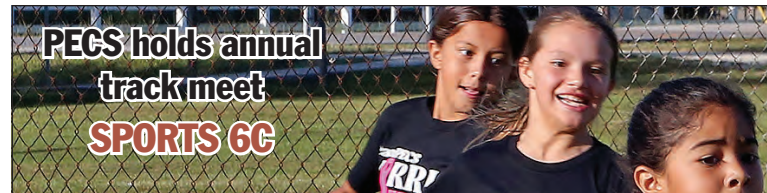




Veterans honored in BC, Brighton
COMMUNITY 2A, 11A



Seminole students visit gov mansion
EDUCATION 1B



PECS holds annual track meet
SPORTS 6C

The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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December 2024

Doc Native nominated for Native American Music Award

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Doc Native has been nominated for a 2024 Native American Music Award (NAMA) in the best Rap recording category for his song "Tear the Walls Down."

Founded in 1998, NAMA is a music industry organization dedicated to Native American music. Its mission is to promote cultural preservation and renewal through new music initiatives. Its annual awards ceremony is modeled on other national music awards shows.

Nominees are chosen by the NAMA nominating committee. There are 116 nominees in 13 categories this year, but winners are chosen by NAMA members and the general public. Anyone may cast votes at the NAMA website.

Native found out he was nominated for "Tear the Walls Down" on Nov. 8.

"The song is a something a little different from what I usually do," Native said. "I like to keep progressing in my music."

The premise of the song is about hitting a glass ceiling and then breaking through it. Native believes Native people have hit that glass ceiling when it comes to music.

"I want to break through it and hear more Native people on the radio. We are breaking through in movies and TV, but I'd like to see it in music too. The song can be for

♦ See DOC NATIVE on page 6A

Former President James L. Holt's legacy lives on with Oklahoma bridge dedication

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

James L. Holt's friends and family gathered to dedicate a bridge in his name on Nov. 9 in Pawnee, Okla., after his death in June 2023.

At 44, he died three days after being sworn in as tribal president. He first pursued elected office in 2014.

Leoma Poore, Holt's mother, said they moved to Pawnee in 1991. Holt graduated from high school there and kept in touch with his friends once he moved back to Florida. She said the dedication was in collaboration with Holt's friends in Oklahoma, including Ty Burns, who serves in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

"The kids, back then, they stayed in contact as they grew and had their own family and became adults and had their own career," Leoma said. "They all stayed in contact. ... Ty being a working politician, and he always kept in touch with James. ... He was asking me, 'We gotta do something for [James].' Because it was a shock to us. That's why we started a scholarship, and then we did the bridge in memory of him. That's how we got all started."

Everett Osceola, a longtime friend of Holt, attended the dedication along with about 60 others. The ceremony in Pawnee, a town about 90 miles north of Oklahoma City, included a blessing, dedication, lunch at Pawnee Bill Ranch and Museum and an auction to help raise money for a scholarship in memory of Holt. Osceola and Leoma said it was a beautiful day and a good gathering.

To dedicate a highway or bridge, legislation must go through the House, Senate and get signed by the governor into



Mike Simons

Gilbert Beard (Pawnee) blesses the memorial bridge for former President James L. Holt on Nov. 9 in Pawnee, Okla., with Holt's family and friends present.

law, Burns said.

"I think [the bridge dedication] is super special. I drive across it more now, and it just means a lot. We forget the fallen. We forget the dead sometimes, except that one day that we look at a Memorial Day, or their birthday, or a holiday, where it's just sadness," Burns said. "Where you can drive across this and look at an accomplishment, it says 'President James Lester Holt.' You know, he has some accomplishments. It's cool. It's one of those

weird things you don't really think about when you do some of these. But when one hits home that close, it means a lot."

When he was scoping out a good place to dedicate to Holt, he drove around the area and saw a sign he hadn't noticed before: Panther Creek.

Holt was from the Panther Clan. "They had the James Holt dedication signage right before you see the Panther Creek sign over the river. I thought it was

really cool, seeing his name up there and seeing the Seminole Tribe name up there as well," Osceola said.

The James L. Holt Pres of the Seminole Tribe of Florida Memorial Bridge is on U.S. Highway 64 crossing Panther Creek.

To Leoma, the dedication showed Holt has friends who still appreciate him and want to remember him.

♦ See FORMER PRESIDENT on page 5A

Princesses cherish FSU homecoming experience

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

TALLAHASSEE — The Seminole Tribe's princesses are not even halfway through their year of representing the tribe, but both said the experience so far has already exceeded their expectations.

"This is everything I expected, and more. I love it a lot," said Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas.

Case in point came at Florida State University's homecoming weekend. Thomas, 18, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola, 15, played a big role in activities that were accompanied by ideal late fall weather in Tallahassee.

Osceola enjoyed her visit so much that FSU could become the college of choice for the 10th grader who attends the Miccosukee Indian School.

"The weather is nice; the people are welcoming. I love it. It's a great place, a great school. Coming up here makes me want to come to FSU," said Osceola, who comes from a family of big FSU fans.

Thomas also received good vibes from FSU, including at the homecoming football game Nov. 23.

"This energy is hyping me up a little bit. I like it," Thomas said.

The culmination of the princesses' activities came at halftime of FSU's 41-7 win against Charleston Southern. In front of more than 43,000 fans at Doak Campbell Stadium, the princesses strode across midfield, flanked on both sides by the Marching Chiefs band. They crowned FSU's homecoming king (DJ Mayard) and queen (Rain Bellamy).

The game was deemed a "Seminole Heritage game." FSU coaches and other personnel donned turquoise shirts as a nod to the tribe during Native American Heritage Month.

Earlier in the day, the princesses attended the FSU homecoming breakfast, where they joined "Grads Made Good" honorees for photos after their meals.

The prior day also featured a busy schedule for the princesses, who participated in the dedication of the Native American & Indigenous Studies Center on campus at noon. At 2 p.m., they sat atop the backseats of white convertible Ford Mustangs and rode in the homecoming parade. The princess program's Wanda Bowers, who accompanied the princesses throughout the weekend, drove the Miss Seminole car; Osceola's father Joseph drove the Jr. Miss car.



Kevin Johnson

Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, left, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola walk across midfield during halftime at Florida State University's homecoming football game Nov. 23 at Doak Campbell Stadium in Tallahassee.

Some of the parade's loudest cheers were directed at the princesses as they smiled and waved their way on Macomb College, Copeland and West Pensacola streets. They also spent time taking photos with parade participants, including the band, cheerleaders, dancers, fraternity and sorority students, and the colorfully speckled and distinctively characteristic Garnet and Gold Guys.

The outfits worn by the princesses were made by Edna Tommie (for Thomas) and Ashley Cypress (for Osceola). Both

princesses wore beads from Dakota Osceola. Being on a college campus seemed like a natural fit for the princesses, who take their education seriously. Thomas earned an associate's degree from Florida SouthWestern State College during her senior year at Moore Haven High School. Osceola is a straight-A student who served as Miccosukee Indian School's student chairwoman last year.

Thomas is in the midst of taking a "gap year" from school. She works in the Tribal Secretary's office on the Brighton

Reservation. She said the next chapter in her academics could be attending the University of Oklahoma or Haskell Indian Nations University. She plans to major in Indigenous Studies. She's completed an internship in curation at the tribe's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. She's not sure what career path lay ahead, but she's a people-person who enjoys Seminole history and culture.

"I like to talk, so I would probably like to do what the (museum's) educators do, and talk to people," she said.

Osceola would like to become the first

member of her family to attend college.

"I hope to be an FSU undergraduate, and after I graduate, I want to go to an Ivy League [school]," she said.

Still with a couple years of high school left, Osceola already has a good idea of what major she wants to pursue. She wants to attend law school and study Indian law or criminology.

♦ See HOMECOMING on page 4A

Veterans Day Profile: Curtis Motlow

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

U.S. Navy veteran Curtis Motlow is the 2024 Veterans Day Celebration's Seminole Veteran Honoree. Motlow grew up in Oklahoma and moved to the Hollywood Reservation in 2013. He has served on the Seminole Honor Guard since then.



Kevin Johnson
Curtis Motlow

Seminole Tribune staff reporter Beverly Bidney spoke to Curtis about his military service and his role in the Honor Guard.

Tribune: What does it mean to you to be honored by your tribe for Veterans Day?

Curtis Motlow: I found it very flattering that they would choose me, but I don't think I should be honored at all. It's not the reason why I joined. I joined to serve my country and do the best I could. For a young kid, I felt I had to do something with my life. But I'm very happy to be recognized in any way. Any military person is happy to be recognized for our service.

Tribune: When did you serve in the Navy, what was your rank and on what ship did you serve?

Curtis Motlow: I was in the Navy from 1993 to 1995 and worked in the valve shop on a repair ship, the USS Yellowstone AD-41. We were in the Atlantic Fleet, based in Norfolk, Virginia. I was a Machinist Mate E2.

Tribune: What does it mean to you to be a Native American military veteran?

Curtis Motlow: The history of the military and Native Americans is not a good one, but I didn't have a problem serving. Even though the way we were treated back then wasn't good, many Native Americans serve. My dad served and I wanted to be like my dad. It was a family thing. My brothers also served.

Tribune: What does it mean to you to be in the Seminole Honor Guard?

Curtis Motlow: It means quite a bit to me. When I first moved back here, I didn't even know there was a veterans group. I met Stephen Bowers, who was president of the veterans group, and asked me if I served. Then he asked if I wanted to join the group. That's how it all began. He also asked me if I wanted to join the Honor Guard; I said no problem.

Tribune: What are some of your best memories of serving in the Honor Guard?

Curtis Motlow: Travel, mostly. I've been all over the state and back to Oklahoma. We travel to different places to do Honor Guard. We do Florida State University's graduation; that's one of my best memories. One of my most recent trips has been to New York. The Seneca Tribe invited us to participate in their powwow in August.

Tribune: What advice do you have for young tribal members about joining the military?

Curtis Motlow: I'd tell them to follow your heart. If it's something they feel they should do, I say just go for it. But they must realize it is a commitment. If that's what they really want to do, I'd say go for it.

Tribune: Do you miss anything about being in the military?

Curtis Motlow: The people. There were so many different kinds of people on my ship, people I never would have met. It made me grow as a person. On top of that, my ship was co-ed, which made it even more interesting.

Veterans honored at Big Cypress ceremony

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Tribal and non-tribal veterans and their families attended the 10th Annual Veterans Day celebration at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium on Nov. 11 on the Big Cypress Reservation.

The Veterans Day celebration was sponsored by President Holly Tiger's office which gave out t-shirts, lanyards, lapel pins, pouches, pens, pins and water bottles to those who attended the event.

Cypress Billie was the emcee for the event which featured multiple speakers including President Tiger and Big Cypress Board Rep Nadine Bowers. Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie was also in attendance at the event.

The event began with the tribe's public safety color guard, followed by the Pledge Of Allegiance by Miss Florida Seminole Cece Thomas. Jr. Miss Florida Seminole read a veterans poem and Aubie Billie sang America The Beautiful.

President Tiger addressed the attendees and spoke about her time working with former Chairman Mitchell Cypress, who is a U.S. Army veteran and thanked him for showing her how to be a good leader.

"One thing I got to see working with Mitchell was his advocacy for veterans," President Tiger said. "He didn't distinguish between the branches although I hear that there can be arguments to be made on all sides. But he welcomed them all and over the years when we would meet veterans on our travels, they all just became brothers and sisters and they shared a bond, which I am not fortunate to have the understanding of as intimately as they do. It was just an amazing thing to witness, it was an honor to see those people come together, whether we were walking through an airport or going to an event he was taking part in. I got to see this connection that they all had. Complete strangers becoming family and friends, it was just an amazing thing to watch over the years."



Calvin Tiger (3)

From left to right at the Veterans Day celebration Nov. 11 in Big Cypress, Native Veterans of the Marine Warrior Society reenact the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima; President Holly Tiger talks to the audience with a framed photo of U.S. Marines Lance Corporal Herman L. Osceola at the podium; tribal veteran and this year's Seminole Veterans Day Celebration Seminole veteran honoree Curtis Motlow, right, with fellow Seminole veteran Sallie Josh.

"As we stand here let us take a moment to reflect on the courage and dedication of our veterans, they face challenges that many of us cannot imagine," Rep. Bowers said. "They have left their homes, their families and their comfort zones to protect our nation and uphold the values we cherish. Through their service, they have shown us the true meaning of bravery and selflessness. Let us remember that each veteran has a unique story of heroism, friendship and resilience."

Tribal veteran Curtis Motlow and Emergency Management Director Paul Downing (Passamaquoddy Tribe) were honored and spoke before receiving plaques and a tribal blanket. Motlow spoke about his years growing up with his family and

following the same steps as his father by serving in the U. S.Navy.

"Being a veteran, I served my country to the best of my ability and would do so again if called upon," Motlow said

Downing spoke about the importance of Native Americans serving in the military, particularly during World War II by having Natives use their language, which was unfamiliar to the enemy who could not decode it.

"When you see someone in that veteran's hat or military gear take a moment, reach out your hand and shake that hand and thank them for their service," Downing said. "They carry the weight of freedom on their shoulders and they signed that blank check

and walked out into the battlefields."

A special presentation from the Native American Women Warriors and the Marine Warrior Society Color Guard followed and featured tribal dances honoring all Native Americans that have served and that are currently serving.

The Native American Women Warriors is an organization that honors the courage, strength, and leadership of Native American women that have served in the United States Military. The Marine Warrior Society Color Guard are a group of Native Americans that serve in the United States Marine Corps and represent their native heritage and military service and wear some tribal regalia combined with military attire.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Seminole veterans Paul Bowers Sr., Mitchell Cypress, Charles Hiers, Sallie Josh, Curtis Motlow and Jake Osceola are honored.



Calvin Tiger

Veterans from the Native American Women Warriors are presented with Native blankets at the Big Cypress Veterans Day event.

BC walk, flag retirement ceremony honors those who served



Calvin Tiger

The Veterans Day walk drew about 30 people, including some Seminole veterans.

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — A Veterans Day walk and flag retirement ceremony were held Nov. 6 at the Seminole Veterans Memorial

Fitness Trail on the Big Cypress Reservation. Seminole veterans, tribal employee veterans and families of veterans were among the participants. The event, in honor of all those who served, was organized by Big Cypress Integrative Health.



Calvin Tiger

Seminole veterans Paul Bowers Sr., second from left, Curtis Motlow, center, and Sallie Josh were among the veterans who placed flags in a burning bin during a flag retirement ceremony.

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Community



Non-resident cultural exchange unites Seminoles from across the country

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

ORLANDO — About 180 tribal members from the Seminole Tribe of Florida traveled from California, Colorado, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas and throughout Florida to reconnect with their culture at the President's Non-Resident Cultural Exchange held Nov. 15 to 17 at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Resort in Orlando.

"It's about fellowship, that's foremost," said President Holly Tiger. "It's a time to reconnect with our culture and language and an opportunity to come together and reconnect with family members. It's a good opportunity to stay in touch."

This was the second year President Tiger has held the event. The program included beading, sweetgrass basket making, doll making, carving and storytelling. The Seminole vendors who participated in the event also live off the reservations.

"They are here to celebrate and have a communal holiday event," said Cherelee Hall, the President's special events coordinator. "We are sending them to 'Jollywood Nights' at Disney Hollywood Studios."

Hoop dancers from the Hopi Tribe in Arizona danced and taught children the basics of the dance. Jake Tiger, from the Seminole Nation in Oklahoma, held a moccasin workshop where participants learned to make the traditional footwear.

Everything occurred in the huge ballroom so nobody missed anything. As the kids were learning to hoop dance, adults and



A hoop dancer teaches kids the basics of hoop dancing at the President's Non-Residents Cultural Exchange.

other children worked on their projects.

Adults and children were all engaged with the culture activities at the tables. Beading, sweetgrass and doll making were set up on tables long enough for about 20 people to sit comfortably with plenty of room to learn. A carving station had a large tarp underneath it to protect the carpet from wood chips flying as carvers worked the wood into shape.

Stephanie Hiatt traveled to Orlando from South Dakota and met her sister Jody Lightfoot, who lives in California.

"Even though we aren't crafty, we want to learn," Hiatt said.

"It's a great idea for them to focus on culture," Lightfoot said. "Being non-residents, we don't get to see it often."

As the sisters learned to make traditional Seminole dolls, Salina Dorgan came over to help. The women made a connection, shared email information and vowed to keep in touch.

Timissay Garcia, who is originally from Immokalee, lives with her family in Waycross, Georgia and brought her children Elijah, 13, and Myla, 11, to the event.

"I think it's good to teach the kids about their culture," Garcia said. "Sometimes it's hard, there is nothing tribal where we live."

As Myla learned the art of doll making, Elijah tried his hand at carving.

"It's harder than I thought," he said. "My hands started to hurt."

A game of musical chairs



Jake Keyser teaches Justin Billie how to carve soap, which is the first step for youngsters to learn to carve wood.

set to Christmas music was a hit with the kids. One game became a battle for the last chair between Kathy Billie, 10, and her brother Justin Billie, 6, who came from Trail. Kathy wound up with the chair, which had tipped during the struggle. The siblings were engaged in all aspects of the day. Justin spent time at the carving table and they both learned how to do the hoop dance.

"I like making baskets the best," Kathy

Adriana Huggins. "It's great to see other tribal members that we don't really see that much."

Karie Osceola came from Naples and brought her daughter Angelina, 17. She was pleased the teenager was engaged in the cultural activities.

"I liked that there were a lot of culture stations and I loved the Elaponce bingo," Osceola said. "I liked seeing people from

other places and that there were a lot of vendors, it hit all aspects of culture. The hoop dancers were really interactive with the kids, it meshed with everything really well. [The event] made the out of towners feel welcome, not awkward or out of place."

"My kids made beaded rings and I always love learning the language," added Marissa Osceola.

Brian Zepeda was the emcee for the event and summed it up succinctly.

"It was a nice turnout," Zepeda said. "Everyone has their own reasons for coming. They want to see family, learn something and it's the holidays. I love that the culture teachers love to share their knowledge."



Salina Dorgan, left, helps Stephanie Hiatt, center, and Jody Lightfoot learn to make Seminole dolls.



Myla Garcia makes a stitch as she learns how to make a traditional Seminole doll.



Tribal non-residents gather for a photo during the President's cultural exchange in Orlando Nov. 15-17.

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At left, Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, and at right, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola participate in the FSU homecoming parade Nov. 22 in Tallahassee.

Kevin Johnson (2)

◆ **PRINCESSES**
From page 1A

Osceola, who was only 14 when she won the Jr. Miss crown, said being able to serve alongside Thomas has been beneficial. "She's been like a big sister to me. She's very nice, very sweet. She's taught me how to get me out of my shell a little bit more. She's very outgoing. I love being Junior Miss with her at my side," she said. Osceola said the experience of being

Jr. Miss has reinforced her desire to run for Miss when she becomes eligible in a few years. "Being Jr. Miss Seminole is already cool enough, so being Miss [would be] even better," she said. The FSU visit was the second major trip in the princesses' year. They also attended the Seminole Nation's princess pageant in Oklahoma. Some of the other major items on their schedule in the coming months are Tribal Fair, Brighton Field Days and trips to New Mexico and Washington, D.C.



The princesses join honorees at FSU's "Grads Made Good" breakfast Nov. 23.

Kevin Johnson



Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. waves to the crowd in his first time participating in the FSU homecoming parade.

Kevin Johnson



The tribe's princesses crown FSU's new homecoming king and queen.

Kevin Johnson



From left to right, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola, Wanda Bowers from the Princess Program and Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas join FSU's Osceola and Renegade on the field.



Moments after the crowning, Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, second from left, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola are joined by comedian Bert Kreischer and FSU homecoming winners, King DJ Mayard and Queen Rain Bellamy.

Kevin Johnson

Okalee Village hosts powwow



The Ameyal Mexican dancing group performs Nov. 15 for an audience of students and other spectators at the third annual Seminole Okalee Village & Museum's Powwow Market in Hollywood. The two-day event drew hundreds of students and other visitors.

Tatum Mitchell



Alligator wrestler Jeremy Possman shows a small gator to young guests.

Tatum Mitchell



Danielle Nelson helps set up a booth to sell patchwork, jewelry and more from Wovoka Tommie's 'Victoria's Bead and Sewing Craft's.'

Tatum Mitchell



Daniel Tommie crafts a canoe.

Tatum Mitchell

◆ **FORMER PRESIDENT**
From page 1A



Courtesy photo

James L. Holt

She said it's a small town and Holt was heavily involved in high school sports. He made a lot of friends who he stayed in contact with.

"Talking to [his friends] was almost like little parts of them reminded me of James," Osceola said. "They're tough and competitive, but then they're really sweet and joking. Want to give you a hug right off the bat. Going to the dedication, a lot of people showed up there."

Burns was one of Holt's friends from Pawnee. They were similar in their tough and masculine, yet gentle demeanors. Burns said Holt was a gentle giant who could get along with anybody, and he felt the need to help people.

"He always had a big heart and wanted to impact people in a positive way," Burns said.

The two became best friends in eighth grade — after they got into a fight, Burns said. Similarly, in elementary school, that was how Osceola and Holt became friends.

Burns and Holt grew up doing sports together and stayed friends when Holt moved back to Florida. Burns said they regularly encouraged each other and talked about their elected office paths.

The last conversation they had was congratulating Holt on his presidential win.

"I still remember the last conversation that [we had]. ... And it was like we had that bond again of something we could truly talk about is being public servants and leading communities. It was just ecstatic," Burns said. "And so obviously, [three] days after inauguration, passing away was devastating and completely unfair, 100%. I've always had that love and bond between him and me."

Holt was a small-town boy with big ambitions and big goals that he did not give up on. He made the most of every situation, and it paid off with the impact he had on his community, Burns said. He consistently showed an interest in helping his people, being a leader and doing better for the youth, Leoma and Osceola said. They knew Holt as mindful, outgoing and often making new friends.

"I think even at a young age, he already knew he wanted to be a leader, which, to me, is very rare. We were like 13 or 14 years old, and he already knew what he wanted to do. ... He had a lot of passion and conviction for what he wanted to do. That's how I remember him," Osceola said.

They are making efforts to keep his legacy alive with a leadership scholarship for students from Pawnee High School and bridge dedication. In the spring, they awarded \$1,000 to five students for the scholarship. They are continuing fundraising for the scholarship by selling items like T-shirts and accepting donations.

"He made a difference with the people in the tribe," Leoma said.

Leoma said her son still makes an impact on her, and she is learning how to navigate life without him.

"I still get messages from different people about him, and I'm just thankful that he wanted to be his own person and wanted to do things and learn new things," Leoma said. "He made an impact on me. I think I was telling his son not too long ago, I said he made an impact in my life. When I was 18, when I had him, he changed my life because it wasn't about me, it was about him, as a mother. And I told my grandson, he's still doing that to this day."

To donate to the James L. Holt Leadership Scholarship, contact superintendent of Pawnee Public School Stacy Womack at 918-762-3676 or stacy.womack@pawnee.k12.ok.us



Mike Simons

Gilbert Beard blesses the bridge's sign.



Mike Simons

From left to right, Dana and Leoma Poore, DJ Holt, Ty Holt and Erica Dietz, Leoma's niece, at the bridge dedication Nov. 9 for James L. Holt in Pawnee, Okla.



Wendi Kendall

James L. Holt's sons with Ty Burns. From left to right, DJ Holt, Ty Burns and Ty Holt, who is named after Burns.



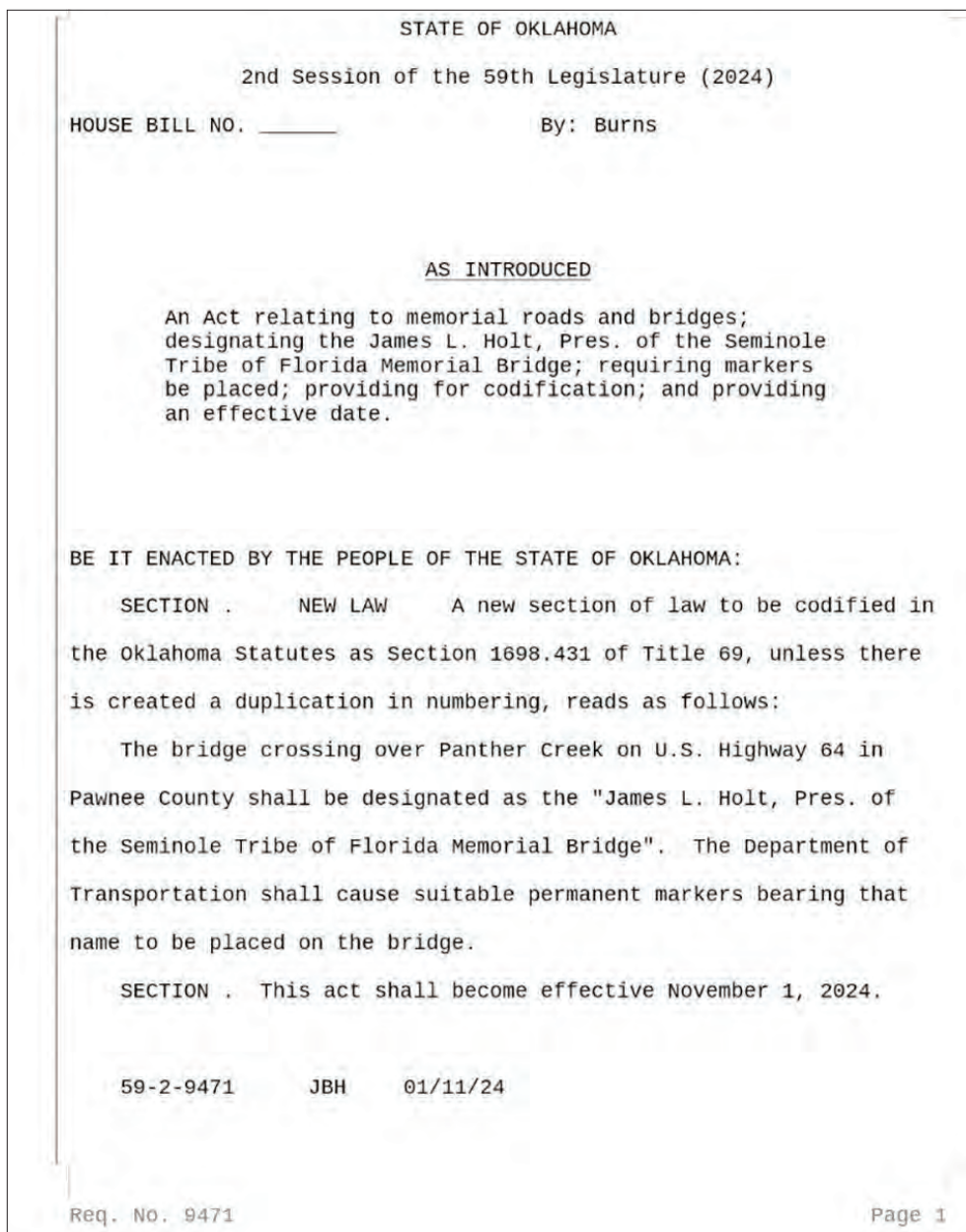
Wendi Kendall

From left to right, Linda Leroy, Rosetta Rhodd, Michelle and Pratt Leadingfox.



Mike Simons

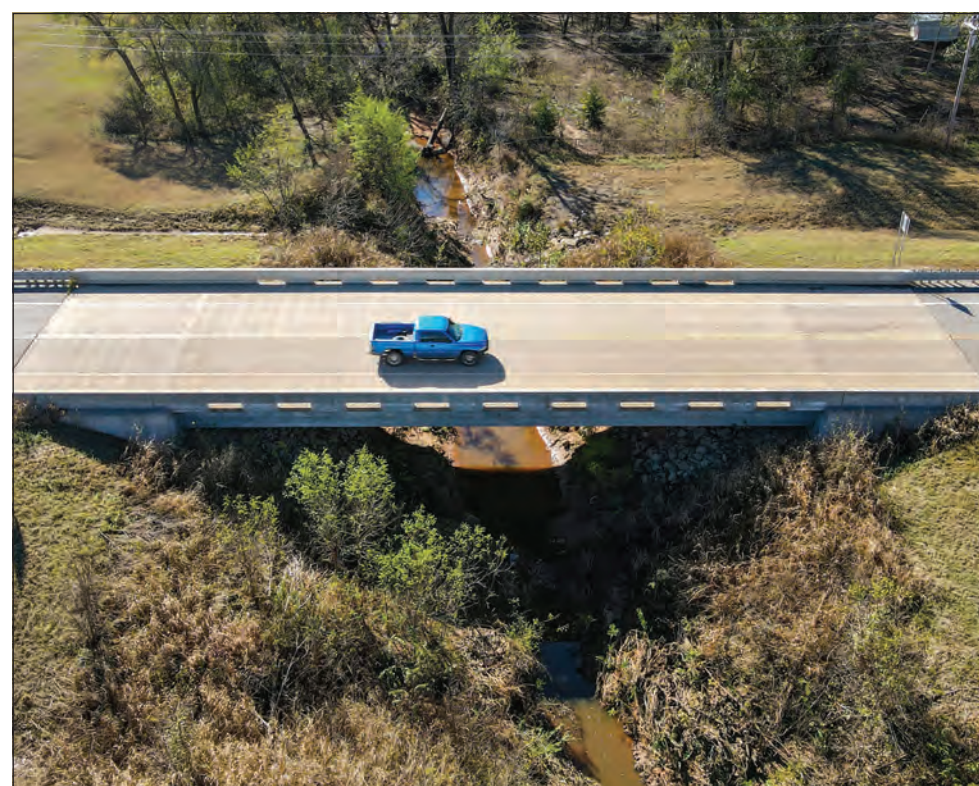
James L. Holt's sons, Ty and DJ Holt, walk across the bridge dedicated to their father.



Page 1

Courtesy photo

The passed Oklahoma state legislation for the dedication of the bridge for James L. Holt.



Mike Simons

A pickup truck crosses the James L. Holt President of the Seminole Tribe of Florida Memorial Bridge and Panther Creek.



Wendi Kendall

James L. Holt's high school classmates from Pawnee hold up a copy of the memorial sign.



Wendi Kendall

From left to right, Maddux Motlow, Tomie Motlow, Dana Poore, Tayla Burns, Leoma Poore, DJ Holt, Ty Holt, Erica Dietz, Robert North, Michael Gentry and Everett Osceola.

Cheyenne Kippenberger's TEDx talk was 'led by love'



Cheyenne Kippenberger gives her TEDx talk on Sept. 24 at the NSU Art Museum.

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

Cheyenne Kippenberger said she grew up on the chattier side. Her mom joked she could sit next to a wall and get it to talk back, and she wasn't reprimanded for it. She said her mom encouraged her to use her voice — a trait that landed her on the TEDx stage in September.

She said her mom, Dr. Susan Kippenberger, introduced values that helped Kippenberger remember the importance of her voice.

"To think that if my mom didn't encourage me to keep talking and instill that secure feeling of your voice matters, you should speak up for yourself, it's okay to talk. ... If [my mom] didn't do that, I don't know if I would be here doing what I'm doing now," Kippenberger said. "I've always been secure in my voice, but then it was just finding where it could be best utilized."

Before giving a TEDx talk, Kippenberger was Miss Florida Seminole in 2018-2019 and Miss Indian World 2019-2021. She presented her talk on Sept. 24 at the NSU Art Museum auditorium.

She said everyone has their own gifts and purposes in life and hers is the ability to speak, talk and connect with people.

"I think back to being a student that wouldn't shut the hell up, and I just gave a freaking TEDx speech. ... There's a beauty to that and going through self-discovery and homing in on your skills, on your talents, and building them up for yourself," Kippenberger said.

After pursuing nonprofit work following her time as Miss Indian World, Cheyenne decided to look into policy in Florida. In the future, she said she wants to go to law school, and she is currently doing an environmental policy and management program. Now, she has a consulting firm through which she does public speaking, among other things.

"It's cultural and historical competency, really bringing that lens of Indigenous peoples, our traditional knowledge systems, whether that's ecologically speaking, politically speaking, socially speaking. At the root of it, I tell people that I consult in cultural and historical competency of Native and Indigenous people with a specialization in the Seminole Tribe," Kippenberger said.

She was approached to give a TEDx talk because someone remembered her from a land acknowledgement she did a couple of years ago.

"I was terrified. Even, I think, with these really, really cool things under my belt, and being only 28, I still feel like I go through a lot of imposter syndrome," Kippenberger said.

The TEDx programming was in accompaniment with the Delphi Neonatal Innovation Conference. At first, she said she was boxing her talk into relating to medicine and neonatal care. After learning she didn't have to cover those topics, she scratched everything she had so far. She considered her audience at the conference and that her talk would be online and reach other audiences, Native and non-Native.

"It was really led by love for my upbringing, love for my community, love for our lands, love for our cultural ways, tradition, stories, etc. ... I think that Native people, ... what's ingrained into us is this idea of legacy," Kippenberger said. "We come from a legacy of resilience and resourcefulness and beautiful deep love for the land and culture and community. And then bringing that into who I am now. What do I want to leave behind from that? What the hell do I want to share with the world?"

During the drafting phase of her talk, she said humanity and climate change were coming to mind.

"People need to know that we all have a responsibility to take care of the planet. And not just to educate ourselves on why we're

experiencing what we're experiencing now with climate change," Kippenberger said. "But, recognizing that we can focus on putting the blame somewhere, or we can all come together and really come up with ideas to live sustainable lives in alignment with the earth and recognizing that this extractive kind of western view of the world is why it's dying, and why we've like gotten to the point that we're at."

Her brainstorming came together as her TEDx talk titled, "Honoring Our Roots: Connection, Community, and Nature," which is on the TEDx YouTube page.

"I thought about all the things that I'm constantly like preaching in a way, like in all of my speeches, and I somehow felt like I was able to encompass all of it into this really short TEDx speech. Community, culture, loving the land, respecting the land, [and] reciprocity. The implementation and respect for traditional Indigenous knowledge systems in practices as well. Respecting cultural differences too."

And what does exchange amongst generations, educational backgrounds, cultures, countries, etc, like, what does that look like when it's actually grounded in respect and understanding? And how that same idea, that same value being mirrored onto the relationship with the land and recognizing that it is a reciprocal relationship with the land, with the natural world, the physical world. It was really beautiful. There was a lot of heart that got put into it," Kippenberger said.

Kippenberger does public speaking events often and all over the country. She said one of the most common talks she gives is the "101 of Native history." This includes a basic timeline of colonization, what Native Americans went through in the U.S. and highlights the fact that within the 574 federally recognized tribes in America, there is a lot of diversity.

"There's the differences of culture, traditional clothing, language, ceremony, etc., and sometimes it's really hard for people to grasp that each tribe had its own historical experience," Kippenberger said. "That's usually where I come in, and I share about our tribe's experience in Florida with the U.S. government, the Indian Removal Act, the three Seminole wars, the attempted takeover and forced relocation. The violence that takes place, I think, is also really hard for people to grasp, and sit with, because it's uncomfortable."

She does question and answer sessions as well, and she said the truth of her responses get challenged occasionally.

"It's hard because you so badly want to just get to the nitty gritty main issues that we're fighting for, right? You know, human rights, respect, political representation, media representation. But you're having to go through this preliminary process of literally rehumanizing yourself and our community at large," Kippenberger said.

Kippenberger said she enjoys educating and raising awareness, though it's emotionally and intellectually taxing work. She tries to be mindful that not everyone was raised the same way with comprehensive historical education, she said.

"You can't go into this type of work thinking that you're just going to be, like, shaming everybody else. That doesn't work. ... You have to meet people where they're at. You have to be graceful," Kippenberger said.

The success of her tribe in the face of challenges, historically and in the present, makes her a very proud person, she said. She encourages people to give back to their communities in their own way.

"Our job is to find our gift, to find our lane, to find our purpose, and just run with it. I genuinely believe that our ancestors would have wanted us to just be happy and to thrive the way that we have. There is no bigger success in the face of colonization than it is to just be happy and successful," Kippenberger said.

coming and established Native artists.

"I have a real passion for younger artists who are really invested in their careers," Native said. "I like to lend my knowledge and musical abilities to help them achieve their goals. It's really fulfilling to see some of these artists come into their own. When I was coming up, I had mentors and I want to keep that going."

Native appreciates all the support from people who listen to his music and have supported him through his journey and career.

"They and everyone in their households can vote every day and spread the word about [the NAMA awards] as much as they can on social media and in all the communities," Native said. "Let's bring another one home."

To listen to nominees' tracks and cast votes, go to nativeamericanmusicawards.com.

New, seasoned firefighters recognized at Hollywood badge ceremony

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Firefighters, some brand new and others 20-years in, were recognized at the Hollywood Fire Department badge ceremony alongside other special recognitions on Nov. 19 at fire station 108.

The ceremony included giving badges to new hires, recognizing people who have served for 20 years and special recognition and promotions.

"Today is important because ... it's acknowledging the men women who put through a lot of time to get through into the fire service," fire chief Michael Mackey said. "They've gone through the fire academy, EMT and paramedic. We also have inspectors who have gone through extensive training to become inspectors. We also have wildland [firefighters]."

Mackey said it was a unique time to honor those just entering into the service and those who have served for 20 years.

"All these people who are being badged today, they're joining the fire service at different parts. Some are firefighter paramedics, some are wildland, and some are doing the fire inspection," Mackey said. "All those come in under the umbrella of Fire Rescue ... So, it's really an occasion to celebrate their success and all the hard work that they put into it. It's something that's commendable. It's very difficult to get through and to do."

The process to becoming a firefighter is a commitment of time and effort, Mackey said.

"It's a combination of physically challenging, and also there's some emotional challenges, and mentally, just going through the whole process," Mackey said. "When you start [and say,] 'I want to be a firefighter,' that process to where you get to where these folks are, is a minimum of three



Tatum Mitchell

The new hires' badge ceremony Nov. 19 at fire station 108 in Hollywood. From left to right, firefighter/paramedic Jordan Chenique, fire inspector Natalia Whiteshield, firefighter/paramedic Nicolas Lavrigata, firefighter/paramedic Cassandra Loriga, firefighter/paramedic Oscar Moreau and wildland firefighter Garret Henderson.

years. And all the way through it, it's testing you. If you don't pass the test, you're out of the program. So, it's very challenging."

Graduating classes 24-01 and 24-02 included Jordan Chenique, Nicolas Lavrigata, Cassandra Loriga and Oscar Moreau. The new hires presented with badges were fire inspector Natalia Whiteshield and wildland firefighter Garret Henderson.

Promotions included community service aide to fire inspector Gamal Stewart, dispatcher to fire inspector Blanca Guereca and firefighter to lieutenant Joshua Huff.

The 20-year member recognitions were

presented to battalion commander Stephen Zitnick, battalion commander Noah Connell, lieutenant Drew Layne, division chief Jorge Valdes, medical director Dr. Wayne Lee and deputy chief Jonathan Hedrick. Chief recognition and outstanding contribution were presented to James Kelley, Francisco Rodriguez, Machir Marsh, Trina Hipp, Mikiyela Cypress, Nathanael Courmoyer, Dane Martin and Garret Henderson. The honor guard is Nicolas Garcia, Anthony Berger, Kevin Pinkerton, Donnie Murray, Michael Dolnick and Michael Setticas.



Tatum Mitchell

Firefighter/paramedic Nicolas Lavrigata receives his badge in front of Division Chief Louis Valdes.



Tatum Mitchell

Firefighter/paramedic Cassandra Loriga with her father.



Tatum Mitchell

EMT Mikiyela Cypress receives Chief Recognition for Outstanding Contribution award from Fire Chief Michael Mackey.



Tatum Mitchell

Lieutenant James Kelley receives Chief Recognition Award for Outstanding Contribution.

'Humbled and wow-ed': Derek Koger receives CEO Council Leadership Award

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

FORT LAUDERDALE — Derek Koger, Executive Director of Tribal Community Development (TCD), is the 2024 CEO Council Leadership Award recipient as presented by the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance. Koger was recognized during the Alliance's annual dinner Oct. 24 at the newly renovated War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

The recognition highlights Koger's time and effort with various tribal and Alliance initiatives. It also celebrates his positive impact within the Tribe and outside of it.

Koger said there are some larger companies represented in the Alliance, and he was "humbled and wow-ed" to represent the tribe and to be acknowledged for his hard work and leadership alongside them.

"It was a truly humbling experience," Koger said. "I think what it really means is that all the work that we do here for the tribe is being noticed by companies and organizations outside is just a true testament to all the work that's been done here. For me, it represents all the work of the TCD employees ... Those guys are amazing."

He currently oversees Construction, Planning & Development, Real Estate, Transportation, Public Works, and Housing departments within TCD.

"I'm just appreciative of the opportunities to serve on the Greater Fort



Courtesy photo

Derek Koger, second from right, Executive Director of Tribal Community Development, receives the 2024 CEO Council Leadership Award on Oct. 24 at the War Memorial Auditorium in Fort Lauderdale.

CEO Council and represent the Seminole Tribe," Koger said. "So, special thank you to my bosses — the Tribal Council — and the members of the tribe for allowing me to serve in this capacity. Being with the tribe for 18 years just shows that this is a great place to be, and I love every day that I come to work."

In addition to Koger, others honored by the Alliance with leadership awards were Bryce Hollweg, Florida Panthers (Governor Council); Jonathan Wolfe, AutoNation

(Leadership Council); Mark Binko, National Jets (Corporate Council); Basil Bernard, Apricot Office Interiors (Entrepreneurship Council); and Anita Fain Taylor, City of Miramar (Partner Council).

The Alliance, which is Broward County's official public/private partnership for economic development, said the recipients were recognized for having "gone above and beyond in their work in the community helping to grow jobs and strengthen the economy."

◆ DOC NATIVE From page 1A

all people, though, not just Natives. It's about breaking through ceilings and tearing down walls, which comes with responsibility and a lot of hard work. You have to really persevere and stay strong and clear about your goals."

This isn't Native's first time as a nominee for the awards; he was nominated for his Rap song and video "Buss Down" and he and his brother Spencer Battisti were nominated for their Pop song "Dream" and video "The Storm: Live from Home" in 2022. They won the award for the video. Native is a songwriter and a producer. One of the songs he wrote and produced is also up for a NAMA award in the R&B category. Artist Ray Viktoria (Caddo) is nominated for "Stay for a While." Native has been writing for and producing for a lot of up and



Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. speaks Nov. 14 at the grand opening ceremony for the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol in Virginia.

Hard Rock opens new casino, hotel in Bristol, Virginia

STAFF REPORT

With its traditional guitar smash, the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Hard Rock International stamped its mark in Virginia on Nov. 14.

A celebration featuring STOF Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Hard Rock International Chairman/Seminole Gaming CEO Jim Allen, and other officials and dignitaries, marked the grand opening of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol, located in the southwest part of the state on the border of Tennessee.

"Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol is creating well-paying jobs and generating new tax revenue across Southwest Virginia, and local businesses in the Tri-Cities region are already seeing increased tourism and spending," Jim McGlothlin, chairman of The United Company, and Clyde Stacy, president of Par Ventures, said in a joint statement. The local businessmen secured a partnership with Hard Rock to build the destination property.

While addressing the audience, Chairman Osceola assured Bristol that Hard Rock will be a big part of the community.

"Every place that we built has a connection with the community that it's in, and we take time and we take part in everything that community does, and we will donate our time as well as our dollars to reinforce everything that this community stands for. You can bet on that," he said.

During the ceremony, Hard Rock presented a check in the amount of \$100,000



Hard Rock International COO Jon Lucas, far left, and Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol President Allie Evangelista, far right, present a \$100,000 check to the American Red Cross.

to the American Red Cross for Hurricane Helene disaster relief.

The 620,000-square-foot resort includes nearly 1,500 slot machines, more than 50 table games, a sportsbook, 300-plus hotel rooms, a 2,000 seat Hard Rock Live, and several dining options, including a Hard Rock Café and Council Oaks Steaks & Seafood.

"This is such an amazing day for Bristol," Allie Evangelista, president of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol, said in a news release. "The support from the Bristol community has been inspirational to our dedicated team, which has worked

around the clock to prepare for today's grand opening. We look forward to offering guests Hard Rock's world-renowned amenities combined with Bristol's legendary hospitality and service."

The area is known as the "birthplace of country music." A concert by country music star Blake Shelton on opening night helped christen the property's Hard Rock Live.

Hard Rock operated the state's first casino – a temporary venue known as Bristol Casino – Future Home of Hard Rock – from July 2022 until Nov. 11, 2024, while the new property was being built.

Naples sisters honor father with annual pie sale in his name

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

NAPLES — Douglas M. Osceola Jr. loved pies so much he would always go to his daughters' Karie Osceola and Jessica Osceola homes when they were making pies for the holidays. Eventually he became their official taste tester every year.

That 10-year tradition ended with his passing two years ago, but the sisters continue their custom of baking treats to sell for the holidays in the community. The second annual Douglas M. Osceola Jr. Memorial Pie Sale was held Nov. 22 at the Juanita Osceola Center in Naples.

"We usually do a bake sale every year and my dad would come and taste everything," Jessica Osceola said. "He was our best taste tester."

The Osceola sisters baked a table full of pies and other goodies including pumpkin pie in two sizes- small and regular, apple pie, banana bread, cranberry nut bread, orange bread, cookies, home canned pickled

peppers, spiced orange slices, cranberry sauce, gift baskets and charcuterie boards with small ceramic plates made by Jessica.

"We've been baking together forever," said Karie Osceola. "Now we do it in his memory. He loved it and spent all day with us. These are the pies he liked. Now we do it to remember dad this time of year. It's a lot of fun to do it together and we look forward to it all year."

Jessica has a farm and is growing Seminole pumpkins now, which she hopes to make pies from next year.

"I have lemon trees from seeds from my great grandmother's tree," Jessica said. "Oranges were always given as gifts from my grandfather to my father and his grandson. We do this to remember our families during the holidays and continue to do the little things to keep the memories alive."

The community came out to buy pies and treats for their tables, as well as gift baskets with a variety of home-canned goods. Over the course of an hour, the bounty on the table was diminished thanks to satisfied customers.



Sisters and bakers Jessica Osceola and Karie Osceola proudly display the pies and other treats for sale at the second annual Douglas M. Osceola Jr. pie sale Nov. 22 at the Juanita Osceola Center.

Federal assistance available for Hurricane Milton damage

STAFF REPORT

On Nov. 5, President Joe Biden announced federal aid to support the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the areas impacted by Hurricane Milton.

Federal funding is available to Seminole Tribe of Florida members and nonprofit organizations for emergency work and repairing facilities, according to a release from the White House. The

assistance includes temporary housing and home repair funding and loans for uninsured property loss.

Residents and business owners who sustained losses in the designated areas can begin applying for assistance at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, or by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362), or by using the FEMA App.

HRI/Seminole Gaming focus on waste reduction with Ocean Conservancy

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming have teamed up with Ocean Conservancy for a sustainability partnership aimed at waste reduction.

The partnership, known as Global Sound Waves, kicked off with a \$75,000 contribution through the Hard Rock Heals Foundation. The money was raised from Hard Rock and Seminole Gaming casino guests who donated change from redeemed gaming vouchers. The money will benefit Ocean Conservancy through the 'Change for Change' program.

The nonprofit Ocean Conservancy focuses on protecting oceans from global challenges.

Other programs held from September

through November included Hard Rock/Seminole Gaming team member education through a global trivia event; a contest from front-line team members in Asia, Europe and North America who identified solutions to reduce waste; and a Nov. 16 community clean up event focused on protecting the environment, promoting biodiversity and reducing plastic pollution. Seminole Hard Rock and Seminole Gaming properties in Florida and other Hard Rock venues around the globe participated in the event.

"We are proud to collaborate with Ocean Conservancy to launch Global Sound Waves as our signature event to reduce waste, celebrate success and expand sustainable solutions across our company's global operations," Paul Pellizzari, vice president of Global Social Responsibility for Hard Rock International, said in a press release.



Hard Rock/Seminole Gaming team members participated in community clean up events at several venues Nov. 16. This beach clean up event included tribal member Edward Aguilar, center, general manager of Seminole Classic Casino in Hollywood.



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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.

RICHARD CASTILLO

FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY

WWW.CASTILLOLAWOFFICES.COM

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum wins grant award for Tribune photograph project

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Curator
and
ROSA MARTINEZ
Cataloging Assistant

For many years the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum has made it a priority to make our collection more accessible to the Seminole community. This means we provide an avenue for remembering, and a way to preserve Seminole history. Therefore, we're happy to announce a recent grant award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Seminole Tribe received the award in July, and it funds a cataloging assistant position whose job is to complete a three-year cataloging project. Her project will greatly increase the number of photographs available to our community. Rosa Martinez joined the museum team as our new cataloging assistant in October. Rosa is tasked with cataloging 16,000 photographs over the next three years. By the end of the project, this will mean that there are 16,000 more images we can provide to you and your families.

When asked what this new job means to her, Rosa said, "I am very grateful to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and the Collections team for allowing me to take on the role as the new Cataloging Assistant. In my previous working experiences within museum education, having community-centered practices and ensuring that the public which I serve is engaged in the co-creation of knowledge has been an important value to me. That value is honored in this position. Working on the Seminole



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Cataloging assistant Rosa Martinez.

Tribune photography collections to give them a second life in our archival database emphasizes that these photographs are not just documentary objects but are rather part of a larger visual narrative showing some of the life experiences of the Seminole community.

Having a position dedicated to this photographic collection which will eventually be uploaded to the online archival database highlights the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's efforts towards higher accessibility and outreach to all community members. It is impactful work for all tribal members to not only be able to view their personal history and memories documented, but also the tribe's more recent events and history right on their screens, right at their fingertips."

One photographic print that Rosa recently cataloged is a photo of Cypress Billie as a baby, asleep on the "Hollywood Walk of Fame" in Los Angeles, California. Part of her research on this print included asking other staff to identify or verify identifications of people in the photographs she catalogs. In this instance she was very lucky, as Cypress is a fellow team member in the education division of the museum. He verified the identification and said the photo could be included in this article. Rosa found this to be such a full circle moment because he is such an important part of preserving his own history.

This was an ideal situation, but it is not the case for most of the photographs Rosa is cataloging. We will have to share those with a wider audience in order to find out the same kind of information. Getting more information will help other people find pictures of friends and family in the Museum's collection. We are happy to provide copies of any photos you

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA

AH-TAH-THI-KI MUSEUM

A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.



Young Cypress Billie, already a star in his stroller in Los Angeles.

find. You can view and request copies of any currently cataloged photographs in our online collection.

If looking online isn't your style, come visit the museum or call us at 863-902-1113. Just ask for a Collections staff member and we'll be happy to help you look at pictures in our community archive.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Service FY24 Program.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum wins Guardians of Culture and Lifeways award

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Curator

On Nov. 13, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum was honored with a Museum Excellence Award from the Association in Palm Springs, California, at its annual conference. Gordon O. Wareham, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum director, accepted the certificate and medal from Chairman Walter Echo-Hawk in front of more than 1,000 conference attendees.

The Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums (ATALM) is an

international organization that has been bringing different tribes and heritage-based organizations together since 2010. Even before that, in 2007 it began recognizing the achievements of the people and organizations who work to protect Indigenous culture and heritage through Guardians of Culture and Lifeways awards. A number of these awards are given out each year at the organization's annual conference. The award categories include:

- Lifetime Achievement Award – Honors an individual whose work has significantly contributed to the preservation and understanding of indigenous cultural heritage.
- Leadership Award – Honors an indigenous individual with exceptional ability to lead and inspire, reflected in accomplishments and broad impact in the archives, library, and/or museum professions.
- Honored One Award – Recognizes individuals whose contributions have significantly benefited the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage and supported the work of tribal archives, libraries, and museums.
- Archives Institutional Excellence Award – Recognizes indigenous archives that demonstrate a significant commitment to the preservation and use of documentary heritage.
- Library Institutional Excellence Award – Recognizes an indigenous library that profoundly demonstrates outstanding service to its community.
- Museum Institutional Excellence Award – Recognizes Indigenous museums and museum services that demonstrate significant commitment to the care, preservation, interpretation, and presentation of material cultural heritage.
- Language Program Institutional Excellence Award – Recognizes indigenous language programs that work with libraries, archives, and museums to incorporate language into cultural programming, thereby enabling these institutions to support language revitalization.
- Tribal Leader Award – Recognizes indigenous elected leaders who demonstrate



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Director Gordon O. Wareham accepts a Museum Excellence award from Walter Echo-Hawk, Chairman of the ATALM board.

significant support of archives, libraries, museums, and language programs.

Recognized for our accredited status, our community service, and our external collaborations, the museum was nominated for this award by a colleague at the University of Florida, Dr. Michelle LeFebvre. We want to thank her for her nomination and for the institution's continued support.

While at the ATALM conference, museum staff also did presentations at two

conference sessions about the work we do at the museum. We talked about projects that make our collection more accessible as well as about working with universities in Florida to foster more understanding between universities and Indigenous people.

If you'd like to hear more about what we presented and what we do behind the scenes, call 863-902-1113, ext. 12246. I'm always available to talk more about our work.



The Guardians of Culture and Lifeways Museum Excellence award received by the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki in November at the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums Conference in Palm Springs, California.

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

December 2024

Have you ever gone looking for shark teeth on the beach? They are very common near the ocean, especially the coast of Florida; so much so that the town of Venice, located on the west coast of Florida, is the self-branded shark teeth capital of the world (Krancking 2024). All of this is good fun on a vacation, but what happens when you find a shark tooth that isn't close to the ocean or rivers? For our Tribal Archaeology Section, that is not too uncommon.

This broken lemon shark tooth was found on the Big Cypress Reservation (Figure 1). You might think that makes sense considering there are so many swampy areas in this part of Florida, but sharks do not usually swim in swamps (AmericanOceans.org). This means there was a significant amount of travel through other means, possibly trade, before it reached its destination. It was found with deer, opossum, and rabbit bones; this suggests that the tooth was not naturally deposited, but was actually the result of food processing. Another clue to this effect is that this shark tooth is not fossilized. Many, although not all, naturally placed shark teeth are fossilized due to their density and mineral composition (paleosoc.org). See the picture to the right for an example of a fossilized lemon shark tooth (Figure 2).

There can be other reasons for the presence of shark teeth aside from being food refuse. There have been many shark teeth, including lemon shark teeth, found by archeologists that have been altered in some way. These modified shark teeth were sometimes used as tools or adornments. However, that was not the case for this tooth, as it is unmodified. Visit <https://stofthpo.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2014-Artifact-of-the-Month.pdf> to see our artifact of the month about a drilled shark tooth.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Are there sharks in swamps? American Oceans. (2024). <https://www.americanocceans.org/facts-are-there-sharks-in-swamps/#:~:text=Swamps%20are%20complex%20habitats%20where%20the%20freshwater%20of,is%20a%20phenomenon%20that%20occurs%20when%20conditio,n%20fall%20>

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - DECEMBER 2024

THE BATTLE OF WAHOO SWAMP



One of the bloodiest battles of the Seminole War took place on November 21st, 1836 at Wahoo Swamp.

U.S. Army forces under the command of Governor Richard Call, looking for a dramatic victory to appease President Andrew Jackson who was questioning Call's command, struck into known Seminole territory.

After burning several abandoned towns, they began to get lost in the swamp, which was described by one officer as "the most gloomy dismal place that the imagination can conceive." Scouts spotted a group of Seminole across a small river, and called for reinforcements.

As the battle began, it soon became clear that the Seminole had chosen the area, utilizing the natural terrain to their advantage. Major David Moniac, a member of the Creek Confederacy and the first Indigenous graduate of West Point, attempted to lead a charge across the water, but was instantly and fatally shot. After numerous casualties on both sides, the army was forced into a retreat.

It was the most aggressive foray into Seminole territory, and one of the bloodiest battles for the Seminole. What Call didn't know was that the native defenders were protecting a nearby town where many of the women, children, and elders had taken shelter. Call was stripped of his command by President Jackson, leading to the rise of the soon to be infamous General Thomas Jesup.

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

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



Health

Mobile food vehicle offers healthy choices for BC

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — A visit by a mobile pantry food market proved to be a popular stop for the Big Cypress Reservation on Nov. 7.

The mobile market consists of a school bus-size vehicle named MAX, which contains a variety of healthy choices for groceries, including fruits, vegetables, soups, healthy snacks, and cooking ingredients.

The five-hour visit at the TPKKY Community Center was held in conjunction with the Seminole Tribe's Environmental Protection Office, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, Integrative Health and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie's office.

Next to the MAX bus, the departments setup tables and distributed reusable food

bags, tote bags, and pamphlets on healthy eating. There was also a knife cutting demonstration to show how to cut specific fruits and vegetables safely.

The Mobile Market Program is a part of the Mobile School Pantry, which is a non-profit organization focused on providing access to fresh produce at lower prices. The profits from the Mobile Market Program go directly to fund the pantry program.

One reason the tribe partnered with the mobile pantry market program was to offer tribal members in BC easy and local access to a wide range of healthy groceries rather than having to deal with lengthy trip off reservation to shop at a grocery store.

"We are really proud to partner with them. We feel like it's a way to help bring the grocery store closer to tribal members," said Jill Horwitz, the tribe's Climate



Alyssa Osceola grocery shops on the MAX bus Nov. 7 in Big Cypress.

Calvin Tiger

Resiliency officer in the Environmental Protection Office (EPO). Horwitz said one environmental benefit of having fresh produce nearby means far fewer miles on the roads for the tribal community and their

vehicles. "I've heard from a lot of tribal members. They've been wanting something like this, and I hope they are able to utilize it," said Krystle Bowers, Climate Resiliency policy

coordinator. Moving forward, the EPO hopes to eventually branch out to multiple reservations with the Mobile Market Program and potentially conduct monthly events.



The Mobile Market Program bus features healthy-based groceries.

Calvin Tiger



Nellie Osceola uses a Climate Resiliency tote bag for groceries.

Calvin Tiger



Renee Tigertail enjoys her visit to the mobile market vehicle.

Calvin Tiger

STOF Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference to be held in January

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Registration is open for the 7th annual Seminole Tribe of Florida Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference which will be held Jan. 27-29, 2025, at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood.

The conference "will focus on the newly changing landscape for Tribal energy development and sustainability, including best practices, federal leadership, policy and regulatory changes, funding a project, and project planning/development trends."

Tribes and First Nations will have the opportunity to learn about renewable energy and sustainability and how to implement them. There will be presentations on various subjects like resources for energy projects, resource development, design and construction, funding and more.

The agenda is available at nativelearningcenter.com.

Everglades Restoration Strategies Project wraps up construction phase

STAFF REPORT

The construction phase of the Everglades Restoration Strategies Project wrapped up Nov. 13 with the completion of the C-139 Flow Equalization Basin Project.

The South Florida Water Management District, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Seminole Tribe of Florida, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and others were present to recognize the milestone, according to a press release.

"The Seminole Tribe of Florida appreciates the relationship it has developed with the South Florida Water Management District while on the journey to restore the Everglades," Tina Osceola, Executive Director of Operations of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, said in a press release. "It is through earnest and robust communication, consultation, and a shared goal that we stand together as another project reaches its completion."

The restoration project began in 2012 and includes 13 projects, over 6,000 acres of constructed wetlands and more than 115,000

acre-feet of water storage that captures runoff during storms, according to the release.

"The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida applauds the South Florida Water Management District's commitment to fulfilling its obligations to the ecosystem," Talbert Cypress, Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, said in the release. "The tribe and other environmental groups fought hard in the courts in past decades to ensure that the water quality in its lands was not being negatively impacted by untreated runoff. This project, among many others led by the District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are substantial steps towards fulfilling the court-mandated obligation to improve water quality in the Everglades. We are encouraged by the District including the tribe's voice and trusting our leadership in the implementation of Restoration Strategies."

The C-139 Flow Equalization Basin Project is an 11,000 acre-foot shallow reservoir that stores runoff and controls the flow of water to the adjacent Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 5/6. It removes nutrients from stormwater and improves the quality of water before it flows south to the Everglades, the release said.



Tina Osceola, Seminole Tribe Executive Director of Operations, speaks at the Nov. 13 milestone event.

SFWM

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SEMINOLE SCENES



Courtesy Gordon Wareham

PROPER ATTIRE: The "Seminole Attire: History and Culture Through Design" exhibition opened in October at the Winter Garden Heritage Museum in downtown Winter Garden, just outside Orlando. The exhibition, which runs through Dec. 31, focuses on Seminole clothing. An opening reception with several tribal members was held Oct. 17. The museum is operated by the Winter Garden Heritage Foundation. For more information call 407-656-3244.



OHS HOMECOMING: The tribe's Joleyne Nunez was part of the homecoming court for Okeechobee High School's homecoming, including a parade in October.



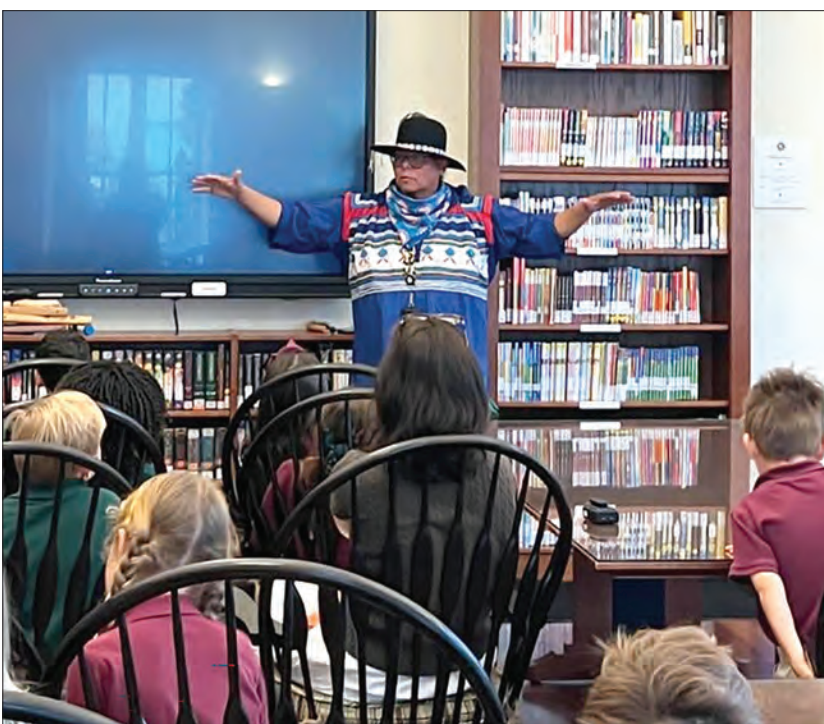
Tatum Mitchell

TREE TIME: A giant Christmas tree greets residents and visitors on the Hollywood Reservation.



Beverly Bidney

SENIOR HALLOWEEN: Immokalee seniors held a Halloween party Oct. 31 where they showed off their festive Halloween costumes and clothing. From left to right are Sylvia Marrero, Nancy Motlow, Maggie Porter, Elizabeth Olea, Frances Pelkey and Linda Frank.



St. Phillips

SEMINOLE OUTREACH: Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum outreach specialist Van Samuels speaks to students at St. Phillips Episcopal School in Coral Gables in November. "Our students had an amazing time learning about Seminole culture, history, folklore, and traditions. We're so grateful for this special experience!" the school posted on Facebook.



Beverly Bidney

HALLOWEEN HIGHLIGHT: Sandy Billie Jr., left, and Johnny celebrate Halloween at the Brighton Senior Center on Oct. 30 in the costume contest.



Beverly Bidney, left; Hard Rock (3)

HOLIDAY ITEMS: Searching for gift ideas? The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum has Christmas tree ornaments, far left, while the Rock Shop is offering a variety of items, including a guitar-rocking Santa hooded sweatshirt (also available as a T-shirt), a sleigh pin and a sizzling sweater.



NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Derogatory term for Native women to be removed from place names across California

The derogatory term “squaw” will be removed from over 30 geographic features in California by 2025, according to an announcement Nov. 15 by the state’s natural resources agency.

The California Natural Resources Agency will remove the word, which is a derogatory term used to describe Native American women, from streets, bridges, buildings, cemeteries and even a forest fire fuel break.

“The names we give to places in California reflect our shared history and culture. These place names should never insult communities or perpetuate discrimination. Today’s action to remove this harmful term from several locations across our state helps right a historic wrong against California Native American communities and represents an important step toward a more inclusive and positive future,” said Wade Crowfoot, the secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency, in a press release.

In the past two years, the word has been removed from geographic locations and features on federal lands across the country. In 2022, the Interior Department announced plans to remove the word from more than 660 geographic features and sought public comment on name replacements.

In California, the decision to remove the word stems from a bill passed in 2022. The measure required the word to be removed from all geographic place names in California, which Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law.

- NPR

Yukon First Nations artists want legal protection from cultural appropriation

Artists say there’s an increase in non-Indigenous people using traditional art forms. Yukon First Nations artists say they want to see legislation in place to protect Indigenous creators from cultural appropriation.

Artist and workshop facilitator Stormy Bradley said she’s been noticing the issue for years, but lately, it’s been getting worse.

When Bradley walked into this year’s Spruce Bog, Whitehorse’s annual craft fair, it was “devastating” to count the number of non-Indigenous people selling beadwork.

She recognized at least one individual from a workshop she taught.

“I know beadwork isn’t inherently native,” said Bradley. “I know there are many cultures out there that do beadwork ... and a lot of my beads are Japanese beads and you know, they come from all over.”

“But if you’re taking my First Nations workshop and you’re going to make a business out of it, and you’re not native, I don’t think that’s right.”

Bradley said she now starts every workshop with a disclaimer.

“Taking my workshop, paying to be here, creating gifts for families and loved ones, that’s cultural appreciation,” she tells them. “Buying artwork off Indigenous artists, that’s cultural appropriation.”

“But if you were to take my workshop and decide to start a beading business, claiming Indigenous space and taking Indigenous money and grants, that’s cultural appropriation.”

Teresa Vander Meer-Chassé is an artist, curator of Indigenous and contemporary art for Open Space Arts Society in Victoria, B.C., and member of White River First Nation.

“We are having an issue now in the Yukon,” she said. “And it’s not just in the Yukon, it’s right across North America.”

Vander Meer-Chassé said it’s common in the Yukon for families to be mixed, and for non-Indigenous family members to learn how to bead. That’s an important way for families and communities to connect, she said.

“Where things impact Indigenous people is when folks use teachings from Indigenous artists and then sell and profit off those teachings,” she said. “That’s where the line has been crossed.”

In the U.S., it’s illegal for non-Indigenous people to sell Indigenous artwork without clearly disclosing their heritage, or “in a manner that falsely suggests it is Indian-produced,” according to federal legislation.

Individuals who violate that rule can face a \$250,000 fine, a five-year prison term, or both.

No such law exists in Canada. Vander Meer-Chassé and Bradley said they would like to see that change. Both said legal protections would also need to take “pretendians” — or individuals who falsely claim Indigenous ancestry — into account.

“We’ve gotten to a point where there are so many non-Indigenous folks identifying as Indigenous, in the arts world, academia, the workplace, just everywhere ... I think we absolutely need legislation,” said Vander Meer-Chassé.

“It’s the only way I think Indigenous artists and people will have a fighting chance to access the resources that were meant for them.”

Vander Meer-Chassé said many organizations worry about “policing” Indigenous identity, and end up making it easy for people to be disingenuous.

“It’s very rare to see an application where somebody has to prove their Indigeneity, you know, sharing a status card or anything like that. It’s very, very rare to see that. So it’s often self-identified, just check a box whether or not you identify.”

While Vander Meer-Chassé acknowledged Indigenous identity can be complex, she said there are a number of ways

organizations can ensure people are who they say they are, such as letters of support from First Nations communities confirming membership.

Cameron Webber, a spokesperson with Yukon’s Department of Tourism and Culture, confirmed that grant applicants are not asked to provide any proof of identity, but Webber didn’t rule it out for the future.

“We recognize the call by Indigenous people for greater vigilance around confirming Indigenous identity to help prevent harm and injustice and would certainly consider additional measures,” Webber wrote in an email to CBC.

“We are also in regular dialogue with our arts colleagues across Canada on this emergent issue, so there may be some learning possibilities from other jurisdictions as well.”

- CBC

Coquille Tribe one step closer to new casino in Oregon

On Nov. 22, the federal government released an environmental assessment in favor of the Coquille Indian Tribe opening a new casino, but other tribes aren’t happy.

The Coquille Indian Tribe has sought approval to build a casino in Medford, Oregon, for around a decade. For that to happen, the tribe must place just over two acres of property it owns within the city into federal trust. On Nov. 22, the Department of the Interior released a Final Environmental Impact Statement in favor of the plan.

The problem, according to other tribes in the region, is that the Coquille’s reservation is more than 150 miles away, near the Oregon Coast, where they already have a casino.

Lindsay Campman, communications director with the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, said the Medford casino would upset Oregon’s informal one-casino-per-tribe policy — which is not technically state law — and draw customers and money away from other tribes.

“With this one decision, this kind of opens the doors for casinos to pop up across Oregon in new cities, in urban places, in neighborhoods. And that is not something that Oregonians want,” Campman said.

She said the favorable environmental impact statement won’t deter her tribe, which operates a casino in Douglas County, from continuing to challenge the proposal.

“Our leaders are committed to fighting this issue tooth and nail, because we absolutely believe that this legal decision is wrong... and it’s a disgrace to tribal nations across the country,” Campman said.

But Coquille Indian Tribe Chair Brenda Meade said criticism toward her tribe doesn’t take into account its unique situation.

After losing federal designation in the 1950s, the tribe regained its status in 1989 with the Coquille Restoration Act passed in Congress. That law included Jackson County in the tribe’s service area. Meade said purchasing property and placing it in federal trust is how her tribe, scattered across Southwest Oregon after assimilation programs, is able to have a reservation.

“It’s sad to hear another tribe say, ‘Get back to the reservation.’ It’s offensive,” Meade said.

The federal government will now consider public comments on the proposal during a 30-day “waiting period.” Meade said she expects a final decision on the casino this winter.

- Oregon Public Broadcasting/Northwest News Network

Wind Creek Hospitality to acquire racecourse and casino

ATMORE, Ala. — Two leaders in Alabama’s hospitality and tourism industry — Wind Creek Hospitality, owned by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and the McGregor family, owners of Birmingham Racecourse and Casino and Victoryland Casino — announced Nov. 18 that they have entered into an agreement under which Wind Creek will acquire the Birmingham Racecourse. The sale is expected to be finalized by early 2025.

According to a press release, Wind Creek will transform the Birmingham Racecourse into an entertainment destination. Parimutuel and historical horse racing games currently in operation will continue to be offered.

“For over 30 years, we have worked to provide the best possible experience for our customers and employees, while generating significant tax revenue for the state of Alabama and local charities,” Lewis Benefield, president of the Birmingham Racecourse and VictoryLand, said in the release. “We have paid hundreds of millions of dollars to the State of Alabama and to local schools, hospitals, charities and other organizations that need financial support.”

Stephanie Bryan, Tribal Chair and CEO of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, said the acquisition will provide an economic boost to the area by creating more jobs. Wind Creek is already involved in the Birmingham area, supporting organizations like the Birmingham Promise, Birmingham Zoo and others.

“Birmingham is one of the most vibrant cities in America, and we feel very fortunate that this acquisition will allow us to increase the investment and deepen the relationships that we already have in Birmingham,” Bryan said in the release.

- Staff Report

Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe granted state recognition

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey signed an executive order Nov. 19 to grant the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe official

state recognition.

The tribe, based in Plymouth, has just under 200 enrolled members. Their ancestral lands reach from Plymouth to Cape Cod.

Chairwoman of the tribe Melissa Ferretti said in a she was “overjoyed” by the governor’s action.

“It’s been almost overwhelming because, you know, it’s real now,” Ferretti said. “We’ve been waiting so long to get this done.”

Ferretti and other tribal members advocated for years to gain state recognition. The chairwoman said the tribe created two, six-inch binders with 400 years of evidence of the tribe’s long-standing presence in the area and sent the material to the Governor’s Council in May.

The order allows the tribe to establish a government-to-government relationship with the commonwealth. Ferretti said it also allows the tribe to access to programs within the Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, along with other federal departments.

- WBUR (Boston, Massachusetts)

Arizona governor signs largest tribal water rights agreement in US history

Arizona Gov. Kate Hobbs has joined Northern tribes in the state to sign the largest tribal water settlement in United States history.

“This is a historic moment for the State of Arizona, Tribal nations, and all parties to these agreements,” Hobbs said. “They create a consequential and lasting impact by securing a sustainable water supply for tens of thousands of Arizonans and helping local economies thrive. I’m proud to be a part of this solution that many Arizona families have fought to get for generations.”

The signing of two historic agreements—the Northeastern Arizona and Yavapai-Apache tribal settlements—will settle outstanding tribal water rights claims to Colorado River water as well as groundwater sources in Northeastern Arizona. Right now, nearly a third of the Navajo Nation does not have access to running water. The agreement would pave the way for funding to be used to divert Colorado River water to these areas.

- Arizona Public Media

Tribes in Oklahoma, National Park Service correcting Fort Marion site narrative

A decade ago, St. Augustine, Florida, tourists visiting the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, or what is historically known as Fort Marion, learned a one-sided history.

“Our visitors could walk away with the impression that ‘Oh, assimilation was a good thing,’” said Steve Roberts, the Director of Interpretation and Education at Castillo de San Marcos.

However, after Roberts and his colleague Gordy Wilson walked through the exhibits, they knew they needed to provide a more complex picture.

“We knew that those exhibits and history had been told from a U.S. military perspective ... versus listening to the oral tradition of the tribes,” he said in an interview with KOSU. “And it struck us both that we needed to do better.”

Seven years after walking through those exhibits, a collaboration between the National Park Service and four Oklahoma tribal nations has become fruitful, evident in the second annual Fort Marion Symposium this week.

This year is the first time the event has taken place in Oklahoma, where the story of the Indigenous prisoners at Fort Marion begins.

Tribes in what is now Oklahoma—the Cheyenne and Arapaho, Kiowa and Comanche nations—fought forced relocation during the Red River War, ultimately leading to their surrender in 1875 due to depleted resources.

Influential tribal leaders were imprisoned following the war. Eventually, more than 50 leaders and warriors were selected by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Neil to be transported to Fort Marion, Florida.

The selections were made based on war crimes, often brought about by false testimonials and to fulfill a quota. Yet, as Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Max Bear said, those men did what they had to do to survive.

“Prisoners at Fort Marion, they’re going to be viewed as somebody that did something bad and heinous,” Bear said during the symposium. “These men defended themselves for their people, their children because we already had three known massacres at that time.”

Opportunities were given for attendees to tell their ancestral histories, and tough memories were shared.

The Indigenous men held captive were under Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who later became well-known for running the Carlisle Indian Boarding School. Pratt displayed the prisoners as “captured savages” to make a profit while traveling to Florida, though that attempt was unsuccessful.

Once they arrived at Fort Marion, the men were forced to cut their long hair and ultimately assimilate.

While assimilation is a piece of history at the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, tourists can now recognize the harm of cultural genocide as well as attendees of the symposium.

“It’s always a work in progress, and there’s more work to do,” Roberts said.

- KOSU (Stillwater, Oklahoma)

Veterans’ sacrifices, service honored at Brighton ceremony

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Report

BRIGHTON — The Brighton Reservation commemorated Veterans Day on Nov. 7 with a ceremony which honored the sacrifices made by tribal and non-tribal veterans.

The 37th anniversary Seminole Veterans Celebration and Recognition was held at the Florida Seminole Veterans building. Veterans and their families and friends attended the event, which opened with the Public Safety Honor Guard. Student Josiah Holt played the National Anthem on violin, the Pemayetv Emahavk Charter School student council recited the pledge of allegiance in English and Creek and Tribal leaders spoke about the importance of veterans.

“Thank you for your sacrifices, some gave their all,” said Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. “We gather for them. Because of them and their sacrifices, we enjoy the freedom we have today.”

President Holly Tiger previously worked for former Chairman and President Mitchell Cypress, who served in the U.S. Army, and recalled how important veterans are to him.

“He always had this fellowship with veterans,” President Tiger said. “In our travels, I’d see tribal and non-tribal veterans find each other and connect. Veterans across Indian Country, they called themselves to battle when they didn’t have to.”

“Most of these veterans didn’t have to serve; it was a calling for them to fight,” said Brighton Councilman Larry Howard. “We always try to encourage our youth to serve. I tell them if there is a calling to go, do it and fight for what you believe in.”

“Freedom is not free; there are many sacrifices made for it,” said emcee S.R. Tommie. “Native Americans have served in the Armed Forces for over 200 years. They have served in every conflict since the revolutionary war.”

“I’m honored and grateful to say thank you for your bravery and courage in all you do,” said Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas. “My grandfather was a veteran and I am grateful to have known him for part of my life.”

Two Pemayetv Emahavk Charter School middle school students read essays they wrote about veterans.

“Veterans are the silent heroes who form the bedrock of our nation, much like the hidden foundation of a sturdy house. Their courage and sacrifice provide the vital strength that upholds our freedom and way of life,” read Jalaaya Hunsinger.



Beverly Bidney

Seminole veteran Sallie Josh presents Ret. Brigadier General Nolen Bivens with a Seminole jacket. In the background are, from left to right, President Holly Tiger, Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola.



Beverly Bidney

Amy Cox, second from right, daughter of the late Seminole veteran and artist Noah Billie, receives a plaque on behalf of her family. With her, from left to right, are Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall, Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and President Holly Tiger.



Beverly Bidney

Seminole veterans on the left side, including from left to right, Sallie Josh, Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Curtis Motlow and Mitchell Cypress, receive handshakes and thank yous at the ceremony.

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Education



B

Tribal veterans Paul Bowers Sr., Mitchell Cypress share wartime experiences at Ahfachkee

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Ahfachkee School middle and high school students heard first-hand accounts of serving in the military from tribal veterans Paul Bowers Sr. and former President Mitchell Cypress on Nov. 13.

Veterans Day was over, but these distinguished Vietnam veterans gave their time freely to share what it was to be a soldier for their country.

Cypress, who served in the National Guard and the U.S. Army from 1968 to 1970, said there were about 60 tribal members who served from 1960 to 1970.

"Some were drafted and some signed up," said Cypress, who was drafted. "Being in the military taught me discipline. Somebody was always above you telling you what to do."

He told the students that during the first eight weeks of basic training, soldiers would qualify for a position based on a point system that could include cook, supply clerk or an office worker.

"You didn't have to carry a rifle all day every day," Cypress said. "Somebody has to keep our freedom, so think about it and see what kind of programs they have."

Bowers, who enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served from 1968 to 1970, passed around a book about the USMC in San Diego in 1968, where he did boot camp.

He told the students that boot camp lasted 12 weeks. Every day they exercised by running three miles, doing pushups and more. Bowers spent a lot of time on the rifle range, doing mountain training and learning



Beverly Bidney

Veterans Mitchell Cypress, left, and Paul Bowers Sr. in the Ahfachkee School gym before their presentation to the middle and high school students Nov. 13



Beverly Bidney

Ahfachkee students listen to a presentation about being military veterans by Mitchell Cypress and Paul Bowers Sr.

about ground warfare.

When boot camp ended, he was sent to Vietnam and said it was kind of scary. The weather was always hot and the North Vietnamese and Vietcong soldiers were always shooting at them.

"Once a mortar round landed right in front of me," Bowers said. "But I picked up my machine gun and kept going."

There were people from cities

throughout the U.S. in his group and they didn't know anything about the vegetation surrounding them. Bowers found nuts on the ground, put them in his pocket and shared them with his buddies. He said the men couldn't believe he could just pick up a nut from the ground and eat it.

Bowers told the students that his primary job was to shoot the enemy soldiers.

"They would shoot at us all day and

then disappear into the tunnels," Bowers said. "They wore camo and were hard to see. We didn't know where the fire was coming from. You never saw them, but you shot at them."

Bowers earned three Purple Heart medals for shrapnel wounds and tripping a land mine.

"I remember it," he said. "You can't ever forget what you went through. It was

kind of rough, but I did my job. We need to get more people from the tribe to serve."

When Bowers got back home, he spent six months in the hospital due to his injuries. When he left, had no job and nothing else to do but work cattle. He still has a herd of cattle today.

"One reason you are [in the military] is to fight for freedom," Cypress said. "This guy [Bowers] is a highly decorated Marine."

Students, teachers from Ahfachkee, PECS earn awards from state during Native American Heritage Month

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

TALLAHASSEE — The governor's mansion served as a picturesque background and the Florida State University Marching Chiefs band provided a rousing welcome as students and staff from the Ahfachkee School and Pemaayev Emahakv Charter Schools as well as tribal leaders and family members were honored Nov. 21 in Tallahassee.

The band played enthusiastic tunes for the Seminoles on their arrival and departure; in between, a ceremony with Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and Gov. Ron DeSantis celebrated winners in the Native American Heritage Month essay and art contests, which is organized by the state's Department of Education and Volunteer Florida.

The contests' roots go back three years when a group of PECS 8th graders helped create and push the Native American Heritage Month designation into a statewide recognition.

"It was a collaborative effort. Here we are three years later and it's amazing," said PECS principal Tracy Downing.

Chairman Osceola and DeSantis spoke to a packed room before the governor handed out awards.

"Weaving" was this year's theme for Native American Heritage Month at the federal level.

"We have things we do in our culture, which is weaving baskets, sewing patchwork. There's a lot of weaving that goes into what we do in our culture and heritage, and how we preserve who we are. It's about the

past, the present and the future," Chairman Osceola told the audience.

The chairman also discussed the tribe's presence in the state, starting with the state flag.

"We're on it," he said.

"We have a big footprint here, not only in the gaming industry and entertainment industry, but we have a big footprint just in our reservations and where we live. Take the time to get to know who we are."

DeSantis said the tribe has supported the state in many ways, including during emergencies.

"Any time the state has had something — whether it's hurricanes, Covid, anything — (Chairman Osceola) is on the phone with me offering support and helping. He doesn't need to that, but they do it. It's been a great relationship. We really appreciate all they've been able to do from the Seminole Tribe," DeSantis said.

The tribe was represented by Chairman Osceola, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard.

The statewide art and essay contests featured the theme "Honoring Native American Contributions to Florida's Success." Ahfachkee and PECS students were among the art and essay winners.

PECS student Serenity Bishop was an essay winner for her piece on Betty Mae Jumper.

"I wrote about her excellence, education, her work on the Seminole Constitution and her being the Seminole Chairwoman," Bishop said.

She added that it was "awesome" to meet DeSantis.



Kevin Johnson

Tribal students and PECS teacher Lucy Anselmo, far right, attend a Native American Heritage Month event Nov. 21 at the governor's mansion in Tallahassee.

Bishop and the other winners from both the Native American Heritage Month contest and the Hispanic Heritage Month contest received their awards from DeSantis. The Hispanic Heritage event had been postponed from October due to Hurricane Milton.

Native American Heritage Month Winners

Art
Jayley Billie Perez (Ahfachkee), Stanley Cypress (Ahfachkee), Ziana Osceola (Ahfachkee), Kloey Key (Shadowlawn

Elementary)

Essay
Serenity Bishop (PECS), Bryant Hunsinger (PECS), Marlee Swift (Palm Beach Maritime Academy), Loelai Abrantes (Celebration K-8 School), Alyssa Dean (Forest Hill Community High School), Cypress Cohen (Babcock High School)

Educator Winners
Rachel Jones (PECS), Lucy Anselmo (PECS), Jennifer Brittingham (Ahfachkee), Cesar Tavarese (Ahfachkee)

Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford sings National Anthem at FSU events



Kevin Johnson

Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford sings at the FSU men's basketball game Nov. 19.

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

TALLAHASSEE — Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford is becoming the voice, or at least the singing voice, of the Seminole Tribe of Florida at Florida State University.

Latchford, who is a dual degree major student at FSU, sang the National Anthem at the women's basketball game Nov. 14 and the men's basketball game five days later. Both occasions were part of the college's "Seminole Heritage" games.

In the spring, Latchford made her FSU sports singing debut at a baseball game.

With each appearance, Latchford said she's become more comfortable.

"I think I'll always be nervous," she said. Singing in performances has been a part of Latchford's life since she was a child. She said she's enjoyed the opportunities with FSU athletics.

"It's a way to keep my hobby alive, but also do it representing the tribe," she said.

She said one of her goals is to sing the anthem at an FSU football game.

"We'll see if they extend the offer," she said. "My sister makes the joke that Florida State seems to win when I sing the National Anthem."

Indeed, the FSU teams are a perfect 3-0 in games that Latchford sings.



Kevin Johnson

Michele Thomas and PECS students depart the governor's mansion with the FSU Marching Chiefs at their sides.



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, Gov. Ron DeSantis and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard.

Native American Hoop Apache Crown dancers wow PECS students

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Hoop dancers from the Hopi Tribe and White Mountain Apache Crown dancers taught Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School students about the meaning of their dances as they put on a show.

The student body, teachers and staff gathered in the school's gym Nov. 4 for the exhibition. The dance groups performed at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's American Indian Arts Celebration in Big Cypress just days before coming to PECS. The museum arranged for the cultural exchange at the school.

"This is the second year bringing AIAC to PECS," said museum director Gordon Wareham. "We want to do outreach and it's way easier for us to come to them. We get to know the school and the dancers like going to schools, they know it matters to the students."

One member of each dance group drummed and explained the meaning of the dances as the dancers performed.

The hoop dance originated with the Pueblo Tribe in Northern Arizona, where the dancers still live. The hoops represent mother nature, the circle of life, the medicine wheel and the drum.

The eagle design represents all birds, the butterfly design represents all insects, the horse represents all animals, the flower represents agriculture and the ladder of life represents humanity's journey on earth.

As a nod to being in Florida, the group created an alligator design which appeared to be a favorite of the students.

In the White Mountain Apache Crown dance, the dancers are hooded and represent



A hoop dancer from the Hopi Tribe performs for students and teachers in the gym at PECS.



A world champion hoop dancer displays his skills in the PECS gym.

the mountain spirits. The dance is a healing ceremony to protect the Apache from disease and enemies, while it honors the creator, ancestors and the community. One of the dancers is a child, called the holy one.

"These dancers are just like you, they go to school," said group leader and drummer Joe Tohonnie, Jr. "Every one of you are special. You are the ones who heals us older ones, you make us smile. Our holy one is

our protector. We dance to massage mother earth; she gives us the food we eat and the air we breathe."

After the crown dance was over, Tohonnie asked the students, teachers and staff make a huge circle around the gym. The dancers moved around the circle and blessed each person individually. The filled to capacity gym was quiet during the powerful ceremony.

Concession stand at PECS track meet raises money for safety patrol

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Pemaayev Emahakv Charter Safety patrol held a fundraiser for its end of the school year trip during the school's track meet Oct. 30.

School administrators manned the concession stand filled with treats for students in need of a treat before or after their races.

"We appreciate them," said principal Tracy Downing. "They are sworn in by the Seminole Police Department and they take an oath to protect the student body. They make sure students are safe coming into and leaving school. They are part of the crime watch."

There are 29 students on the school's safety patrol this year, ranging from fourth to eighth grade. They are stationed at high traffic areas around campus so they may assist students as they arrive on campus and proceed to their classrooms. They remind students to walk safely through the hallways and help the younger students find their classrooms, if necessary.

The Florida Department of Education requires every school to have a safety patrol, which looks out for anything that doesn't seem safe. The motto of the safety patrol is "if you see something, say something."

"It makes me feel like I'm an actual leader with the police," said 8th grader Payton Barasch, who leads the group this year. "I like that we can stop people from making threats."

The safety patrol's end of the year trip will be to Sky Zone and a hibachi restaurant. They will hold fundraisers at the Brighton Community Tree Lighting Ceremony Dec. 6



PECS staff sold candy, snacks and drinks to raise money for the school's end of the year trip. From left are Michele Thomas, Stephanie Tedders, Dixie Houston and Tracy Downing. In front is 8th member of the safety patrol Payton Barasch.

and at the entry to school basketball games in December.

Immokalee preschool Halloween

IMMOKALEE — There were plenty of treats and no tricks to be found at the Immokalee Preschool Halloween celebration Oct. 31 at the Immokalee pavilion. The

youngsters dressed in their finest, prettiest and scariest costumes as they went from table to table gathering treats, courtesy of various tribal departments.



Amari Osceola, 3, enjoys some treats at the Immokalee Preschool Halloween celebration Oct. 31.

Hollywood preschool donates toys, supplies to Sistrunk Early Learning Center



Courtesy Photo
From left to right, Dana Rolle, Afua Baptiste, Jaleel Jack, Samantha Hisler, Thommy Doud, Terri Mansae, Nina Frias at Sistrunk Early Learning Center Nov. 25 in Fort Lauderdale. The Hollywood Preschool parents and staff donated toys and supplies to the learning center.



Beverly Bidney
Dressed as a juicy watermelon, Ocean Hernandez, 2, is delighted to get yet another bag of treats at the Immokalee Preschool Halloween celebration.

Tribe, FSU celebrate dedication of Native American & Indigenous Studies Center

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

TALLAHASSEE — The Seminole Tribe of Florida's presence was felt outside and inside at the dedication of Florida State University's Native American & Indigenous Studies Center on Nov. 21 in Tallahassee.

Speaking from a podium on the center's porch, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and tribal FSU student Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford addressed an audience of about 75 — including the tribe's princesses — who gathered on a sun-splashed front lawn for the 12 p.m. ceremony during homecoming week.

Inside the center, each room featured Seminole-related items, ranging from beads in the tribe's colors on tables set up for the reception to a flier featuring a recent performance by Elgin Jumper at FSU.

One room's bookshelves feature Seminole faces and writers, ranging from magazine covers with Max Osceola Jr., Mitchell Cypress and Kyle Doney to a book by Betty Mae Jumper and additional works that highlight Seminole and other Indigenous culture, life and history. Seminole-produced programs and booklets about the tribe's cattle history, events and veterans, including Charlie Steel Gopher, are also on the shelves.

"At this center here, walking through those doors, this gives everybody a chance to learn about what the true history is from our side because if you were in school — high school, middle school, college, and taking courses — that story is only told from one side and that's not our side," Chairman Osceola said to the audience.

"Seminole Tribe history is Florida history," FSU President Richard McCullough told the guests. "We have a responsibility to



From left to right, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola and FSU President Richard McCullough.

educate the next generation of students on the incredible resilience and success of the Seminole Tribe."

The university, including its athletic teams, has used the Seminole name since 1947 when Florida State College for Women became coeducational and was renamed Florida State University. On June 17, 2005, the Seminole Tribe's Tribal Council passed a resolution that formally emphasized its approval and support of FSU's use of the Seminole name and imagery.

"At FSU, we're very proud of our

partnership with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which is built on respect and shared values," McCullough said.

The center opened earlier this year aiming to be a hub for the campus and community to learn about Native American and Indigenous cultures, and explore educational initiatives, collaborations and programs about Indian Country and beyond.

The 2,600-square-foot-style home was built in 1916 at 535 West College Avenue. It has historically been known as the Greene-Lewis Home, a nod to its previous owners. It was placed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1998. The location is a prime spot on campus, just a short walk to the Westcott Building, home to the university's administration.

Latchford said she hopes the center helps attract more Seminoles and other Indigenous students to FSU.

"Today's dedication is about more than just opening a new student center; it's about creating a space for community, education and growth," Latchford said to the audience. "My hope is that this center becomes a sanctuary for Indigenous students and a motivating factor for future tribal students to choose FSU, seeing it as a pace that truly values our culture and traditions."

Speaking from the podium, FSU professor Andrew Frank, the center's director, stressed the importance of building new partnerships with the tribe in academics and with the student body, and "...to look into Indian Country and to see them as experts, not subjects to be studied..."



Kevin Johnson

The Native American & Indigenous Studies Center at Florida State University.



Kevin Johnson

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. and FSU First Lady Jai Vartikar check out the literature in the center.



Kevin Johnson

The audience for the dedication ceremony included several tribal members.



Kevin Johnson

Andrew Frank, director of the center, greets Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas at the dedication ceremony.

Immokalee Elaponke bingo aims to help revitalize language

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The goal of the tribe's language department seems simple enough; to create more fluent speakers, reinforce what's already there and try to bring conversation back.

In an effort to meet that objective, the department has developed a bingo-like game and has been taking it to all the reservations. The game is played in Elaponke, except in Brighton where it is done in Creek and in Lakeland where it is done in Elaponke and Creek.

"We are trying to have the language grow," said language department director Francine Osceola. "Our grandparents planted the seed and we just have to water it to bring it back."

The program, which began in October 2023, holds two games every Wednesday on the Hollywood reservation, one for kids at the Boys & Girls Club at 4 p.m. and one for adults at noon. Recently, Osceola has brought it to every other reservation and hopes to make it a monthly event. In its inaugural year, the language department has held 75 events.



Beverly Bidney

Language department director Francine Osceola checks Spencer Jock's winning bingo card during the Immokalee Elaponke bingo game Nov. 14.

"In Hollywood we usually get more than 40 people," Osceola said. "In Tampa we recently had more than 30. We enjoy it and tribal members have been really receptive."

The program came to Immokalee Nov. 14 where about a dozen folks tried their hand at the game. They had a bingo-like card with English words in front of them. First, they practiced how to say the items on the card in Elaponke. Then Brian Billie called out words in Elaponke as the players tried to match the words correctly. The first one to

get a bingo, won a prize from the table loaded with them.

The department works with the preschools to create activity books, nursery rhymes and coloring books to help reinforce the language with pictures and words together.

Osceola would like to have the events more often on all the reservations, but she doesn't have enough staff to make that happen.

"If we can get a local person on each reservation to lead it, we can send supplies and they can do it without us," she said.



Beverly Bidney

Brian Billie calls out the words in Elaponke as the language department team follows along.



Beverly Bidney

A display of already crushed dried corn to make sofkee were some of the prizes given out for winning bingo cards.

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Beverly Bidney

Seminole medicine man Bobby Henry leads the welcome dance at the AIAC Nov. 1, followed by Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola and actor/writer Dallas Goldtooth.

Native arts, culture come to life at AIAC

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Seminole Tribe's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum held its annual American Indian Arts Celebration (AIAC) in Big Cypress Nov. 1 and 2. More than 800 students from South Florida and tribal schools joined other attendees at the museum's festival grounds on Nov. 1.

The event commemorates Native American Heritage Month with Indigenous entertainment, food and arts.

The AIAC offered something for everyone from Native American culture, music, dance, arts, jewelry, clothing and food. The day began with a traditional Grand Entry led by Seminole medicine man Bobby Henry, Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola, Billy Walker, Everett Osceola and actor/writer Dallas Goldtooth.

Highlights of the AIAC included alligator wrestling, the Ahfachkee School fashion show and band concert, a wildlife show, Native American hoop dancers, Aztec dancers, White Apache crown dancers and a meet and greet with Goldtooth (Dakota,

Navajo).

Florida's history is an important part of the state's fourth grade curriculum, so some of the school groups were loaded with fourth graders, their teachers and chaperones. Many of the teachers, who prepared the students for the day by teaching Seminole history, said they wanted the students to get an appreciation of Seminole heritage and culture.

"We talk about how the present day Seminoles keep their culture, traditions and heritage alive," said Embassy Creek Elementary teacher Dr. Michelle Krantz. "We want [the students] to know Native Americans aren't just what they see on TV. We talked about the Hard Rock and they were surprised. I'm trying to show them the benefits we have because of the Seminole Tribe."

Many of the teachers and chaperones believe it's important to attend to this and other festivals so students can learn about people who are different from themselves.

"I think it's critical that they see the culture and traditions beyond what's accessible to them where we live," said parent volunteer Jacob Pfeffer, of Cooper

City. "This is such an important community in Florida."

"This place is kind of cool to look at," said student Iyla Benjamin, 9. "In the museum I got to see where they slept and what it looked like in the old days."

Embassy Creek Elementary teacher Stacy Vidal said she wanted her students to get a taste of what they learned about in class and hopes they can appreciate the authentic items and people.

"This is exactly what we teach," said teacher Lisa Dutschke. "I want them to understand that what happens in the classroom is alive and real. I want them to see what Florida is made of and see something they wouldn't normally see. The Seminole tribe is a culture that needs to be preserved. I taught [students] about how they contribute to our economy and preserve our ecosystems."

Enthusiastic students from schools around South Florida were excited to be at AIAC and to experience what they learned about in social studies class.



Beverly Bidney

Ewanteke Roberts walks in the Ahfachkee fashion show Nov. 1



Beverly Bidney

Danelle Thomas and Joanie Henry display items for sale at their booth.



Beverly Bidney

Everett Osceola takes a photo of Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, actor Dallas Goldtooth and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola during a meet and greet session.



Beverly Bidney

An Aztec dancer/emcee describes the meaning of the Ameyal group's performance in the tent at AIAC.



Beverly Bidney

Pharaoh Gayles shows the crowd a large snapping turtle during the wildlife show.

Train, Def Leppard, Brad Paisley coming to Immokalee Reservation

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — The Harvest Nights Charity Music Festival will run Jan. 10-12, 2025, at the John Jimmie Rodeo Grounds on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Immokalee Reservation. The festival will feature a variety of music, including pop-rock, rock n' roll and country.

Headliners scheduled to appear include Train, Def Leppard, Brad Paisley and former Eagles guitarist Don Felder. The lineup also features a local presence with former American Idol contestant Casey Bishop from nearby Estero, and Maiden Cane and the Ben

Allen Band, also from Southwest Florida.

The event is organized by The Charity Pros. Proceeds will help support the Immokalee Foundation, Guadalupe Center, Cancer Alliance Network and the Collier Community Foundation.

"We are blessed to host this amazing event at the John Jimmie Rodeo Grounds in Immokalee...We graciously thank the Seminole Tribe of Florida for sharing the use of their beautiful land and for their help & support of this event and the local community charities involved," The Charity Pros posted on its website.

For more information and tickets go to thecharitypros.org.

Miccosukee Arts & Crafts Festival to be held Dec. 26-29

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The 50th annual Miccosukee Indian Arts & Crafts Festival, Dec. 26-29 will be hosted at the Miccosukee Indian Village festival grounds. There will be live performances, an

artisan market with hand-made items, food and alligator shows.

There will be performances from Joe Tohonnie Jr. and the White Mountain Apache Crown Dancers and Native Pride Dancers. Tickets are available on Eventbrite.

Actor, writer Dallas Goldtooth plays big role at AIAC

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Actor and writer Dallas Goldtooth (Dakota, Navajo) attended the Seminole Tribe of Florida's American Indigenous Arts Celebration, but he didn't stay on the sidelines during the event. He walked in the grand entry, modeled Seminole clothing in the Ahfachkee School fashion show and held court in the Stage 360 tent as he met with and posed for selfies with attendees Nov. 1 and Nov. 2 on the Big Cypress Reservation.

Goldtooth previously attended the AIAC in 2019 as a member of the comedy group the "1491s" when it performed in the main stage tent. His career has included TV shows including "Rez Ball," "Seeds," "Echo," "Reservation Dogs," and "Rutherford Falls."

He is currently writing and acting in a feature film set in the 1890s at the Chicago World's Fair. He recently finished filming a TV show called "Last Frontier," which is his first non-comedic role.

"I like telling stories," Goldtooth said. "It's a powerful tool to bring tremendous change. It's a tremendous gift to travel around Indian Country and share stories."

Goldtooth is also a vocal supporter of Indigenous issues, including climate change and standing against oil development in the



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Joe Frank, Dallas Goldtooth and Rhonda Roff at the meet and greet tent.

Everglades.

"One of the biggest issues is that people don't think we are still around," he said. "The Seminole Tribe is a good advocate for

that. Events like this are essential to educate the next generation of Floridians about who are the original inhabitants of the state."

Hollywood skate park opens



Brighton Councilman Larry Howard leads a group in cutting the ribbon to open the reservation's new skate park Nov. 23. Beverly Bidney



Kenley Osceola, left, on a scooter and Finnley Metcalf, right, riding his bike. Tatum Mitchell



Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola gets some help from kids to cut the ribbon at the opening of the reservation's new skate park Nov. 23. Tatum Mitchell



Professional skateboarder Andy MacDonald jumps over Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Recreation site manager Mary Huff during the grand opening. Beverly Bidney



Aurora Osceola tries out the new park on a skateboard. Tatum Mitchell



Skateboarders try out the new skate park, located in Seminole Estates next to the Betty Mae Jumper Clinic. Tatum Mitchell

Olympic skateboarder helps open new Brighton skate park

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Brighton Reservation inaugurated its new skate park Nov. 23 with a slew of professional and amateur skaters of all ages. The youngest budding skateboarder was 2 years old and the oldest was 51-year-old professional skateboarder Andy MacDonald, who brought five other pros with him.

The 13,400-square foot skate park has more than 20 ramps of varying sizes from 2 feet to 6 feet tall, a 4.5 foot half pipe, two grinding rails, a table and plenty of room to skate on the smooth polished concrete floor. Located next to the Brighton gym, it is a steel structure airnasium with open sides, large ceiling fans like ones found in rodeo arenas, lights, a speaker system to play music, a pro shop and restrooms.

The ribbon was cut by Brighton Councilman Larry Howard with help from MacDonald, Recreation site manager Mary Huff, Recreation site supervisor Kelly Smiley and more than a dozen kids who will likely be the ones to use it most.

MacDonald competed in the 2024 Summer Olympics for the Great Britain team. MacDonald was born in the U.S. but has dual citizenship since his father is from England. He was the oldest skateboarder in the Olympics and two of his teammates were only 16 years old. He didn't win an Olympic medal, but said the experience was the thrill of his career. He has also competed and won in the X Games 23 times with friend and fellow skateboarder Tony Hawk and was named World Champion nine times in the World Cup Skateboarding Series.

After the ribbon was cut, MacDonald spoke to the crowd of kids and their families about skateboarding.

He told them he grew up in Boston and got a skateboard for Christmas when he was 12. He was determined to become a professional skateboarder and moved to California after he graduated from high school. MacDonald practiced all the time to achieve his goal. What he didn't realize was that he was training by practicing moves over and over.

"Skateboarding taught me self-motivation and self-discipline," MacDonald said. "It also taught me a lot about creativity. There is no right way to skate, people have their own styles and one is no better than the other. There is no rule book for skateboarding, it's all about the fun and creativity."

He said skateboarding used to be the antithesis of an Olympic sport. It started in the 1960s by surfers in California, who put some roller skate wheels on wood boards and



Ciel Cypress, 11, enjoys the new Brighton skate park during the grand opening. Beverly Bidney

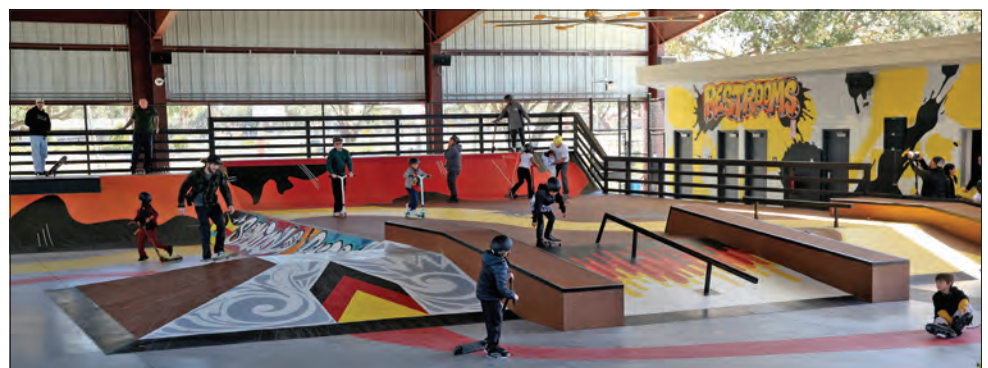
called it sidewalk surfing. In 1980, urethane wheels were invented, which changed everything. You could skate on the street and not be stopped by cracks in the concrete or a tiny pebble. Florida has a prominent place in skateboarding history. The trick the "Ollie" was invented by Alan Gelfand in Hollywood in 1978. MacDonald said every trick since then is a variation of the "Ollie."

After the ribbon cutting, MacDonald performed a risky trick. He had Councilman Howard and Huff lie on the floor, where he planned to jump over them. During the first try MacDonald held his skateboard; the second time he was on his skateboard as he easily breezed over them.

Then MacDonald, the pros from Lake Skateboard Team in Palm Beach County and the kids took to the ramps and had some fun. The pros demonstrated their skills and then helped the kids learn how to keep their balance on their skateboards while going up and down the ramps. Damon Cypress, 12, learned how to drop in to the half pipe from pro Nick Day, who patiently held his hand as he learned. By the end of the session, Damon's confidence level was a lot higher than before.

"This is an awesome place," said Ciel Cypress, 11. "The ramps are nice and it's so big so you can just chill. I'll be here every day after school."

The skate park is decorated with elaborate graffiti art on the exterior and interior walls done by Broward county artists Justin Pagan, Nargiza DaDabaeva, Zachary Koch and Jonathan Desrosiers.



An overall view of the spacious Brighton skate park on opening day. Beverly Bidney

New patchwork exhibit debuts at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

BY JIM PATRICK
Ah-Tah-Thi Ki Museum, Head of Exhibition

BIG CYPRESS — A new exhibition is now open in the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's East Gallery. "Taweeahche: Seminole Patchwork," celebrates Seminole artistry through unique Seminole patchwork garments and the designers who created them. More than 20 different artisans are featured with skirts, capes, jackets, big shirts, even patchwork flowers and other crafts. Accompanying the creations are text panels that give insight into the craft and culture.

The idea originated when Museum Director Gordon O. Wareham called a meeting challenging the Museum curatorial staff to create an exhibit worthy of the Seminole artists who produce this iconic clothing. Up for the challenge, the Museum's Collections and Exhibits Divisions, along with the Museum Assistant Director JoJo Osceola, and Museum Curator Tara Backhouse went to work dreaming up the best way our museum could honor the craft. JoJo Osceola, a skilled sewer herself, wanted to reach out to contemporary artisans to see if we could display some of their creations reflective of how they are known, recognized, and admired for creating. The response was overwhelming with virtually everyone contacted willing to contribute to the show.

Some of the obstacles were how to adequately display all of the pieces. The team went to work, de-installing, transporting, and storing the mannequins that typically populate the East Gallery, which has not had an alternative exhibition for more than 10 years. These mannequins do much more than tell some of the Seminole Story, they



A turban made by Connie Gowen is part of the exhibition. Gowen has made the turban for FSU's homecoming king for many years. Beverly Bidney



Seminole patchwork is celebrated in the "Taweeahche: Seminole Patchwork" exhibition. Beverly Bidney

are based on actual Seminoles - making them an actual part of that story. So extra care and respect go into how they are handled and stored. Lighting design and text panels were developed to engage and inform both Seminole and non-Seminole visitors.

A timeline places some common Seminole patchwork designs in historical context, and a hand-crank sewing machine is on display, restored to perfect working condition. Along with some of the more traditional clothing are unique pieces such as a ballgown "Night at the Ringling" by Jessica Osceola which was inspired by the Ringling Museum, and an extravagant evening dress by Lenora Roberts. Both young artists and elders, men and women all contributed to provide a balanced and comprehensive display of color, shapes, and beauty. Questionnaires to the artists who reside in Hollywood, Big Cypress, Immokalee, Naples, Trail, Brighton, and Tampa provided insight to enrich the stories behind the objects and the culture.

On a recent visit, contributor Melissa Demayo, stated that she could identify many of the artists before having to look at the tag identifying them. To those of us who are aware that this was part of our mission, it was music to our ears. Rande Osceola who contributed a matching men's shirt and women's skirt honoring her own Wind Clan, had a message to non-Seminoles admiring this clothing, "It's not a costume!" That message is clarified in a closing panel to explain to the visitors the importance of Seminole history and pride in this historic Seminole craft. As JoJo Osceola has stated, "Wearing our traditional Seminole clothing is a piece of home wherever you go!"

This exciting new exhibition will be on display through spring 2025. You won't want to miss this showcase at the Ah-Tah-Thi-

Ki Museum on Big Cypress Reservation, where we celebrate the art history and culture of the Seminole people through stunning visual exhibits while showcasing talented Seminole artists.



The exhibition will be on display through spring 2025. Beverly Bidney

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Sports



Memorable season for Moore Haven ends in state semifinals

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

WINTER HAVEN — A season of firsts, an abundance of achievements and a lifetime of memories for the Moore Haven High School volleyball team concluded Nov. 4 with a 3-1 loss to the Panhandle's Liberty County. Scores were 25-18, 14-25, 25-21, 25-17 in a Class Rural state semifinal at Winter Haven Health Center on the campus of Polk State College.

Moore Haven went places no Terrier volleyball team had ever gone before, including winning a district championship, a regional championship and making an appearance in the Final Four while racking up a 17-3 record that included a 15-match winning streak.

"I'm super proud of them," Moore Haven coach Mona Baker said.

Tribal members on the Terriers were Tiyanni Anderson, Preslynn Baker, Tahniah Billie, Marley Jimmie, Miley Jimmie, Kulipa Julian and Truley Osceola.

The Terriers received plenty of tribal and community support in the stands at Polk. Dozens of tribal members, including Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., were among the approximately 300 spectators. Moore Haven didn't disappoint its fans, providing plenty of highlights in the late morning match.

The Terriers shrugged off a first set loss. They won set two and were in control of the pivotal third — leading 19-14 — but errors crept into their play at crucial times as did a couple of powerful kills by Liberty, which outscored Moore Haven 11-2 to close out the set and take a 2-1 lead.

"We won the second set and I thought we were going to come back and win two more," coach Baker said.

The fourth set was tight — tied at 15-15 at one point — but Liberty's kills became the difference in the later points as did Moore Haven's nerves.

"They were super nervous; they've never been here before," Baker said.

But the Terriers expect to be back next year.

"We're going to be here next year, for sure," Anderson said. "We did the best we could. It's our first time being here. We're going to improve. I'm proud of this team and how far we got."

Moore Haven will have several strong players returning next year, but the Terriers will have to overcome the loss of three seniors, including star starters Baker and Akeelah Ling.

"They're basically our rock," said Billie. "They are such huge mentors. Everybody on the team looks up to them."

For now, Moore Haven can cherish the memories of a season like no other.

"It was so exciting, to be able to come this far. It was amazing," Billie said. "We spent the whole weekend together and came up Sunday. It's been a blast. We went swimming and we made dinner. We had a barbeque. It was a really special year. If you didn't come see a game, you missed out."



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven celebrates after winning a point against Liberty County in the Class Rural state semifinals Nov. 4 at Polk State College in Winter Haven. From left to right are Miley Jimmie, Preslynn Baker, Tiyanni Anderson, Akeelah Ling and Kulipa Julian.



Kevin Johnson

In her final volleyball game for Moore Haven, senior Preslynn Baker sets the ball with teammate Tahniah Billie nearby.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven's Tiyanni Anderson serves in the state semifinal in Winter Haven.



Kevin Johnson

The Terriers huddle on the sideline before facing Liberty County.



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Moore Haven's backrow of Truley Osceola, Kulipa Julian and Tiyanni Anderson gets ready on defense.

Kevin Johnson
The captains meeting before the start of the state semifinal included Moore Haven coach Mona Baker, Adore Thomas (2), Akeelah Ling (3) and Preslynn Baker (7).



Osceola sisters earn praise in final season together at Hollywood Hills

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — The Hollywood Hills High School volleyball team finished with an average record — 8-7 — but the contributions the team received from the Osceola sisters were anything but average.

In their final high school season playing together, Mary Sally Osceola and her older sister, Xiya, starred in just about every aspect. Coach Johanna Fernandez praised the sisters' skill, leadership and knowledge.

"Those two sisters really made the team," Fernandez said after the team's final

game, a 3-0 loss to Pembroke Pines Charter in a district semifinal Oct. 16 at Hollywood Hills High School.

With Hollywood Hills trailing two sets to none, the sisters' desire to extend their final season together for as long as possible was evident in the third set. Both produced a bevy of kills. Mary Sally, a lefty, also excelled in setting while Xiya made outstanding plays defensively, keeping hard hit balls in play.

Hollywood Hills staved off a couple match points but finally succumbed, 29-27.

The sisters previously played together at NSU University School, where they helped the team win a district championship in 2022. They spent the past two seasons at Hollywood Hills. They weren't with the team at the start of this season, but when they rejoined, they made a significant impact.



Kevin Johnson (3)

Mary Sally is a junior; Xiya is a senior. Action from the Osceola sisters final game together at Hollywood Hills on Oct. 16: clockwise from left to right, Xiya Osceola (10) keeps the ball with her sister Mary Sally (1) nearby; Mary Sally sets the ball; the sisters celebrate winning a point late in the match.



The Osceola sisters won an AAU national championship in June with their club team, High Voltage. Courtesy photo



said. "She made the team so much stronger. It was a lot of pressure on her because everyone was looking at her; if she does good the whole team does good. With all that pressure on top of her, she did wonderful. I'm very proud of Mary."

Fernandez said Mary Sally was practically an assistant coach at times. "She is a leader. There are sometimes we're in the huddle and she's being a coach to them, more than I am at some points. She's very vocal. She's amazing with the girls," Fernandez said.

Fernandez echoed those sentiments about Xiya's impact. "She is the heart of the team. Without

her, I would not have a serve/receive or anything like that," she said.

Fernandez relied on both sisters for suggestions from time to time.

"I always like to go talk to the sisters because they have so much knowledge when it comes to the girls on the court," she said.

When the season ended, the tears started. Both sisters were emotional after the game as they were met by their mom, Tasha, and grandmother, Virginia. The sisters said they knew this day — their final high school game together — would eventually come, but that didn't lessen the sting.

"It was a good season because I played most of my high school with my sister," Xiya said.



As Moore Haven improved in second half of season, so did Greg James, Thaddeus Johns

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — As the season wore on, the Moore Haven High School football team improved, and so did its two players from the Seminole Tribe.

Terriers coach Emmanuel Hendrix praised the improvements made by tribal member Greg James and descendant Thaddeus Johns.

"Greg has been having a really good season on offense and defense," Hendrix said Nov. 7 before the team's final regular season game against Fort Meade. "He's been a major contributor on the offensive line. He's been a big part of this turnaround. He's been playing a lot better on offensive line than he did at the beginning of year. At beginning of the year, he was playing good on defensive line, but not offensive line."

James' improvement on the OL coincided with the team's surge in the second half of the season.

"He's stepped his game up on the offensive line, so we've been able to run the ball more effectively," Hendrix said.

Moore Haven won its final three regular season games, and the Terriers needed all three of those wins to qualify for the Rural Class playoffs as the 15th seed out of 16 teams.

At 6-foot-3, 270-pounds, James has a big presence on the field, especially for a sophomore. He played on both the offensive and defensive lines, although he received sideline breaks on defense.

"Sometimes we've been playing him too much on defense and it's hurt his offense," Hendrix said.

James said he felt he improved on both sides of the ball.

"I got a little better on offense, my run blocking and especially my pass blocking. Just being more patient in the pocket," he said.

With aspirations to play major college football, James said he will be more focused on hitting the weight room in the offseason than he was last year.

"I didn't lift as much weights as I should I have. I feel like that affected me. I feel like I could have had a better season," he said.

James' focus in the winter will be on the basketball court, where he and Johns are teammates on the Terriers. James is a forward; Johns is a guard.

Johns' first football season this year started with plenty of watching from the sidelines, but by the end of the year he earned



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven sophomore lineman Greg James (52) battles a Fort Meade player Nov. 7.

a spot in the wide receiver rotation.

"Thaddeus has come on lately. He's getting a lot more playing time. He had two or three catches the last game. We trust him a lot more than we had been trusting. I'm ecstatic about the improvement I've seen since the beginning of the year to right now," Hendrix said.

Johns, 5-foot-9, 150-pound junior, said he enjoyed his rookie season.

"I'm liking it. I'm learning a lot from all these [players] teaching me and all the good coaching we got," he said.

Moore Haven had a lengthy trip for its playoff game, a 340-mile jaunt north to No. 2 seed Madison County High School, which is close to the Georgia border. The Terriers fell, 51-13. James did not make the trip due to illness. Moore Haven finished with a 5-5 record.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven wide receiver Thaddeus Johns (82) lines up against Fort Meade.



Beverly Bidney

The Moore Haven High School girls basketball team gets ready to face Dunbar in a preseason game Nov. 14 in Fort Myers.

Strong start for Moore Haven girls as basketball season begins

STAFF REPORT

The Moore Haven High School girls basketball team, which features several Seminoles, picked up momentum in the preseason and hasn't relinquished it.

In the preseason, Moore Haven notched lopsided wins against Okeechobee and Dunbar. The Terriers continued their strong play in the regular season with wins against Glades Central (56-8) and South Fork (59-43) before suffering their first loss to Lake Wales (74-30).

Seminoles on the roster are seniors Preslynn Baker and Willo James, juniors

Tahniah Billie and Truley Osceola, sophomores Charisma Micco and Carley Osceola, and seventh grader Margaria Fudge.

Baker is among the Terriers off to a fast start. She poured in 23 points in the win against Okeechobee. She opened the regular season with 15 points against Glades Central, and pulled down 16 rebounds to go along with seven points against South Fork. Through three games, she had already grabbed a team high 34 boards.

The team will have a busy schedule in December before the holiday break. The Terriers have nine games in 16 days from Dec. 3 to Dec. 19.



Beverly Bidney

A Dunbar player is triple-teamed by, from left to right, Preslynn Baker, Tahniah Billie and Carley Osceola.



Beverly Bidney

Carley Osceola drives the lane for a fastbreak layup.



Kevin Johnson

American Heritage cornerback Greg "Zae" Thomas breaks up a key fourth down pass in the Patriots' 35-14 win against Norland in a Class 4A regional final Nov. 29 in Plantation.



Kevin Johnson

Greg "Zae" Thomas (2) had two fumble recoveries for American Heritage's defense, including this one in the fourth quarter.

'Zae' Thomas stars in American Heritage playoff win

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

PLANTATION — The Seminole Tribe of Florida's Greg "Zae" Thomas had two fumble recoveries and made a crucial fourth-down stop to help American Heritage-Plantation defeat Norland-Miami, 35-14, in a Class 4A regional final Nov. 29 in Plantation.

Heritage will host St. Augustine in a

state semifinal Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m. The winner will advance to the state championship against Jones-Orlando or Naples at Florida International University in Miami.

Both fumble recoveries by Thomas — a 6-foot-3 cornerback who has committed to Florida State — led to Heritage touchdowns. The first grab came near midfield in the second quarter when he pounced on a loose ball with the game knotted at 7-7. Minutes later Heritage wide receiver Jamar Denson caught a touchdown pass from Malachi Toney.

With Heritage up 21-14 late in the third quarter, Thomas broke up a fourth-down pass near the Norland sideline at the Heritage 36-yard line. Less than two minutes later, Heritage padded its lead on a Toney to Brandon Bennett bomb.

Norland's next offensive series was short-lived as Thomas stripped the ball from a receiver near midfield with 10:42 left in the fourth quarter.

Once again, Heritage's offense used momentum from a big play by Thomas and scored, this time on a one-yard plunge by Byron

Louis that gave Heritage a 35-14 cushion.

In addition to the fumble recoveries, Thomas finished with six tackles, including two solos.

"He's starting to peak at the right time," said Heritage coach Mike Smith.

Toney was the offensive star of the game. He is normally a wide receiver, but he subbed for injured starting quarterback Dia Bell. Toney threw for 122 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for 103 yards and one highlight-reel touchdown.

Heritage played a demanding regular season schedule filled with powerhouses. Smith pointed to comeback wins against St. Thomas in the regular season and Dillard in the regional semifinals as proof that facing a tough schedule is paying off.

"These kids are battle tested. From the St. Thomas game on, they've learned how to win," he said.

The wins didn't come as often as Heritage would have liked in the regular season as the team dropped four games, but two of them turned into forfeit wins because of opponents' use of illegal players. Still, a forfeit win off the field doesn't carry the same gratification as a win on the field. The team also has had to regroup after losing the injured Bell, a University of Texas-commit.

"We've been through a lot of adversity, but we've fought through," Thomas said.



Kevin Johnson

After recovering a fumble, Greg "Zae" Thomas (2) celebrates with teammates.



Kevin Johnson

Greg "Zae" Thomas and American Heritage celebrate after their playoff win against Norland.

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PECS basketball teams start season with wins

STAFF REPORT

LABELLE – With new coaches making their debuts, the Pemaitev Emahakv Charter School girls and boys basketball teams opened their seasons with wins at LaBelle Middle School on Nov. 19, 2024.

Adryauna Baker (girls) and Kamani Smith (boys) are both former PECS players who are in their first year as head coaches.

2024-25 PECS girls basketball

Head coach: Adryauna Baker

- Dalyse Baker
- Tawnee Baker
- Jaiden Fludd
- Elainna Fonseca
- Neveah Gopher
- Kalayah Hodge
- Jalaaya Hunsinger
- Kanae Jumper
- Ameliana Osceola
- Layla Osceola
- Caysie Platt
- Jessica PonceDeLeon
- Ciani Smith
- Jalene Smith
- Zoie Snow
- Miranda Tommie
- Azariah Washington

2024-25 PECS boys basketball

Head coach: Kamani Smith

- Damahni Bonilla
- Josiah Gopher
- Augustine Jumper
- Tate Matthews
- Derrick McQueen
- Makai Newkirk
- Kowi Osceola
- Milo Osceola
- Storm Osceola
- Jeremy Smith
- Silas Snow
- Zaden Spencer
- Cody Tommie



Coach Adryauna Baker and her PECS girls team show support for their players on the floor during the team's win at LaBelle Middle School on Nov. 19.

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney

Jalene Smith drives hard to the basket.



Beverly Bidney

PECS boys coach Kamani Smith gets his players ready to face LaBelle.



Beverly Bidney

Derrick McQueen dribbles toward the basket against LaBelle.



Beverly Bidney

Milo Osceola takes a short jump shot.



Beverly Bidney (2)

At left, Silas Snow makes a layup in the boys game; at right, Jaiden Fludd plays tough defense in the girls game.



Beverly Bidney

The PECS girls team gathers for a photo on opening night in LaBelle.



Beverly Bidney

Dalyse Baker eyes two points.

Kashlynn Cooper helps Heritage Hall volleyball to successful season

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Tribe of Florida's Kashlynn Cooper helped the Heritage Hall volleyball team in Oklahoma produce a vastly improved season in 2024.

In the previous two seasons, Heritage Hall had a combined record of 10-40-1, but this season proved to be a different story. Heritage Hall finished with a 17-11 record – its best record in the last 10 years – and advanced all the way to the Class 3A state semifinals.

Cooper, a 5-foot-9 middle blocker, delivered seven aces in a regional championship win against Wesleyan on Oct. 10.

Heritage Hall won a state quarterfinal against Southwest Covenant before losing, 3-1, to Christian Heritage in the semifinals. Christian Heritage went on to win the state championship.

Cooper is also a standout guard on Heritage Hall's girls basketball team, whose season starts in December.



Kashlynn Cooper
Heritage Hall

'Fresh' Walters, Iowa Western to play in semifinals

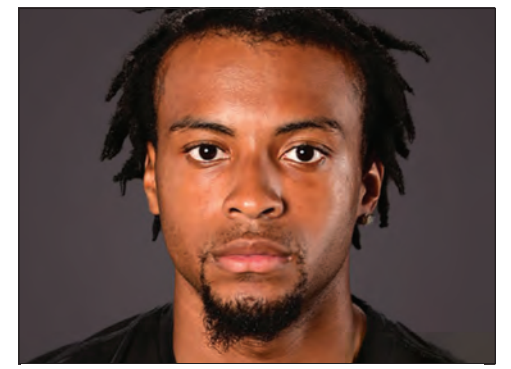
STAFF REPORT

With a 10-1 record, the Iowa Western Community College football team, which includes Seminole descendent Roger "Fresh" Walters, has reached the National Junior College Athletic Association's semifinals in Division 1.

Western, the No. 1 ranked team in NJCAA, will host Northwest Mississippi Community College (10-1) on Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. in a game that will be televised on ESPN+.

Walters, a wide receiver, has been a big reason for Western's success. He's played in all 11 games and racked up 745 receiving yards on 64 catches, including seven touchdowns.

He's also had a big season on special



Roger 'Fresh' Walters
Iowa Western

teams, where he leads the team by miles in return yards. He has 393 return yards; the next closest teammate has 34 yards. Walters' longest return is 75 yards.

FSU wins Seminole Heritage games

STAFF REPORT

The Florida State University football and men's and women's basketball teams notched victories in their Seminole Heritage games in November.

The football team defeated Charleston Southern, 41-7, on Nov. 23. Coaches and other staff wore turquoise jerseys on the sidelines.

The men's basketball team wore turquoise uniforms in its 79-61 win against Hofstra on Nov. 19.

The women's team wore turquoise in warm-ups before routing Samford, 101-68, on Nov. 14.

In October, the women's soccer team also produced a lopsided win its Seminole Heritage game, a 7-1 victory against Pitt.

FSU promotes games in which its teams wear turquoise as a way to honor its long-standing relationship with the Seminole Tribe.



FSU Athletics

FSU's Jamir Watkins wears turquoise in the team's Seminole Heritage game Nov. 19. FSU will be in Sunrise on Dec. 14 to face Tulane in the Orange Bowl Classic at Amerant Bank Arena. Tip is 4:30 p.m.

Female racing series to be part of Grand Prix week

STAFF REPORT

MIAMI GARDENS – The all-female racing series F1 Academy will return to the Miami International Autodrome on the campus of Hard Rock Stadium in 2025 during the Formula 1 Miami Grand Prix week.

Established in 2023, F1 Academy aims to bridge the barriers to entry for young women in motorsport by offering opportunities for drivers aged 16 to 25. The drivers receive support in all aspects of competition, from technical training to physical and mental preparation.

The Formula 1 Grand Prix race will be the fourth race to be held in Miami Gardens on a 3.36-mile track within the complex of Hard Rock Stadium.

Tickets for the Grand Prix week are on sale. For more information go to f1miami.gp.com.

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PECS students showcase athleticism in track meet

STAFF REPORT

BRIGHTON — Students from Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School laced up their sneakers and competed in the school's track meet Oct. 30 on the Brighton softball field.

Students from kindergarten through eighth grade participated in foot races, relay races, the broad jump and a softball throw

and had a good time doing it. Races included the 100 meter, 200 meter, 400 meter and one mile as well as a 4x100 relay.

"We have held track meets since the school opened," said physical education teacher Pam Matthews. "They all look forward to it."

Several PECS runners will be competing in the county championship Dec. 13 at Okeechobee High School.



Beverly Bidney

A group of 9-10 year old girls compete in the 400-meter race during the PECS track meet Oct. 30.



Beverly Bidney

Isaac Osceola, left, and Asiah Fludd give it their all as they sprint to the finish line in the 100-meter race.



Calvin Tiger

Cordey Jumper, left, and Silas Snow compete in the one-mile race.



Beverly Bidney

It's an all-out sprint to the finish line in this girls race.

Pro bull riding team returns to Sunrise in 2025

FROM PRESS RELEASE

SUNRISE — The Florida Freedom's annual PBR Camping World Team Series homestand, known as PBR Freedom Days, will return to Amerant Bank Arena in Sunrise for a fourth season Aug. 8-10, 2025.

Tickets go on sale Dec. 3 at SeatGeek.com and PBR.com, at the Amerant Bank Arena Box Office, or by calling PBR

customer service at (800) 732-1727.

The Freedom are Florida's only professional bull riding team, competing in a league which transforms bull riding from an individual to team-formatted competition. The Freedom were one of eight founding teams and relocated to South Florida prior to the 2024 season when the league expanded to 10 teams.

All-Native football game to showcase class of 2025

STAFF REPORT

Native American high school football players will get a chance to showcase their talent in the practice home of the Dallas Cowboys.

Seventy Native American athletes in the class of 2025 from throughout Indian Country and beyond will be selected to participate in the Native American All-Star Football Game on Jan. 7, 2025, at The Star in Frisco, Texas. The game is organized by the Native American Athletic Foundation (NAAF) in partnership with the National Football League and Nike.

The five-day event will feature the game and a camp that runs Jan. 3 to Jan. 7, 2025, which will include coaching, college preparation, leadership training, life skills and other training.

"We are excited and honored to work with the NFL to make an impact in the lives of Native athletes," Michael Stopp, executive director, NAAF, said in the release. "Our organization was established to use sports to develop the next generation of leaders in Indian Country. This partnership and this year's game take an important step forward in meeting our mission."

"Through this partnership, we aim to create a lasting impact by giving Native athletes the same opportunities to succeed both on and off the field. This also reflects the NFL's commitment to building character, promoting inclusivity and strengthening communities across the country," Roman Oben, NFL vice president of football development, said in the release.

Nike will provide uniforms. For more information go to nativeamericanathleticfoundation.org/.

Chalo Nitka Festival to be held Feb. 22 to March 1

MOORE HAVEN — The Chalo Nitka Festival will be held Feb. 22, 2025, to March 1, 2025. The festival kicks off Feb. 22 with a bass fishing tournament. The festival's main day is March 1, which is scheduled to feature

a 5K race, pancake breakfast, parade, live entertainment from the Seminole Tribe of Florida, ranch rodeo, rides and dancing. For more information visit chalonitkafestival.com/events/.

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