda, Tehya Nunez, Melaine Bonilla, Kiera Snell, Joleyne Nunez and head coach Mary Huff.

## Season starts for OHS softball loaded with Seminoles

BY KEVIN JOHNSON **Senior Editor** 

**PORT ST. LUCIE** — With a roster that includes eight players from the Seminole Tribe of Florida, a young Okeechobee High School softball team played its second game of the season Feb. 19 against Centennial High School in Port St. Lucie.

Seminoles on the team include head coach Mary Huff and players Melaine Bonilla, Adeline Garcia, Dyani Kayda, Alyssa Madrigal, Daliyah Nunez, Joleyne Nunez, Tehya Nunez and Kiera Snell.

The Brahmans encountered a tough task in a loss against Centennial, having to go up against hard-throwing pitcher Hailey Brereton, who has committed to NCAA Division I Murray State University.

Some highlights for the Brahmans included a single by Bonilla, a walk and run scored by Snell, and an RBI sacrifice bunt by Tehya Nunez.

After opening the season with four losses, the Brahmans notched their first win in impressive fashion, a 2-1 victory against Jensen Beach on Feb. 28. Pitcher Lily Larson delivered a complete game two-hitter and



Daliyah Nunez is cheered by her teammates during player introductions.

helped her own cause with two hits and one RBI. Tehya Nunez also starred in the victory. She scored both runs and notched one of the

team's five hits. Through five games, Bonilla leads the club with a .385 batting average.

Kevin Johnson



Kevin Johnson



Betty-Lynn Osceola battles for position in the paint against Doral Academy.

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Kiera Snell smiles after she scores a run against Centennial.





Dyani Koenes makes solid contact.

Melaine Bonilla cleanly fields a groundball for an out.

### Seminole teams win Tribal Fair basketball titles

BY KEVIN JOHNSON Senior Editor

The Seminole Tribal Fair Basketball Tournament crowned its champions Feb. 1, 2025, at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center in Hollywood.

In the men's 18 and over division championship, the Seminoles team was in control throughout and cruised to a 93-67 win against the Plainzmen. Freddy Brown had the hot hand for the Seminoles with 31 points, including seven from beyond the arc. The Seminole Tribe's Hunter Osceola and Duelle Gore were also standouts on the Seminoles. Osceola scored 13 points, which included four 3's, and Gore scored nine

In the 35 and over men's title game, the Young Bucks edged the EBCI Braves, 48-47. Ronnie Battle led the Bucks with 15 points.

On the women's side, the Lady Ballers - led by the Seminole Tribe's Skyla Osceola – jumped out to a 14-0 lead, scored 73 points

in the first half and cruised to a win against XFactor in the 18 and over championship. Osceola scored 16 points and she had plenty of company in double digits with teammates Ni'Asia McIntosh (36 points), Jenna Plumley (32 points, including 24 in the first half) and Kyannah Grant (25 points),

The Lady Ballers' 35 and over team also claimed a championship by defeating Rezilient, 41-36. Mystee Dale led the way with 16 points and Plumley had 14 points. The Seminole Tribe's Mercedes Osceola scored 5 points for Rezilient and Tasha Osceola had 3 points.

Women named tournament all-stars were Valiyah Yazzie, Miracle Spotted Bear, Tiana Guillory, Kyannah Grant and Ni'Asia McIntosh. Jenna Plumley was named Tournament MVP.

The men's all-stars consisted of Rance Harrison, Tevin Foster, Micah Lena, Falcon Albers and Jesse Callan. Freddy Brown was named the men's MVP.

Tribal Fair Committee director Virginia Osceola congratulated each team.



Seminoles: 18 and over men's champions.



Young Bucks: 35 and over men's champions.



Lady Ballers: 35 and over women's champions.



The Lady Ballers: 18 and over women's champions.



Kevin Johnson

Tribal Fair Tournament men and women all-stars.

## **Brighton Field Day Festival hosts pro rodeo**

**BRIGHTON** — The PRCA brought three days of action to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena during the Brighton Field Day Festival.

Here are the results:

**Brighton Field Day Festival Xtreme Bulls** 

Feb. 16

**Bull riding:** 1. Trey Benton III, 88 points on JC Kitaif ProRodeos' Rockstar, \$12,972; 2. Cody Jesus, 87.5, \$9,945; 3. Brandon Ballard, 85, \$7,351; 4. T Parker, 84.5, \$4,756; 5. Stefan Tonita, 81.5, \$3,027; 6. Cutter Kaylor, 81, \$2,162; 7. Clayton Sellars, 80, \$1,730; 8. Riggin Shippy, 79.5,

Total payoff: \$43,240.

**Brighton Field Day Festival & Rodeo** Feb. 13-15

All-around cowboy: Cross Fulford, \$2,115, tie-down roping and steer wrestling. Bareback riding: 1. Andy Gingerich, 84 points on Painted Pony Championship

Rodeo's No. F18, \$2,456; 2. Taylor Broussard, 83.5, \$1,883; 3. Collin Roland, 81, \$1,392; 4. Colton Clemens, 79, \$901; 5. Steven DeWolfe, 78, \$573; 6. Anthony Thomas, 77, \$409; 7. Squirm Osceola, 75, \$327; 8. Chett Deitz, 74, \$246.

Steer wrestling: 1. Mose Fleming, 4.2 seconds, \$2,140; 2. Kamry Dymmek, 4.3, \$1,861; 3. Kyle Irwin, 4.5, \$1,582; 4. Clayton Culligan, 4.6, \$1,303; 5. Juan Alcazar Jr, 4.7, \$1,024; 6. Eli Troyer, 4.9, \$744; 7. Joshua Moore, 5.5, \$465; 8. Joshua Hefner, 5.7, \$186.

Team roping: 1. Bradley Massey/Zack Mabry, 4.4 seconds, \$2,233 each; 2. Keven Daniel/Parker Carbajal, 4.5, \$1,970; 3. Jobe Johns/Rylan Lipe Lipe, 4.6, \$1,708; 4. Quinton Parchman/Gus Mosley, 5.2, \$1,445; 5. Ryan Pope/Zak Dobbins, 5.3, \$1,314; 6. Joe Beaver/Levi Pettigrew, 6.3, \$1,182; 7. Clint Keller/Morgan Jones, 6.8, \$1,051; 8.

Wyatt Muggli/Latham Dickson, 7.8, \$920; 9. Dillon Green/Trent Davis, 10.1, \$788; no other qualified runs.

Saddle bronc riding: 1. Kole Ashbacher, 86 points on C5 Rodeo's North Country, \$2,913; 2. Ryder Sanford, 81, \$2,233; 3. Caleb Miller, 80.5, \$1,651; 4. Kody Rinehart, 80, \$1,068; 5. Keene Justesen, 79.5, \$680; 6. Lachlan Miller, 77.5, \$486; 7. Rudy Troyer, 77, \$388; 8. (tie) Parker Kempfer and Jake Watson, 76.5, \$146 each.

Tie-down roping: 1. Ben Mayworth, 8.0 seconds, \$2,397; 2. Cross Fulford, 8.5, \$2,115; 3. Spur Valdez, 8.9, \$1,833; 4. Bart Brunson, 9.2, \$1,551; 5. Dontre'

Goff Craven-Goff, 9.4, \$1,410; 6. Jake McKendree, 9.7, \$1,269; 7. Colt Papy, 9.9, Carrington, 15.40, \$169. \$1,128; 8. (tie) Randall Carlisle and Zeke Norfleet, 10.0, \$917 each; 10. (tie) Collin Arnould and Chris McCuistion, 10.1, \$282

Barrel racing: 1. (tie) Katie Chism and Margo Crowther, 15.02 seconds, \$3,046 each; 3. Lindsey Muggli, 15.04, \$2,200; 4. Ruby Lightfoot, 15.08, \$1,692; 5. (tie) Cindy Patrick and Tara Seaton, 15.15, \$1,184 each; 7. Kati Jett. 15.17. \$846; 8. Abbie Crews. 15.18, \$761; 9. Katie Halbert, 15.19, \$677; 10. Taylor Carver, 15.20, \$592; 11. Karrie Hudson, 15.21, \$508; 12. Ryleigh Adams, 15.33, \$423; 13. Jo Fisher, 15.36, \$338;

Bull riding: 1. Braden Richardson, 85 points on Big Rafter Rodeo's Sasquatch, \$3,610; 2. JR Stratford, 83.5, \$2,767; 3. Andres Guzman, 83, \$2,045; 4. Cody McElroy, 82.5, \$1,324; 5. (tie) Jace Trosclair and Travoris Zeno, 81.5, \$722 each; 7. Patterson Starcher, 80.5, \$481; 8. Scottie Knapp, 78.5, \$361.

**Total payoff:** \$102,328. Stock contractor: Five Star Rodeo. Sub-contractors: JC Kitaif ProRodeos, C5 Rodeo, Painted Pony Championship Rodeo, Big Water Pro Rodeo, Marty Johns, Jason Hanchey, Marcus Theriot, Brookman Rodeo and Big Rafter

Rodeo. Rodeo secretary: Jody Cox. Officials: Chuck Hoss, Kent Crouch and J.R. Clark. Timers: Emilie White and Morgan Sellars. Announcer: Roger Mooney. Specialty acts: Haley Procto Proctor and David Whitmoyer. Bullfighters: Jake Geiger, Mike Driver and Dalton Burnell. Clown/barrelman: David Whitmoyer. Flankmen: Shawn Graham, Jack Simmons, Seth Louthan, Paul Bowers Jr and Tyson Wade Cardinal. Chute boss: Marty Johns. Pickup men: Hunter Holley, Reed Durrance and Spook Whidden. Music director: Ashley Mooney. Photographer:

Darlena Roberts.



Braden Richardson rides a bull in the PRCA rodeo.



# Chanon Frye putting up numbers at both ends

**STAFF REPORT** 

Chanon Frye, from the Big Cypress Reservation, finished February in solid form as he scored in double digits in the final two games of the month for Murray State College men's basketball.

Frye, a 6-foot-6 freshman, scored 12 points in a 79-70 loss against Redlands Community College. He also had nine rebounds, three blocks and two steals.

Three days later he scored 11 points

in an 83-62 loss against Northeast Oklahoma A&M. He also dished out a season-high five assists and grabbed seven rebounds.

In 26 games, Frye is averaging six points and five rebounds per game. He leads the team in blocks with 22 and is fourth with 129 rebounds.

Murray State, located in southern Oklahoma, entered March with a 19-8 record.

Murray State
The 2024-25 Murray State
College men's basketball
team includes
Chanon Frye (32).



#### BC to host annual Herman Osceola Memorial Tournament

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — The 36th annual Herman Osceola Memorial Basketball Tournament will be held March 20-22 at the Herman Osceola Gymnasium on the Big Cypress Reservation.

The divisions scheduled to be held include Legends (men and women 35 and up), Adults, and Youth Co-Ed. Last year's tournament was the first time the Youth Co-Ed division was offered.

The tournament is held in memory of U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Herman L. Osceola, who grew up on the BC Reservation. He died aboard a military helicopter that crashed during a training exercise March 24, 1984, in South Korea

# **Hot bat for Ava Nunez**

STAFF REPORT

Thomas University softball third baseman Ava Nunez picked up momentum at the plate heading into March.

Nunez, from the Immokalee Reservation, finished February by hitting safely in six of the team's final nine games before the end of the month.

She had three hits, two runs scored and one RBI in the team's Florida swing against Warner, Southeastern and Webber.

Nunez notched her first multiple hit game of the season with a 2-for-2 day in a loss Feb. 21 at Coastal Georgia. She ended the month with one hit, one run, one RBI and one walk in a 7-4 win against Middle Georgia State.

She entered March with a .250 batting average that included eight hits and three RBIs.

Nunez is in her third season at the Thomas, Georgia, school. She is majoring in psychology.

Thomas had a 7-8 record as of Feb. 28.

## Pro golf tour coming to South Florida

FROM PRESS RELEASE

DORAL — Trump National Doral golf course will host LIV Golf Miami from April 4 to April 6 in Doral. The field is expected to include some of the top names in golf, including Jon Rahm, Brooks Koepka, Bryson DeChambeau, Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Cameron Smith and Sergio Garcia.

The band Sublime will perform a concert

LIV Golf features individual and team competitions. For ticket information go to livgolf.com.

#### Miami Open runs March 16-30 at Hard Rock Stadium

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**MIAMI GARDENS** — The Miami Open presented by Itaú, featuring some of the top tennis players in the world, will be held March 16-30 at Hard Rock Stadium.

Four past men's winners are in the field, led by No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz (2022), who is joined by No. 6 Daniil Medvedev (2023), No. 20 Hubert Hurkacz (2021) and six-time Miami Open champion Novak Djokovic, who is looking to make his first Miami Open appearance since 2019. Four previous finalists are also in the field, including current Top 10 members Alexander Zverev (No. 2) and Casper Ruud (No. 5) as well as Grigor Dimitrov and Kei Nishikori.

Defending champion Danielle Collins is one of a trio of former women's winners in the field, joined by Iga Swiatek (2022) and three-time winner Victoria Azarenka. The entire WTA Top 10, led by No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and No. 2 Swiatek, is entered along with No. 7 Elena Rybakina, who has been runner-up in each of the past two years. She's joined by other past finalists Naomi Osaka and Jelena Ostapenko in the field.

The Open features more than 40 restaurants and bars. New this year are popular eateries such as Fabel and Miami Slice along with returning favorites like Kiki on the River and OMAKAI.

For more information go to miamiopen.

## Bare knuckle fights to be held at Hard Rock Live

FROM PRESS RELEASE

**HOLLYWOOD** — Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship returns to Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood March 27 at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$60. For ticket information go to myHRL. com.





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## Big Cypress employees enjoy appreciation day luau

**BIG CYPRESS** —Employees on the the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena on Jan. 31. Big Cypress Reservation were treated to a The event was sponsored and organized by festive employee appreciation day luau at the office of Councilwoman Mariann Billie.



About 70 Ahfachkee School staff members gather together on the stage at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena during Big Cypress's employee appreciation From left to right, Building and Grounds employees Adriana Dos Santos, Michael Dolado Romero and day luau luncheon on Jan. 31. Dina Castro take part in the festive atmosphere of the luau.



**Beverly Bidney** 



Human Resources employee Laurell Battiste, center, poses with luau dancers as they hand out coconuts filled with coconut water to employees entering the luau.

Health Clinic employees smile for a group selfie.

**Beverly Bidney** 

Association

# Learning Center

## March schedule

FROM NATIVE LEARNING CENTER

HOLLYWOOD The NLC offers free Training, Technical Assistance, and Kerretv Online Webinars to Native Americans and those working within Indian Country. The NLC's housing-related training opportunities and resources focus on areas that are critical to the growth and improvement of Tribal Communities. Stay informed about the latest trainings, webinars, and podcast episodes.

Webinar: How Money Works for Women: Take Control or Lose It Instructor: Chantay Moore, MBA

(Navajo / African American) Certified Financial Educator Native American Financial Literacy

Date: March 4 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Money is a very emotional subject. Whether you are struggling financially or simply are not sure what to do with the money you have, this workshop will provide you the information and guidance you need to improve your financial position, create generational wealth, and truly take control

Course Objectives:

-Understand the emotional factors that influence financial decision-making -Assess your current financial position

and identify areas for improvement -Develop personalized strategies for managing money effectively, including budgeting and debt reduction

-Explore avenues for investing and saving to build generational wealth

-Create a long-term financial plan tailored to your individual goals and values

-Gain confidence in making informed financial decisions to secure your future LLC financial well-being

a strong understanding of your current baseline of metrics and success. You will

Webinar: Strategy & Metrics for a

Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST

Owner, DH Leonard Consulting &

Professionals

**Successful Annual Grant Plan** 

Grant Writing Services, LLC

Course Description:

Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Date: March 6

Approved Trainer

This session will provide you with learn how to set goals for the year ahead in a way that will help expand your grant seeking strategy and revenue.

Course Objectives:

-How to define your success in the current year beyond the dollars awarded

-How to set goals for your success in the upcoming year to include measurements beyond dollars awarded

-How to engage your colleagues in being ready for the upcoming year

Onsite **Training: Property** Maintenance for Tribal Housing

Instructor: Jeff Ackley Jr., (Sokaogon Chippewa) **Executive Director** 

Lac Du Flambeau Chippewa Housing Authority

Great Lakes Indian Housing Association Co-Founder Native Land Construction & Consulting

Date: March 6-7 Time: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Training Description:

Instructor Jeff Ackley, Jr. is a Sokaogon Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe Tribal Member and the Executive Director of the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa Housing Authority. Through his leadership, the Housing Authority secured diverse funding through Low Income Housing Tax Credits, the American Rescue Plan Act, and other sources to develop the Tree Haven subdivision, a community center, and other housing-related projects in Lac du Flambeau. Jeff is also the Chairman of the Great Lakes Indian Housing Association and sits on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Native Loan Fund, Inc. This comprehensive twoday in-person tuition-free training provides both entry-level and seasoned Tribal Housing Professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively manage and execute maintenance operations within their communities. Participants will gain a thorough understanding of preventative

maintenance, troubleshooting common issues, and coordinating repairs while adhering to relevant regulations and industry best practices.

Webinar: Understanding **Emergency Operation Center and** Navigating Through Crisis 4-Day Webinar Series

Instructor: Dr. William Latchford, DCJ President,

Native Peacekeeper Consulting Group,

Date: March 11-14 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

"Understanding the Emergency Operation Center and Navigating Through the Crisis Series" offers an in-depth look at the heart of emergency response: the Emergency Operation Center (EOC). These webinars are crafted to help participants comprehend the structure, functions, and management of an EOC, including the integration with Incident Command Systems (ICS). Attendees will navigate through the processes of activation, operation, and deactivation of an EOC, along with the progression of response and recovery to various hazards. The webinar series will delve into the role of coordination and communication among different agencies and jurisdictions during an emergency. It will provide a sequential understanding that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in managing disasters and practical application in managing disasters and emergencies from the onset of the hazard to the end back to normalcy.

Course Objectives:

-Define the purpose and functions of an Emergency Operation Center (EOC) -Understand the relationship between EOCs and Incident Command Systems

-Identify key components of EOC concepts and basics of procurement

structure and layout. -Recognize different models of EOC organization and their applications -Comprehend the role of technology in

modern EOC operations Webinar: Grant Professionals ARE

**Superheroes** Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST Professionals Association Grant

Approved Trainer Owner, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC Date: March 20

Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description: This session will highlight the many hats and specialties we wear/have as grant professionals. While we may tell our clients/ employers that we can't do it alone, and we \*shouldn't\* do it alone, we are each, in fact, our own unique superhero creating impact and change through our work.

Course Objectives: -YOU are a Super Hero -Measuring Your Value -Setting Goals for the Upcoming Year -Discussion and Questions

Webinar: NAHASDA Procurement & **Contract Administration 5-Day Webinar** Series

Instructor: Cheryl A. Causley, (Bay Mills Tribe of Chippewa Indians) Principal, Cheryl A. Causley and Associates

Date: March 24-28

Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

This course will cover the administrative requirements that pertain to procurement using Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) funds distributed to Tribes and Tribal Housing Programs in accordance with the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA). During this course, students will learn how to conduct procurement effectively and efficiently and to comply with requirements imposed by HUD and other funding sources. We will discuss the skills required to perform the responsibilities related to sound procurement management and the methods for complying with 2 CFR 200. We will provide various procurement documents to help your organization with procurement compliance areas.

Course Objectives:

-An understanding of the IHA management and operations in relation to procurement

-An increased knowledge of the

-Improved capabilities and proficiency job skills in the performance of procurement functions of the local housing

Follow the Native Learning Center on social media or visit www. nativelearningcenter.com to keep up-to-date. For technical assistance, feedback, or more information, please contact us through our website or call 954-985-2331. The Native Learning Center values your input and welcomes your questions. Let us know what courses you and your community would like to see offered or if there are insights and lessons you and your community would like to share with others through the Native Learning Center.

