

‘A’ reason to celebrate as PECS earns top rating

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School gym was transformed into the Land of Oz on Aug. 14 to celebrate the school earning its tenth “A” grade from the Florida Department of Education.

In addition to the “A” rating, the department named PECS a school of excellence for the third year in a row. The school also has the distinction of being a high performing charter school and ranks in the top 4% of schools in the state.

Students walked the “yellow brick road” before they entered the gym for the festivities. Along the way, they were greeted by characters from the film version of the “Wizard of Oz” played by familiar faces. Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and principal Tracy Downing dressed as the Wizard of Oz. Administrative assistant Michele Thomas was Dorothy and held a small stuffed dog named Toto in a basket. Teachers and administrators dressed as the tin man, cowardly lion, scarecrow, Glinda the good witch of the North, the wicked witch of the west and Oz residents.

“We have something big to celebrate today,” Thomas said to the students in the gym. “Not only have we earned an “A” school grade for the 2025-2026 school year, but we are also beginning a very special journey- our 20th year. We have 20 years of learning, 20 years of growing, 20 years of building dreams, creating opportunities and educating our children.”



Dressed as characters from the "Wizard of Oz," Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, left, and PECS administrators and teachers, including administrative assistant Michele Thomas, far right, and principal Tracy Downing, greet students Aug. 14 as they walk the yellow brick road in celebration of the school earning an "A" rating from the Florida Department of Education.

◆ See PECS on page 3B

Tribe welcomes Rep. Soto to Brighton

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BRIGHTON — For three hours on the afternoon of Aug. 7, U.S. Congressman Darren Soto visited the Brighton Reservation and received a synopsis about the Seminole Tribe of Florida with plenty of attention given to the Brighton Reservation. He heard from Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and tribal department leaders who explained the tribe’s agriculture, education, culture, environmental protection, public safety and other aspects of life and government on the reservations.

Florida’s District 9, which Soto represents and includes Osceola County and parts of Orange and Polk counties, has been expanded south. It now includes Glades, where Brighton is located, Highlands, Okeechobee and Indian River counties. The district expansion is one reason why Soto made his first visit to the reservation.

“Thank you for coming to breathe our air and walk our roads and our halls and break bread with us because that’s the way you truly get to know the heartbeat of this community,” Michele Thomas, the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School administrative assistant and a lifelong Brighton resident, said to Soto as she started a presentation about the school on the reservation during a gathering in the Florida Veterans Building.

◆ See SOTO on page 5A

Zae Thomas begins second season on FSU football team

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

TALLAHASSEE — Heavily favored Florida State opened its 2026 football season with a 34-17 win against New Mexico State in front of 65,919 fans Aug. 29 at Doak Campbell Stadium.

FSU has dozens of new players on its roster – including starting quarterback Ashton Daniels – but among the returnees from last year’s club is Zae Thomas from the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The 6-foot-3 defensive back, who did not see game action against New Mexico State, enters his sophomore season after what he said was a positive summer of working out.

“It was good. I put in a lot of work to prepare and hopefully get on the field. It was a goal for me to get stronger, a little more muscle,” Thomas said after the game, just before he stepped outside the Moore Center to meet his parents, sisters and grandparents who came up from South Florida to watch the game.

A year ago, Thomas was listed at 196 pounds; this year the roster has him at 207, although he said his weight is closer to 200



Led by coach Mike Norvell, the Florida State Seminoles, including the Seminole Tribe's Zae Thomas (22), get ready for their season opener against New Mexico State on Aug. 29 at Doak Campbell Stadium in Tallahassee. Thomas is in his second season at FSU. The Seminoles won, 34-17.



The Seminole Tribe of Florida seal is on the helmets of all FSU football players.

now.

Thomas played in two games last year as a freshman (vs East Texas A&M and Kent State). He has four years of eligibility remaining. With new NCAA rules, redshirting has disappeared, giving way to a new rule that allows athletes five years of competition.

Thomas said his freshman season had its “ups and downs.” This season he said he needs to take advantage of opportunities.

Thomas is the second student-athlete from the unconquered Seminole Tribe to play football for FSU; Justin Motlow (2014-17) was the first. Thomas is also one of two Seminoles on FSU varsity sports teams in 2026-27. OB Osceola III is in his freshman year on the FSU baseball team. The tribe’s Xavier Osceola was a member of the FSU men’s basketball team as a freshman in the 2025-26 season, but he is no longer on the team.

◆ See FSU on page 4A

Editorial

When the bulldozers move before tribal consent

• Levi Rickert

Imagine living with your family on land that has been yours for generations — only to have the government draw a line through it and divide your property.

Then, to make matters worse, the government decides it wants to build a wall across your lot – without asking your permission.

This is the dilemma facing the Tohono O’odham Nation of Arizona. The Nation took its fight to federal court in June.

Leading the fight against the wall is Tohono O’odham Nation Chairman Verlon Jose, whom I met at a National Congress of American Indians convention several years ago. When I asked him to tell me about his Nation, he immediately included a large swath of land extending beyond the southern border of the United States into Mexico. He told me the reservation stretches 62 miles along U.S.-Mexico border and the Nation’s ancestral homeland extends about 75 miles into Mexico. He told me that some 2,000 Tohono O’odham citizens still live in Mexico.

As he told me about the geography of his tribal nation, I was reminded of something Native Americans often say: “Their borders are not necessarily ours.”

Since then, I have seen him at other national Native American conventions and I ran into him at the Democratic Party convention in Chicago two years ago. He told me that if Donald Trump got elected for a second term, the Nation would still oppose the construction of a border wall on the Tohono O’odham reservation.

That conversation has stayed with me.

The Tohono O’odham homeland predates the U.S.-Mexico border. Today, the Nation’s federally recognized reservation encompasses approximately 2.8 million acres and shares 62 miles of international border with Mexico. But O’odham people have lived across what is now southern Arizona and northern Sonora for thousands of years. The international boundary divided their people, communities, families and sacred places.

[In August], U.S. District Judge Richard Leon in Washington denied the Nation’s request to stop construction while its lawsuit proceeds. Leon ruled that the Tohono O’odham Nation had not demonstrated that construction would unlawfully alter its reservation boundaries or constitute an illegal trespass. He also found that the federal government’s interests in border security and public safety outweighed the potential harm to the Nation for purposes of the preliminary injunction.

But this case should be about more than whether a line on a government map technically moves. It is about whether the United States can enter Indian Country, begin construction on tribal lands and damage sacred cultural resources without the consent of the tribal nation that has governed those lands for centuries prior to the existence of the United States.

The Tohono O’odham Nation says it was not asked for consent before the federal

government moved forward with the project. The Nation also argues that construction threatens sacred places, religious practices, wildlife and the cultural connections that have survived despite an international border being imposed across its homeland.

And there is already evidence of why the Nation’s concerns should not be dismissed as hypothetical.

In April, construction connected to the border wall damaged the Las Playas Intaglio, a sacred archaeological site featuring an ancient image carved into the desert floor. The Nation has warned that other sacred places also face potential harm.

Judge Leon acknowledged that the international border is an area of great significance to both the United States and the Nation. He also said he expects the government to honor its promises of consultation and cooperation with the Nation.

But consultation after construction begins is not how sovereign nations should operate. A federal promise of consultation should not substitute for the legal rights of a tribal nation.

For generations, Native nations have heard the federal government say that treaties, laws and executive orders protect their sovereignty—only to see those protections narrowed when they conflict with federal priorities.

Border security is a legitimate federal responsibility. But protecting the border does not give the federal government a blank check to disregard tribal sovereignty.

The Tohono O’odham Nation has worked with federal authorities on border security for decades. The Nation has supported technology and other measures when it believed they could protect its people while respecting its lands and culture. In 2019, for example, the Nation approved rights-of-way across its lands for a Customs and Border Protection Integrated Fixed Tower system used for electronic surveillance.

That cooperation should mean something.

The federal government should not be allowed to say, in effect, “trust us,” while bulldozers are already moving.

The Tohono O’odham Nation is not asking the United States to abandon border security. It is asking the federal government to respect Tribal sovereignty and protect a homeland that existed long before an international boundary divided it.

The judge’s decision may be a setback, but it should not be the final word.

This is about more than a wall. It is about whether the United States will honor its relationship with Tribal Nations when doing so becomes inconvenient.

Native people have heard those promises before. It is time for the United States to keep them.

Thayék gde nwéndëmen – We are all related.

Levi “Calm Before the Storm” Rickert (Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation) is the founder, publisher and editor of Native News Online. This opinion was published on nativenewsonline.net.

Everglades Coalition to hold annual conference in Naples

STAFF REPORT

The Everglades Coalition will hold its annual conference from Jan. 28 to 30, 2027, in Naples. The theme of the conference is “Uniting for America’s Everglades: Protecting Our Investment.”

The conference will be the largest forum for discussing the Everglades restoration progress, challenges and opportunities by bringing together conservation groups, elected officials, business leaders, local, state, tribal and federal partners to engage in meaningful dialogue about restoring the Everglades.

The Coalition, a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation, is an alliance of 55 local, state and national conservation and environmental

groups dedicated to the full restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem from the Kissimmee chain of lakes into Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries, through the river of grass and out to the Florida Bay and the Keys.

The Coalition works in the public arena to inform decision makers on the collective view of the conservation community regarding the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. It uses policy papers, comparisons of proposed policy decisions focused on sound science and public comments on critical aspects of restoration.

For more information about the conference, visit www.evergladescoalition.org/conference.

Hard Rock Cafe sponsors music competition for emerging bands

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Hard Rock Cafe and Coca-Cola Brand have partnered in a global music competition for emerging artists. The Hard Rock Rising music competition spans 34 countries and 64 Hard Rock Cafes around the world. Hard

Rock Rising will conduct multiple live performances being held at various Hard Rock Cafes. Local fans will be able to vote for artists that will advance round by round until a global winner is announced.

Live competition rounds will be held Sept. 2, 9, 16 and 23. A global winner will be announced on Oct 5.

Three tribal youth complete summer internships with Department of Conservation

BY JOE ANDREOLI
Invasive Wildlife Biologist, Department of Conservation
and
CRAIG VAN DER HEIDEN
Director, Department of Conservation

The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP) continues to grow, offering Tribal youth ages 14 to 24 an opportunity to explore careers across Tribal departments. Since its founding in January 2025, the Department of Conservation (DOC) has made youth engagement and Tribal Member career development a central part of its mission to protect and sustainably manage the Tribe’s natural resources.

In just two years, DOC has welcomed seven SWEP interns, each completing an eight week internship culminating in a final presentation to their community. This summer, three interns—Koty Gopher, Marley Jimmie, and Karter Puente—joined DOC teams on the Big Cypress, Brighton, and Immokalee Reservations, contributing to wildlife, fisheries, and forestry conservation projects. On July 31, they shared their experiences in a PowerPoint presentation to their community in Brighton.

Highlights of the summer included setting and checking 80 live capture traps in different habitats off Buster Twin Road in Brighton. Koty, Marley, and Karter learned how to bait and set the Sherman traps, identify the mammal captured, take the mass, and mark the belly of the mammal with a Sharpie to document recaptures. They captured Cotton Mice, Cotton Rats, and Virginia Opossums, with some individual Cotton Mice and Virginia Opossums recaptured multiple times throughout the week.

In Kissimmee Billie Slough, Big Cypress, Koty, Marley, and Karter waded in waist-deep water to set and check long nets called fyke nets. Part of what makes this long-term project so fun is that you never quite know what you’re going to catch. Koty, Marley, and Karter learned to identify, safely handle, and release native fish like Florida Gar, invasive fish like Brown Hoplo, amphibians like Greater Siren, Pig Frogs, and Two-toed Amphiuma, reptiles like Chicken Turtles and Striped Mud Turtles,



DOC

Marley Jimmie, Koty Gopher and Karter Puente with a recaptured Virginia Opossum.

and Everglades and Slough Crayfish. Instead of using a Sharpie to document recaptured Florida Gar, Koty, Marley, and Karter used a hole puncher to “mark” captured Florida Gar by making a hole in the dorsal fin.

Koty, Marley, and Karter also learned some of the technological tools used by biologists, ecologists, and foresters. Such tools included drones and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Koty, Marley, and Karter learned how to use some of the GIS applications scientists use to gather important information like ArcGIS Field Maps, ArcGIS QuickCapture, and ArcGIS Survey123. Drones, GIS, and GIS applications are used in many Seminole Tribe of Florida departments, and DOC is proud to introduce and develop these skillsets in SWEP interns working with us.

Reflecting on their summer, each intern spoke about the impact of the experience.

“Working in DOC this summer was fun because I met new people and I got to do hands on activities,” said Koty Gopher.

“By doing this it has influenced me to study botany in college, and I hope to work here in the future after I finish high school,” added Marley Jimmie.

“All these fun projects we get to do working in DOC in the summer, I would for sure do again,” said Karter Puente.

Are you a tribal member between the ages of 14-24 that wants to conserve the fish, wildlife, and forests of the Seminole Tribe of Florida? Do you want to learn the latest in drone and GIS technology? Are you looking for a fun SWEP experience in 2027? Email DOCStaff@semtribe.com to learn more.

PBS to air film about Indigenous scientific knowledge

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Vision Media Maker (VMM) has announced a new film for PBS science series Nova titled “Knowledge Keepers.” The film focuses on Indigenous scientific knowledge, built on relationships with the environment and passed down through generations. The film will premiere on Sept. 23 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS and will stream at pbs.org/nova and the PBS app.

“Native people have developed and utilized essential scientific knowledge over millennia. These practices, based on respect and careful observation of the natural world, hold timely lessons for all of humanity. I am thrilled that NOVA is shining a spotlight on Indigenous science,” said VMM CEO and President Francene Blythe-Lewis (Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota, Diné, Eastern

Band Cherokee) in a press release. “We are honored to co-produce this film and we are proud of the important work that has been accomplished here by producer and director Daniel Golding (Fort Yuma Quechan) of Hokan Media, LLC, who previously co-produced the VMM series Native America 2.0, and co-producer Chris Neighbors (Choctaw) of NOVA.”

“Knowledge Keepers” reveals how deeply-held cultural traditions inform remarkable innovations, from ancient sea farming techniques that optimize ecosystems to celestial navigation methods perfectly adapted to extreme environments like the frozen Arctic. Viewers will learn how centuries of observation, experimentation, and adaptation have forged solutions to complex challenges like living in the harsh climate of the desert Southwest. Today,

knowledge keepers fight to preserve this ancient expertise and consider how it could transform our future.

The film features unique insights from many experts including Roberto Nutlouis, farmer and executive director of Nihikaya, a grassroots organization focused on restoring regenerative Diné ecological, cultural, social, and economic systems and lifeways, guided by traditional knowledge, teachings and practices, based in Pinon, Arizona; Ryan Spring, the cultural research assistant for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Calera, Oklahoma; Nicole Norris, a shellfish aquaculture specialist from Halalt First Nation in Nanaimo, Canada; Octavio Cruz, a marine manager from Pauquachin First Nation in Victoria, Canada; and Fred Sangris, Chief of the Yellowtail Dene First Nation in Yellowknife, Canada.

Official Notice

The Fleet Management Department of the Seminole Tribe of Florida is in the planning phase to install electric vehicle chargers at the following Tribal office locations within the existing parking lots. Per the EPA review the entire property and the specific location areas may have a potential to flood. The EV charger impact is being mitigated by installing all electrical wires in conduit and the EV chargers will be installed on a pedestal to avoid being submerged in water. The EV chargers are being funded by an EPA grant EPA-PRJ-021585.

Hollywood – Recreation Center, 3100 N 63rd Ave.; 6365 Taft St.; Fleet Facility, 4161 State Rd. 7; TCD Building, 5700 Griffin Rd.

Big Cypress – Frank Billie Field Office, 31000 Josie Billie Hwy.; Medical clinic, 30851 Buffalo Jim Loop N; Ahfachkee School, 31200 Josie Billie Hwy.

Brighton – Administration Bldg., 650 Harny Pond Rd.; Health Center, 17201 Civic St.

Immokalee – Administration Bldg., 295 Stockade Rd.; Medical Center, 850 Seminole Crossing Trail.

Fort Pierce – Community Center, 3300 Sally Chupco Tommie Way.

If you are interested in reviewing the proposed plans, contact Sandy Leonard, Director of the Fleet Management Department, sandyleonard@semtribe.com.

The question and answer session will be open for general inquiries from September 3, 2026, to September 17, 2026.

JOIN US CREATING JACK-O-LANTERN ART FOR THE PUMPKINS OF DEVIL'S GARDEN EXHIBIT

PUMPKIN PAINTING PARTY

SEPTEMBER 11, 2026, 2:30PM - 6PM

Community Members

You are invited on September 11th to create Jack-O-Lanterns for the Annual Pumpkins of Devil's Garden event!

Pumpkins, art supplies, & snacks will be provided. All creations will be displayed in the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Sculpture Garden at the exhibit opening celebration on October 8, 2026.

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Community



‘Answering his call of duty to serve our country,’ Edward Aguilar Jr. graduates Navy boot camp

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Edward Aguilar Jr., who graduated from the U.S. Navy boot camp July 9, has committed to serve his country in the Navy for eight years.

Aguilar Jr., 26, graduated as an E-3 rank and is a section leader. He is training to be a gunner’s mate, which will make him responsible for the operation, maintenance and repair of all weapons systems onboard a ship.

His wife, Rayanna; daughter, Elaine; and parents, Cindy and Edward Aguilar Sr. attended the boot camp graduation ceremony in Great Lakes, Illinois.



Courtesy photo

Edward Aguilar Jr. with his wife, Rayanna, and daughter, Elaine, at graduation.

“My son has always been military minded and is an enthusiast for weaponry,” wrote Aguilar Sr. in an email. “There was no better feeling than to see our son sworn into oath to defend our freedom and our country like many of our veterans in the Seminole Tribe have done for decades and decades.”

Before joining the Navy, Aguilar Jr. was in ROTC at Palmetto Ridge High School in Naples, worked in the security department at the Seminole Casino Hotel in Immokalee and as a security supervisor at the Coconut Creek Casino. He later left to work as a corrections officer in North Florida, returned to the Tribal Career Development program and returned to South Florida, where the call to duty inspired him to enlist.

“Cindy and I are both very proud of our son for a few reasons,” Aguilar Sr. said. “First, his bravery for stepping up to the plate and answering his call of duty to serve our country. And secondly, for following and pursuing one of his lifelong dreams of service at the highest level. His enlistment did not come too easy for us, however we know that this is his calling.”

His family doesn’t know where he will be assigned to serve, but they believe “God has plans for him and will keep him safe.”



Courtesy photo

Edward Aguilar Jr.

“At a time where patriotism seems hard to find, his actions have revitalized my hope for a better America and he is doing his part for us to achieve that,” Aguilar Sr. said.



Courtesy photo

Edward Aguilar Jr. with his parents, Cindy and Edward Aguilar Sr., at the graduation ceremony for the U.S. Navy boot camp July 9 in Illinois.

Animal Wildlife Services offers free spay and neuter clinics

BY HANNAH MCQUEEN AND ALEX KLING
Animal Wildlife Services

The Department of Conservation’s Animal Wildlife Services (AWS) has partnered with Cape Coral Animal Shelter (CCAS) to host free spay, neuter, microchip, and vaccine clinics this year in Hollywood, Brighton, Big Cypress and Lakeland. The last event in Brighton brought in 19 animals for full service, along with two additional pet owners who came solely for vaccinations.

These clinics are essential for long-term pet health and community safety. Spaying and neutering remain one of the most effective tools for managing pet overpopulation. Florida ranks fourth in the nation for shelter euthanasia, largely due to overcrowding. Brighton alone took in 321 dogs and 48 cats last year from multiple reservations. Just one unsprayed female cat can produce more than 100 kittens in her lifetime, and in theory, she and her offspring could contribute to more than 400,000

cats in only seven years.

AWS encourages residents to fix not only household pets but also stray or feral cats in the community. AWS assists with trapping. Beyond preventing litters, fixing pets can reduce health risks such as uterine infections, mammary tumors, and testicular cancer, as well as behavioral issues including roaming, fighting, and territorial marking.

Vaccines were another major focus of the clinic. Vaccinating dogs helps prevent dangerous illnesses such as Parvovirus, Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parainfluenza, and Rabies. Cats benefit from protection against Rhinotracheitis (FHV-1), Calicivirus, Panleukopenia, Feline Leukemia, and Rabies. Feline Leukemia can even be transmitted to Florida Panthers when they consume infected domestic or stray cats. Many of these diseases are inexpensive to prevent but costly and highly contagious once contracted.

Microchipping was also offered

as a free service. In an area frequently affected by hurricanes and severe weather, microchips help ensure lost pets make their way back home. Although microchips are not GPS trackers, they allow animal control officers, veterinarians, rescues, and good Samaritans to identify and contact owners—provided the chip is registered. Microchips offer permanent identification in cases of theft, impoundment, or ownership disputes. AWS provides free microchipping and registration year-round and can assist at their office or travel to residents who need help. AWS encourages pet owners to reach out to their local officer for microchipping.

The next clinic will be held at the Lakeland Reservation’s gymnasium on Sept 9. Drop off at 8 a.m. We will call you for pickup. Pets must not eat the day of the visit. EVERYONE MUST PREREGISTER WITH Cape Coral Clinic at (239) 573-2002, ext. 106

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Seminole Hearts: Denim & Diamonds Gala celebrates a night of giving

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe of Florida hosted its annual Denim & Diamonds Gala on Aug. 13 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, bringing together guests for an evening of celebration with a purpose: giving back to organizations that make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families.

At the heart of the annual Gala is Seminole Hearts, a message that reflects the spirit of generosity, compassion and community behind the Tribe's charitable giving. Through Denim & Diamonds, that spirit is put into action by raising funds and supporting nonprofit organizations whose work provides critical resources, services and opportunities to those who need them most.

While the Gala has a particular focus on organizations serving Native American communities and families, the reach of Seminole Hearts extends beyond Indian Country. This year's charitable giving also included support for organizations such as Ronald McDonald House Charities and Els for Autism, reflecting a shared commitment to improving the lives of children, adults and families facing significant challenges.

Els for Autism is devoted to helping people with autism of all abilities reach their fullest potential and live meaningful, fulfilling lives, while supporting the families and caregivers who walk alongside them. Ronald McDonald House Charities provides vital resources and support to families with children receiving medical care, helping keep families together during some of their most difficult times.

The evening also offered an opportunity to celebrate the generosity that makes this work possible. Guests enjoyed a Western-themed reception, dinner and live entertainment by country artist Graham Barham at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.

Tribal members and leaders joined nonprofit and community organizations, business and community partners, and elected state and local representatives for the evening. Together, their participation and support demonstrated the collective impact



Courtesy photo

Attendees sport a Western style look at the annual Denim & Diamonds Gala on Aug. 13.



Courtesy photo

From left to right, Esther Gopher, President Holly Tiger, and Tribal Secretary Naomi Wilson.

that can be achieved when people come together around a common purpose.

Seminole Hearts is more than a theme for an evening—it reflects a tradition of giving and caring for others. Through Denim

& Diamonds, the Seminole Tribe of Florida continues that tradition by supporting organizations working every day to strengthen families, create opportunities for children and improve lives in communities

both within and beyond Indian Country.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida extends its sincere appreciation to the sponsors, donors, organizations and guests whose generosity helped make this year's Denim & Diamonds

Gala a success. Their support ensures that the spirit of Seminole Hearts continues long after the evening ends, through the people, families and communities touched by the organizations the Gala supports.



Courtesy photo

Helene Buster, from Seminoles in Recovery, receives a donation for the program from President Holly Tiger.



Courtesy photo

Country artist Graham Barham, with President Holly Tiger, receives money raised from the silent auction on behalf of St Jude Children's Research Hospital.



Courtesy photo

Michele Thomas, Connie Whidden, Helene Buster, Linda Spurlock and Jodi Clay

◆ FSU From page 1A

FSU was listed as a 31-point favorite against New Mexico State. The Seminoles,

who led 17-7 at halftime, had a grip on the game all night, but perhaps not as firm a grip as many expected. With new players at several positions, the Seminoles had some bumpy moments. New Mexico State's 10 3rd down conversions sent uncomfortable ripples throughout the crowd.

Offensively, the Seminoles generated a few big yardage plays set up scoring. Two short TD runs by running back Samuel Singleton Jr. and another by Daniels paved the way for the opening night victory.

FSU will host a rare Monday night game when SMU visits Doak Campbell on

Labor Day at 7 p.m. The game, which will be broadcast on ESPN, marks the start of a tough stretch for FSU, which has four of its next six games against teams currently ranked in the top 25, including road trips to No. 13 Alabama (Sept. 19) and No. 7 Miami (Oct. 7).



Kevin Johnson

Zae Thomas, Chavez Thompson (52) and the rest of the Seminoles enjoy the postgame celebration after the win against New Mexico State on Aug. 29.



Kevin Johnson

Zae Thomas does pregame drills.



Kevin Johnson

Zae Thomas

◆ SOTO
From page 1A

Thomas stressed the important role that the school plays in keeping the Muscogee (Creek) language alive on the reservation and the vital connection between those who speak it and those who are being taught to learn it.

“We’re language revitalization,” she said.

She also pointed out the school’s impressive track record, earning several ‘A’ ratings and ‘school of excellence’ accolades from the state.

Soto also heard from Dr. Paul Backhouse, senior director of Environmental Protection Office, who spoke about issues the tribe deals with regarding water quality, water supply and evasive species, among others.

“When I first started, 20 years ago, Brighton was not connected really to any of the other surrounding urban areas, but as you come today, you can see those communities getting closer and closer. That’s pushing species onto this reservation,” he said.

Backhouse added that black bears are among the species making more of a presence in Brighton. In Big Cypress, which has bears, too, it’s pythons whose numbers have increased.

“As we see climate shifting and habitat shifting, species are moving further north as the environment changes,” he said, later adding that “The tribe’s core philosophy is that harmony between environment and culture.”

Those sentiments were echoed by Alex

Johns, Agriculture executive director, who spoke about the history and vital role cattle has played in the tribe and its families. He even took Soto back hundreds of years.

“1521 Ponce De Leon showed up and introduced the first cow to the United States, and our ancestors were the folks that actually received it,” Johns said.

Johns discussed the importance of water quality as it relates to cattle and land. He mentioned a pilot project aimed at making sure water received from a lake is not going to be detrimental to Seminole lands; and if it is, to work at finding solutions.

“We’ve always been good stewards, we do follow the best management practices that we were part of creating,” Johns said.

Representatives from Seminole Police and Emergency Management also briefed Soto on the work they do, including the differences between the issues they face in rural reservations like Brighton and BC compared to urban settings like Hollywood.

The brief ride in an SUV that Soto made from the Veterans Building to the historic Red Barn provided him with a glimpse of the expansion and progress being made on the reservation, which serves as one example of what is taking place at other reservations, too. He drove past the new preschool that is being built, and other new facilities, such as the skate park and Cultural Center Complex. Also on the way, he passed the “A” rated Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School, whose banner on its front fence declares “Successful learners today, unconquered leaders tomorrow.”

Soto didn’t leave disappointed. He said he’s a history buff and was thrilled



Michele Thomas, PECS administrative assistant, speaks at the gathering with U.S. Congressman Darren Soto.



Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, left, and Alex Johns, Agriculture executive director, right, chat with U.S. Congressman Darren Soto in the lobby of the Florida Seminole Veterans Building.



Jack Chalfant leads a tour and discussion with U.S. Congressman Darren Soto, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and others in the Red Barn on Aug. 7.

with the visit to the Red Barn, which was built in 1941 and served as a tribal hub for cattle industry and cowboys and an informal setting in the 1950s for discussions about the tribe becoming federally recognized and forming its own government. Jack Chalfant, who has a wealth of historic knowledge about the tribe and is THPO cultural resources supervisor, hosted the tour with Soto, Councilman Howard and others. It wasn’t just a quick peak inside and get out. The group stayed inside the barn for about 25 minutes, chatting about its history and importance.

As for key takeaways from the overall visit?

“Tribal sovereignty is essential,” Soto said in an interview at the end of his visit.

“Water continues to be a huge issue,” he added. “I’ve worked on it for years when I was in the state legislature. In fact, it was one of the ways I started working with the tribe. Everybody wanted to work on the casino stuff; I worked on water and agriculture and making sure with eminent domain that they were consulted on these things.”

Soto, a Democrat, has served in Congress since 2017. Depending on



Dr. Paul Backhouse, senior director EPO, has a discussion with U.S. Congressman Darren Soto.

upcoming election results, having tribal land in his district would be a first for him. “Brighton will have a special place in

my heart since it would actually be in the district,” he said.



U.S. Congressman Darren Soto, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and others who attended Soto's visit to Brighton gather outside the Red Barn.

Online prediction markets rile up state lawmakers

BY KEVIN HARDY
Stateline

CHICAGO — The escalating feud between states and online prediction markets was on full display at a summit of state lawmakers [in July] as legislators publicly scolded Kalshi and Polymarket, the two most prominent platforms.

Prediction market platforms say they are like commodity markets that offer contracts to speculate on the future price of corn or oil — not sportsbooks that allow gamblers to place bets. But many states reject those justifications, arguing the platforms are a backdoor to skirt state gambling regulations, particularly on sports.

The issue has sparked action from state regulators, new legislation, and a flurry of lawsuits from states, prediction markets, and the Trump administration, which has sought to sideline state oversight.

During a sometimes-heated panel discussion at the annual gathering of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Chicago, Iowa Republican state Sen. Dan Dawson told the audience that a group of students at his son’s high school recently enrolled in Kalshi to bet on World Cup matches. In Iowa, people must be at least 21 to participate in legal online sports betting.

“States are the ones that pick up the pieces,” Dawson said as a Kalshi executive looked on.

Dawson has previously raised concerns about the public health consequences of prediction markets. While an industry representative pledged to work with states, Dawson said a legislative subcommittee that recently studied the issue could not get even basic information from the prediction markets about their reach in Iowa.

“We couldn’t get one answer,” he said.

In March, Kalshi preemptively sued to block Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird,

a Republican, from taking civil or criminal enforcement action against it. In its suit, Kalshi claimed there was “a substantial risk that the attorney general of Iowa will bring an enforcement action.”

Regulation of prediction markets

Sara Slane, Head of Corporate Development at Kalshi, told lawmakers in Chicago that the company was committed to building relationships with the states. But she said the prediction markets are not subject to state oversight, as they are regulated by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which regulates derivatives such as futures contracts on stocks.

She said prediction markets require a national standard rather than a “state-by-state regulatory patchwork.”

“This was exactly what the commodity exchange was set up for,” she said.

The five-member, presidentially appointed CFTC currently has four vacancies. But it has aggressively sought to exclude states from overseeing prediction markets, suing red and blue states alike to maintain its jurisdiction over the markets.

[In July], a coalition of 44 state attorneys general wrote to the agency, arguing it does not have the power to regulate sports-related event contracts, which they say are subject to state gambling regulations.

In addition to encroaching on state-regulated and state-taxed sports gambling, states argue that prediction markets are subject to potential insider trading, lack consumer oversight and can fuel problem gambling.

Slane said her firm works to prevent money laundering and allows people who have problems with gaming to block themselves from the site. She said Kalshi also works with major sports leagues to prevent athletes and referees from trading on

sports events.

“We take this very seriously,” she said. “We want to promote integrity around our exchange.”

But prediction markets continue to gain national attention for allowing people to unfairly bet on the outcome of events by leveraging nonpublic information.

[In July], the White House announced the president’s teleprompter operator was no longer on staff after he was accused of using inside knowledge to make bets about presidential speeches on Kalshi.

Minnesota Democratic Gov. Tim Walz [on July 28] signed an executive order prohibiting state employees from using inside information to bet on prediction markets. At least eight states, including Arizona, California, Maryland and Wisconsin, have implemented similar restrictions.

Mick Mulvaney, executive director of the Gambling is Not Investing Coalition, said he was sympathetic to the argument that prediction markets want to avoid a regulatory patchwork across the states.

“That being said, there’ve been two areas where the states have almost always been entirely sovereign: That’s on booze and gambling,” he said.

Mulvaney, a Republican, represented South Carolina in the U.S. House and served as acting White House chief of staff during President Donald Trump’s first term. His organization argues that prediction markets should be subject to the same state and tribal regulations as other forms of gambling.

With litigation flying, he said there’s no question the debate is heading toward the U.S. Supreme Court. Mulvaney said it’s unclear how the conservative court will rule, given its recent decisions. Some of those rulings have allowed the expansion of federal executive power, while others have tilted toward the states.

“So that will be fascinating to see how

it shakes out at the Supreme Court,” he told Stateline. “But I have every expectation that this is going all the way up.”

Threat to tribal casinos

Casino gambling has been the sole economic engine for many Native American tribes for years, said Michael Hoenig, vice president and associate general counsel for gaming at the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation in Southern California.

He said tribes have built up the gambling industry over the last 40 years — sometimes in cooperation with states, other times “in friction with the states.”

“This is just a profound affront to tribal sovereignty, tribal self-government,” he said. “Tribes are supposed to have the sovereign right to decide who gets to operate gaming on their lands and who doesn’t.”

Aside from regulatory concerns, state leaders worry about how the rise of prediction markets may impact the financial and mental health of their residents. Since a 2018 U.S. Supreme Court ruling opened the door for states to legalize sports gambling, 39 states and the District of Columbia have done so.

Advocates, researchers and lawmakers are already raising alarms about how the burgeoning market could fuel gambling addiction and hurt household finances.

Aside from regulation, there is little difference between the potential impacts of prediction markets and online sports betting, said Rachel Volberg, a professor emerita of epidemiology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Volberg, who has studied gambling addiction for 40 years, told lawmakers in a separate presentation that the research is clear about how over involvement in gambling can hurt individuals and families. However, she told Stateline that legal

sports gambling is too new for researchers to fully measure how much the high-speed and accessible world of online gaming has changed the dynamics.

In North Carolina, a new poll found that most people generally approve of sports betting, but a majority wants the state to ban prediction markets.

In the Meredith College poll released [July 28], 51% of registered voters said they were satisfied with state regulation of sports gambling. Only 11% said they were dissatisfied, while 38% said they didn’t know.

In that poll, two-thirds of registered voters said they would support state legislation banning prediction markets, while 24% said they should be legal.

Though sports fans, policymakers and the researchers continue to grapple with the quickly evolving landscape, experts gathered in Chicago were clear that this industry is here to stay.

“It’s not going anywhere,” said Anthony D’Angelo, who leads responsible gaming efforts at Fanatics Betting & Gaming.

D’Angelo said his company’s sportsbook invests heavily in providing assistance for problem gamblers, flags potentially problematic transactions and incentivizes customers to set and stick to betting limits.

He said lawmakers can help keep people away from illegal and offshore betting platforms that have no oversight or consumer protections.

“We all want the same things to happen,” he said. “I think we want a sustainable, long-term industry where customers are protected.”

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org. This story was originally produced by Stateline, which is part of States Newsroom.

100 years ago, the Great Miami Hurricane wreaked havoc far beyond the city

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

Buffalo Tiger was six years old leaving the Willie Willie Seminole Indian Village on Palm Avenue in Hialeah towards the Everglades when the Great Miami Hurricane swept through South Florida in September 1926.

“We were so cold. I remember that,” Tiger said to Harry Kersey in an interview on July 2, 1998. “I was so hungry. The wind blew everything around. Thankfully, our people picked out a hammock on higher ground. If not, we would’ve been underwater.”

Miami swelled with new residents; according to the National Weather Service, Miami-Dade County had amassed a population of over 100,000 in 1926. Still, no warnings had been issued until Sept. 17—hours before the category four hurricane’s effects would surface.

“It must’ve been three in the morning when the storm hit,” Tiger added. “We thought it would just rain, but this was a real bad hurricane.”



Courtesy of Miami Springs Historical Society and Museum
Seminole children at the Willie Willie Seminole Indian Village on Palm Avenue in Hialeah in 1926. The boy on the left is holding a racoon pelt.



Courtesy of the National Weather Service
The killer hurricane swept through the city of Hollywood.

Lake Okeechobee and the Hurricanes of 1926 and 1928

How the Storms Changed the Lake Forever

Given its name by the Seminoles (Okeechobee meaning Big Water), it is the second largest natural freshwater lake contained entirely within the contiguous 48 states, after Lake Michigan. It covers 730 square miles, 467,000 acres, and is only 9-12 feet deep. The Big “O” measures 30 miles from north to south and 33 miles from east to west and many of its shallow, grassy areas are similar to the Everglades.



Breaks in the low earthen dike caused flooding throughout the area.

For centuries, the lake would overflow from heavy rainfall, flooding the land with water flowing south into the Everglades. After early settlers started to arrive in the early 1900s, water control efforts included the construction of a muck dike and drainage canals, but those efforts proved no match for Mother Nature.

In 1926, a killer hurricane struck Moore Haven, resulting in 300 - 500 deaths, with the exact number unknown. In 1928, a similar hurricane struck the southeastern shore of the lake. Over 2,500 perished in that storm. It remains the second greatest loss of life to a hurricane in American history. Deaths occurred as walls of water were pushed over unprepared settlements. Entire families were lost, and bodies were burned or buried in mass graves. Clewiston had no deaths directly attributed to these storms but there was considerable damage. The storms led the Federal government to begin its massive dike construction project in 1931, in order to protect the communities around the lake.



Repairing the dike after the hurricane of 1926.

The Okeechobee Waterway transits from the Gulf of Mexico, via the Caloosahatchee River, across the lake, and out the St. Lucie River to the Atlantic. Used by commercial and pleasure craft alike, it is Florida’s primary waterway linking the east and west coasts.



Flooding after the 1926 hurricane.



Small boats navigated the flooded east side of Clewiston after the 1926 hurricane.



Damage after the 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane.

Today, Lake Okeechobee remains one of the premier fishing lakes in the world and is known for its black (largemouth) bass, which are often caught in sizes of up to 12 pounds. Because of the climate, fish spawn frequently, resulting in a constant supply of many other varieties, including bream, shellcracker, blue gill, and catfish. The lake is commercially fished for catfish and other overpopulated species. Non-native species, such as tilapia and Oscars, have also found their way into the lake, having a negative impact on the native fish habitat. Snook and manatee are also occasionally found in Lake Okeechobee.

The Big O receives the vast majority of its water from the Kissimmee River Valley, originating below Orlando. Fisheating Creek, west of the lake, remains the only free-flowing tributary into the lake. Both directly and indirectly, Lake Okeechobee provides the delivery of water to the Everglades and is the centerpiece of the extensive network of canals and water storage area managed by the South Florida Water Management District.

Kevin Johnson

A display at the Clewiston Museum features information and photos about the impact of the hurricanes of 1926 and 1928 in and around Lake Okeechobee.



Courtesy of the National Weather Service

The damage on Bayshore Drive, Miami Beach, was significant, resulting in a boat being swept inland.

Remembering - 30 years ago Atlanta powwow

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

Back in the summer of 1996 in downtown Atlanta, the Seminole Tribe organized the Discover Native America American Indian Powwow from July 19 to Aug. 4. During the same time of the powwow, the 1996 Summer Olympics took place in Atlanta whereas the powwow received a big boost in attendance. The powwow featured more than 100 Native American dancers, drummers, comedians, musicians, and crafts people.

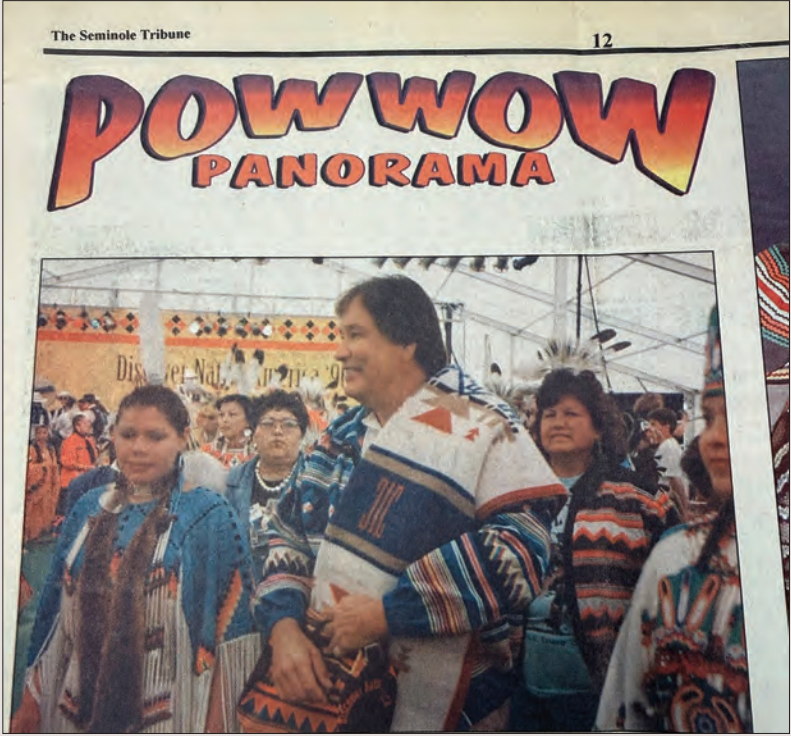
The powwow was also aired via television where millions of viewers got to witness every day of the event.

Observers at the powwow called it the “greatest powwow show on

earth”.

At the time, attendees and powwow organizers were under a great amount of stress and uncertainty as the result of a homemade pipe bomb attack at the Olympics. The bomb went off beneath a bench at a public concert area. One person died and more than 100 were injured.

File photo
Billy Mills, an Olympic gold medal winner, was honored in 1996 with a special dance at the Seminoles’ Discover Native America event in Atlanta.



Mark Cruz, from Klamath Tribes, named IHS director

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced in August that Mark Cruz, a citizen of the Klamath Tribes, has been confirmed to serve as director of the Indian Health Service (IHS). Cruz becomes the agency’s 12th Senate confirmed director, filling the leadership position that had been unoccupied since January 2025.

Cruz will oversee IHS, which provides health care services to 2.8 million Native Americans through nearly 600 federally operated hospitals and clinics, tribal health care programs and urban Native American organizations.

“Mark has already been an invaluable partner in advancing our priorities across Indian Country as my senior advisor,” HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in a release. As director of the Indian Health Service, he will build on that work by supporting tribal self-determination and food sovereignty, and ensuring Native families receive the high-quality healthcare they deserve.”

“I want to thank President Trump and Secretary Kennedy for their trust in me and appreciate the U.S. Senate’s confirmation.



HHS

Mark Cruz

I am humbled by the opportunity to serve American Indian and Alaska Native communities as the new director of the Indian Health Service,” Cruz said in the release. “I look forward to working closely with tribal leaders, urban Indian organizations, our dedicated workforce, and partners across Indian Country to strengthen tribal consultation, improve access to high-quality, culturally appropriate healthcare, hire health professionals our communities need, and modernize the Indian health system.”

Native comedians to perform at Classic Casino Sept. 25

FROM NIGC

HOLLYWOOD — Seminole Classic Casino in Hollywood will host Native American comedians Ernest Tsosie and Tonia Jo Hall for two live performances Friday, Sept. 25 at 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Tickets starting at \$45 are available at Ticketweb.com. Guests must be age 21 or over to purchase tickets.

Tsosie is a comedian, actor and member of the Screen Actors Guild whose credits include the Netflix film “Rez Ball” and appearances on AMC’s “Longmire,” “Better Call Saul” and “Dark Winds,” as well as NBC’s “Rutherford Falls.” He has entertained audiences nationwide at venues including the Laugh Factory in Hollywood, the House of Comedy in Phoenix and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Hall is known for her popular character Auntie Beachress, a bold and unapologetic auntie who delivers relatable storytelling and “rez humor.” Her viral content has attracted a loyal following across Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok throughout the United States and Canada.

For more information, visit doclassic.com.



Courtesy Classic Casino

Ernest Tsosie and Tonia Jo Hall

4th show added for Maniscalco

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood has added a fourth show for renowned comedian, actor and podcast host Sebastian Maniscalco on Nov. 22 at 8 p.m. with the first three shows at very limited inventory. For ticket information, go to myHRL.com.

Seminole Classic Casino honored with Green Visionary Award for sustainable development leadership

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Classic Casino recently received the 2026 Green Visionary Award for Sustainable Development Leadership by the South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce during its annual sustainability luncheon on Aug. 21 at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables.

The award recognizes individuals, businesses and organizations that demonstrate leadership in sustainability through innovative practices and environmental strategies that reduce waste, lower carbon emissions and address plastic pollution.

“Receiving the Green Visionary Award is a tremendous honor and a reflection of our Team Members’ commitment to making sustainability part of how we operate every day,” said Edward Aguilar, general manager of Seminole Classic Casino, in a press release. “Their ideas, dedication and willingness to take action have produced measurable results while supporting Seminole Gaming and Hard Rock’s broader commitment to protecting the planet. We are proud of what we have accomplished and remain focused on finding new ways to reduce our environmental impact.”

The Seminole Classic Casino’s Save The Planet Committee has implemented team member-driven food waste diversion

and glass recycling programs designed to incorporate sustainability into the property’s daily operations.

Over the past year, the casino diverted 47,553 pounds of organic waste and 9,701 glass bottles from landfills. The initiative generated an environmental impact equivalent to planting 313 tree seedlings, eliminating 47,172 miles of driving and conserving 2,139 gallons of gasoline. The resulting energy savings were also sufficient to charge more than 1.25 million smartphones. The casino said the results reflect its ongoing commitment to reducing waste and improving environmental sustainability.



Humberto Marchante

Seminole Classic Casino team members and Lourdes Mola, vice president of Latin Business Development for Seminole Gaming, accept the 2026 Green Visionary Award for Sustainable Development Leadership during an awards luncheon at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables on Aug. 21.

Slot machine crackdown takes place in Cape Coral

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Florida Gaming Control Commission in collaboration with the Cape Coral Police Department recently seized 60 illegal ballot slot machines from a business disguised as a legal bingo establishment, according to officials. The enforcement operation, known as Operation Going Downtown, took place at 2708 Santa

Barbara Boulevard, Suite 108, in Cape Coral, at an establishment called Uptown Bingo.

Slot machines are lawful at eight licensed locations in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, as well as at facilities operated by the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

“Bingo is fun, and the FGCC supports lawful play,” said FGCC Commissioner Peter Cuderman in a press release. “Unfortunately, criminals prey on Floridians

by using a bingo theme on slot machines and falsely claiming these games are legal.”

If you suspect someone is operating an illegal bingo hall or casino, or conducting any other illegal gambling, you can submit a crime tip online at FLGaming.gov/File-a-Report, by email at Tipline@FLGaming.gov, or by phone at 850-880-3433.

St. Johns County man hits \$1.1M jackpot

FROM PRESS RELEASE

TAMPA — A St. Johns County man hit a jackpot totaling \$1,104,476.06 on Aug. 29 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa.

The guest won the jackpot while playing

a Dragon Link Panda Magic slot machine by Aristocrat Gaming with a \$150 bet on a \$2 denomination.

This is the second million-dollar jackpot awarded in August and the seventh Dragon Link jackpot of more than \$1 million awarded at Hard Rock Tampa this year.

Hard Rock properties receive accolades

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock International announced Aug. 28 that seven of its venues have been recognized in Pollstar’s 2026 Top 25 U.S. Casino Venues ranking.

Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood earned the No. 1 position for the second consecutive year.

Honored venues include:

Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood: Ranked No. 1 for the second consecutive year, this 6,600-seat venue at the iconic Guitar Hotel has established itself as a leader in world-class entertainment with 77 live performances in the past seven months, grossing \$53.2 million from more than 380,000 tickets sold – including Shakira’s three ‘Up Close & Personal’ headline shows, The Eagles, Guns N’ Roses, Chris Stapleton and the Jonas Brothers.

Hard Rock Live at Etess Arena, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City: Ranked No. 4 nationally with nearly \$13.4 million in gross revenue from more than 97,000 tickets sold, this Atlantic City

landmark is the Jersey Shore’s premier destination for major headliners paired with premium gaming experiences. Recent performances have featured Rod Stewart, Nikki Glaser and The Chicks.

Hard Rock Live Sacramento at Fire Mountain: Ranked No. 10 nationally, this intimate Northern California venue generates over \$5 million in annual gross revenue by combining distinctive concert experiences with Hard Rock’s renowned casino and dining offerings. This year, the venue hosted Jefferson Starship and Myles Smith among others. Upcoming performances include Earth, Wind & Fire; Chance the Rapper; and Alice Cooper.

Hard Rock Event Center at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa: This top Florida regional hub ranked No. 11 with \$4.5 million in gross revenue. In the past year, the venue hosted comedian Adam Ray, country star Maren Morris, and DJ and producer Fisher amongst a host of other talent for fans across generations.

Hard Rock Live Northern Indiana: Ranked No. 15 nationally with over \$3.1 million in gross revenue, this premier Midwest venue serves as a regional leader in concert entertainment and gaming

hospitality, drawing audiences from across the Great Lakes. In 2026, the venue hosted a mix of talented performers spanning multiple genres, including Boy George & Culture Club and Wiz Khalifa.

Hard Rock Live Rockford: Opened in 2024, this Illinois destination has rapidly established itself as a preferred Midwest venue, ranked No. 18 nationally. The venue has hosted a diverse mix of major concert headliners, comedians and special events. In 2026, the venue has brought diverse musical talent to the stage, from singer-songwriter Don McLean to blues guitarist Kenny Wayne Shepherd.

Hard Rock Live Bristol: Ranked No. 22 nationally, this Virginia venue demonstrates Hard Rock’s strength in the Eastern regional market with strong audience appeal and consistent performance since opening in 2024. The venue has featured a wide variety of country, rock, pop, and comedy acts, from Blake Shelton and Foreigner to Boyz II Men and Gabriel Iglesias, appealing to diverse music interests and audiences.

Classic doles out nearly \$10M in jackpots

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Classic Casino in Hollywood reporter that it paid out more than \$9.4 million in 2,246 jackpots that were awarded in July.

The biggest three jackpot winnings

included Dragon Link Grand Jackpots totaling \$504,275.50, which consisted of \$258,769.58 jackpot won with a \$25 bet on a \$1 denomination, \$140,060.40 jackpot won with a \$5 bet on a 10-cent denomination, and \$105,445.72 jackpot won with a \$2.50 bet on a 5-cent denomination.

Seinfeld to perform two shows in Hollywood

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Legendary comedian Jerry Seinfeld is coming to Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel &

Casino Hollywood on Jan. 22 and Jan. 23, 2027, at 8 p.m.

For ticket information, go to myHRL.com.



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The hiring of an attorney is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisement. Castillo worked as a Public Defender in Broward County from 1990-1996 and has been in private practice since 1996. In 1995, he was voted the Trial Attorney of the year. He graduated from Capital University in 1989 and was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1990, Federal Bar in 1992, and the Federal Trial Bar in 1994.

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FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY
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Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Exhibit rendering of "Our Grandmother's Grandmothers" gallery from the 90% phase of exhibit designs, completed June 2026.

Our story: The past and present of the museum redesign project

BY TERRY RUNNER
Exhibit Specialist

BIG CYPRESS — After three decades of preserving and sharing the vibrant culture and deep history of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will close its doors in November to begin a transformative new chapter through a full museum redesign. The plans for this redesign have been many years in the making, with careful consideration to the full and complete story of the Seminole Tribe and their long-standing heritage in Florida.

The vision for the museum’s redesign began in late 2015, when former Chairman James E. Billie, recognized that the museum had the opportunity to tell much more of the Seminole Story. To help bring this vision to

reality, the museum, under the leadership of then-Director Paul Backhouse, partnered with Studio Tectonic, an exhibit design firm specializing in building immersive culture experiences.

From the beginning, community input played a central role in the planning process. Museum staff worked closely with community members, listening to their feedback on exhibit concepts and the museum’s overall narrative. Their insights helped shape the visitor journey, ensuring the redesigned museum reflected the stories, values, and histories that mattered most. In 2018, after reaching multiple benchmarks of the concept design phase, the museum transitioned its focus to architectural planning. Rather than expanding the building’s footprint, the goal was to

reimagine the existing space while retaining the mile-long boardwalk, as well as the recreated village and ceremonial grounds. As development of the redesign was nearing completion, the project was temporarily put on hold during the COVID pandemic.

Shortly after joining the museum as Director in 2021, Gordon Oliver Wareham jump started the project and began reviewing the plans for the museum. He emphasized that the Seminole story is not simply a story of the past, but a living story—one rooted in the people, traditions, and enduring spirit of generations of Seminoles. Guided by the belief that the Seminole story is Our Story, Director Wareham and Museum Curator Tara Backhouse began reshaping the museum experience to place Seminole voices and perspectives at the heart of every gallery.

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



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

The pathway to the Observation Hallway on the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki boardwalk. The boardwalk and the Observation Hallway will be open while the museum is closed for the redesign of its galleries.

The culmination of these efforts has produced a visually stunning and culturally immersive experience telling the Seminole story from the Seminole perspective. While the museum’s original exhibits focused on a very short period of Seminole life (1890-1910), the redesigned experience presents a past to the present continuum reinforcing that Seminole people have always lived and thrived in Yak-ne Fash-ke (what is now known as Florida).

The new museum will feature four major gallery spaces: The Seminole Experience, Our Grandmother’s Grandmothers, Strength and Survival and Being Seminole Today. The design of each experience illustrates

the gallery themes though Seminole art and architecture, while stories are told by the voices of those who live here using thoughtfully integrated text panels, audio and captivating visuals.

While the museum is expected to be closed for the duration of almost two years, the construction phase of this project, the boardwalk and museum store will remain open to the public, with a smaller “mini-museum” experience located in the Observation Hallway behind the Curatorial building for visitors to enjoy.

Miccosukees leave their mark in Miami-Dade County time capsule

BY DANIELLA HAKIM
Staff Reporter

In 2076, a Miccosukee palmetto fiber doll accompanied with a letter signed by the Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida Talbert Cypress, will be unburied at Tropical Park in Miami.

The time capsule, containing a 100-item collection that resembles life in Miami-Dade County, was sealed on June 29, 2026, honoring America’s 250th anniversary.

“How amazing to be a part of something monumental like this,” said Kendal Osceola, a Miccosukee tribal member, in a post on Instagram.

The palmetto fiber doll was dressed in traditional patchwork clothing.

“Our palmetto dolls are, themselves, a time capsule of our Miccosukee culture,” said Cypress in a statement. “They tell the story of a people who have kept our traditions, our clothes, and our language, but have adapted to a modern world. We are a proud people, but like all peoples, we derive our strength through the relationships we build with others.”

Mayor Daniella Levine Cava joined officials and stakeholders at one of the county’s best-known parks, placing sand over the capsule.

According to Miami-Dade County, the capsule was designed to celebrate the county’s shared history and its diverse range of cultures, while encouraging civic engagement and community connection.

The celebration included activities beyond the capsule’s burial at Tropical Park, including a community art competition and a naturalization ceremony at the historic Freedom Tower in downtown Miami.

The capsule will be unsealed on June 29, 2076, on the 300th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America. Osceola’s son, Eele, will be 56 years old.



Courtesy photo

This time capsule was sealed June 29, 2026, and will be opened in 50 years when the United States turns 300.

Marshall Tucker Band to perform in Brighton

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON — The Marshall Tucker Band, with classic hits such as "Heard It in a Love Song," "Can't You See," "Fire on the Mountain," "Long Hard Ride," and "Ramblin," will perform Oct. 10 at 8 p.m. at the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino's Seminole Event Center. Go to ticketmaster.com for tickets.

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

September 2026

For almost as long as people have needed light, there have been lamps. The oldest lamps can date back as far as 40,000 years ago. Archaeologists in France have discovered Neolithic age lamps made from sandstone (Gralókk & Matthews, 2025)(Fig1), while in the Americas lamps made from bone were used by Native populations such as the Inuit (Clark, 2002)(Fig2). This month's artifact is much more recent than its Native and Paleolithic counterparts, however.

The artifact of the month is a well-preserved glass base of a mass-produced kerosene lamp (Fig3). It was recovered by TAS (Tribal Archaeology Section) after being found above ground in what is called a "surface find." While exact dates may be fuzzy, there are clues to help narrow down when this lamp was manufactured and used.

The most obvious clue for archaeologists attempting to track down the age of the lamp is the fuel. Kerosene fuel is relatively new, having come about in 1846 (Sheridan, 2020). Before kerosene, lamps were fueled with a variety of oils and animal fats to produce flames that allowed everything from late night reading to long journeys. Some of these fuel sources were olive oil, beeswax, and whale fat (Arnold, 2004).

The next clue comes from a close examination of the lamp's creation. The lamp has two long seams running down either side which means it was created through mass-production from a factory mold rather than by the hands of a single craftsman (Fig4). This narrows down the lamp's age to between 19th century (when the kerosene lamp was invented) to sometime in the 20th century (when lamp usage declined following electricity) (Wells, 2026). Surprisingly, the glass lacks a maker's mark, so it's currently unknown where exactly it was produced and by whom, limiting our dating capabilities.

Finally, the very nature of the lamp's discovery allows archaeologists to estimate its age as well. The lamp, as stated above, was a "surface find" meaning it was recovered without digging. While surface finds can still be quite old, when viewed along with the other clues uncovered with the lamp, archaeologists are able to piece together a relatively accurate date range. This lamp is a great example that in archaeology sometimes deductive reasoning is the only course of action when everything else is exhausted.

Figure 1: hanging soapstone oil lamp
atlantia.sca.org



Figure 2: Inuit lamp
afognak.org



THPO
Figure 3



THPO
Figure 4

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - SEPTEMBER 2026

SURVIVING THE STORMY SEASON



September is peak hurricane season in south Florida, and hurricanes have had a major influence historically in the region. In fact, hurricanes are partly to blame for keeping colonizers away from the gulf coast during the 17th and 18th centuries (fierce resistance by Seminole ancestors like the Calusa was the other reason). Colonizers simply did not know how to identify signs of coming storms and prepare for them, and their large ships and immobile settlements left them especially vulnerable.

Of course, the opposite is true for the Seminole and Miccosukee, and their ancestors. Traditional knowledge of their surroundings and adaptive strategies developed over generations allowed them to deal with all kinds of weather, hurricanes included. As Miccosukee Tribal member Betty Osceola once explained to a reporter, “Our ancestors were taught not to fear the hurricane” because they could recognize the signs and prepare. One such sign was blooming sawgrass, which Tribal members noticed just before the 1928 hurricane that devastated south Florida. Shifts in atmospheric pressure just before a hurricane cause the release of sawgrass pollen and trigger it to bloom early. Recognizing this, Seminole ancestors packed up their canoes and retreated to higher ground where trees like palmettos, that were adapted to high winds, provided shelter.

Flexible and adaptable structures, like chickees, also had an important role in helping the Indigenous communities of south Florida, past and present, weather severe storms. Tribal members share memories of roofs of chickees being removed and placed on the ground so their families could shelter beneath them during storms. According to Seminole Tribal member, Mr. Lonnie Billie, a long-time chickee builder, the light, flexible construction of chickees keeps them from being destroyed by high winds, unlike modern buildings.

These aren't the only ways that the ancestors and their modern descendants who form the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes today have survived hurricanes, but they are two important strategies, and both are great examples of how generations of knowledge continues to serve the Indigenous communities.

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

Painting: Harold Newton, Untitled (Hurricane) n.d. Oil on Upson board 27 x 47 in. Courtesy of the Schlesinger Collection © Harold Newton

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



Health

Chronic fatigue and exhaustion

BY TERESA SNOW
Health Contributor

Why Am I Always Tired?

Every morning, Lena promised herself she would feel better after one more good night’s sleep. But even after eight hours in bed, she dragged herself through work, skipped family visits, and stared at simple chores she could not begin. At first, she blamed her busy schedule. She wondered whether she needed vitamin B12, vitamin D, or iron. What she did not expect was that her tiredness might also be connected to the sadness, worry, and loss of interest she had quietly carried for weeks.

What It Is

Everyone feels worn out sometimes. A late night, a demanding week, illness, caregiving, grief, or too little food and water can drain anyone’s energy. Usually, rest and a return to normal habits help.

Ongoing exhaustion is different. You may wake up tired, move more slowly, struggle to focus, or feel that small tasks take enormous effort. Sleep may not leave you refreshed. You may also lose interest in cooking, visiting people, exercising, or doing things you normally enjoy. There is no single cause. Low iron can lead to anemia, which means the blood cannot carry oxygen as well as it should. Low vitamin B12 or vitamin D, an underactive thyroid, diabetes, sleep problems, infection, pain, and some medicines can also reduce energy. Loud snoring and gasping during sleep may point to sleep apnea, a condition in which breathing repeatedly stops and starts.

Depression can cause deep physical tiredness too. It is more than a bad mood or a difficult day. It can affect sleep, appetite, concentration, movement, motivation, and the ability to enjoy life. Some people notice exhaustion before they recognize sadness. Others feel empty, irritable, disconnected, or unusually guilty rather than tearful.

Why It Matters

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, fatigue or lack of energy is a common sign of depression. One symptom alone does not prove that depression is the cause. The pattern matters, including how long the changes have lasted and how much they interfere with daily life.

Pay attention when tiredness continues for two weeks or longer, keeps returning, or makes work, driving, caregiving, or basic chores harder. Notice whether it comes with low mood, loss of interest, sleep changes, appetite changes, hopelessness, trouble thinking, or pulling away from others. These clues help a doctor or nurse practitioner see the whole picture.

A physical check still matters. A doctor or nurse practitioner may review sleep,

medicines, eating habits, recent illness, stress, and mood. Blood tests may help check for anemia, thyroid trouble, blood sugar problems, or certain vitamin shortages. Do not assume that a supplement will solve the problem. Taking large doses without knowing what is low can waste money, cause side effects, or delay the care you actually need.

Depression can also exist alongside another condition, so the care plan may need to address both.

Did You Know? Depression does not always look like crying. For some people, the strongest clues are constant tiredness, body aches, poor sleep, and losing interest in everyday life.

If this sounds familiar, you are not lazy or failing. Your body and mind may be asking for care, and you deserve support for both.

What To Do

- Track seven days. Write down sleep hours, naps, energy, mood, meals, caffeine, medicines, pain, and snoring. Bring the notes to your visit.
- Schedule one health appointment. Say, “I have felt unusually tired for ____ weeks, and it is affecting ____.” Ask whether a physical exam, blood tests, sleep review, and depression check make sense.
- Skip guesswork with supplements. Ask before taking high-dose iron, vitamin B12, or vitamin D. The right treatment depends on the actual cause.
- Protect the basics. Keep a steady sleep time, drink water, eat regular meals with protein and fiber, and take a short walk if you can do so safely.
- Tell one trusted person. Ask a family member, friend, elder, counselor, or community health worker to check in and help you follow through.
- Get urgent help for thoughts of hurting yourself. Call or text 988 for free, confidential support at any hour. Call 911 if you are in immediate danger.

Closing Takeaway

Constant exhaustion is not something you must simply push through. It may come from sleep, stress, a health condition, depression, or more than one cause at the same time. Finding the reason can open the door to treatment and steadier days. Today, put a seven-day energy log beside your bed or save one in your phone. Record your first entry tonight, then use it to make a clear, informed request for help this week. You do not have to guess alone.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institute of Mental Health guidance on fatigue and depression symptoms.

Gila River Indian Community entity launches historic medical partnership

FROM UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

CHANDLER, Ariz. — On Aug. 18, the University of Arizona and Gila River Health Care (GRHC), the Gila River Indian Community's tribally operated healthcare system, announced a long-term partnership to establish the nation's first MD-granting medical school branch located on the lands of a sovereign Tribal Nation.

The University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix Regional Medical Branch in Sacaton, Arizona, is designed to educate future physicians within a tribal healthcare system while strengthening access to care in tribal, rural and medically underserved communities. Beginning in July 2027, ten students will be admitted annually to the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix's three-year MD-granting Primary Care Accelerated Program at the Gila River Branch. Students will receive full tuition scholarships funded by GRHC. They will complete the first 18 months of their foundational medical education in Phoenix before relocating to Sacaton for the final 18 months of clinical education.

"Tribal and rural communities have some of the nation's greatest unmet primary care needs," University of Arizona President Suresh Garimella said. "This partnership to establish the country's first medical school branch within a Tribal Nation will train physicians through an accelerated three-year MD program, support them with full scholarships to free them of debt burden and provide residency opportunities that anchor them to the places and patients they know. That is how you build a physician workforce that remains in the communities that need them most."

The U.S. continues to face persistent physician shortages, particularly in rural and Tribal communities. Arizona ranks No. 42 in the nation for primary care access, and its rapidly growing population has intensified the demand for primary care physicians. Research shows that physicians are more likely to practice where they train, making community-based medical education a proven strategy for strengthening Arizona's long-term healthcare workforce.

Rather than expanding medical education solely through large academic medical centers, the Regional Medical Branch places students within a community-



Chris Richards/University of Arizona

University of Arizona leaders, tribal leaders, healthcare professionals and federal legislators gather Aug. 18 to celebrate the announcement of the nation's first MD-granting medical school branch located on the lands of a sovereign tribal nation.

based healthcare system, where they will learn by caring for patients and working alongside physicians serving Native communities every day. Under exploration is the development of primary care residency programs at GRHC, which will further strengthen the long-term goal of retaining physicians to serve the Community and other underserved areas.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for our community and for the next generation of physicians," said Stephen Roe Lewis, Governor of the Gila River Indian Community. "For too long, many of our young people who dreamed of becoming doctors had to leave home to pursue that goal. This partnership with the University of Arizona changes that. It gives them the opportunity to learn, train and build their careers right here in the Community, where they can make a real difference for the people they serve."

GRHC has committed more than \$25 million through 2034 to establish and support the Regional Medical Branch, including faculty positions, student scholarships and educational infrastructure. Unlike traditional clinical rotations, students will become part of a healthcare system. Working under faculty supervision, they will care for patients across a broad range of clinical settings while gaining firsthand understanding of the historical, cultural, and social factors that influence health. University and GRHC leaders also believe the partnership will inspire more Native American students to pursue medicine while strengthening long-term pathways into Arizona's physician workforce.

"This partnership challenges us to think differently about where and how physicians are educated," said Dr. Fredric Wondisford, dean of the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix. "Clinical excellence is shaped not only by scientific knowledge, but by understanding the communities physicians serve. By educating future physicians within a tribally operated healthcare system serving Native communities, we are creating a

learning experience that cannot be replicated in a traditional academic medical center."

Developed through close collaboration between the U of A and GRHC, the partnership reflects shared leadership, mutual respect and a long-term commitment to improving health outcomes when training the next generation of physicians. It demonstrates how public research universities, sovereign tribal nations and community healthcare systems can work together to strengthen the physician workforce while improving access to care. The partnership also reinforces the U of A's long-term investment in preparing physicians to serve communities across the state.

"There's a real challenge for rural health hospitals to recruit trained professionals to come and work in their communities," said Robert Pablo, chairman of the Gila River Health Care Board of Directors. "We are very fortunate to launch this first-of-its-kind partnership between Gila River Health Care and the University of Arizona, which will establish a starting ground for these young doctors to jumpstart their careers."

Inspired by a similar partnership announced last year with Onvida Health in Yuma, the Regional Medical Branch further advances the University of Arizona's commitment to expanding community-based medical education across Arizona. The Association of American Medical Colleges projects the United States could face a shortage of up to 86,000 physicians by 2036, with Tribal and rural communities expected to be among those most affected.

Leaders from the U of A, Gila River Indian Community and GRHC are confident that this first-of-its-kind collaboration demonstrates how public research universities, sovereign tribal nations and community healthcare systems can work together to strengthen the physician workforce, improve access to care and expand educational opportunity for generations to come.

BIA awards grants for family services

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Two million dollars in funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs will go to seven Native organizations, with a goal to strengthen child and family services.

According to a press release, the Indian Child Welfare Act off-reservation grants will support culturally appropriate services that promote family stability, prevent unnecessary family separation and help ensure the removal of an Indian child from a parent or custodian occurs only as a last resort.

Grant recipients and award amounts:

- ICWA Law Center, Minneapolis, Minn. – \$300,000
- Bristol Bay Native Association, Anchorage, Alaska – \$300,000
- Rocky Mountain Tribal Leadership Council, Billings, Mont. – \$280,000
- Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition, Inc., Bloomfield, Neb. – \$280,000
- The American Indian Community Center, Spokane, Wash. – \$280,000
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc., Anchorage, Alaska – \$280,000
- Native American Fatherhood & Families Association, Mesa, Arizona – \$280,000

Labor Day events in Okeechobee

STAFF REPORT

The Okeechobee Labor Day in the Park is set to be held Sept. 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. downtown at Flagler Park. A parade, food and vendors will be part of the day. The summer concert series is slated to wrap up with an evening performance. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs.

BRAIN CORNER



How to Play Sudoku

Fill each empty square with a number from 1 to 9.

- Every **row** must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repeating a number.
- Every **column** must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repeating a number.
- Every **3-by-3 box** must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repeating a number.
- The numbers already printed in the puzzle are clues. Do not change them.
- Use logic to find the missing numbers. When finished, compare your puzzle with the answer key.

SUDOKU PUZZLE

5	3			7				
6			1	9	5			
	9	8					6	
8				6				3
4			8		3			1
7				2				6
	6					2	8	
			4	1	9			5
				8			7	9

♦ See ANSWERS on page 6C



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SEMINOLE SCENES



Kevin Johnson

VOLLEYBALL SISTERS: Seminole descendant Kiani Runkles, right, and her older sister, Kali, pose after their schools met in junior varsity and varsity volleyball matches Aug. 25 at Clewiston High School. They didn't play against each other, but both had outstanding games. Kiani, a seventh grader, plays for Moore Haven High School JV; Kali, a ninth grader, plays for Clewiston High School varsity.



Calvin Tiger

DOLLY PARTON: The entertainment industry and many others mourned the passing of country music star, actress, business owner and philanthropist Dolly Parton, who died Aug. 25 in Nashville at age 80. A robe she wore when photographed for TV Guide is displayed at Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood. The plaque highlights her songwriting career and mentions notable hits such as "Jolene" and "I Will Always Love You."



Elgin Jumper

HOT PAINTING: In August, Seminole artist Elgin Jumper completed an oil painting for the tribe's Environmental Protection Office's Climate Resiliency department. Jumper titled the painting "Feeling the Heat." He said he wanted the painting to reflect "sadness, despair and anguish" as it relates to global climate concerns.



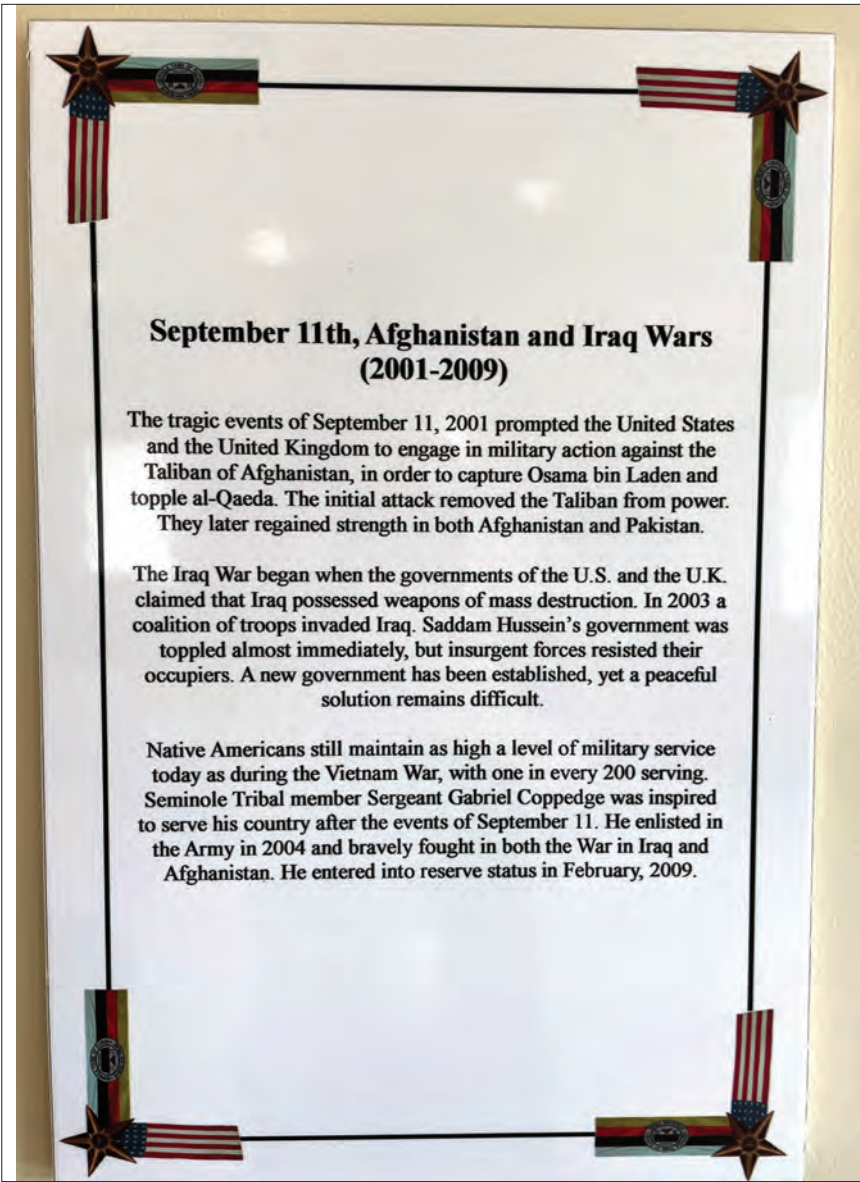
Gordon Wareham

NEW PRINCESS VISITS NEW MEXICO: Newly-crowned Miss Florida Seminole Serena Zepeda and her father, Brian, check out artwork at the Santa Fe Indian Market that was held Aug. 15-16 in New Mexico. The event is described as the world's largest Native American art market. Serena won the Miss Florida Seminole Princess Pageant on July 25.



Beverly Bidney

WELCOME BACK: Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Dahlia Sanders and her sister, Presleigh Osceola, attend Immokalee's Back-to-School Bash on Aug. 4. They posed for photos and interacted with students. The 2026-27 school year began Aug. 10.



Kevin Johnson

REMEMBRANCE: A poster at the Florida Seminole Veterans Building outlines 9/11 and the Afghanistan and Iraq wars during the early 2000s.



Beverly Bidney (2)

TRADING PLACES: Above and below, construction has commenced on Brighton's new 4,700-square-foot trading post, which will be on the same site as the existing one. The trading post will have 10 double-sided fuel pumps under a new 5,994-square-foot canopy. Construction of the trading post is estimated to be completed in May 2027. The existing trading post will remain open until the new one opens.



Kevin Johnson

SHERIDAN SITE: A Broward County project that will increase the height of the bridge on Sheridan Street over the Florida Turnpike -- an area just south of the Hollywood Reservation -- requires traffic flow to be temporarily altered. In August, motorists began using one lane in each direction as the westbound lanes were closed. The project is expected to be completed in spring 2027.



Hard Rock

K-9 CONTRIBUTION: In August, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol donated \$15,500 to help fund the Bristol, Virginia, Police Department's newest K-9 officer named Ace. The donation will go toward the purchase of the K-9 and the specialized training required for its deployment. Ace, whose name was selected by Hard Rock team members, will be the only drug and patrol K-9 at BVPD. "We are incredibly grateful to Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol for this generous investment in public safety," Chief D. Byron Ashbrook, Bristol, Virginia Police Department, said in a statement. "This donation will allow us to place another highly trained K-9 team into service, providing a resource that enhances officer safety, strengthens our ability to apprehend dangerous offenders, and better protects the citizens of Bristol."



Beverly Bidney (3)

KIDS ENJOY NEW REC CENTER: The new Immokalee Recreation Center and Boys & Girls Club is getting a workout judging by the number of kids who are there after school on a daily basis. On Aug. 25, kids (in left photo), including Elijah Garza and Amis Guerrero keep busy coloring with markers. (In right photo) Teens Ziela Cantu and Cali Osceola work on an arts and crafts project. In the gym (center photo) Kyren James and Amis Guerrero shoot hoops with some help from work experience employee Darius Billie.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

California lawmakers kill grizzly bear reintroduction bill

Lawmakers on Aug. 13 killed a controversial plan that could have allowed grizzly bears to one day return to California.

The Assembly Appropriations Committee spiked Inglewood Democratic Sen. Laura Richardson’s Senate Bill 1305. The measure would have tasked the California Department of Fish and Wildlife with creating a “roadmap that evaluates whether, and under what conditions, reintroduction of the grizzly bear is feasible and advisable.”

As is typical with the Legislature’s appropriations committees, lawmakers didn’t discuss the bill; nor did they take public testimony before the committee’s chairperson, Democratic Assemblymember Buffy Wicks of Oakland, announced the decision.

Wicks later told reporters that before intentionally reintroducing grizzly bears, the state must figure out how humans can best coexist with predatory wildlife. She pointed to the controversial return of gray wolves to California and the subsequent loss of cattle.

“The state needs to really invest in how we are actually addressing and dealing with those conflicts,” she said.

Grizzlies once lived across most of California. As many as 10,000 may have roamed before the Gold Rush. They were so prevalent that when California settlers tried to form their own nation, they called it the Bear Flag Republic. A grizzly bear is memorialized on California’s flag.

Settlers systematically exterminated the animals. They were gone by the 1920s, leaving the smaller black bear as California’s only surviving native bear species.

Two Native American tribes consponsored the bill, and several animal welfare and environmental groups supported it. They argued that bringing the second largest land predator back to America’s most populated state would right an ecological wrong and help restore California’s degraded ecosystem.

Opponents included ranchers, hunting associations and rural communities. They argued California is far too populated with people to sustain another apex predator. Rural communities are already overwhelmed with conflicts with mountain lions, black bears and wolves that attack livestock and wander into their towns, opponents said.

The measure set aside no funding for the study, but it allowed for a future Legislature or an outside group to do so.

- *Cal Matters (California)*

Much of New Mexico’s tribal, pueblo land ripe for geothermal power, energy leader tells lawmakers

The majority of New Mexico’s tribe, nation and pueblo land could be ripe for exploring geothermal energy, an energy expert told a panel of state lawmakers Aug. 10.

Rebecca “Puck” Stair, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department’s Energy Conservation and Management Division director, spoke before the interim Indian Affairs Committee in Shiprock about the potential for the state’s Indigenous populations to harness the heat beneath the ground as a form of energy.

The state’s largest electric provider, PNM, has already tapped into a southern New Mexico geothermal plant that uses the heat beneath the earth’s crust to create steam, turn turbines and generate electricity.

Stair’s presentation to the committee focused on the advantages of geothermal energy — such as its renewable nature and its relatively low water demand — and said tribal leaders could consider investing in the technology not just to generate electricity, but potentially to sell excess energy or to strengthen New Mexico’s outdated power grid.

“If you’re using geothermal, the heat beneath our feet to generate electricity, that’s wonderful,” Stair told lawmakers. “It could offer electricity revenues to tribes... it’s clean energy, and that’s in alignment with a lot of tribal values.”

State leaders have increasingly eyed geothermal energy alongside renewables such as wind and solar as deadlines approach to comply with the landmark Energy Transition Act’s renewable energy goals. The ETA, which Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed in 2019, requires that utilities use 50% renewable energy by 2030, 80% by 2040 and 100% by 2045.

A 2025 report from Project InnerSpace, New Mexico Tech and the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources found that “a significant amount of Tribal land sits on top of some of the best subsurface heat.” In addition to generating jobs and revenue on Native lands, the technology could also help Indigenous communities achieve “enhanced energy sovereignty,” the report said.

One state lawmaker at [the Aug. 10] hearing spoke along similar lines.

Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero (D-Albuquerque) said she would like to see leaders in New Mexico’s 23 tribes, nations and pueblos work together and collectively benefit from the technology.

“I am proposing — and have proposed — that they come together and pool their resources and create their own geothermal development group,” Roybal Caballero, a member of the Piro Manso Tiwa Indian Tribe, Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, said. “It’s natural heat coming from our natural earth, and it belongs to us.”

- *Source NM (New Mexico)*

Sen. Murkowski pushes for release of \$41.3M in delayed federal grants for Alaska Native education

The U.S. Department of Education is expected to award \$41.3 million in grant funding through the Alaska Native Education Program to 26 Alaska grantees after some delay, according to an announcement from Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski.

The grant funding was expected on July 1, but has been delayed more than a month. Grantees alerted Murkowski’s office they had not yet received the funding, prompting Murkowski to press the U.S. Sec. of Education Linda McMahon to release the awarded funding, according to the statement on Aug. 5.

“Last week, I raised this issue with Secretary McMahon, and I’m pleased she agreed to expedite the obligation of the funds for the Alaska Native Education Program grants that Congress appropriated earlier this year,” Sen. Murkowski wrote.

The Alaska Native Education Program provides federal funding to “meet the unique education needs of Alaska Natives” and to support education programs to benefit Alaska Native people, according to the program website.

Officials with the U.S. Department of Education’s grant office for the program did not give a reason for the delay or specify when the funds will be dispensed after a query on Friday.

The grants are awarded to Tribes, tribal organizations and school districts with a majority of Alaska Native students to support a variety of initiatives across a three-year grant period.

“Grants provide, for example, culturally relevant curriculum, tutoring and other academic supports, indigenous language revitalization, workforce development opportunities, teacher professional development, postsecondary planning and support, and success, early childhood education, and afterschool programming,” Murkowski said in the statement.

“I will continue to champion this program and work with the Department to ensure this funding is administered more expeditiously going forward,” she said.

Grantees include several early learning and literacy programs. Millions are slated for Indigenous language, art, science, and medicine including \$2.1 million for the Baby Raven Reads project by Sealaska Heritage Institute and \$1.4 million for tutoring and college readiness programs through the Rural Indigenous Students College Readiness Alliance launched by the Bering Strait and Lower Kuskokwim School Districts, two of Alaska’s largest, rural districts.

Rosita Kaaháni Worl, president of the Sealaska Heritage Institute, a Native non-profit corporation focused on Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultures, said her organization was one of the grantees that alerted Murkowski’s office to the delay. Sealaska has not received its grant funds yet.

Worl said in an interview [Aug. 7] that federal funds and support for Alaska Native communities is critical, given Alaska’s history of suppressing Native education and language.

“So these programs have helped us overcome the effects of that kind of suppression,” she said. “Our data shows definitely that it promotes and enhances Native education, and we show that through all of our evaluations...it’s led to higher academic performance.”

She said SHI has seen success in early childhood programs like Baby Raven Reads project and initiatives to support students continuing education, which reduces drop out rates. “We’re still behind non-natives, but we’re gaining ground,” she said.

Worl said the federal support helps Sealaska Heritage Institute provide annual funding for education across Southeast Alaska where state funding has fallen short. SHI provides \$1 million each year to the Juneau School District and \$2 million annually to the University of Alaska Southeast, as well as funding to support school districts across the region for teacher training, arts and language programs.

“It’s a program that has proven benefits,” she said. “There, there’s no doubt about it.”

- *Alaska Beacon*

Solar Developer Cancels Washington State Project on Sacred Indigenous Land

A renewable energy developer has pulled its controversial permit application to build an industrial-scale solar facility on an Eastern Washington mountain sacred to Indigenous nations.

Avangrid, a powerful player in the Northwest’s push for green energy development, sought for at least five years to build a solar plant on Badger Mountain. The project site straddled private as well as public lands. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation have protected rights to practice cultural traditions, such as food gathering and ceremonies, on Badger Mountain and other ancestral public lands.

A 2024 investigation by High Country News and ProPublica found that Avangrid and a consultant it retained, Tetra Tech, had omitted key archaeological and cultural information from a state-mandated review of the site, which would have been used for a solar farm. Avangrid continued pushing the project despite a state archaeologist’s warning that the planned development would threaten significant historic sites and current ceremonial activity. An elected

member of the Colville Tribal Business Council told the newsrooms at the time that the project would destroy roughly half the root vegetable harvest in the area.

An Avangrid spokesperson said then that the company had followed “all relevant law and regulation” with regard to the Badger Mountain solar project and had “taken additional steps to accommodate stakeholder feedback where possible.”

It’s unclear whether the company’s decision to cancel the project had anything to do with Indigenous rights. Avangrid declined to clarify its reasoning to HCN.

The Colville Tribes chair, Cindy Marchand, praised the decision in a statement last week. “While the Colville Tribes certainly appreciates the value of renewable energy such as solar power, sacred sites must remain pristine to pass down to future generations.”

After the publication of HCN and ProPublica’s investigation, some members of the Wenatchi-P’squosa, one of the 12 Confederated Colville Tribes, held a demonstration on Badger Mountain, saying that while they support renewable energy, they’re against facilities being built on important cultural sites. Following the demonstration, Avangrid announced that it would pause development to reconsider tribal input and public response. The public comment process is one of the only avenues available for tribal nations to advocate for their rights regarding land development.

At a meeting of the state’s permitting authority council in July, an Avangrid senior director sought a continued pause of the permitting work, pointing to anticipated construction delays affecting the power grid. At the same meeting, the council chair, Kurt Beckett, characterized concerns over the project’s environmental and cultural impacts as “noise,” but he also said tribal objections should be considered in the state’s permitting decision.

Five days later, Avangrid filed a request to completely withdraw its proposal. And last week, the permitting council formally announced the withdrawal and said it was “closing out existing financial arrangements and notifying interested and agency partners.” It did not provide further comment, referring questions to the developer. The state Department of Natural Resources, which owns the public parcel on Badger Mountain, said it had not received any other requests to develop it for clean energy projects at this time, and a spokesperson did not have additional information about future plans for the site.

No matter the reason for the project’s cancellation at Badger Mountain, the outcome is a good one, said Steven Wynecoop, vice chair of the Wenatchi Advisory Group, an independent body that advises the Colville Tribal Business Council and that organized the 2024 Badger Mountain demonstration.

The mountain is a “very sacred site to us,” said Wynecoop, grandson of the Wenatchi Advisory Group founder Matthew Dick. “Generations, we’ve been going to that mountain for plenty of reasons: medicines, foods like roots and berries.”

- *ProPublica and High Country News*

Osage Congress considers language charter school following immersion school closure

The Osage Nation Congress is considering a public charter school with the state of Oklahoma after the executive branch recently closed the immersion school.

Congressman Eli Potts introduced the idea to the 12-member body during an emergency education committee meeting Tuesday. He said the school would be regulated by the Oklahoma state government, would act outside of Osage executive authority and would be subject to state education standards.

“It’s not ideal, but it’s a path that I’m willing to discuss,” Potts said. “In this room, all options are on the table.”

The state standards mean the tribe couldn’t limit enrollment to Osage students, nor could it enroll students outside of Oklahoma. According to Skyler Lusnia, auditor for the Oklahoma Statewide Charter School Board, it would have to define its school district boundaries and accept students within that area.

But Lusnia said it could still include Osage language immersion.

“It would also have its own independent governing board that would establish policies and procedures that align with state standards and certainly would be allowed to have the full immersion language component,” Lusnia said.

Daposka Ahnkodapi, meaning “Our School,” was a private Osage language and cultural immersion school designed for students from six weeks old to eighth grade.

It was closed by the tribe’s executive branch on Aug. 5, about one week before the incoming school year. Principal Chief Joe Tillman declared a state of emergency before announcing the school would close alongside the tribe’s visitors center and Harvest Land Farm due to a financial shortfall.

Tillman encouraged parents to enroll in Pawhuska Public Schools, which extended its enrollment period to Aug. 6.

The Osage Nation Congress told citizens Tillman’s statements were inaccurate and that the tribe was not experiencing a financial crisis. It released a letter last week asking the executive branch to reopen Daposka Ahnkodapi. That letter also included signatures from 1,000 community members in support of the school.

Tillman lifted the state of emergency [Aug. 14.]

Osage Congressional leaders Alice Goodfox and Whitney Red Corn met with Tillman Monday. Goodfox said Tillman rejected congress’ request to reopen the closed locations and return them to the 2027 fiscal year budget. Red Corn said the executive branch did not have a plan, and that congress must devise one.

Potts suggested the tribe could enter into a five-year contract with the school board that would outlast Principal Chief Joe Tillman’s administrative term. He said developing a public charter school would take around 12-18 months.

The idea was met with debate from other members.

Congresswoman Maria Whitehorn argued putting schooling authority in the hands of the state could undermine sovereignty.

“Privatization is much superior to charter,” Whitehorn said. “I believe (chartering) really stomps on our sovereignty.”

Red Corn said she is pursuing her doctorate in educational leadership and recognized that charter schools are not a monolith.

“I need us to get out of a colonial schooling mindset for just a minute and recognize our sovereignty and the ability to create a chartered school,” Red Corn said. “And it does not have to look anything like what the state charter schools look like. ... We can still have a very Osage school — Osage-controlled, Osage-funded, Osage-ran.”

Potts said regardless, the tribe has to find a path forward.

“It’s really cool to walk into a room and have a state leader acknowledge that you have the right to be there,” Potts said. “They’ve carved out in state law the ability for tribal nations to charter schools. We should exercise that because that is an exercise in sovereignty in itself.”

Potts said the tribe is looking for solutions but he doesn’t want to codify a charter school into Osage law yet, adding the congress isn’t ready to write such legislation.

According to Goodfox, the tribe never codified Daposka Ahnkodapi at the request of former Principal Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear. If the congress were to litigate the school’s closure, she said she’s unlikely they would win.

Red Corn said parents could enroll their children in Epic Charter Schools while the congress considers its option.

Oklahoma has seen some Indigenous charter schools over the years.

Cherokee Nation opened an immersion charter school, Tsalagi Tsunadeloquasdi, in 2001. The charter expired this June and the school transitioned into tribal governmental oversight.

Comanche Nation operates a charter school, Comanche Academy, in Lawton.

Sovereign Community School was an OKC-based charter school designed around Indigenous education more broadly. The Oklahoma State Board of Education ended sponsorship for it in 2023, citing multiple issues including financial instability, low academic performance and enrollment.

- *KOSU (Stillwater, Oklahoma)*

Poll shows Deb Haaland with 17% advantage in NM governor’s race

Former Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland has made her return to New Mexico and is running to be the state’s next governor.

Recent data from BSP Research finds Haaland, a Democrat, with a 17% advantage over Republican Greg Hull. The survey, which focused on the upcoming governor’s race in New Mexico, asked registered voters statewide about who they would pick if the election were held today. More specifically, 41% of the survey respondents plan to vote for Haaland, compared to 24% who intend to vote for Hull, with another 3% planning to vote for another candidate/write in candidate. A substantial 27% of the sample remains undecided, with 4% not planning to vote in the November election.

- *From press release*

Tribe makes \$150M loan to company for magnet manufacuting

Niron Magnetics, a company commercializing the world’s first rare-earth-free Iron Nitride permanent magnets, announced Aug. 18 a \$150 million loan from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) to advance the construction of its Sartell, Minnesota, magnet manufacturing plant.

According to a press release, funding will support construction, equipment and operational readiness activities at Niron’s Sartell plant, advancing domestic production of rare-earth-free permanent magnets.

SMSC’s relationship with Niron began more than a decade ago following an introduction through the University of Minnesota’s Research and Innovation Office and Technology Commercialization team. SMSC became one of Niron’s earliest investors in 2016, helping the company advance Iron Nitride from promising university research towards a scalable manufacturing pathway. The Community later participated in Niron’s 2023 financing syndicate, supporting the development of end-to-end manufacturing capabilities in Minneapolis and customer qualification programs across industries.

“The relationship with the SMSC is a core part of Niron’s success to date. This

financing helps accelerate construction of our Sartell manufacturing plant and brings us closer to establishing a domestic source of permanent magnets for critical industries,” said Jonathan Rowntree, CEO of Niron Magnetics. “As demand for rare-earth-free permanent magnets continues to grow, investments like this support our efforts to build a resilient domestic supply chain and scale manufacturing to serve customers across critical industries.”

“Niron Magnetics is building technology with the potential to strengthen domestic manufacturing while creating economic growth and opportunity here in Minnesota,” said SMSC Chairman Cole Miller. “We prioritize investments that align with our Dakota values — including being a good steward of the earth. We recognized Niron’s potential early on to benefit the broader Minnesota community and have remained committed to investing in its success.”

The investment adds to a series of public and private commitments supporting Niron’s efforts to establish large-scale domestic manufacturing of rare-earth-free permanent magnets. The financing is in addition to Niron’s recently announced \$150 million conditional commitment from the U.S. Department of War Office of Strategic Capital, further strengthening the capital foundation supporting construction and operational readiness at the Sartell plant.

The Sartell plant will serve as Niron Magnetics’ first full-scale magnet manufacturing plant and is expected to begin production in 2027. It is set to create approximately 175 full-time, high-quality jobs and strengthen domestic supply chains supporting AI infrastructure, automotive, industrial and consumer applications. It also represents the first step in Niron’s modular manufacturing platform. Final site selection is underway for a subsequent U.S. manufacturing plant capable of producing 10,000 tons of annual capacity that is expected to break ground in 2028.

- *From press release*

Cat Lake First Nation, Lac Seul First Nation and First Mining sign Project Agreement for gold project

VANCOUVER, BC, Canada - First Mining Gold Corp. announced Aug. 27 that it has entered into a Springpole Project Consultation and Benefits Agreement with Cat Lake First Nation and Lac Seul First Nation covering the Springpole Gold Project in northwestern Ontario.

According to a press release, the definitive Project Agreement solidifies a mutually beneficial and collaborative long-term relationship for the development of one of Canada’s largest gold resources. The definitive Project Agreement covers all phases of the Project including construction, operations, and closure, in a manner that respects the land, air, water and culture, and provides key benefits to Cat Lake and Lac Seul, and certainty for the Project’s successful future, the release stated.

Russell Wesley, Chief of Cat Lake First Nation, said: “Developed over more than four years, this agreement is rooted in Anishinaabe teachings and law. It reflects our Anishinaabe-led Impact Assessment that was completed in partnership with Lac Seul First Nation. We know from our Members that this project will impact our lives and connection to our home. The process to get here involved many difficult decisions, and we are thankful for all the dedication of our people to the land, culture and way of life. This Agreement will create meaningful opportunities for our members and youth, strengthen our ability to shape our future, and protect our enduring relationships with the land, water, and all who call this place home.”

Clifford Bull, Chief of Lac Seul First Nation, stated: “We stand in solidarity with Cat Lake First Nation in signing this Agreement. This milestone reflects years of hard work, cooperation, respect and willingness to share the rich resources within our Traditional Territories, in accordance with our Anishinaabe laws and traditions. This land will always be home to our people long after the Springpole Project has ended. The conditions we built into the Agreement from our ALIA process will ensure that this Project - from beginning to end - will be guided by our laws so that our lands and waters, and all our relations are protected for generations to come. This Agreement will provide meaningful opportunities for our people to both benefit from and participate in this Project.”

The Project Agreement includes provisions for CLFN and LSFN to take part in the Project’s environmental management and monitoring, the implementation of adaptive management and preferential training and employability measures, equity and participation in the economic upside of the Project, the promotion of business opportunities during the mine’s construction and operations, as well as the recognition of Anishinaabe culture. The Project Agreement also sets out the sharing of financial benefits from the Springpole Project.

- *From press release*

SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



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BLUES TRAVELER &
GIN BLOSSOMS



SEP 4
JO Koy



SEP 6
CHANCE THE
RAPPER



SEP 10
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CROCKETT



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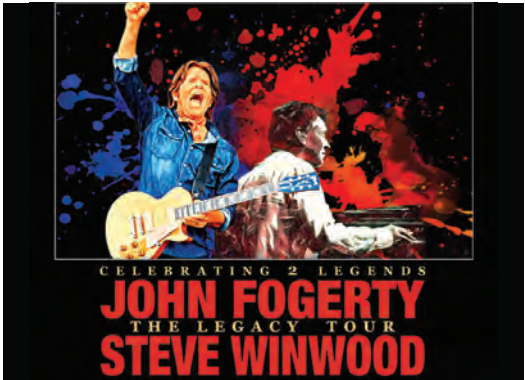
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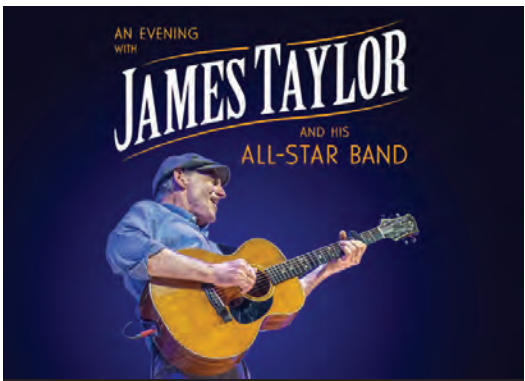
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ZAC BROWN BAND



SEP 20
JOHN FOGERTY
& STEVE
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Education



Beverly Bidney
Students Amari and Arianna Osceola choose from an array of colorful folders as their mother Marsha Osceola, far left, helps.

Immokalee Back to School Bash celebrates education

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — Students and their families prepared for the start of the 2026-2027 school year at Immokalee's annual Back to School Bash on Aug. 4 in the reservation's old gym.

Numerous tribal departments set up tables with school supplies and a few tasty treats to assure students would have the necessary supplies to succeed in school.

The gym was crowded with students along with their families, who went from table to table gathering supplies such as backpacks, folders, notebooks, paper, pencils, pens and lunchboxes. There was also face painting and a D.J. who provided entertainment and line dancing.

2J Cattle Company and Immokalee Seminole Charities joined Tribal Council and Board by handing out backpacks to Seminole kids and descendants.

This was the second year that 2J Cattle Company, which is owned and operated by Josh Jumper and his family, has given back to the community by donating backpacks to students.

"Education was a big part in my family," Jumper said. "My grandmother, Betty Mae Jumper, said if we didn't do well in school she would take sports and rodeo away from us."

That was enough to ensure the Jumper children's success in school, sports and rodeo.

Immokalee Seminole Charities, founded by Jimmy Wayne Holdiness, gave 100 backpacks to middle and high school students who are Seminole descendants. The backpacks include dental hygiene supplies and other personal items such as body spray.

"I'm very proud and humbled to be able to help," Holdiness said. "The whole family came out to help; I try to teach them about the importance of giving back."



Beverly Bidney
At right, Van Samuels from the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, hands out lunchboxes and information about the museum to students.



Beverly Bidney
Backpacks are given to students by Josh Jumper's 2J Cattle Company and at far right, Jimmy Wayne Holdiness of Immokalee Charities Inc. at the Immokalee Back to School Bash on Aug. 4.



Beverly Bidney
Immokalee students with in-house tutors Kathleen Meany and Alondra Salazar get homework help August 25 in the new tutoring space located in the Immokalee Boys & Girls Club in the new gym.



Beverly Bidney
Big Cypress library assistants Claudia Doctor and Austin Villa unpack items moved from the old library to the new one Aug. 25 in the Big Cypress Education Department located in the former home of the Big Cypress Preschool.

Education Department on the move in Big Cypress, Immokalee

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The Education Department has been busy packing and unpacking a lot of boxes in Big Cypress and Immokalee lately.

The Big Cypress Education Department, including its advisors, tutors and the entire library, moved from the administration building into the former preschool building next door. The new location is spacious and bright with plenty of space for students, families and staff to interact privately and in groups.

"We have high expectations for all of our students," said Sherene Goodison, tribalwide ESE program specialist. "We welcome families who want us to join them for parent teacher meetings as a support system. We will go over and beyond if we are needed for our families."

The center of the building is a large flexible space which can be used by students after school, for parent trainings and other activities. The library is larger than the one left behind, all the bookshelves fit easily and there is ample space for computers.

Additionally, there is a room dedicated to a language program. Most classes will be held remotely on WebEx twice a day on Tuesdays every week but there are tables and chairs for in-person classes.

Tutoring is held daily by in-house tutors and a few outside vendors, individually and in groups. There is plenty of room in the flexible space for overflow students and tutors if necessary.

"I believe the new space will bring in a lot of families and students," said K-12 advisor assistant Courtney Lee. "We've grown over the last couple of years. It's a big area; we had 26 students here yesterday."

In Immokalee, the in-house tutors recently moved into the new Boys & Girls Club space in the reservation's new recreation building. The second-floor tutoring room is spacious and bright with an expansive view of the playground and surrounding landscape through large picture windows.

When students are finished with their homework or tutoring session, they are free to walk the few steps to the Boys & Girls Club or go downstairs to the Recreation Department and the gym.

Eventually, the Immokalee Education Department will move into the old Boys & Girls Club building by the old gym. Once the building is renovated, the library and education staff will relocate there from the administration building.



Beverly Bidney
Immokalee in-house tutors in their new home with students. From left are Alondra Salazar, Penelope Emmanuel Grey, tutor program supervisor Jan Bishop and Kathleen Meany.

Hillary Josh - Guardianship program success

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Drugs and a bad relationship led Hillary Josh into a dark place financially and emotionally in 2019. However, her enrollment in the tribe’s Guardianship program has brought light into her life.

“It’s gotten me out of debt, holds me accountable and helped me when I had relapses,” said Josh, 33. “They were always the first one to talk to me and get me into [recovery] places when I needed to go. I’ve grown a lot since going into the program.”

The program, which is part of the Health and Human Services Department, helps tribal members who cannot make sound decisions about their own welfare by helping them transition into living independently by teaching them valuable life and financial skills. The program also include families in the process.

Josh moved to Flagstaff, Arizona, in 2023 to be with her family, who she described as straightforward people who stay on the “straight and narrow.”

“I don’t hang out with a bad crowd here,” Josh said. “It’s changed my perspective on life a lot. We go out and do things together as a family. They know how I’ve struggled, show me that they care and are supportive.”

Josh said she appreciates the benefits of being in the program, which include weekly conversations with her advocate Nikole Stallworth, who also helped her find a therapist in Arizona.

“The program can be hard and frustrating at times, but as long as you’re doing what you’re supposed to do, it’s not that hard,” Josh said. “I grew up not knowing how to ask for help. They make you feel comfortable and they don’t judge you. They do control your funds, but it’s ok to ask for funds if you have a good reason. At first I felt belittled, but then I learned they are here to help me. Now I’m moving forward and feel like I’m closer to getting out of the program.”

Josh is becoming more independent and has her own apartment as well as a new vehicle. She has no problem having a breathalyzer in her vehicle because she said it holds her accountable.



Courtesy photo

Hillary Josh

“I told them to extend the amount of time I have it in my truck,” she said. “I’m doing really well now. I’m about to celebrate one year sober from alcohol and have been off drugs for six years. I’m extremely proud of myself. It’s all due to having that accountability.”

Josh has three children ages 11 to 14 who are living with a relative in Brighton.

“She does a really good job taking care of my children,” Josh said.

Josh knows it is harder to get sober on her own and has some advice for tribal members who may need to but not want to go into the guardianship program.

“It’s easier to take the help than do it on your own,” she said. “They are there to help and there is no shame in it. It’s a choice you really need to think on and one you need to choose. When you do the things they ask you to and do them correctly, it isn’t hard at all.”

Montana agrees to accountability for Indigenous education

BY NORA MABIE
Montana Free Press

A group of Montana students, families and tribes has reached a settlement with the state Office of Public Instruction that’s set to bring closure to a yearslong legal dispute about how the state implements its constitutional requirement to provide Indigenous education.

The settlement, if approved, would resolve a class action lawsuit filed in 2021 in which plaintiffs alleged the state has failed to implement and enforce a constitutional mandate requiring K-12 public education to recognize the “distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians.”

In 1999, the state Legislature enacted the Indian Education for All (IEFA) Act to implement that constitutional mandate and require public schools to teach Native American history and culture. Since 2007, the Legislature has appropriated about \$3.5 million annually to school districts to fund implementation. According to the IEFA Act, schools are supposed to use the funds to develop curricula, purchase class materials and train teachers.

In 2021, a group of Montana students, families and tribes filed a class action lawsuit against the Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Board of Public Education, alleging that school districts were improperly using funds intended to support IEFA. Tribal plaintiffs include the Fort Belknap Indian Community, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, Northern Cheyenne Tribe and Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana.

Court documents alleged that in 2019

and 2020, only 10% of Montana school districts could account for their IEFA funding having been spent on appropriate expenses. One school, according to court documents, used some of its IEFA funds to pay a portion of librarian salaries. Other schools allegedly used the funds to purchase books unrelated to Native American culture or history.

A district court judge on Monday [August 24, 2026] preliminarily approved the settlement, which is subject to final court approval after a notice period. The Office of Public Instruction has agreed, in part, to:

Use its accreditation system to require districts to provide evidence of IEFA implementation

Establish enforcement mechanisms, including a yearly evaluation of at least seven schools’ IEFA expenses and potential funding reductions for noncompliance

“Strengthen and formalize” tribal consultation processes

Require schools to report IEFA expenses and publish a list of noncompliant schools

Superintendent of Public Instruction Susie Hedalen wrote in an emailed statement that she is “pleased” an agreement has been reached so “that we can move forward with ensuring every Montana student receives authentic instruction on our state’s tribal nations.”

“The OPI has also launched a new website and professional development portal to house additional IEFA resources for educators and families,” she wrote. “In Montana, we support all students and work to ensure they are seen and supported.”

Hard Rock Cafe Tampa to host Venezuelan Salsa band

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Hard Rock Cafe in Tampa will host En Vivo featuring Venezuelan Salsa band Adolescentes Orquesta at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa on Sept. 24 at 9 p.m. Guests can enjoy an evening of live Salsa music and vibrant Latin dance party.

For tickets go to casino.hardrock.com and Ticketmaster.com.

Founded by legendary producer Luis Francisco “El Negro” Mendoza under Kora Records, the iconic Adolescentes Orquesta remains the global gold standard for authentic Salsa music. Today, the group is

fronted by the powerhouse talents of its fifth generation—Ernesto Cabrera, Rodrigo Silva, Alex Quintero, Jonathan Martínez, Ángel Mejía, And Andy Moreno—who seamlessly bridge classic tropical rhythms with modern, multi-generational appeal. Their recent career trajectory is marked by massive commercial triumphs, including the chart-topping anthem “Resistiré” (which hit #1 in ratings, earned Mexico’s prestigious Premio Inmortal Internacional in 2021, and secured a YouTube Silver Plaque), the cultural hit “Soy Latino”, and “Nadamás,” which earned the group a YouTube Gold Plaque for surpassing one million subscribers.

Introducing the 2026 NAFOA Leadership Summit Class



Courtesy photo

From left, bottom row is Broderick Roberts, Ailana Toya, McKaylin Peters, Aziza Smith, and Lawrence Village Center III. From left, top row is Stevie Quijas, Aiden Perkins, Delanie Seals, Gavin Crouch, and Ava LaPlante.

STAFF REPORT

NAFOA (originally Native American Finance Officers Association) has introduced the eighth cohort of the NAFOA Leadership Summit. This year’s class includes 10 rising young Native American professionals selected for their passion and experience in accounting, business, and tribal economic development policy. They have each demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing the economic future of Indian Country.

As part of the program, participants will connect with tribal leaders, engage with industry executives and policymakers, and sharpen their understanding of finance and economic development. The Summit will take place on Sept. 20, preceding the 2026 Fall Finance and Tribal Economics Conference on Sept. 21–22.

The Leadership Summit is part of NAFOA’s ongoing work to strengthen tribal economies by fostering leadership in financial and business sectors across Indian Country.

Please join us in welcoming this new cohort to the NAFOA community:

Ava LaPlante

Descendant of Santo Domingo Pueblo
Bachelor’s in Economics - St. Catherine University

LaPlante (she/her) is an associate data scientist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis’s Center for Indian Country Development (CICD), where she compiles data, conducts analysis, and builds data tools supporting the economic self-determination of Native nations. She joined CICD as an intern and was a 2022 scholar in the American Economic Association’s Summer Program.

Aiden Perkins

Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation
Bachelor of Science, Business Administration – Montana State University-Northern

Perkins (he/him) is an Accounting Associate at CB Accounting in Dickinson, North Dakota. He is currently pursuing both a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Entrepreneurship at Dickinson State University with plans to become a Certified Public Accountant.

Ailana Toya

Pueblo of Jemez
Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance – University of New Mexico
Toya (she/her) earned her BBA in

Finance at the University of New Mexico and is currently pursuing her Master of Business Administration. She is passionate about expanding her knowledge and developing as a leader, with a strong interest in strengthening Tribal organizations and supporting the long-term success of Native communities.

Broderick Roberts

Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
Master of Business Administration – Sitting Bull College

Roberts (he/him) serves as the Economic Development Planner for the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe. His role focuses on strengthening economic sovereignty through Tribal entrepreneurship, strategic land use planning, and capital development initiatives. Starting in the Fall of 2026, Roberts will be pursuing his Master’s in Business Administration.

Lawrence Village Center III

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
Business Administration & Environmental Science – Sitting Bull College

Village Center (he/him) is a Tribal member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. He is a first-generation student attending Sitting Bull College, where he also serves as a peer mentor, guiding and supporting mentees in their academic careers. Village Center plans to pursue a Master’s degree upon completing his undergraduate degree.

Gavin Crouch

Choctaw Nation
Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance – Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Crouch (he/him) works as a Performance Analyst for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, supporting Gaming and Hospitality through reporting, revenue analysis, and efficiency improvement. He is passionate about using finance, analytics, and leadership to support financial growth and sustainability for Native communities. Crouch is currently pursuing an MBA with a concentration in Native American Leadership.

McKaylin Peters

Menominee Nation
Bachelor of Science, Community & Nonprofit Leadership – University of Wisconsin-Madison

Peters (she/her) currently serves as Executive Director of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and is beginning a new role as Vendor Relations Manager for the Wolf River Development Company,

the Tribe’s business venture. She is also currently pursuing a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership at Johns Hopkins University, strengthening her expertise in organizational systems, leadership strategy, and Tribal governance. Peters was recognized in 2026 as both a Champion for Change and a 25 Under 25 honoree.

Aziza Smith

Eastern Shoshone Tribe
Master of Public Administration – University of Kansas

Smith (she/her) grew up on the Wind River Reservation. She attended Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, KS, and received an Associate’s degree in Social Work and a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration. Smith is currently pursuing her Master’s degree in Public Administration at the University of Kansas.

Delanie Seals

Chickasaw Nation
Bachelor’s and Master’s – East Central University

Seals (she/her) is a member of the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Sac and Fox Nations. She has an extensive background in political and legal organizations, including internships with U.S. Representatives, USAID, and multiple Chickasaw Nation offices. Seals currently serves as an Adjunct Professor at Oklahoma City Community College, Chair of the Young Democrats of America Indigenous Caucus, and a board member of Regalia Making Relatives. Seals was recently awarded the Oklahoma Native Students in Higher Education 2026 Rising Alumnus Award.

Stevie Quijas

Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians

Master of Public Policy & MS in Environmental Sustainability – University of Michigan

Quijas (he/him) serves as a Graduate Fellow at the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, pursuing a dual Master’s in public policy and environmental sustainability. He is an emergency medical technician and has worked in both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Those experiences anchor his interest in Tribal health and environmental policy in what communities actually need on the ground. Quijas is most excited to learn how Nations are building enterprises that will continue to generate benefits for seven generations.

Navajo Nation Council celebrates Indigenous STEM facility at Navajo Preparatory School

FROM PRESS RELEASE

the resources to make those opportunities possible,” Curley said.

Navajo Preparatory School President Shawna Allison Becenti said the project has received substantial support from federal and state partners.

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich secured \$2 million in congressional direct spending for the project in 2024, providing its first major funding commitment. New Mexico later provided \$10 million in capital outlay funding over two years, followed by another \$6 million through the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department’s Tribal Infrastructure Fund.

The school has also secured resolutions of support from all five Navajo Nation agencies and 110 chapters as it seeks Navajo Nation matching funds for the final phase of construction.

School officials emphasized that continued partnerships with Navajo Nation, state and federal leaders will be necessary to complete the project.

Becenti described the facility as a place where Indigenous knowledge and contemporary technology will work side by side.

Students are expected to have opportunities to weave, code, perform, design and create within the new building, reflecting an approach that places traditional knowledge and modern innovation alongside

one another.

The facility is intended to support STEM education, career preparation, cultural preservation and community wellness. Navajo Prep has set January 2028 as its target opening date.

Speakers at the groundbreaking described the project as an investment in Navajo students and the Nation’s future workforce. They highlighted the longstanding scientific and engineering knowledge practiced by Diné people and the opportunity to showcase the abilities of students from communities throughout the Navajo Nation.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham also recognized Navajo Prep’s academic accomplishments and emphasized the importance of providing students with modern educational facilities.

She said investments in educational infrastructure give students the space, resources and dignity needed to succeed while stressing that technological advancement should remain connected to the cultural knowledge and human values students bring into the classroom.

The groundbreaking represents the latest step in Navajo Preparatory School’s ongoing campus development and its broader mission of preparing Navajo students for higher education and future careers.

◆ PECS
From page 1A

Thomas read “The Legend of Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School” about the school’s history and its 20 years of growing together, which was projected on a large screen.

The story tells about how the three founding mothers of PECS – Lorene Gopher, Louise Gopher and Jennie Shore – worked to create a school focused on Seminole culture and history along with academics. In 2007 that dream came true when PECS was born. In 2015 the school’s immersion program began.

“Together we build successful learners today and unconquered leaders tomorrow,” Thomas said. “One tribe, one family, one journey.”

After the story finished, Councilman Howard and Downing unveiled a banner proclaiming PECS as a grade “A” school for the 2025-2026 school year.

“For 20 years PECS has been a place where we celebrate the heritage, culture, traditions and language of the Seminole Tribe of Florida while preparing students to become the leaders of tomorrow,” Downing wrote in prepared remarks.

After the banner was revealed, students and teachers filled the gym with color from a slew of confetti cannon poppers.



Students celebrate in a storm of confetti.

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, left, and PECS administrators and teachers including from right administrative assistant Michele Thomas and principal Tracy Downing, greet students as they walk the yellow brick road into the gym, aka for the day as the Emerald City in the Land of Oz.



Beverly Bidney

Students walk through the reception line consisting of characters from the Wizard of Oz on their way into the PECS gym to celebrate the school’s tenth “A” rating from the state.



Beverly Bidney

Principal Tracy Downing and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard unveil the banner announcing the school’s “A” rating for the 2025-2026 school year.



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Former Lawyer for Leonard Peltier
Counsel to the Protestors at Standing Rock

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Rockabillaque to rock Immokalee Nov. 14

FROM PRESS RELEASE

This year’s Rockabillaque musical lineup on Nov. 14 at the Seminole Hotel & Casino Immokalee includes headliner Shannon & The Clams, whose blend of garage rock, vintage doo-wop, soul, surf, and psychedelic pop has earned them an international following and acclaim as one of the most original bands in modern roots music.

Just before them, Les Greene & The Swayzees deliver a mix of vintage rock ‘n’ roll, Southern soul, rhythm & blues, and gospel-powered vocals. Greene – best known as the voice of Little Richard in Baz Luhrmann’s “Elvis” and on its Grammy-nominated soundtrack – is one of the most electrifying performers working today.

Swing fans won’t want to miss the collaboration of Royal Crown Revue meets Gunhild Carling, bringing

together the legendary architects of the swing revival with the internationally acclaimed Swedish jazz virtuoso known for her incredible musicianship, showmanship, and infectious energy. The band spearheaded the 1990s swing revival. The band’s biggest signature hits include “Hey Pachucos!” (immortalized in the film “The Mask”), “Zip Gun Bop,” “Barflies at the Beach” and “The Contender.”

Jack Chalfant named president of TOFIH

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Jack Chalfant was recently named president of the Trail of Florida’s Indian Heritage (TOFIH), a non-profit network of archeological sites, museums, heritage interpreters and parks whose goal is to promote and preserve the state’s historical and archeological resources.

As president, Chalfant leads the board and runs its monthly meetings. He also attends the Florida Anthropological Society meeting every year, where they set up a booth, promote TOFIH and meet people.

“We have about 500 different sites within the state that we advertise,” said Chalfant, who works at the Tribal Historic Preservation Office as cultural resources supervisor. “The goal [of TOFIH] is to educate the public about the past and Florida’s Indian heritage from way back when to the modern day. We tell then there were people here before they even thought there were people here.”

Chalfant leads the board in its decision-making process, which includes allowing sites to join the organization. When a group wants to join, the board does research and decides if it is a legitimate archeological or historic site. He cited one example of a group who found a burial mound and performed some “made up stuff” on the mound itself. That group wasn’t allowed to join.

“We told them they were desecrating the mound and didn’t know what they were doing,” Chalfant said. “They stopped, but they still do their ceremonies off the mound.”

Another time, after a hurricane hit Martin County and revealed some long-buried remains, some people posted pictures of themselves holding human skulls. The news media contacted TOFIH, Chalfant called THPO’s NAGPRA professional who suggested they call the Martin County

Sheriff’s department to do something about it. It took just about 20 minutes for the page to be taken down.

TOFIH has divided the state into five regions; northwest, northeast, central, southwest and southeast. All the regions have numerous sites for the public to explore, most of which are free of charge. Sites include museums, archeological sites and historic sites and county, state and national parks.

The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Reservation is located in the southwest region, which also includes seven archeological sites, six museums, two historic sites and one state park.

TOFIH used to make presentations in person, but since the Covid 19 pandemic they make video presentations every few months on Zoom. The presentations are available for anyone to view. The Florida Public Archeology Network gave a presentation on the effects of hurricanes on archeological sites and Chalfant made a presentation about Indian heritage in the state.

“There were people here way before the Spanish arrived, but most of the history is only written about when the Spanish arrived, not before,” Chalfant said. “There is no other history because everything else was passed down by word of mouth and not written down.”

Chalfant also works as the cultural resources supervisor for the Tribal Historic Preservation Office, where he does archeological surveys, works with cultural advisors and medicine men. Part of the job is to look for areas with medicine plants and makes sure those sites are protected.

“I find the plants, mark it on a map and make sure they don’t overflow the area by pumping too much water through it,” he said. “My job is to make sure they don’t destroy the plants. Too much water will kill them,



Beverly Bidney

Jack Chalfant at the ceremonial grounds behind the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress.

not enough water will shrink them down to a small area. I try to protect those areas as best I can.”

When someone wants to build a home or building, Chalfant and his team do archeological surveys of the property. One time they identified a camp in a hammock near cowpens that was used by cowboys “back in the day” before there were horse trailers. They would camp and work the cattle in that area.

“We found the camp and asked them to

move the homesite over a little bit,” Chalfant said. “We got them to move it over and saved that site.”

When FPL wanted to build solar arrays near the Big Cypress Reservation a few years ago, Chalfant and his team found historic trails on the site and wanted to make sure they weren’t destroyed during construction. FPL worked around the trails and protected them so the vehicles wouldn’t disturb the historic site during construction. The solar array was built around the old trail leading

from Big Cypress to Immokalee.

Chalfant has been doing archeology since 2013, when he joined THPO. As a child, he used to go out looking for medicine plants with his grandmother Alice Micco Snow, who was a medicine gatherer and wrote a book on the healing plants of the Seminoles.

“I kind of have an inside track from being tribal,” Chalfant said. “I never knew that what I learned from being a kid would come to play later on in life.”

Hollywood projects continue to take shape

HOLLYWOOD — Here’s a look at some of the major projects taking place on the Hollywood Reservation. All photos are from Aug. 28 of the ballfields project, Senior Center and Community Center. Also (no photos) an addition to the Betty Mae Jumper Health Center is being constructed.



Kevin Johnson

The Senior Center.



Kevin Johnson

The ballfields.



Daniella Hakim

Above and below, the Community Center.



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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. Go to nativelearningcenter.com for more about the latest training, webinars and podcast episodes. Recordings are available on the site.

Webinar: Successfully Managing Change

Instructor: Dr. William R. Latchford, DCJ, President, Native Peacekeeper Consulting Group, a Native woman-owned public safety consulting firm; retired Executive Director of Public Safety/Chief of Police for the Seminole Tribe of Florida; co-director of Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice Native American Crime and Justice Research & Policy Institute
Sept. 1, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

None of us can escape change, therefore it is well worth developing strategies to manage it! Because everyone has to manage change, having tools to help embrace it leads to the best outcomes. Successfully Managing Change includes the stages and pace of change, dealing with resistance, adaptive strategies, approaching change as an opportunity for growth, and more.

Learning Objectives:

- Accept there are no normal or abnormal ways of reacting to change, but that we must start from where we are
- See change not as something to be feared and resisted but as an essential element of the world to be accepted
- Understand that adapting to change is not technical but attitudinal - change is not an intellectual issue but one that strikes at who you are
- Recognize that before we can embrace the way things will be, we may go through a process of grieving, and of letting go of the way things used to be

Webinar: Finding Financing for Your Business

Instructor: Russ Seagle, trainer/facilitator, Seagle Management Consulting
Sept. 8, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

Securing appropriate financing is a crucial step for business growth and sustainability. This webinar will guide participants through various funding options available, including traditional loans, alternative lending sources, grants, and tribal financing programs. Attendees will learn how to strengthen their funding applications and increase their chances of approval.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand different types of financing and their suitability
- Identify Tribal, government, and nonprofit funding sources
- Learn how to prepare compelling loan and grant applications
- Recognize common financing challenges and strategies to overcome them
- Gain insights into lender expectations and how to meet them

Webinar: The ABCs of Supervising Others

Instructor: Dr. William R. Latchford
Sept. 10, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

This course is for people who are new supervisors or who are interested in a supervisory position, as well as those who are team leads or part-time supervisors without a great deal of authority. This course is designed to help students overcome many of the supervisory problems that they will encounter as a workplace leader.

Learning Objectives:

- Adjust to the supervisor’s role with confidence
- Develop your skills in listening, asking questions, resolving conflict, and giving feedback to employees
- Identify key attitudes that you can develop to enhance your supervisory skills
- Use time management and planning techniques to maximize your success
- Develop a technique for giving instructions that are clear and understood
- Understand the importance of developing good relationships with employees and peers, so you are seen as fair and consistent

Webinar: Don’t Surprise Your Grantmaker: How to be a Fantastic Grantee

Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST; Grant Professionals Association Approved Trainer; President, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services
Sept. 15, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

Grantmakers do not like surprises (good or bad) about a funded project at the time a grant report is submitted. Surprises in a report lead to additional work for the person managing the funding program, and that does NOT endear you or your organization to the grantmaker. This can damage long-

term funding relationships, even if the surprise was a good one. In this webinar, we will work through situations that commonly arise in grant-seeking organizations to help you be a fantastic grantee even when the implementation of grant-funded work does not go as planned.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand how to involve your grant team in relationship development and maintenance
- Learn how to manage and improve relationships with grant funders
- Know how and when to communicate with a grantmaker outside of required reports

Webinar: Time Management Secrets of High Achievers

Instructor: Russ Seagle
Sept. 17, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

Effective time management distinguishes successful leaders from the rest. This webinar uncovers practical, actionable time management techniques used by top performers. Participants will learn methods for prioritizing tasks, delegating effectively, and avoiding common productivity pitfalls to achieve better results with less stress.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize and overcome common timewasters
- Master techniques for prioritizing tasks based on impact and urgency
- Learn effective delegation strategies for maximizing productivity
- Implement proven daily routines and practices of high achievers
- Manage distractions and interruptions effectively

Webinar: Meeting Management: The Art of Making Meetings Work

Instructor: Dr. William R. Latchford,
Sept. 22, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

Meetings come in all shapes and sizes, from the convention to a quick huddle in an office hallway. This course will be concerned with small working meetings; with groups that have a job to do requiring the energy, commitment, and talents of those who participate. Members of such a group want to get some kind of result out of their time together: solving problems, brainstorming, or simply sharing information. At its best, such a group knows what it is about, and knows and utilizes the strengths of individual members.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the value of meetings as a management tool
- Recognize the critical planning step that makes meeting time more effective
- Identify process tools that can help create an open and safe forum for discussion
- Develop and practice techniques for handling counterproductive behaviors

Webinar: Business Planning for Business Success

Instructor: Russ Seagle, trainer/facilitator, Seagle Management Consulting
Sept. 24, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

Regular business planning is essential for sustained growth and adaptability. This webinar teaches attendees the importance of continuous planning, effective goal-setting, and strategic analysis to respond quickly to market changes. Participants will learn how to implement dynamic planning processes that drive performance and accountability.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the difference between strategic and operational planning
- Develop a repeatable, effective planning cycle for ongoing success
- Set clear, measurable goals linked directly to business success
- Identify strategies for adapting quickly to changing market conditions

Webinar: The Professional Supervisor

Instructor: Dr. William R. Latchford,
Sept. 29, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

With a host of new challenges and responsibilities to tackle, new supervisors need training that helps them adjust to their new role. Learning how to supervise your new employees on a trial-and-error basis can lead to discouragement. This course can help you overcome many of the problems a new supervisor may encounter and to set the groundwork for a successful change in your working life!

Learning Objectives:

- Clarify the scope and nature of a supervisory position
- Learn some ways to deal with the challenges of the role
- Recognize the responsibilities you have as a supervisor, to yourself, your team, and your organization
- Learn key techniques to help you plan and prioritize effectively
- Acquire a basic understanding of leadership, team building, communication, and motivation, and what part they play in effective supervision.

Dolphins Cancer Challenge to be held at Hard Rock Stadium

FROM PRESS RELEASE

MIAMI GARDENS — Registration for Dolphins Cancer Challenge XVII is open, inviting riders, runners, walkers and supporters to join in the fight against cancer on Feb. 27, 2027, at Hard Rock Stadium. One-hundred percent of participant-raised funds are donated directly to Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of the

University of Miami Health System and Miller School of Medicine.

The event was founded in 2010, inspired by former Dolphins player and broadcaster Jim “Mad Dog” Mandich following his cancer diagnosis, for which he received treatment at Sylvester. Participants can choose from the 13-mile Dan Marino Ride, 39-mile Larry Csonka Ride, 54-mile Zach Thomas Ride presented by Guardant

Health, 99-mile Jason Taylor Ride, or the DCC 5K presented by Amazon.

DCC XVI set a fundraising record for the sixth consecutive year, surpassing the \$18 million mark and bringing the organization’s total contribution to Sylvester to more than \$100 million.

Register at dolphinscancerchallenge.com.

Anti-uranium advocates wrest control of public hearing on proposed mine near Navajo Nation

BY PATRICK LOHMANN
Source NM

GALLUP, N.M. — A recent hearing meant to inform the public about a new uranium mine proposal near Church Rock (New Mexico) instead exposed wounds around the legacy of mining’s impacts on Navajo communities, as well as fresh concerns about whether technology that promises to safely extract the mineral is as clean as the industry claims.

Laramide Resources, a Canadian mining company, and its subsidiary NuFuels, Inc., held a public hearing [Aug. 6] at a casino near Gallup as it seeks a permit from the New Mexico Environment Department to discharge.

But Navajo anti-mining advocates, as well as those who still remember the cascading consequences from the 1979 Church Rock mine spill, shouted out repeatedly during the company’s presentation. They expressed frustration that NuFuels would pursue a uranium mine in an area still contending with the biggest uranium spill in the nation’s history, as well as numerous other public health and environmental harms from decades of uranium mining.

About half way through company Vice President Josh Leftwich’s presentation, advocate Jenn Nez slowly got to her feet and walked toward Leftwich, ultimately convincing him to hand her his microphone.

Through tears, Nez described cancer and other health issues she said uranium contamination caused in her family. Leftwich did not get the microphone back for most of the rest of the 90-minute meeting, as a line of fellow opponents gathered alongside Nez and waited for their chance to speak.

“Thank you for giving us this opportunity, because we took it from you,” Teracita Keyanna, vice president of the Red Water Pond Road Community Association Executive Committee, told Leftwich. “This is my community. This is my family. That’s my home you’re talking about.”

Leftwich’s presentation centered on a

proposed uranium project called Church Rock Section 8, which the company hopes to build on a 175-acre site of private land surrounded by the Navajo Nation, which bans uranium mining. Before Leftwich was interrupted, he detailed how the company sought to use a mining method known as in situ recovery to access roughly 10 million pounds of uranium contained in sandstone formations in the underground aquifer.

In situ recovery entails the injection of lixiviant — a chemical solution composed of water, oxygen and either carbon dioxide or sodium bicarbonate — to dissolve the uranium underground. From there, pumps extract the uranium liquid into recovery wells, where the uranium is separated. The leftover water is then discharged back into the aquifer.

“It’s a closed-loop system,” Leftwich said. “There won’t be any other discharges. The water just circulates through the formation to extract the uranium.”

The company’s permit application notes that, when fully operational, it will seek to discharge roughly 4,000 gallons of leftover water a minute back into the aquifer, which provides drinking water to the Crownpoint community. That would be the equivalent of about nine Olympic-size swimming pools’ worth of water a day.

The company cannot begin mining until the NMED rules on the permit application, which officials said will take at least a year.

Still, Leftwich’s presentation extolled the virtues of in situ recovery as a low-emissions means of extracting uranium without risking the lives of workers underground.

The company would also employ monitoring wells to ensure the water quality meets federal and state standards, and the company is in preliminary stages of a research project with Los Alamos National Laboratories that aims to restore the groundwater supply with “approaches tailored to the geology of the Churchrock deposit.”

However, state officials are dubious about the company’s promises to restore the groundwater to its pre-mining condition.

Earlier [Aug. 6], the New Mexico Department of Justice weighed in on the company’s pending license renewal application to the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission with a 39-page rebuttal of numerous claims the company has made regarding its operation and in situ recovery more broadly.

The NMDOJ’s “petition to intervene” argues that in situ recovery has never been proven to restore groundwater supplies to their pre-mining states and that no technology yet exists to do so. It cites NuFuels’ own statements in an unrelated filing before the NRC in 2023, in which the company states that, “to date, no ISR site has restored all groundwater constituents of concern to pre-operational concentrations” and that uranium levels “tend to gradually rebound” in aquifers after the treatment.

Therefore, the NMDOJ wrote, the company has acknowledged “that the technology needed to ensure compliance with the governing restoration standard does not yet exist and that developing it is the object of ongoing research.”

Advocates who wrested the microphone from Leftwich on [Aug. 6] also raised concerns about what they said is untested technology, with one woman shouting that the NuFuels was making “Guinea pigs” out of the communities downstream of the mine site.

Leftwich told Source NM after the hearing that he was surprised the New Mexico Department of Justice would weigh in on what he sees as a “pretty small issue” regarding a single mine in the Church Rock area, “compared to big issues, like across the state.”

As for the hearing itself, he said he was content to let people “speak their minds” about the issue, but also that legacy uranium issues and “misinformation” are preventing a productive community debate. The hearing also marked the beginning of a 60-day public comment period.

“This is the first of hopefully multiple meetings that we can get more in-depth,” he said. “I really wish we could have good meetings.”

Yurok Tribe company among National Park Foundation housing grant recipients

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — The National Park Foundation announced Aug. 31 the awarding of \$6.9 million in grants to accelerate and expand workforce housing solutions across 17 national parks. According to a press release, the funding will empower parks and park partners to advance near-term, direct investment projects and long-term project planning to increase housing options for the rangers, staff, volunteers, and partners who care for America’s national parks and help welcome millions of visitors each year.

The projects include:

- Redwood Parks Conservancy will work with the Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation – a firm owned by the Yurok Tribe and has strong experience with complex projects in the region’s parks – to construct a dormitory at Redwood National Park in California for seasonal employees and volunteers.



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Sports



Seminoles help lead OHS volleyball to victory in gym’s first game

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

OKEECHOBEE — The Okeechobee High School girls volleyball program christened the school’s new gymnasium with a pair of wins against Lincoln Park Academy-Fort Pierce on Aug. 18.

It was the season opener for the Brahmins, who have three Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal members on the junior varsity team and seven on varsity. In what were the first athletic events in the gym, the JV opened with a 2-0 win followed by the varsity’s 3-0 triumph. The varsity match drew about 200 spectators, who sat in purple and gold-colored bleachers on one side of the gym; the bleachers on the side where the teams were located were not opened.

The gym is part of an entirely new high school that opened Aug. 10 on the campus of the old school, which has been demolished.

The JV game started at 4:55 p.m. and included tribal members Jaiden Fludd, Ciani Smith and Jaelle Weimann. Okeechobee lost the first point of the first game, but a kill by Bristol Schoonmaker for the Brahmans’ first point in the gym evened the score and the team never looked back, winning 25-2 and 25-10. Okeechobee won the first nine points of the second game thanks to strong serves by Fludd and a kill by Smith.

About half of the varsity squad is Seminole, led by senior libero Tehya Nunez, who participated in the pregame coin toss with Kaylee Werk, the team’s only other senior. The other Seminoles on varsity are juniors Melaine Bonilla, Dahlia Grzech, Bobbi Johns-Osceola, Kulipa Julian and Daliyah Nunez, and sophomore Jalene Smith. The starters were Grzech, Werk, Tehya Nunez, Olivia Bartels, Kendall Chambers and former Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School standout Azariah Washington, who led the team with 12 kills.

Grzech’s serves to start the match



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee’s Melaine Bonilla controls the ball during the Brahmans’ win Aug. 18.

proved to be too hot to handle for Lincoln Park. A 6-0 Brahmans’ lead forced an early timeout by Lincoln Park. Later in the game, a couple kills by Washington and back-to-back aces by Chambers paved the way to a 25-14 win.

Game two featured plenty of excitement as the teams traded leads several times before Okeechobee emerged with a hard-fought 33-31 win. At one point, Okeechobee’s back row featured four alumni of Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School (Julian, Nunez, Smith and Washington). The teams were knotted at 7-7 before Okeechobee cranked out seven straight points led by Nunez’s outstanding serves. Washington stepped up late in the game with big kills.

The third game finished quickly and quietly as the Brahmans capped off the first night in the gym with a 25-11 win.

In serving, Smith led OHS with four aces; Nunez had three. Defensively, Nunez led the way with eight digs followed by Julian and Grzech with five each.

The good vibes for Okeechobee didn’t last long as the Brahmans dropped their next two matches before evening their record at 2-2 with a character-building 3-2 win against Sebastian River on Aug. 27. Down 2-1, Okeechobee fought back to win games four and five.



Kevin Johnson

Tehya Nunez, one of Okeechobee’s top servers, delivers a serve against Lincoln Park.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee’s Kulipa Julian winds up for a hit.



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Seminoles on OHS varsity volleyball are Melaine Bonilla, Daliyah Nunez, Jalene Smith, Kulipa Julian, Dahlia Grzech, Tehya Nunez and Bobbi Johns-Osceola.



Kevin Johnson

After pregame introductions, Daliyah Nunez and her teammates receive good luck greetings.

Cheyenne Nunez earns promotion to associate head coach

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Cheyenne Nunez, a Seminole Tribe of Florida tribal member, has been promoted to the position of associate head softball coach at New College of Florida in Sarasota.

Nunez, 28, is entering her fourth season as a coach in New College of Florida’s softball program. Her ascension to associate head coach was announced Aug. 19 by Corbin Weeks, who is entering his second season as head coach. The team plays in the NAIA’s Sun Conference.

“I am incredibly grateful for the support that Cheyenne has shown me since I arrived at New College,” Weeks said in a statement. “Cheyenne has an unwavering love for this program, and her loyalty runs deep for our institution. There’s no one else that I would want to work alongside as we continue building this program.”

During her playing days, Nunez was a standout athlete at Okeechobee High School (class of 2016), where she excelled on the varsity teams in softball, basketball and volleyball, earning a remarkable 12 varsity letters. She went on to play softball at the State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota, where the infielder/outfielder starred on and off the field. She earned First Team All-Conference and Second Team All-State honors in 2019. She set team records for most stolen bases in a season (38) and career (61). She finished her two-year career with a cumulative .364 batting average. She was named SCF’s Female Athlete of the Year for the 2018-19 academic year.

The following season she became one of the few STOF tribal members to ever play NCAA Division I sports when she joined the University of South Carolina Upstate softball team. In her only season with USC-Upstate in 2020, she appeared in nine games

and had three hits in 12 at-bats for a .250 batting average with two walks and three runs scored. The team’s season was cut short due to the outbreak of Covid in the U.S.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in sociology from the University of South Florida in 2021, Nunez embarked on a collegiate coaching career. She was an assistant softball coach at State College of Florida for two years. Shortly after joining the New College of Florida staff as an assistant coach, Nunez took on a leadership role with the program while head coach Aly Bermudez battled ovarian cancer. Bermudez died in April 2025 at age 32.

Nunez is the mom of three kids ages 5 and under: Elianna, Zayden and EJ. She and her husband, Eddy Gonzalez, often coach Seminole Tribe youth softball teams. Their 17U teams have won multiple championships at the Native American Youth Organization (NAYO) tournaments, including this year’s

that was held in Okeechobee.

Nunez, the daughter of Peggy and Daniel Nunez, grew up on the Brighton Reservation. Her younger sisters, Joleyne and Daliyah, followed in her athletic footsteps and have played volleyball and softball at Okeechobee High School.



Kevin Johnson

Cheyenne Nunez speaks to a New College of Florida softball player during a game on April 22, 2025, in Fort Lauderdale.

Brody Riley’s big night (TD, safety) propels OHS past Suncoast

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

RIVIERA BEACH — On Aug. 21, the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Brody Riley had a game most defensive linemen can only dream about.

Riley, a senior defensive tackle from the Brighton Reservation, notched a safety and recovered a fumble for a touchdown to help lead the undefeated Okeechobee Brahms to a 44-0 win against Suncoast High School in Riviera Beach.

Okeechobee improved to 2-0 under new head coach Antwan Blatch.

Already leading 14-0 thanks to a pair of short TD runs by freshman running back Elijah Gordon, Okeechobee’s defense made contributions to the scoreboard in the second quarter. With 6:46 left, Riley broke through the line and wrapped up Suncoast quarterback Brady Streets in the endzone for a solo sack and safety that made it 16-0. Three minutes later, the defense swarmed the QB again, this time forcing a fumble that was recovered by Riley in the endzone and gave the Brahms a commanding 23-0 lead.

Under the guidance of new defensive coordinator Marvin Newkirk, Okeechobee’s aggressive defense prevented Suncoast’s offense from gaining any momentum as the hosts were hemmed in on their own side of the field all game.

With QB Noah Hazellief at the helm, Okeechobee’s offense found plenty of success. Gordon stepped up big time after RB Ashton Mobley was injured early in the game and did not return. Gordon finished with four TD runs, including a dazzling 35-yard score in the third quarter when he wove his way through a half-dozen defenders. Chris Sneed scored the final touchdown on 3-yard run.

Riley and Urijah Bowers are the only Seminoles on this year’s team. Bowers, a 6-foot-4 sophomore lineman, did not play due to an injury.

A week later, Okeechobee suffered its first loss as Space Coast coasted to a 48-0 win.



Kevin Johnson

Brody Riley (19) and his Okeechobee High School teammates on defense celebrate after Riley, a defensive lineman, recovered a fumble for a touchdown against Suncoast on Aug. 21 in Riviera Beach.

New coach ready to tackle new challenge

There is plenty of newness with the Okeechobee High School football program this season.



Kevin Johnson

The Okeechobee High School football team, including Brody Riley (19), takes a break at halftime of the Brahms' 44-0 win against Suncoast.

New head coach, new league and, of course, a new high school that opened just in time for the start of classes Aug. 10.

The coaching vacancy opened earlier this year when BJ Pryor, who was at the helm of the Brahms for four years, moved to Wisconsin for family reasons.

Pryor’s replacement is Antwan Blatch, a longtime high school coach on Florida’s east coast who played for legendary college coach Howard Schnellenberger at Florida Atlantic University.

Having coached at several FHSAA schools, including Jensen Beach, Martin County, and most recently being the head coach at South Fork, Blatch quickly had to familiarize himself with a different football league – the Sunshine State Athletic Association. Prior to Blatch’s arrival, Okeechobee opted to leave the FHSAA in

football and join the SSAA, a conference loaded with private schools, including several parochial schools.

Okeechobee has had only one winning season in the past 10 years. The team will still play some FHSAA schools, but its league and playoffs are in the SSAA.

“Right now, I think it’s a good fit for us,” Blatch said in an interview before the start of the season.

Even before the first snap of the season Blatch had plenty of reasons to be encouraged, i.e. an influx of players. As of late July, the roster had 62 players.

“My goal is to retain them all, develop them, and turn them into better football players,” said Blatch as he embarks on his 16th season as a coach.

Helping that cause will be new defensive coordinator Marvin Newkirk, who served as

Blatch’s DC at South Fork. Newkirk has ties to the Seminole Tribe. He’s not tribal, but his younger brothers – Makai and Maddox – who are middle school age, are Seminole and they play youth football.

Marvin’s dad, also named Marvin and his wife Andrea Holata are very active in the Brighton and Okeechobee sports scenes with their kids Makai and Maddox.

The coaches said this year at home games the Seminole flag will be brought on the field along with the U.S. and Brahman flags. The Seminole flag is on loan, compliments of the Newkirk family in Brighton.

“When we run out of the big [inflatable] bull, each [flag] will be represented. It’s multi-culture. Let’s build it that way. That’s the way the world is,” Blatch said.



Kevin Johnson

Brody Riley sacks Suncoast quarterback Brady Streets for a sack and safety.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee sophomore lineman Urijah Bowers (77) watches from the sideline due to an injury.



Kevin Johnson

Okeechobee High School head football coach Antwan Blatch, left, and defensive coordinator Marvin Newkirk hold a Seminole flag that will be used when the Brahms take the field at home games.



Jayda Torres, in lane 8, competes at the AAU Jr. Olympics that was held July 31-Aug. 7 at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

Jayda Torres shows pride in her tribe as she holds the Seminole flag on the campus of Drake University.

Jayda Torres blazes a fast path all the way to Jr. Olympics

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

If Jayda Torres had to write a “What Did I Do This Summer” essay, she wouldn’t have trouble finding a subject.

Torres, a 5th grader at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School, spent part of her memorable summer putting together impressive performances on the track, so much so that she earned a spot at the AAU Junior Olympics in Des Moines, Iowa.

It was a remarkable summer of accomplishments for Torres considering she only started running track a few months ago.

The daughter of Josie Snow and Jovanny Torres began the summer with top 5 finishes in district competition in the 100 meter and 200 meter dashes. She qualified for regionals, where she placed first in the 100M and second in the 200M. Those finishes earned her a trip in early August to face other top-notch runners at the AAU Jr. Olympics on the campus of Drake University. She very well could be the first Seminole to ever compete in Jr. Olympics track.

She represented the tribe, Okeechobee and Florida, and even brought a Seminole flag with her to Iowa.

Her rapid ascension continued as she

thrived on the big stage. She finished third in a 200M heat and even produced a personal best time (32.04 seconds) which placed her third in the heat. The following day she set another personal best, this time in the 100M dash in 13.2 seconds, which placed her fourth in her heat.

The opportunity to compete against runners from throughout the country in a Jr. Olympics setting should bode well for Torres as her track experience grows.

“Overall, Jayda did extremely well,” said Jovanny Torres, who is the athletics director at PECS. “She finished among the top 50 in the nation in her division, competing at

an event that included more than 5,000 girls. Considering she only began running track in April of this year, we couldn’t be more proud of what she accomplished.”

Jayda made sure that she made the most of her time at the Jr. Olympics, on and off the track.

“Jayda had an amazing experience at the Junior Olympics,” Jovanny said. “She had the opportunity to meet and compete against girls from all over the country, and one of the things she talked about most was how nice and supportive everyone was. She even collected a few autographs from parents of other athletes, including former NFL player

Antonio Cromartie.”

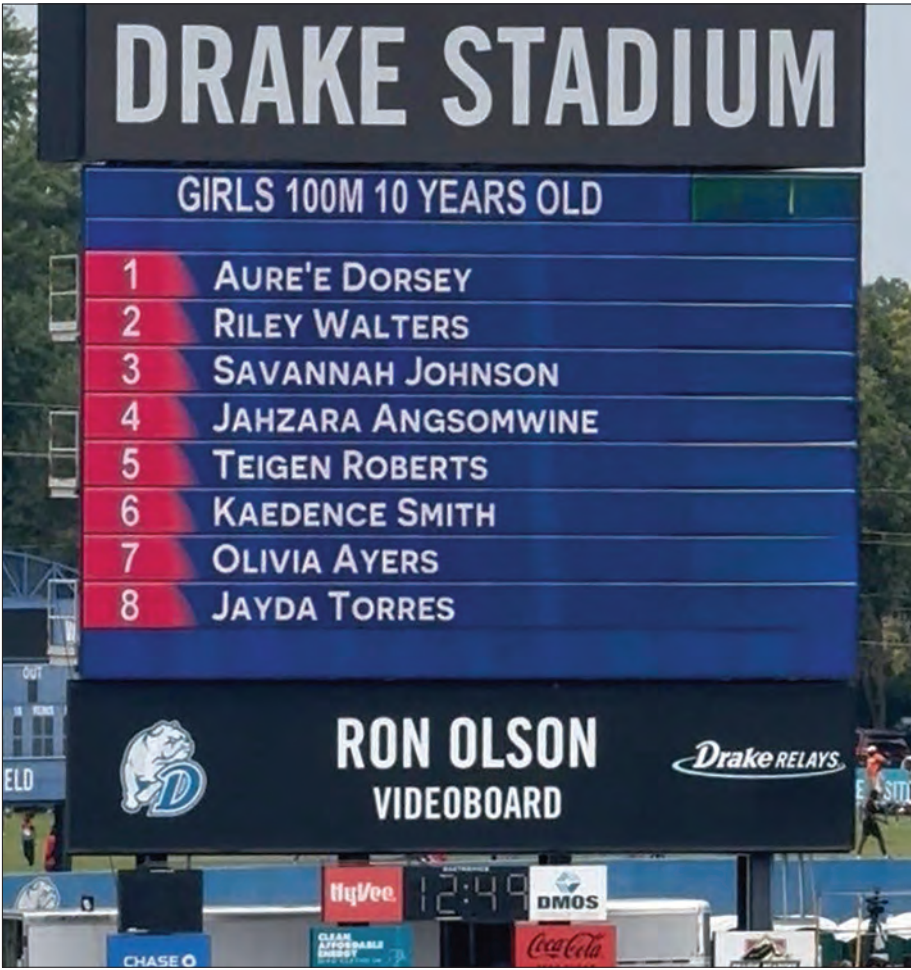
In AAU Region 9, she is currently ranked No. 1 in the 100M dash and No. 2 overall in the 200M dash in the state.

“For someone who has only been running competitively for a few months, it has been incredible to watch her progress,” Jovanny said. “More than anything, we’re grateful she had the opportunity to compete on a national stage, make new friends, and experience something she’ll always remember. We’re excited to see where she will be after another year or two of training and competing.”



Courtesy photo

Jayda Torres holds a certificate of participation from AAU Jr. Olympics.



Courtesy photo

Lane assignments on the scoreboard show Jayda Torres in lane 8.



Courtesy photo

Jayda Torres in the stands at Drake University's track.

Baker sisters play for OCRA all-star teams

STAFF REPORT

The Baker sisters from the Brighton Reservation – Haizley and Dalyse – both made their all-star teams for OCRA softball this summer in Okeechobee.

Haizley played for the 8U Darlings All-Stars. Dalyse played for the 14U Belles All-Stars, which was coached by their dad, Adrian.

The Darlings thought their season had ended after finishing in second place at the state tournament, but they received an invitation to play in the Dixie World Series in Belleview, Florida. They didn’t win the World Series, but they earned plenty of praise.

“We are super proud of this very young group of girls and we already know they will continue to put the work in and they’ll be back to the World Series again,” OCRA posted on Facebook.



OCRA

The 14U Belles All-Stars, including Dalyse Baker, second from left, Okalani Collins, second from right, and coach Adrian Baker.

The Belles, which also included Okalani Collins from the tribe, played in the state tournament. They did not advance, but picked up some valuable experience.

“Belles took a tough loss to send us home, but we will be back next year stronger and better,” coach Baker posted on Facebook.



OCRA

The 8U Darlings All-Stars, including Haizley Baker, front row, second from left.



The Moore Haven High School volleyball team, including Jalaaya Hunsinger, third from right, and Marley Jimmie, far right, celebrate a point with a dance.

Kevin Johnson



Jalaaya Hunsinger sets the ball.

Kevin Johnson

Seminoles play key roles on Moore Haven volleyball

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

CLEWISTON — The Moore Haven High School volleyball roster is vastly different than last year’s team that won a second straight district championship.

Gone – mostly to graduation – are eight Seminoles from that squad. Coaches Mona Baker and Yendryc Veloz are back to lead the Terriers.

With many new faces, this year’s varsity team continued the program’s winning ways with a 3-0 victory against Clewiston High School on Aug. 25 in Clewiston. Tribal members and starters Jalaaya Hunsinger and Marley Jimmie were among the standouts as the Terriers swept the Tigers, 25-19, 25-21, 25-21. Hunsinger is a sophomore setter; Jimmie is a junior outside hitter and middle blocker. Junior defensive specialist Eden Johns, also a tribal member, saw brief action.

The scores were close, but Moore Haven was ahead most of the night. When Clewiston made surges, Moore Haven quickly regained momentum. Jimmie smashed a couple of powerful cross court kills in the third game that stymied Clewiston comeback attempts. Hunsinger delivered a big kill to give Moore Haven a 24-18 edge. Earlier in the final game, senior Kiana Morales followed up a kill with two strong serves. An ace from Mia Capdet also revved up the Terriers.

Moore Haven finished August with a 2-2 record. The win against Clewiston and a victory against Pahokee were sandwiched around losses to Lake Placid and Everglades City.

Clewiston wins close JV match

In the JV match, Clewiston edged Moore Haven, 2-1. Scores were about as tight as can be (23-25, 25-23, 15-12). Moore Haven 7th grader and Seminole descendent Kiana Runkles was a force on defense with several digs. Tribal member Mohayla Billie, a junior, had a strong game at the net and serving. Moore Haven won a combined four points on both players’ serves early in game 3 to take a 7-6 lead before Clewiston rallied for the win.



Marley Jimmie, right, shows the perfect touch at the net against Clewiston.

Kevin Johnson



Kevin Johnson

Eden Johns delivers serves during varsity warm-ups.



Courtesy photo

Mohayla Billie (20) attempts a block in the JV game against Clewiston.



Kevin Johnson

Kiani Runkles controls the ball in the JV match against Clewiston.

Fresh Walters, Youngstown start season with win

STAFF REPORT

Seminole descendant Fresh Walters began his fifth season of college football Aug. 29. Walters, from Fort Pierce, is in his second season at Youngstown State in Ohio. Youngstown opened with a 43-10 win against Mercyhurst on Aug. 27. Walters had one reception for seven yards, and he returned one kickoff for 19 yards. Youngstown will play Kentucky from the SEC on Sept. 5. Last season, Walters played in all 13 games, including as a starting wide receiver in the playoffs against Yale. He finished the season with eight receptions for 101 yards and a touchdown. He caught a pass in a loss against Michigan State and he threw a 50-yard touchdown pass to quarterback Beau Brungard against Murray State.



Youngstown State
Fresh Walters

Notah Begay III receives Payne Stewart Award

FROM PGA TOUR

On Aug. 25, Notah Begay III was presented with the 2026 Payne Stewart Award presented by Southern Company, honoring his character, sportsmanship and commitment to charitable giving. Begay, the only full-blooded Native American to play on the PGA Tour, earned four Tour victories before transitioning into broadcasting. He has remained deeply connected to the Native American community, using his platform to mentor Native American youth and expand access to golf within their communities. “This is an incredible honor and one I accept with great humility,” Begay said. “Payne Stewart represented the very best of our game, not only in how he competed, but in how he lived his life and gave back to others. To be associated with his legacy is truly special.”



PGA Tour (2)

Above, Notah Begay III receives the Payne Stewart Award on Aug. 25 in Atlanta. Below, Begay's family joins him at the podium.



OB3 at FSU

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Tribe's OB Osceola III has joined the Florida State University baseball team. The 6-foot-2 left-handed pitcher from Naples is shown on the team's website as wearing No. 37. He is one of eight freshmen on the roster. As of late August, only one game is listed on FSU's fall ball season, which is an Oct. 10 game against Auburn in Pensacola. Earlier this year, Osceola graduated from St. John Neumann Catholic High School.

FSU
At right, OB Osceola III's bio page on the FSU baseball team website.



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OB OSCEOLA III

Position: LHP	Year: Freshman
Height: 6-2	Weight: 195
Hometown: Naples, Fla.	High School: St. John Neumann

Tampa Bay Buccaneers schedule

- Sept. 13 at Cincinnati 1 p.m.
- Sept. 20 vs Cleveland 1 p.m.
- Sept. 27 vs Minnesota 4:05 p.m.
- Oct. 4 vs Green Bay 1 p.m.
- Oct. 8 at Dallas 8:15 p.m.
- Oct. 18 vs Pittsburgh 1 p.m.
- Oct. 25 at Carolina 1 p.m.
- Nov. 1 vs Atlanta 1 p.m.
- Nov. 8 at Chicago 8:20 p.m.
- Nov. 22 at Detroit 1 p.m.
- Nov. 30 vs Carolina 8:15 p.m.
- Dec. 6 vs LA Chargers 1 p.m.
- Dec. 13 at Baltimore 1 p.m.
- Dec. 20 vs New Orleans 1 p.m.
- TBD at Atlanta
- TBD vs LA Rams
- TBD at New Orleans



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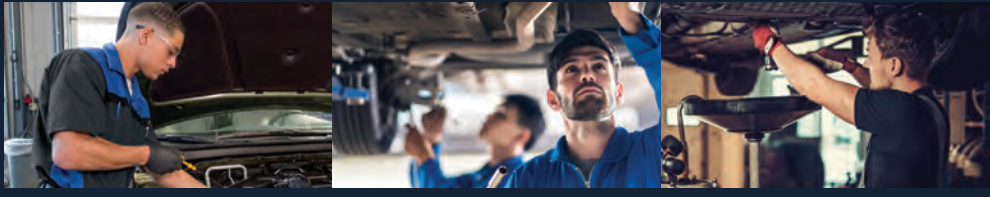
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Ahfachkee, PECS volleyball seasons get underway

STAFF REPORT

Circle Sept. 10 and Sept. 17 on your calendars. That's when the Ahfachkee School and Pemayetv Emahakv Charter

School volleyball teams will face each other. Ahfachkee will host the first meeting on the 10th; a week later it's PECS turn to host on the 17th.

Last year, Ahfachkee didn't have a volleyball team. The school's return to sports

for the first time since pre-pandemic started in the winter and included basketball games against PECS.

Ahfachkee has a seven-game schedule; PECS will play 12 games. Both teams were set to start Sept. 1.

PECS will hold its 8th grade parent night, when the team's 8th graders and their families are honored, on Oct. 8 against Clewiston.

Big 4 champions crowned at Seminole Hard Rock Poker Open

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — For the eleventh consecutive year, the Seminole Hard Rock Poker Open (SHRPO) concluded with the crowning of The Big 4 champions at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Unique to South Florida, The Big 4 is a collection of four tournament finales that feature staggered structures, timed so the events play down simultaneously. This year's four primary events boasted combined prize pool guarantees of \$4.75 million. With 1,143 entries in Big 4 events, the total cash payouts topped more than \$5 million.

The quartet of winners earned nearly \$1 million, with Joe McKeehen winning the SHRPO Championship and claiming \$462,600. This year's SHRPO Championship drew 673 total entries, boasting a total prize pool of more than \$3.3 million

SHRPO Championship Final Table Results:

- 1st: Joe McKeehen (Plymouth Meeting, Pa.) – \$462,600 + SHRPO Trophy
2nd: David Greufe (Jacksonville, Mo.) – \$390,804
3rd: Loni Hui (Tamarac, Fla.) – \$250,000
4th: Eddie Pak (Los Angeles, Calif.) – \$188,000
5th: Frankie Rivera (Bushkill, Pa.) – \$142,000
6th: Dan Chalifour (Spofford, N.H.) – \$108,000
7th: Jose Nadal (Alicante, Spain) – \$83,000
8th: Robert-Andrei Burlacu (London, England) – \$65,000
9th: Darren Rabinowitz (Las Vegas, Nev.) – \$51,000

- The other Big 4 winners include:
- Justin Zaki (Tampa, Fla.)–won the \$25,500 High Roller NLH for \$391,550
 - Mehmet Siginc (Calgary, Alta.)–won the \$3,000 Deep Stack No Limit Hold'em for \$92,017
 - Jay Jay Wilson (Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.)–won the \$1,100 Deep Stack No Limit Hold'em for \$42,682

This year's SHRPO kicked off with the \$400 Deep Stack No Limit Hold'em (NLH), which had 5,069 entries. The event nearly doubled its \$1 million guarantee for a final prize pool of more than \$1.6 million. Winner Joseph Duchman (Miami Beach, FL) was awarded the title and cashed for \$144,758.

Raminder Singh became the first player in series history to win four trophy events during a single festival, extending his all-time Seminole Hard Rock lead to 20 career tournament victories. Just one day later, Jean Laurent captured his fourth trophy of the series, matching Singh's newly established mark and further cementing his place among the most successful players in Seminole Hard Rock Poker history.

For the first time in our history, five women won a trophy event:

- Melanie Hochman (Boynton Beach, Fla.) - \$600 Mixed Triple Draw
- Esther Petiotte (Miami Beach, Fla.) - \$400 Triple Stack Black Chip Bounty
- Loni Hui (Tamarac, Fla.) - \$800 Pot Limit Omaha 8
- Maria Hernandez (Miami, Fla.) - \$1,100 Deep Stack NLH
- Michelle Ceglarek (Miami, Fla.) - \$400 Black Chip Bounty NLH

Poker action will return to Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood with the Rock 'N' Roll Poker Open from Nov. 17 to Dec. 2. For more information and to view the series schedule, future tournament details and make hotel reservations, visit SHRPO.com.

♦ BRAIN CORNER ANSWERS

From page 9A

ANSWER KEY

5	3	4	6	7	8	9	1	2
6	7	2	1	9	5	3	4	8
1	9	8	3	4	2	5	6	7
8	5	9	7	6	1	4	2	3
4	2	6	8	5	3	7	9	1
7	1	3	9	2	4	8	5	6
9	6	1	5	3	7	2	8	4
2	8	7	4	1	9	6	3	5
3	4	5	2	8	6	1	7	9

AHFACHKEE SCHOOL ATHLETICS

AHFACHKEE WARRIORS

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

2026 SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 1

AT Piper High

4:30 PM

SEPTEMBER 9

AT LaBelle Middle

5:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 10

VS PECS

4:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 15

AT Naples Classical Academy

6:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 17

AT PECS

5:30 PM

SEPTEMBER 22

VS LaBelle Middle

5:30 PM

SEPTEMBER 24

AT Cooper City High

6:00 PM

2026-2027

PECS VOLLEYBALL

VARSITY COACH - MONICA KOGER | JV COACH - SURAIYA SMITH

9/1 TUE

VS WEST GLADES

HOME

5:00 PM | 6:00 PM

9/3 THU

@ CLEWISTON

AWAY

5:30 PM | 6:30 PM

9/9 WED

VS YEARLING

HOME

5:00 PM | 6:00 PM

9/10 THU

@ AHFACHKEE

AWAY

4:30 PM | 5:30 PM

9/16 WED

VS LABELLE

HOME

5:30 PM | 6:30 PM

9/17 THU

VS AHFACHKEE

HOME

5:00 PM | 6:00 PM

9/21 MON

@ LABELLE

AWAY

5:30 PM | 6:30 PM

9/22 TUE

VS OMS

HOME

5:00 PM | 6:00 PM

10/1 THU

@ OMS

AWAY

4:30 PM | 5:30 PM

PINK OUT GAME

10/6 TUE

@ WEST GLADES

AWAY

5:00 PM | 6:00 PM

10/8 THU

VS CLEWISTON

HOME

5:30 PM | 6:30 PM

8TH GRADE PARENT NIGHT @ 5:30PM

10/13 TUE

@ YEARLING

AWAY

4:30 PM | 5:30 PM

HOME GAMES

AWAY GAMES

PEMAYETV EMAHAKV CHARTER SCHOOL

IMPORTANT DATE

8TH GRADE PARENT NIGHT

10/8 @ 5:30PM

2026-2027 PECS Lady Seminoles Volleyball Team

JV Varsity

Zoey Calisce

Arrow "Herake" Johns

Jolietta "Hvse" Osceola

Kalliope Puente

Claire Randolph

Lillie Coleman

Nohea Collins

Messariya Hardy

Ja'Vaiah Jones

Alijah Osceola

Laylah-Ann Payer

Sarah Randolph

Jamelynn Anderson

Dalyse Baker

Kaliyah Hodge

Kanae Jumper

Ameliana Osceola

Dylanie Peak

Kahniyah Billie

Jessa Davis

Gracie Gopher

Amariah "Vtvssv" Lavatta

A'Milya Rodrigues

Avani "Hopany" Smith

Willena Tommie

Managers

Evelyn Gore

Jasmine Billie

Varsity Coach - Monica Koger

JV Coach - Suraiya Smith

AHFACHKEE WARRIORS

AHFACHKEE SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL ROSTER

TEAM A

Chanel Cypress

Adaleyah Hall

DanaSue Bear-Osceola

Ada Bruised Head

Dalaylah Cypress

Karma Koenes

Kalina Cavazos

Amaya Bert

TEAM B

Caleigh Osceola-Fuller

Talia Osceola-Fuller

Natalie Shaffer

Cheyenne Walker

Arya Billie Quintanilla

EQUIPMENT MANAGERS

Reyna Rios

Chaaya Porter-Osceola

AHFACHKEE WARRIORS

ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL CHEERLEADING 2026-2027 Squad

CONGRATULATIONS!

Justice Trujillo

Shayln Koenes

Adelyn Caldwell

Reumi Cypress

Eboline Vazquez

Jayley Billie-Perez

Zih'Nellie Oscola-Burney

Emoryelle Everett

Makaylah Cypress

Sienna Carter

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2026 Miami Dolphins Schedule

- Sept. 13 at Las Vegas 4:25 p.m.
Sept. 20 at San Francisco 4:25 p.m.
Sept. 27 vs Kansas City 1 p.m.
Oct. 4 at Minnesota 4:05 p.m.
Oct. 11 vs Cincinnati 1 p.m.
Oct. 25 at NY Jets 1 p.m.
Nov. 1 vs New England 4:25 p.m.
Nov. 8 vs Detroit 1 p.m.
Nov. 15 at Indianapolis 1 p.m.
Nov. 22 at Buffalo 1 p.m.
Nov. 29 vs NY Jets 1 p.m.
Dec. 6 at Denver 4:05 p.m.
Dec. 13 vs Chicago 1 p.m.
Dec. 20 at Green Bay 1 p.m.
Dec. 27 vs LA Chargers 1 p.m.
Jan. 3 vs Buffalo 1 p.m.
Jan. 10 at New England TBD

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