



The Seminole Tribune

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'Seminole Wind' artist to receive high honor

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Singer-songwriter John Anderson, whose hit single "Seminole Wind" is still played at Seminole Tribe of Florida events more than 30 years after its release, will be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in October.



Courtesy CMA
John Anderson

The induction ceremony will honor Anderson, guitarist James Burton, and the late singer-songwriter Toby Keith, who died in February. The ceremony will be held in Nashville, Tennessee, at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in the CMA Theater.

Kyle Young, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum chief executive officer,

said on the day of the induction announcement in March that Anderson "...helped steer country music back to its traditions with his bold honky-tonk style."

Anderson, 69, will be inducted in the veterans era artists category, which is for artists who came to national prominence before 1979.

◆ See ANDERSON on page 3A



Beverly Bidney

Surrounded by other Miss Indian World contestants, Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie, center, takes part in the Gathering of Nations Grand Entry in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Thomlynn Billie competes in Miss Indian World

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Thousands of dancers, drummers and spectators congregated at the 41st annual

Gathering of Nations from April 25-27 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to celebrate Native culture and heritage. About 3,000 traditional Native American dancers, singers and drummers competed for prizes in a variety of categories as tens of thousands of

spectators watched during the three days of activities.

The event began with the traditional talent presentation in the Miss Indian World contest. Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie, from the Big Cypress Reservation,

was one of the 25 contestants vying for the title.

◆ See BILLIE on page 4A

Greg 'Zae' Thomas earns abundance of college offers

Clemson, FSU, Miami among 31 teams pursuing Heritage standout

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

PLANTATION — What a difference a year has made for the Seminole Tribe's Greg "Zae" Thomas.

After the 6-foot-3, 187-pound cornerback finished practice with his American Heritage School football team in Plantation on May 21, Thomas reflected on where he was in mid-May 2023.

His grueling training regimen during that summer included multiple workouts each day, focusing on lifting and running.

"I did that every day of the summer. I put my head down and focused. I kept telling myself it's going to pay off," said Thomas, who is heading into his senior year.

Indeed, his hard work has paid off in a big way. After having no scholarship offers from colleges a year ago, Thomas now has several big-time college programs seeking his services, making him by far the most highly recruited student-athlete in the history of the tribe.

"It's a blessing just to be in the position I'm in. I have 31 (offers). I thank God every day because this time last year I had none,"



Mayli Tommie

Greg 'Zae' Thomas (No. 2) covers a teammate during an American Heritage practice May 21 in Plantation.

Greg 'Zae' Thomas college offers

- Bowling Green
- Clemson
- Colorado
- Duke
- Florida Atlantic
- Florida International
- Florida State
- Georgia Tech
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kentucky
- LSU
- Liberty
- Louisville
- Miami
- Michigan State
- Mississippi State
- Missouri
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Penn State
- Pittsburgh
- Purdue
- Tennessee
- Texas A&M
- Tulane
- UCF
- West Virginia
- Western Kentucky
- Wisconsin



Kevin Johnson

Greg 'Zae' Thomas

Thomas blossomed last season into a 4-star recruit as he helped Heritage post a 10-2 record. He missed the team's final game — a 17-14 loss to Tampa's Berkeley Prep in the Class 2M semifinals — due to an ankle ligament injury. He said he has completely healed.

Thomas doesn't live on the Hollywood Reservation, however, he does work out in the reservation's weight room at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center.

When asked what advice he would give to younger tribal members who aspire to get noticed by colleges, Thomas suggested following the path that he did.

"You just got to put your head down and block out all the distractions," said Thomas, who is the son of tribal members Greg Thomas and Alice Osceola. "It's going to be boring and seem lame and you're not going to do a lot of things other people do, but hard work pays off. It's a cliché, but it's true."

Thomas said it's a possibility that he commits during an official visit, but added that his timeline would likely be to make a decision toward the end of the summer.

Thomas's final season with American Heritage will kick off Aug. 23 when the Patriots host 2023 Georgia state champion Milton, which is led by quarterback and Miami-commit Luke Nickel.

Thanks to an outstanding performance at a combine in March, Thomas's season will extend beyond the Patriots' schedule. At the combine, he was selected to play in the U.S. Army Bowl on Dec. 21 at the Ford Center at the Star in Frisco, Texas. The 12,000-seat stadium is the practice home of the Dallas Cowboys. The game will feature some of the nation's top seniors.

"I performed really well," Thomas said about the combine that was held in Orlando. "They invited me to the game in December. I think that's great. It will be a good experience."

he said.

Offers poured in from all the major conferences, including the ACC and SEC. He said the schools pursuing him the most are Clemson, Miami, Florida State, Missouri, Iowa and Tennessee. He has also received offers from the likes of other powerhouses such as LSU, Oklahoma and Penn State.

Thomas has official school visits lined up with Clemson (May 31-June 2) and Florida State (June 21-23). He said he might have an official visit to one more school in June.

Courtesy photo

In March, Greg 'Zae' Thomas, left, was selected to play in the U.S. Army Bowl that will be held in Texas on Dec. 21.



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Visit the Tribune's website (seminoletribune.org) and Instagram (@seminoletribune) for news throughout the month

Editorial

Walking toward food justice: A call to action for Indigenous communities

• Jackie Blackbird

Amid staggering food-price inflation and the rollback of pandemic benefits, access to nutritious and affordable food continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing Native American communities across the United States.

I grew up in the Fort Belknap Indian Community in Montana. At that time, it was a food desert located 76 miles from the nearest affordable grocery store. We lived in poverty, like many families in the community, and my parents worked hard to put food on the table. We didn't have access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Unfortunately, the absence of fresh produce and other nutritious food options has had lasting, generational consequences on my community and on me. Like many Native people — nearly 15% according to the Centers for Disease Control — I was diagnosed with diabetes.

This lived experience fuels my passion for food-justice advocacy that I bring to my new role at Newman's Own Foundation as the organization's first Indigenous Communities Officer. Despite our rich cultural heritage and deep connection to the land and food for healing, too many of our families face barriers to access, and too many of our reservations are food deserts.

Addressing the Roots of Food Insecurity

According to the nonprofit Feeding America, approximately 1 in 5 Native Americans are food insecure. Geographic isolation, strained economic opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure are driving factors. Food insecurity is the issue, and it's rooted in historical injustices and systemic barriers due to intentional policies severing Indigenous peoples from their ancestral ways of eating and reliance on the land. This contributes to cycles of poverty and perpetuates health disparities. People fail to recognize the urgency of this problem.

No child should have to worry about where their next meal will come from, or if their food will provide the nutrients needed to thrive.

Food is so much more than nutrition; it is spiritually connected with our bodies and even our memories. The lack of access to healthy, culturally relevant foods has had a profound impact on the physical and mental well-being of our communities.

I carry with me the cherished memories of my grandmother's cooking. Her mac and cheese blended large chunks of government cheese, noodles, and milk into a creamy baked perfection. Little did I know that this meal would be a formative lesson in how commodity food programs issued cheap, highly processed foods on our reservations, ultimately contributing to our communities facing physical health problems like diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension.

Newman's Own Foundation is prioritizing Indigenous Food Justice in its philanthropic efforts. I am part of that commitment to bring more grant dollars and funding than ever to tribes and Native-led organizations to address food access and agricultural solutions. The Foundation draws inspiration from its founder, the legendary film star and race car driver Paul Newman. Since the 1990s, Newman's Own Foundation has invested resources in Native communities, and we want to deepen that commitment.

In many ways, the path forward involves a return to our Indigenous roots. This year, Newman's Own Foundation launched a \$1 million Food Justice For Kids Prize to bring awareness and funding to tribes, nonprofits,

and schools, creating impact across Indigenous Food Justice and Nutrition Education and School Food. In 2023, the Foundation provided over \$1.5 million in grants to more than 30 organizations supporting Native people and advancing nutrition efforts.

Return to Indigenous Cuisine and Food Practices

Newman's Own Foundation grantee partners are making cultural shifts happen as they reimagine and revitalize Indigenous cuisine and return to Native food practices.

James Beard-award-winning chef and restaurateur Sean Sherman continues to make headlines with delicious meals that cut out colonized ingredients like beef, pork, chicken, dairy, wheat flour, and sugar. His nonprofit North American Traditional Food Systems (NATIFS) brings meals to Indigenous schools and families and has been a Newman's Own Foundation grantee partner since 2021. The organization does so much to support Indigenous food pathways, access, and infrastructure, especially with the Center for Indigenous Education.

Regenerative Agriculture and Farming

Food sourcing is a core focus area for many of our grantee partners. I'm most optimistic about the transformative power of regenerative farming and agriculture in addressing the root causes of food insecurity, while also promoting holistic well-being among Indigenous peoples. For more than 40 years, First Nations Development Institute has been uplifting, funding, and supporting Native communities. The Institute is committed to helping Native people reclaim control over their food systems through advocacy, regenerative farming practices, and cultural preservation.

In Arizona, Nalwood Denzhone Community works with Native youth on education programs, food production, and summer camps, all centered around food security and nurturing tribal and non-tribal partnerships. In South Dakota, Makoce Agriculture System is developing the needed infrastructure and resources to create local agriculture and a local food hub for the betterment of the environment and community. These are just a few examples in action across the country, and where there's alignment, there's the potential for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Our communities often don't have access to nourishing food, and that has devastating health consequences every day. Addressing food justice in Native communities is an urgent priority, and we need to support innovative solutions like regenerative agriculture and Indigenous food systems to improve access now.

As a member of the Aaniiih tribe, my name is Itha-Gibi-That, or Walking Woman. I'm committed to walking in my purpose and hope to help build a more connected network for our grantees to learn, develop, and grow. I already see so many synergies and throughlines with their work. I see their progress. To make change happen, we need to tap into the strength and wisdom of each other and unite Indigenous communities to forge food systems that honor our well-being and preserve our cultural legacy.

Jackie Blackbird is first-ever Indigenous Communities Officer of the Newman's Own Foundation, where she is committed to broadening and deepening the Foundation's commitment to Indigenous Food Justice. Blackbird is a member of the Aaniiih tribe of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana.

This opinion appeared in Nativenewsonline.net.

AISES to hold national conference in Texas

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The AISES National Conference will be held from Oct. 3 to Oct. 5 in San Antonio, Texas.

The conference has been held annually since 1978 and is an opportunity to connect companies with over 2,500 Indigenous high school juniors and seniors, college and graduate students, educators, workforce professionals and AISES's corporate, government, private foundation, nonprofit, and tribal partners for professional development, networking opportunities, research presentations, workshops, awards, and traditional Indigenous cultural events.

The conference hosts the largest college and career fair in Indian Country with many

companies also hosting hiring events by conducting onsite interviews. Job seekers are provided interview coaching, and resume development, as well as career planning and other skills necessary to be successful in today's job market.

For students considering college or graduate school, resources are provided to assist in financial planning, applying to college or graduate school, as well as information on the many STEM majors and careers available.

AISES is a national, nonprofit organization focused on substantially increasing the representation of Native peoples in STEM studies and careers.

For more information about the conference visit: conference.aises.org.

Public Works showcases services to tribal community

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — To celebrate National Public Works Week, the Seminole Tribe's Public Works Department invited people to come to its Brighton water treatment plant May 20 and learn about what the tribe does to provide clean water.

"Water is life and we sustain it to keep the community alive," said Public Works Director Emran Rahaman. "This is a great opportunity to showcase our services to the public. We make sure we have continuous drinking water and sanitation."

To educate the public, 40 vendors from around the state set up booths with information about their roles in water treatment and other functions of public works. Vendors came from Orlando, Miami, Ocala, West Palm Beach, Port St. Lucie, Sarasota and other locations.

The event, sponsored by the Tribal Community Development Department, attracted Pemaquety Emahavk Charter School sixth graders.

"This is about educating our kids in the tribe so they understand what we do and that we are responsible for our water," said Brighton Councilman Larry Howard. "From tech to taste, this is an opportunity to get kids to learn about it."

Howard remembers when the site of the water treatment plant was just a field. Now, he is proud that every reservation has its own water plant.

"John Wayne Huff worked here from day one for more than 20 years, this was his vision," Councilman Howard said. "He was instrumental in getting this started and passionate about it. I feel his presence here."

The event also drew other tribal members and employees from various reservations to learn about public works.

"National Public Works Week is a big celebration throughout the country," Rahaman said. "The key service we provide is public health."

In addition to providing clean water, the department is responsible for disposing of it once it has been used. Brighton is building a new wastewater facility to dispose of that water through deep injection wells and percolating ponds.

The department has about 100 employees tribalwide and its facilities operate 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. In addition to water treatment, the department also maintains all the roads on the reservations and is responsible for solid waste, or trash, pickup. The trash goes to transfer stations where it is then sent to landfills.

"Solid waste is one of the most dangerous occupations in the country," Rahaman said. "We put a lot of emphasis on training."

According to a study by the Florida Center for Solid and Hazardous Waste



Brighton Public Works transfer station operator Alonzo Aiken explains to PECS students how the Public Works Department disposes of batteries safely May 20.



PECS sixth grader Silas Snow learns how hard it can be to tighten a repair band around a leaking pipe.

Management and the University of Miami, the mortality rate is 100 times higher than what is considered acceptable risk by any standard. Garbage collectors average 90 deaths annually per 100,000 workers. The



From left to right, Human Resources Department employees Ana Garces, Valerie West and Laurrel Battiste learn about the Brighton water treatment plant during the National Public Works Week celebration at the facility May 20.



Tribal Community Development executive director Derek Koger welcomes the community and PECS students to the Public Works Department as Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and others applaud.

deaths can be attributed to vehicles hitting workers.

Some of the solid waste personnel training was on display during a friendly competition between employees tribalwide. A grappler truck typically picks up trash, bulk items, vegetative debris and hurricane debris.

On this day, the huge claw of the grappler truck had to delicately lift a five-gallon bucket filled with water and rubber ducky toys, put it in the truck, lift it out and place it ever-so-carefully on the pavement. Each operator had to complete the task with minimal loss of water or ducky. The contest showcased their skills, while honing their even further.

The water treatment plant and some of the vendors featured interactive displays and activities for the students and other attendees to experience. At one booth, they learned about how to properly recycle batteries, another service provided by the Public Works Department. Brighton transfer station operator Alonzo Aiken explained the process.

Tribal members may bring used batteries to any tribal department, which sends them to Public Works. The batteries are then packed up in special boxes that can hold 50 pounds of batteries and are shipped to one of only 12 battery recycling centers in the country.

At a vendor's table, PECS students checked acidity levels in various beverages including water, soda, milk, coffee, orange juice. At another, they saw various ways to filter water and the results of using each component.

"We have been doing this program with PECS for about 10 years," said Tribal Community Development executive director Derek Koger. "We bring them here to show them what we do."

Student Beni Girtman found it interesting while sixth grade teacher Angie Snyder was glad the students were seeing everything on display at the vendor tables.

"We want them to get the idea of how water works," Snyder said. "Maybe someday they will want to work here."

Some of the sixth graders tested their strength as they tried to tighten or loosen a repair band around a leaky pipe. The 8-inch pipe was comfortably located under a tent in the shade and secured on a pedestal so they could easily manipulate the tool to fix the leak; repairs in the field encounter much different conditions.

◆ See PUBLIC WORKS on page 5A

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Beverly Bidney

Community



Prayer walk held in BC to commemorate Memorial Day

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The annual Memorial Day Remembrance & Prayer Walk was held May 23 at the Big Cypress Veterans Memorial Fitness Trail on the Big Cypress Reservation. Veterans from the Seminole Tribe of Florida and staff were joined by other residents and staff from the tribal community for a walk and prayers at the fitness trail.

Staff from the Integrative Health Department, Seminole Fire Rescue and Seminole Police were among those who participated. The event was organized by Integrative Health to honor and commemorate the sacrifices made by all veterans in the name of freedom.

After the walk concluded, veterans spoke about remembering those who have served in the Armed Forces. They also spoke about their experiences while serving in the military. The tribe's Mitchell Cypress, Paul Bowers Sr. and Sallie Josh, and Recreation employee Marcus Thompson were among the veterans who spoke.

"All these people that we know, that have gone, you know so we appreciate their efforts and everything else that they did for the military and everything else. I appreciate myself, I'm still here. I enjoy talking to different people, different veterans and all the veterans and heroes you can see at Arlington Cemetery with all the crosses all over the field," Bowers said.

In addition to the speakers, other veterans who participated in the event included Curtis Motlow, Paul Downing and Erik Hartl. Ruby Osceola, a Gold Star mother, was also honored.



The Memorial Day Remembrance & Prayer Walk drew about 30 people to the Big Cypress Veterans Memorial Fitness Trial.

Calvin Tiger



Calvin Tiger

Big Cypress Health educator Jamie Diersing, right, and Pastor Salaw Hummingbird, center, start the prayer walk at the Big Cypress Veterans Memorial Fitness Trail.



Calvin Tiger

Pastor Salaw Hummingbird, right, says a prayer to honor those who have served and given the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom.



Calvin Tiger

Standing behind Gold Star Mother Ruby Osceola are, from left to right, veterans Paul Bowers Sr., Sallie Josh, Curtis Motlow, Mitchell Cypress, Paul Downing and Erik Hartl.

♦ ANDERSON From page 1A

During the announcement, Anderson said being inducted is "probably the greatest honor I could ever receive." He mentioned Hall of Famers Merle Haggard, George Jones and Loretta Lynn.

"Just the fact that I get a chance to be amongst this kind of greatness, words can't really explain for me how important it is," he said.

"Seminole Wind" was released

in 1992 and reached No. 2 on the U.S. Billboard Hot Country Singles & Tracks chart. The breezy tune pays homage to the Everglades and the "land of the Seminole" with somber references to outside greed and development that impacted the region, and "now the glades are going dry."

The end of the third verse is: "And the last time I walked in the swamp,

I sat upon a Cypress stump, I listened close and I heard the ghost,

Of Osceola cry."

Anderson grew up in Apopka, about 25 miles northwest of Orlando. He and his family have lived in Tennessee for decades. He's had five No. 1 Billboard hits and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1982 for Best Male Country Vocal Performance. His resume includes awards from the Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music.

The day in October for the induction ceremony had not been announced as of press time.

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◆ **BILLIE**
From page 1A

Billie's presentation was about the history and meaning of Seminole patchwork, from old-style to modern clothing. She proudly showed off the old-style clothing she wore and explained the other items she made, including a patchwork tote bag, bonnet, baby blanket, pillow and flowers made from patchwork and craft wire.

"I'm glad I did well, even though one of the props fell," Billie said. "I recovered and made the crowd laugh. My mom said a lot of people at the pow wow came over and told her they enjoyed my presentation and that I was their favorite."

"I'm just so happy for her," said her mother, Jane Billie. "I worked with her on her patchwork presentation. She seems like a good contender."

Other contests for the title included two public speaking events and a dance competition. During the public speaking contests, contestants pulled a question from a bag and had to answer with no rehearsal. The five questions in the bag for the first one were: what type of traditional home did your tribe build; what food, beverage or plant from your reservation is significant and why; what is the significance of your traditional clothing; what is your tribe known for; and who has had a significant influence in your tribe.

Billie drew the question about traditional clothing. She talked about the history and meaning of patchwork and said it was a way to show Seminole culture.

After the final Grand Entry on April 27, Kassie John, of the Navajo Nation (Diné) and Rock Point, Arizona, was named Miss Indian World 2024-25.

"I was happy for Kassie," Billie said. "She was who I had in mind could win and I'm glad she did. [Miss Indian World] was such a great experience. I liked all the girls. They were all so knowledgeable of their own culture and so smart. It was a good group of girls representing their nations and tribes."

It was the first time Billie, and many of the other contestants, had such a large group of women their own age to talk to. They plan to stay in touch.

"We bonded and got each other's contact and social media information," Billie said. "We really appreciated each other."

Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahniah Billie also participated in the pow wow during the Miss Indian World crowning event. She spent the time at the pow wow with other royalty from around Indian Country. They were all part of the ceremony.

"It was an exciting moment," said Tahniah Billie, who is Thomlynn Billie's niece. "I was happy and proud of Thomlynn that she's come this far in her journey. I know Miss Indian World will honor Indian Country well."

The pow wow and its competitive dancing and drumming began April 26 with a Grand Entry, during which all of the regalia wearing dancers filled the floor of the New Mexico EXPO/Tingley Coliseum in a celebration of colors and feathers as they slowly circled the floor in an ever-tightening spiral. The floor was so crowded it became difficult to dance, so participants mostly just bobbed to the beat of the drums, the heartbeat of the pow wow.

Among the thousands who attended Gathering of Nations were 36 Seminole seniors from Big Cypress, Brighton, Hollywood and Trail.

Claudia Doctor, Betty King and Mary Tigertail were part of the group and said they were impressed with the Grand Entry. They also said they loved shopping at the Indian Traders Market, which featured more than 800 Native artists, crafters and traders.

"I've been here twice and it's an exciting thing to see all these Indians," King said.

Agnes Motlow, Loretta Micco and Louise Osceola also did some shopping at the Indian Traders Market.

"I love meeting new people and seeing the differences in the reservations," Motlow said. "Everyone here is in a really good mood."

President Holly Tiger, who has attended Gathering of Nations "countless" times, hosted a dinner for nearly 100 people, including seniors and tribal members who were in Albuquerque for a non-resident meeting.

"I love the atmosphere of fellowship, camaraderie with the other Natives and enjoying each other's company," Tiger said. "The highlight was the dinner and the opportunity to bring tribal members together, which is always a good thing."

After the pow wow and Miss Indian World, Miss Florida Seminole reflected on her experience and had some advice for other young Seminole women who are considering competing in a pageant.

"Judges aren't looking for a specific person, so you just need to be yourself and speak from your heart," Billie said. "Just applying and showing up shows that our people are proud of us for taking that step. I kept telling myself that I believe in myself. The pageant was a whole lot of fun. Everyone has been so kind. It was the highlight of the year for me."



Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie waves to the crowd as she takes the stage for the Miss Indian World talent competition April 25.

Beverly Bidney



Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahniah Billie participates in the Miss Indian World crowning ceremony. Royalty from other Native American tribes also participated in the Gathering of Nations.

Beverly Bidney



Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie competes in the public speaking event during the Miss Indian World competition April 26.

Beverly Bidney



Newly crowned Miss Indian World Kassie John beams as she revels in the first moments of her new role.

Beverly Bidney



The Seminole Tribe is represented by Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Tahniah Billie, left, and Miss Florida Seminole Thomlynn Billie.

Beverly Bidney



Dancers of all ages participate in the Gathering of Nations Grand Entry April 26 in Albuquerque.

Beverly Bidney (3)

Smithsonian Folklife Festival to highlight Indigenous Peoples' traditions

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — The Smithsonian Folklife Festival will celebrate the National Museum of the American Indian and the people whose voices the museum amplifies. The program "Indigenous Voices of the Americas: Celebrating the National Museum of the American Indian" will highlight

living traditions of Indigenous peoples and honor contemporary and traditional creative expressions, celebrations and community connections.

The festival will be held June 26-July 1 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., between Third and Seventh streets. All events are free, and the festival will be open daily from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On select

evenings, live music on the festival's Four Directions Stage will run until 7 p.m.

The festival will feature more than 250 participants from 60 Indigenous communities from across the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Brazil.

The program is organized around four themes: relevance, resistance, representation

and reclamation. Indigenous artists and makers, professional chefs and home cooks, musicians, dancers, athletes and storytellers will demonstrate multigenerational traditions, as well as new, innovative approaches to cultural expression.

The foodways stage on the National Mall will have 45-minute food demonstrations throughout the day featuring Indigenous

chefs and food, including Sean Sherman, Oglala Lakota Sioux chef and author of The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen, who will host a presentation inside the museum.

For more information americanindian.si.edu.



U.S. Treasurer Lynn Malerba speaks April 29 during the NAFOA conference at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel Hollywood.



Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz receives NAFOA's Government Economic Empowerment Award for exceptional dedication to tribal relations

NAFOA, US treasurer come to Seminole Hard Rock for conference

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The NAFOA's 42nd annual conference took place at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood on April 29-30. NAFOA, founded as the Native American Finance Officers Association, focuses on tribal finances and economic opportunities for tribes across the United States. NAFOA also advocates for innovative training programs in financial management that can be utilized for future generations.

"If you see a challenge, take it because you never know where it will lead you," Cristina Danforth (Oneida Nation), outgoing NAFOA board president, said in a speech as the conference opened.

The conference featured Chief Lynn Malerba (Mohegan Tribe), who was appointed U.S. Treasurer in 2022 by President Biden. She is the first Native American to hold the position. She spoke to the audience about how NAFOA has helped tribes around the country and she praised Danforth's work.

"You are so special to everyone in Indian Country and you always said 'yes' when it mattered and the things that you've done have mattered to Indian Country," Chief Malerba said.

Breakout session topics included Leaps and Bonds Ahead: New Tribal Tax Legislation, Funding Pathways for Tribal Agriculture, Fueling Tribal Futures in the New Economy, and The Tribal Perspective:

New Funding Opportunities and Post-Covid Transitions.

Seminole Tribe Treasurer Peter Hahn was a panelist in the "Financial Well-Being Through Tradition and Transformation" session. The panel included Osage Nation Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear and moderator Megan Cruz, who is research officer with the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Cruz is also a tribal member of the Osage Nation.

The session focused on the balance of tribal traditions and culture while facing western concepts. The discussion included different perspectives of financial well-being.

"We don't just focus learning in a traditional way, we don't just focus learning in a modern way; what we do is we offer as much availability to each member of the tribe," Hahn said in the session. Hahn said that the Seminole Tribe teaches financial literacy to its tribal members in settings such as schools and Boys & Girls Clubs.

"What I heard from Treasurer Hahn is where we want to be," Chief Standing Bear said to the audience.

Standing Bear went to address the different financial inequities that he has seen with Osage Nation over the years. Focusing on educating their tribal members in financial literacy and creating new programs are tasks currently being pursued by Chief Standing Bear.

A few days after the conference, NAFOA announced Rodney Butler, chairman of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, as its new president of the board of directors.



Seminole Tribe Treasurer Peter Hahn, center, served on a NAFOA panel with moderator Megan Cruz and Osage Nation Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear.

US Supreme Court to decide whether or not to hear sports betting challenge

STAFF REPORT

West Flagler Associates (WFA) has taken its legal challenge against the 2021 sports betting compact to the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS). The compact gives the Seminole Tribe of Florida exclusive rights statewide to sports betting online and in person.

The court has agreed to discuss whether or not to hear the full case against the Seminole Tribe and Hard Rock Bet. It will have a decision by the end of June. If the court decides to hear the full case, it will likely be in the 2025 SCOTUS session. If it denies the request to hear the case, the compact and

sports betting will remain in effect.

The issue is whether the Court should stop or allow the compact, which allows the tribe to conduct online gambling in the state as long as servers are located on tribal land.

WFA believes the compact violates the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). IGRA, a federal law passed in 1988 that established the legal framework for tribal-owned casinos.

The case before SCOTUS is WFA Ltd. et al, v. Debra Haaland, et al. The federal government, through Haaland, Secretary of the Interior, believes the compact does not violate IGRA.

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. is among the scheduled speakers.

The conference will be held in conjunction with the 14th annual Native American Healthcare Conference, the Ninth Native American Cannabis and Hemp Conference and the Sixth Tribal Finance Conference.

Registration for one conference allows access to all four. For more information visit nativenationevents.org.



All Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue transport units carry a sensory kit that includes items to help comfort and calm - such as earmuffs, sunglasses and a weighted blanket - in crisis situations.

Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue doing its part to increase autism awareness

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — A crisis that requires response from emergency services can be overwhelming to any family, including those with autistic people.

Bright flashing lights and loud sirens from emergency vehicles could increase tension to an already frightening situation for children and adults on the autism spectrum. Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue (STFR) is focused on doing all it can to provide comfort during responses and make crisis situations as bearable as possible.

For the last few decades, studies have shown a steady increase in the number of people with autism. For example, according to a Centers for Disease Control study conducted in 2000, about 1 in 36 children age 8 has autism spectrum disorder in the United States compared to 1 in 68 just ten years earlier. For American Indian or Alaska Native 8-year-olds, the 2000 report found about 1 in 37 with autism spectrum disorder.

In April, STFR personnel wore dark blue T-shirts to coincide with Autism Awareness Month. The shirts, designed for STFR, included the national autism awareness symbol - also known as the puzzle piece ribbon - and the slogan "In These Families, Nobody Fights Alone."

This is the first year STFR wore Autism Awareness shirts, but for many years the department has addressed autism in other ways, including in annual staff training and by carrying sensory kits.

All 16 STFR transport units throughout the tribe carry a kit with items that can be given to autistic kids and adults.



Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue wore special T-shirts in April to help raise awareness about autism.

"All Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue transport units have those on it, to try to calm and release some of the stress associated with those kinds of environments," said Stephen Zitnick, STFR Battalion Commander.

If a situation warrants, STFR personnel can provide a weighted blanket for comfort, fidget toys as a distraction to the crisis, earmuffs to lessen noise and sunglasses to help with light sensitivity.

Zitnick said STFR is trying to raise awareness about its efforts to address autism.

"We're taking a lot of pride in doing that awareness," he said. "We try to engage tribal members that do have autistic kids within some of the community events we do. We talk to them about what we do. Not using the sirens, not using the bright lights. The feedback has been phenomenal from the community. The parents are really engaged and appreciative of the fact that we recognize that."

Russell Brown named Education director

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Russell Brown has been named director of the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Education Department. He accepted the position in May.

Brown has decades of experience in education and administration, including a previous stint with the Seminole Tribe when he served as the first principal at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School on the Brighton Reservation. He also served as provost at Indian River State College and president at its Okeechobee campus.

"I'm excited for the opportunity to be back working with the tribe," Brown said. "Their emphasis on education is evident. I hope to be able to develop the youth to be leaders of the tribe."

Brown earned a master's degree in education from the University of North Florida in 1989 and was employed in the Okeechobee School District, where he was working his way up to superintendent. In 2007, he was approached by Louise Gopher and Michele Thomas who asked if he had any interest in coming to Brighton to open a new school.

He realized being principal at PECS

would be similar to being a superintendent of a school district since he would be responsible for all aspects of the school. He stayed at PECS from 2007-2011 before leaving to be provost at IRSC. He worked at IRSC for 13 years.

"The college was good to me, but I heard about this opportunity, and I thought I could make a difference," Brown said. "I may have reached the highest level at IRSC and was satisfied with what I accomplished. It was time for new challenges."

Over the years, Brown remained in touch with PECS and the tribe. When he found out about the director of education position, he pursued it.

His said his first objective as director is to learn more about the department. To that end, he has been meeting with every employee on every reservation to find out what they feel is going well and what areas could be improved.

"The team seems very committed and looks at their roles very positively," Brown said. "The managers are very detail oriented, communicate well with their staff and see the importance of collaborating with the students and families."

There are about 1,150 students tribalwide from preschool to higher education. The education department has 47 employees to

serve students who are registered with the department. Brown hopes to receive input from all reservations so the department can customize and meet the needs of each community.

Brown wants to increase the profile of the department and make sure tribal members know what it can provide to students and families. He said he wants education to be a department they can rely on and trust.

"The Education Department is here to support and provide resources for the families and students in a positive way," Brown said. "We can help them set goals that are possible and attainable. Many things in the world are more achievable if there is a passion for them; we want to expose children to those opportunities."



Courtesy photo
Russell Brown

♦ PUBLIC WORKS From page 1A

"The pipes are always underground, about four to six feet deep," said Brighton Public Works distribution/collection operator Tavarus Jacobs. "We have to dig around to find the leak and get the repair band around the pipe and then tighten it. Most pipes are four, six or eight inches around, but some are bigger."

The Seminole Public Works Department and its water treatment plants have won numerous awards for water quality since

2010. Hollywood water treatment plant operator Bryan Fogle set up a display of some of the awards.

"The awards have an impact on the staff," Fogle said. "It gives us a sense of pride. We enjoy putting ourselves up against the best of the best in the state."

Human Resources employees Laurell Battiste, Valerie West and Ana Garces from Hollywood were impressed with what they were learned at the event, including as it relates to their jobs hiring employees.

"This gives us a different vantage point," said Battiste, HR special project coordinator. "Now we can see why they need more people. We see how they function

together. They are compartmentalized but they fit together like a puzzle. I have a new appreciation for what they do with water."

The Brighton plant had a table that put people's palates to the test by tasting water from each reservation and scoring them on a scale of 1 to 5. Participants took their tasting task seriously as they considered the different color, odor and taste of each one.

"I love the pride they take in the facility," said Hollywood TCD procurement and contracts administrator Denise Tuma. "The Public Works Department really works hard to service the tribe. You can really see that."

Native economic development conference to be held in June

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The 17th annual Native American Economic Development Conference will be held June 18-19 at the Pechanga Resort Casino in Temecula, California.

The conference will feature panels and interactive discussions focused on economic development, diversification and sustainability. Seminole Tribe of Florida

Tribe shows appreciation for mothers

STAFF REPORT

Mother's Day celebrations were held throughout the tribe on various days leading up to the actual Mother's Day on May 12. At the Hollywood event, Board President Holly Tiger talked to the audience about how kids who grew up in a camp-style setting received a lot of support in addition to their mothers, getting help from aunts,

grandmothers, and sisters of grandmothers. "They all pitched in to help raise the kids. They all pitched in to make sure everybody was fed and taken care of. If you grew up in that lifestyle, and you come from a family that is rooted in that, you had a lot of 'mothers,' she said. "I think that's something we have that's rich in our culture that nobody else has."



From left to right, Desiree Smith and Danni Cypress with their mom, Jeannette Cypress, and Mary Jene Koenes attend the Big Cypress Mother's Day event May 9 at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.



From left to right, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Nancy Shore, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Helene Buster share laughter at the Brighton Mother's Day event May 10 in the reservation's recreation gymnasium.



Eliza Mora with her daughter, Mayeli Hall, at the Hollywood Mother's Day celebration May 9 in a ballroom at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.



Kaylan Osceola with her daughter, Arianna Osceola, in Hollywood.



Ahnje Jumper and her daughter, Sawyer Jumper, enjoy their time at the BC Mother's Day event.



Donna Schaefer with her daughter, Amber Billie, in Hollywood.



Danielle Nelson and her daughter, Tehya Nelson, at the Big Cypress Mother's Day event.



From left to right, Caleb Burton, Micki Burton and Leilani Burton gather for a family photo at the Brighton Mother's Day event.



Acealyn Youngblood, left, from the Brighton Council office, hands out flowers to mothers, including Vicki Huff, during the Mother's Day event in Brighton.



Lindsy King and her mom, Betty King in Big Cypress.



Cheyenne Gonzalez and her daughter, Elianna Gonzalez, receive a visit from Board President Holly Tiger at the Brighton Mother's Day event.



Sonja Buck, standing, and Sarah Sampson smile in the photo set up area in Brighton.



Leslie Fish with her daughter, Ruth Cypress, in Big Cypress.

Upcoming events at Fairgrounds

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WEST PALM BEACH — The South Florida Fair will host the following events in June at the Fairgrounds in West Palm Beach:

- June 8-9: Halfway to Christmas Craft Fair
- June 14-16: South Florida Boat Show
- June 14-15: 23rd annual Arrigo Extreme Rodeo

For more information and a complete list of June events visit southfloridafair.com.

Country music band to play in Tampa, Hollywood

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The On back-to-back nights, country music star band Old Dominion will play at Seminole resorts. The band will play Dec. 12 at Hard Rock Event Center in Tampa. On Dec. 13, the band will perform at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood. Both shows start at 8 p.m. For tickets visit ticketmaster.com. Old Dominion has captured awards in just about every major country music organization, including Country Music Awards, Academy of Country Music and CMT.

EPA announces more than \$225M for tribal water improvements

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — On May 22, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced more than \$225 million in funding will go toward improving both access to safe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure for American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages. The funding is being made through President Biden's Investing in America program. "With this announcement, tribes will be able to access funding for critical public

health improvements ranging from lead service line replacement to get the lead out of drinking water to installation of wastewater infrastructure to protect public health and improve water quality in lakes, rivers, streams and oceans," said Bruno Pigott acting assistant administrator for Water, in a news release. The FY 2024 funding will be administered through the following programs:

- \$69.4 million in Clean Water Indian Set-Aside through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and annual appropriation

funds.

- \$133.8 million in Drinking Water Infrastructure Grants Tribal Set-Aside through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and annual appropriation funds.
- \$19.3 million in Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Tribal Grant Program through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds.
- \$2.85 million in Small, Underserved, and Disadvantaged Communities Tribal Grant Program through annual appropriation funds.



Seminole Gaming/HRI earn 'best managed' honor for 4th straight year

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — For the fourth consecutive year, Seminole Gaming/Hard Rock International has been recognized as a US Best Managed Company by Deloitte Private and the Wall Street Journal.

Seminole Gaming/HRI is one of only two companies in Florida to earn the best managed honor; Coca-Cola Beverages Florida in Tampa is the other. The award recognizes the achievements of 61 private companies in the U.S. with revenues of at least \$250 million, and the successes of their management teams.

"We are proud to be selected a US Best Managed Company in this prestigious program for the fourth year in a row," Jim Allen, chairman of Hard Rock International and CEO of Seminole Gaming, said in a statement. "This is continued recognition for our leaders and team members around the world who create a great place to work and build a career, while providing a memorable guest experience across Hard Rock and Seminole Hard Rock casinos, hotels, resorts, cafes and Rock Shops."

The best managed program honorees are selected by an external panel of judges who consider strategy, ability to execute, culture, governance and financial performance.

Twenty charities, including The Centre for Women, left, and the Humane Society of Tampa Bay, right, received \$20,000 checks from Seminole Hard Rock Tampa on May 14.

Courtesy photos

Charities give thanks to Seminole Hard Rock Tampa following \$400,000 in donations

STAFF REPORT

TAMPA — The 20th anniversary celebration of Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa extended to 20 local charities May 14.

With its giant circular staircase and Elvis Presley's gold piano as a backdrop, Seminole Hard Rock Tampa presented \$20,000 checks to each of the charities for a total of \$400,000 in donations.

"Having been a major economic force in the Tampa Bay area for the past two decades, it's our privilege to give back through this initiative," Steve Bonner, president of Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, said in a statement. "Love All-Serve All" is more than a motto to us; it's our guiding principle. Through our philanthropic efforts, we continue to invest in the community by advocating for important causes that are making a real difference in countless lives every day."

Some of the responses by the charities on social media included:

"This generous gift supports our mission to ignite the power and promise of youth through mentoring. Thank you, Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, for your incredible support and commitment to our community! — **Big Brothers Big Sisters Tampa Bay**

"CASA Pinellas was honored to be awarded a \$20,000 donation at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa Twenty Year Celebration. It's amazing to be a part of a community so dedicated to lifting up its local nonprofits and community organizations." — **CASA Pinellas**

"Please help us thank Seminole Hard Rock for its continued support of the Habitat mission to build more homes, communities, and hope." — **Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas and West Pasco Counties**

"HSTB is so grateful for our continued partnership with Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa! They are celebrating 20 years in the Tampa Bay community by donating to the animals and we couldn't be more honored. — **Humane Society of Tampa Bay**

"The Centre for Women won big today at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. As part of the Hard Rock's 20th Anniversary celebration, we were thrilled to be one of 20 nonprofits to receive a \$20,000 donation to support our work. We are immensely grateful to Steve Bonner, President of the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, COO David Hoenemeyer, and Darien Cobb... — **The Centre for Women**

The 20 area charities each receiving \$20,000 are:

Best Buddies Tampa Bay

- Big Brothers Big Sisters Tampa Bay
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay
- Bullard Family Foundation
- CASA
- Children's Dream Fund
- David A Straz Center For the Performing Arts
- Florida Aquarium
- Glazer Children's Museum
- Habitat For Humanity of West Pasco and Pinellas
- Hispanic Family Research Cultural Center
- Humane Society of Tampa Bay
- Junior League of Tampa
- Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful
- Make A Wish of Southern Florida
- St. Joseph's Hospitals Foundation
- The Centre for Women
- The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay
- The Spring of Tampa Bay
- Zoo Tampa.

Coconut Creek casino to host fireworks display

FROM PRESS RELEASE

COCONUT CREEK — Seminole Casino Coconut Creek will hold its annual Independence Day celebration with fireworks by Grucci on July 4. Festivities will start at 7 p.m. and culminate with a fireworks and drone show at 10 p.m. The evening will include live entertainment, music and performances, and gourmet food trucks. For more information visit hardrock.com/coconut-creek/.

The Tenors to play in Immokalee

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee will host The Tenors live in concert Nov. 10 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$99. For ticket information visit ticketmaster.com or moreinparadise.com. Attendees must be 21.

The Tenors perform a mixture of classical and pop, with original songs and tributes that range from classics such as "The Prayer," and "Nessun Dorma" to new songs and contemporary hits like "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Forever Young," and "Hallelujah."

Hard Rock's Todd Hricko named to FIU board

FROM PRESS RELEASE

MIAMI — The Florida International University's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management announced May 28 the creation of its Hospitality Real Estate Advisory Board.

The new board is comprised of hospitality real estate leaders, including FIU alumnus Todd Hricko, senior vice president and head of global hotel development for Hard Rock International.

According to a news release, the board will help advise and provide hospitality industry expertise and guidance to faculty and focus on enhancing the practical relevancy of the real estate curriculum.



The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay receives its check at the Seminole Hard Rock Tampa ceremony.



Seminole Hard Rock Tampa President Steve Bonner speaks during the event for charities.

Hard Rock set for transformation of Las Vegas property

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Hard Rock International's plans to stamp its name on the Las Vegas Strip are moving forward.

HRI announced May 15 that it will cease operations of its Mirage Hotel & Casino on July 17 in order to start the transformation of the property into the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino and Guitar Hotel Las Vegas.

In December 2022, HRI completed the purchase of the operations of the 3,000-room Mirage Hotel & Casino from MGM Resorts International for \$1.075 billion.

"We'd like to thank the Las Vegas community and team members for warmly welcoming Hard Rock after enjoying 34

years at The Mirage," Jim Allen, chairman of Hard Rock International and CEO of Seminole Gaming, said in a news release May 15. "We'd also like to thank the unions, community leaders, local and state government organizations and the Gaming Commission for their support and fair negotiations over the past year. Also, we are grateful to MGM for assisting with our transition."

In addition to renovations, HRI plans to build a nearly 700-foot guitar-shaped hotel with more than 600 rooms. HRI debuted its first guitar-shaped hotel in October 2019 as part of a \$1.5 billion expansion at its Hollywood, Florida, resort and casino. The Hollywood hotel is 450 feet tall.

The Las Vegas project is expected to

create 2,500 construction jobs, the release said. As for team members impacted by the closing, the company said it will pay approximately \$80 million in severance packages, and organize collaborative hiring events with other employers.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida is the parent entity of HRI.



Kevin Johnson

A model of the Las Vegas property project is in the lobby at the Brighton administration building.



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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

Social media provides glimpse into Collections work

BY LAURA DELLO RUSSO
Collections Manager

BIG CYPRESS — The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's Collections Division is responsible for a diverse range of tasks, all of which have the common goal of preserving the valuable objects housed within its vaults. Such tasks include acquiring cultural objects for the collection, cataloging hundreds of thousands of photographs in the museum's database, conducting conservation treatments, loaning collection objects to other museums and institutions, and traveling to tribal events with historic photos for community members to view.

The Collections Division is responsible for the museum's library, conservation lab, archival vault, objects vault, and it also manages the online collection. Collections consists of eight staff positions, and it is one of the largest divisions within the museum.

However, much of this work is behind-the-scenes. Out of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's many wonderful activities, the work of the Collections Division tends to be the least visible to the public. The acquiring, preserving, and managing of the nearly 240,000 permanent collection objects is usually accomplished quietly in the museum's workspaces. Fortunately, social media and today's digital age provide a multitude of opportunities by which this work can be shared.

The museum has active social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram, as well as its own LinkedIn and YouTube channel. The social media team creates daily posts about upcoming events, exhibits, and outreach activities, which allow the public to stay up to date with all the exciting things

happening at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. These are also wonderful platforms to share the many projects of the Collections Division.

With the help of the of the museum's social media team, the Collections Division was recently able to share the process of selecting garments for the spring/summer textile rotation through a short video posted on Facebook and Instagram. The textile rotation happens twice each year, and it is a chance to switch out the various capes, skirts, jackets, big shirts, and other objects on display in the museum's galleries. Additionally, it prevents any damage to these valuable objects by limiting the amount of time they are exposed to light and other environmental elements. The textile rotation is an important bi-annual task for both the Collections and Exhibits divisions, yet it is also important to share this project and the purpose behind it with the public.

Another recent project shared through social media was the rotation of loaned objects in Walt Disney World's "Creating Tradition: Innovation and Change in American Indian Art" exhibit. This exhibit is located in the American Adventure Pavilion in the Epcot theme park, and the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum has partnered with Walt Disney Imagineering on this display since its inception in 2018. Through social media, staff were able to share the entirety of the loan process, from preparations to the finished product. Staff also recruited help from Willie the Journeyman, a doll who has become a connecting thread and unofficial mascot of the museum's social media accounts.

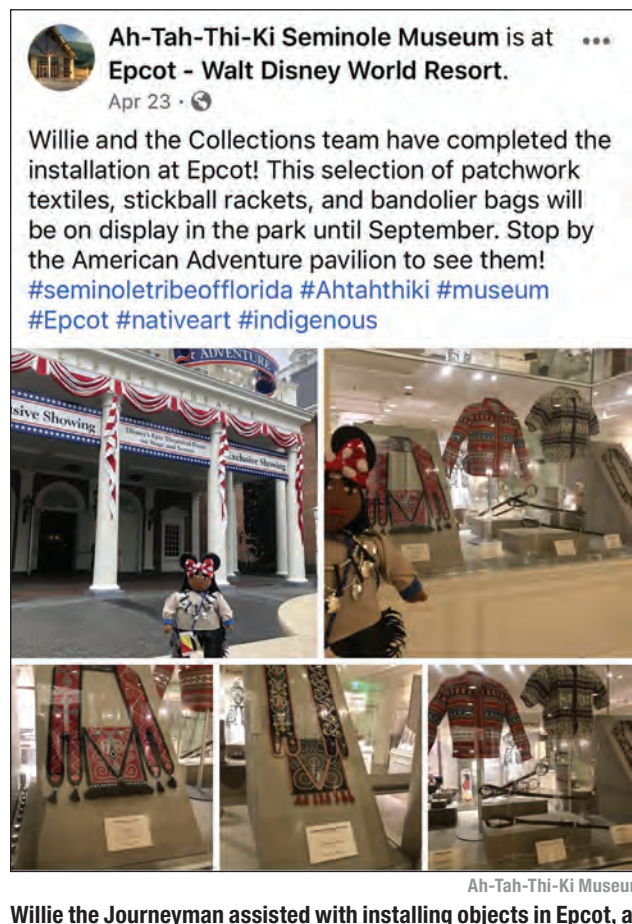
These projects are just two of many undertaken by the Collections Division, and it is the hope that even more projects

can be shared through social media. The goal over the coming months is to create regular content that details the everyday activities of Collections staff members. From treating and preserving historic photographs in the conservation lab to cataloging some of the collection's newest acquisitions, there is exciting work being accomplished behind-the-scenes at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Be sure to follow the museum's social media accounts to get a glimpse!

For more information about the museum's collection, please contact Laura Dello Russo at lauradellorusso@semtribe.com. You can also access the online collection at <https://semtribe.pastperfectonline.com>.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
A video on Instagram shows the process of selecting objects for the textile rotation.

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



Willie the Journeyman assisted with installing objects in Epcot, as seen in this Facebook post.

Mellon Foundation provides \$1M to help with return of Indigenous objects

FROM PRESS RELEASE

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — The Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) has received a gift of \$1,000,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support the "Going Home: Returning Material Culture to Indigenous Communities Project." The project facilitates the return of culturally significant items to descendant communities with cultural facilities. Additional funding to support international returns is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation and the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians is supporting returns to California tribes.

In addition to providing financial support to tribes seeking the return of cultural items, the Going Home Fund focuses on raising public awareness about the importance of returning culturally significant items to Indigenous communities, building relationships between tribal museums and

non-Native collections institutions and individual collectors, as well as building the capacity of tribal museums to seek loans and gifts of culturally significant items.

To launch the project, the Fund is working with the Museum of the Cherokee People and individual donors to return over 200 objects to descendant communities. Available objects may be viewed on the Going Home Fund portal. From the portal, descendant communities may request the return of items. Cultural experts may also provide additional information about the items.

The Going Home Fund is led by an Advisory Council of museum professionals, tribal leaders, and attorneys with expertise in repatriation, gifts, and museum loans. Walter Richard "Rick" West, a member of ATALM's governing board and President Emeritus of the Autry Museum of the American West, is leading the project.

To view the portal and access related forms, visit <http://goinghomefund.org>.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum offers free admission for teachers in July

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BIG CYPRESS — July is Teacher Appreciation Month at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Educators are invited to plan ahead and enjoy complimentary admission throughout the entire month of July. This initiative provides an opportunity for teachers to incorporate Seminole culture and the flora and fauna of the Everglades into their lesson plans.

Teachers are welcome to bring up to four guests that will receive 50 percent off the standard admission rate.

The visit includes access to exhibits showcasing both historic and modern Seminole life, as well as an expansive mile-long boardwalk through a cypress dome.

Teachers are encouraged to integrate

the museum's resources into their lesson plans and provide students with a memorable and exciting learning experience. There are many learning opportunities on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian reservation, ranging from the history and culture of the Native Americans to the diverse eco-systems of the Florida Everglades.

To sign up for the free visit, teachers should visit www.ahtathiki.com/teachers/. Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except on July 4, when it will be closed in observance of the holiday.

Teachers must present valid school credentials, such as a school ID or a note from the school, upon entry.

For more information email bczureception@semtribe.com or call (863) 902-1113 and press 0.

Fort King to host Seminole program in August

FROM PRESS RELEASE

OCALA — The Fort King National Historic Landmark will host the Summer Nights Lecture Series at Fort King National Historic Landmark in Ocala during select dates in July and August.

Each week different topics will be presented by professionals in the natural and historical resource fields.

On Aug. 15, "Enduring Legacies: Exploring the Past from the Seminole Perspective" will be held with Bill Locascio, research manager at the Seminole Tribe's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. The lecture will provide oversight about Seminole history and how the museum staff is making the history of the tribe broadly accessible. Learn more about the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and the archaeological field research in the 21st century.

For more information or for questions, call (352) 401-6980 or visit ocalafl.gov/repcark.

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

June 2024



Figure 1

Figure 2

What is your favorite drink? Whatever it is, chances are that when you take a sip of it, you don't focus on it too much. You are not thinking about how long the drink has been around, what its original purpose was, or its cultural impact. You are thinking about the flavor if you are thinking about it at all. That being said, everything has a place in history. This Hires glass root beer bottle from THPO's Collections is one such example.

Hires Root Beer was created in 1876 by pharmacist Charles Elmer Hires from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hires first sold this drink at his pharmacy, calling it Hires Root Tea. Later, he sold his drink as root beer and developed a soda fountain syrup for it (Patton, 2005). This was not unusual at the time. Many of our favorite drinks had their start in pharmacies; for example, Coca-Cola and Pepsi (Bauer, 2019). These drinks were originally sold as remedies. Hires Root Beer was once advertised to "Purify the blood" (Pendergrast, 2000). What that meant exactly is unclear. Charles Hires may have been the first person to successfully sell root beer commercially, but the drink itself did not start with him. Native populations in North America used sassafras and sarsaparilla, the central ingredients to root beer, in beverages long before Hires' enterprise (Verberg, 2023).

This glass bottle was developed long after Hires Root Beer's humble beginnings. As indicated by the maker's mark, it was manufactured in 1957 (Figure 2). Charles E. Hires would have never seen a bottle like this one, dying in 1937 (Taplin, 2016).

The maker's mark also indicates with its LGW that it was manufactured by Laurens Glass Work (Toulouse, 1971). Today, the Hires brand is owned by Dr Pepper Snapple Group, but is difficult to find anywhere except online (Taplin, 2016). On this bottle, the Hires label has long fallen off, leaving only a smooth glass surface. The word Hires can be seen on the bottom of the bottle beneath the maker's mark (Figure 2). On the surface of the bottle that was not covered by the label, there is a texture that is reminiscent of an orange peel.



Figure 3

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - JUNE 2024

SEWING SEMINOLE SUCCESS



In the winter of 1880, a visitor to the Catfish Lake Seminole community on the north side of Lake Okechobee spotted a hand-operated sewing machine in the camp of Me-le (John Willis Mikko). The visitor reported that Me-le could take the machine apart and put it back together flawlessly, as he knew the machine so well. By the 1890s, sewing machines were a common sight in Seminole camps, brought from trading posts operating in and around Seminole land. Tribal Members quickly learned the tricks of the trade from post owners and their families, such as the Stranahans and Browns.



Before sewing machines, clothing was sewn by hand and required a lot of time for Seminole crafters to produce. The machines not only sped up the process, but also allowed for more exploration. Creative trends emerged from Seminole camps and innovative styles and techniques began to transform Seminole clothing. Applique work, or sewing ornamental pieces of fabric onto clothing, had previously been reserved for special garments but became common on everyday clothing once the sewing machine was available. The capes of women's dresses grew in length and ruffled fabric was added to the dress. Similarly, men's long shirts took on more elements, such as a sewn-in waistbands and ruffled fabric along the edges.

The greatest innovation in Seminole clothing came just before 1920 when women in Big Cypress camps invented Seminole patchwork. According to Tribal Member Sam Tommy, patchwork began out of necessity when fabrics preferred by Seminole crafters became unavailable during World War I. Seminole women devised a creative solution to the problem by stitching together patches of solid colored cloth to create unique designs, and Seminole patchwork was born.

Tourists began flocking to Florida in the 1920s and Seminole Tribal Members capitalized on them as an opportunity for growth. At exhibition villages, such as Musa Isle, and tourist camps run by Seminole families, Tribal Members sold their crafts, including their patchwork to this willing group. The addition of sewing machines to the Seminole communities enabled the creation of ingenious designs that captivated tourists and fed into the Seminole's entrepreneurial spirit.

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

First-of-its-kind medical school in Cherokee Nation graduates inaugural class of doctors

BY ADAM KEMP
PBS NewsHour

Growing up, Mackenzie Thompson always wanted a deeper connection with her tribe and culture.

The 26-year-old member of the Choctaw Nation said she grew up outside of her tribe's reservation and wasn't sure what her place within the Indigenous community would be.

Through a first-of-its-kind program, Thompson said she's now figured out how she can best serve her people — as a doctor.

Thompson is graduating as part of the inaugural class from Oklahoma State University's College of Osteopathic Medicine at the Cherokee Nation. It's the first physician training program on a Native American reservation and in affiliation with a tribal government, according to school and tribal officials.

"I couldn't even have dreamed this up," she said. "To be able to serve my people and learn more about my culture is so exciting. I have learned so much already."

Thompson is one of nine Native graduates, who make up more than 20 percent of the class of 46 students, said Dr. Natasha Bray, the school's dean. There are an additional 15 Native students graduating from the school's Tulsa campus.

The OSU-COM graduates include students from 14 different tribes, including Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee, Seminole, Chickasaw, Alaska Native, Caddo and Osage.

Bray said OSU partnered with the Cherokee Nation to open the school in 2020 to help erase the shortage of Indigenous doctors nationwide. There are about 841,000 active physicians practicing in the United States. Of those, nearly 2,500 — or 0.3 percent — are Native American, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

When American Indian and Alaska Native people visit Indian Health Service clinics, there aren't enough doctors or nurses to provide "quality and timely health care," according to a 2018 report from the Government Accountability Office. On average, a quarter of IHS provider positions — from physicians to nurses and other care positions — are vacant.

"These students here are going to make a generational impact," Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. told the students days before graduation. "There is such a need in this state and in this region for physicians and this school was created out of a concern about the pipeline of doctors into our health system."

The Cherokee Nation spent \$40 million to build the college in its capital of Tahlequah. The walls of the campus feature artifacts of Cherokee culture as well as paintings to remember important figures from Cherokee history. An oath of commitment on the wall is written in both English and Cherokee.

The physician training program was launched in the first year of the pandemic.

Bray said OSU and Cherokee leadership felt it was important to have the school in the heart of the Cherokee Nation, home to more than 141,000 people, because students would be able to get experience treating Indigenous patients. In Tahlequah, students live and study in a small town about an hour east of Tulsa with a population of less than 24,000 people.

"While many students learn about the problems facing these rural communities," Bray said. "Our students are getting to

see them firsthand and learn from those experiences."

While students from the college are free to choose where to complete their residency after graduation, an emphasis is placed on serving rural and Indigenous areas of the country.

There's also a severe lack of physicians in rural America, a shortage that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic. The Association of American Medical Colleges has projected that rural counties could see a shortage between 37,800 and 124,000 physicians by 2034. An additional 180,000 doctors would be needed in rural counties and other underserved populations to make up the difference.

Bray said OSU saw an opportunity to not only help correct the underrepresentation of Native physicians but also fill a workforce need to help serve and improve health care outcomes in rural populations.

"We knew we'd need to identify students who had a desire to serve these communities and also stay in these communities," she said.

Osteopathic doctors, or DOs, have the same qualifications and training as allopathic doctors, or MDs, but the two types of doctors attend different schools. While MDs learn from traditional programs, DOs take on additional training at osteopathic schools that focus on holistic medicine, like how to reduce patient discomfort by physically manipulating muscles and bones. DOs are more likely to work in primary care and rural areas to help combat the health care shortages in those areas.

As part of the curriculum, the school invited Native elders and healers to help teach students about Indigenous science and practices.

Thompson said one moving moment involved a trip to the Cherokee Nation's heirloom garden, which features culturally significant plants and food practices.

Thompson said she was able to bring those experiences into her appointments. Instead of asking only standard doctor questions, she's been getting curious and asking about her patient's diets, and if they are taking any natural remedies.

"It's our mission to be as culturally competent as we can," she said. "Learning this is making me not only a better doctor but helping patients trust me more."

Part of knowing those patients is also knowing what challenges they face.

Native Americans face health crises at a disproportionately higher rate than other Americans. They face the highest rate of diabetes compared with all U.S. racial groups and continue to die at higher rates than other Americans in other categories, including chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, suicide and chronic lower respiratory diseases.

For Caitlin Cosby, it wasn't until she was on a rotation that she began to see what her patients were up against.

She said many of her patients faced significant poverty, while some lacked cars, cell or internet.

Access to care remains challenging for some rural residents on the reservation, Bray said.

Cosby, 25, is starting a family medicine residency in Durant, Oklahoma, home to the Choctaw Nation's headquarters. Cosby, a Choctaw member, said she got to meet physicians all around Oklahoma.

◆ See HEALTH on page 6C



From left to right, Tomasina Chupco, Lorelei Tommie and Georgette Palmer Smith show their support at a MMIP event May 4 in Hollywood.

Tribe shows support for MMIP with series of events

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — Hung on bleachers and trees, red blouses and dresses gently swayed in the warm wind, serving as a vivid visual tribute to the missing, the murdered, the taken.

Red handprints smeared across faces, including that of a Seminole doll made by Judy Baker, provided further emphasis on the crisis known as Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP).

"The red clothing and red handprint represent the Indigenous voices that are not heard, those that are missing, still missing, murdered, not counted; they're silenced by the media and they're often under investigated by law enforcement," said Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum outreach specialist Van Samuels, who led a program May 4 at Seminole Okalee Indian Village and Venue in Hollywood.

Speakers included Lorelei Tommie, who co-curated the exhibit "Seeing Red: A Community's Response to Missing and Murdered Indigenous People." The red clothing was part of the exhibit that debuted at the museum in May 2023.

Tommie spoke passionately about her MMIP crusade, which includes raising awareness and overcoming obstacles.

"In general, our voices just aren't taken seriously, and our stories aren't taken seriously, which is something I've heard over and over," Tommie said to the audience.

Chilling stories from speakers and audience members included bodies of Indigenous women in a landfill in Winnipeg, the search for a little brother's killer in Oklahoma, and the misclassification of a murdered Native man who was deemed white by authorities.

Frustration with law enforcement and the media was a common theme among speakers, who questioned how MMIP cases

are investigated and reported.

"According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Indigenous women are murdered and raped at 10 times higher than the national average. According to CDC, homicide was the sixth leading cause of death among American Indian/Alaska Native females age 1 to 44, however, there is no reliable count on how many Native American women go missing or are killed each year," Samuels said.

Recent reports at the federal level, including from a national commission, have criticized the lack of data and collaboration among agencies, and how data is collected.

The Hollywood event marked the tribe's third and final MMIP program to coincide with National MMIP Week and National MMIP Day (May 5). The other events were held in Brighton on May 1 and in Big Cypress on May 3; both drew sizable turnouts. Gordon Wareham, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum director, said 66 people attended the Brighton event and 76 people attended the BC event.

"To honor and respect and memorialize the murdered and missing Indigenous People and to bring awareness to this crisis...not just in North America, but also South America. This crisis is happening in Indigenous



"Seeing Red" co-curator Lorelei Tommie speaks at a MMIP event May 4 at Seminole Okalee Indian Village and Venue in Hollywood.

communities around the world," Wareham said.

In addition to raising awareness through the programs, the museum also helped raise money. More than \$12,000 that was raised by the year-long exhibit and two endeavors with the Māori of New Zealand was donated to the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.

The Hollywood program also featured Native songs played by Wareham on a traditional flute and by Josiah Johns on a violin.



Gordon Wareham plays the Native song "Mothers" on a traditional flute.



Josiah Johns plays a violin at the event.

June is Men's Health Month and a great time to make some healthy changes.

Take charge of your health by checking in with your health care provider—because even one small step on your journey to health is important.

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For more information, contact your local Indian health care provider, visit HealthCare.gov, or call 1-800-318-2596.



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SEMINOLE SCENES



GOING, GOING, GONE: A large excavator makes quick work of the Brighton Reservation's old Boys & Girls Club building now that the new facility down the road is open.

Beverly Bidney (2)



Courtesy photo
STAR GAZING: Seminole artist Elgin Jumper shows his most recently completed work from his "Seminole Starry Night Series." He finished this piece in May.



COOLIN' OFF: These girls in Brighton are having a blast at the Recreation and Education departments' "End of the School Year Bash" on May 24, which included water slides, games and food.

Beverly Bidney



SMART TEACHER: PECS' Teacher of the Year Quenten Pritchard kept a promise to his students. To encourage them to do well on the state end of the year civics exam, he said he would get a tattoo if they all passed. The encouragement worked; 100% of 7th graders passed and the result is this tattoo celebrating their achievement. The tattoo was designed by student Zoey Bowers.

Beverly Bidney



POOL POSITION: Oracle Red Bull Racing drivers Sergio "Checo" Perez, left, and Max Verstappen try out remote control racing boats in early May at the Guita Hotel pool in Hollywood. They were in town for the Miami Grand Prix F1 race. Verstappen finished second; Perez was fourth.



MAIL CALL: A new mail facility recently opened in Big Cypress at 30550 Josie Billie Highway.

Beverly Bidney



CHAIR FROM CHAIRMAN: Foldup chairs decked out in patchwork were among the gifts mothers received from the Chairman's office at the Hollywood Mother's Day celebration.

Kevin Johnson



SOUTHWEST SHOPPING: In the left photo, from left to right, Agnes Motlow, Loretta Micco and Louise Osceola spend some time shopping at the Indian Traders Market at Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on April 27. In the right photo, from left to right, Claudia Doctor, Mary Tigertail and Betty King enjoy their time at the market.



Beverly Bidney (2)

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Montana senator holds up nomination of state's first Native American federal judge

WASHINGTON — U.S. Republican Sen. Steve Daines of Montana is blocking the nomination of a lawyer who, if confirmed by the Senate, would be the first Native American to serve as a federal judge in the state.

Daines objected to the White House's nomination of Danna Jackson, a tribal attorney for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Pablo, Montana, because the Biden administration did not consult with him prior to her nomination, Rachel Dumke, a spokesperson for Daines, said in an email to States Newsroom.

Daines did not return his "blue slip" on Jackson's nomination to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The slip is given to senators of the same state as a federal judicial nominee so they can express an opinion about the nomination.

In the Senate, it's a long-standing tradition for both senators to agree on a judicial nominee before moving forward with the confirmation process.

Daines' objection to Jackson's nomination was first reported by Bloomberg Law.

"Senator Daines believes confirming federal judges with lifetime tenure is among the most important decisions he will make and that these individuals must be trusted to not legislate from the bench and protect the Montana way of life," Dumke said.

However, the White House pushed back on Daines' objections.

Daines' team interviewed Jackson six months ago, but Daines refused to meet with her, White House senior deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said in an email to States Newsroom.

"This claimed lack of consultation seems to be little more than pretext, and it's shameful that Senator Daines is depriving Montana of the talents of a principled, fair, and impartial jurist like Danna Jackson, who would make history as Montana's first Native American federal judge," Bates said.

The White House announced her nomination on April 24. Jackson did not appear during Senate Judiciary Committee nomination hearings on May 22.

A spokesperson for the committee deferred to the White House and Daines' office on Jackson's "consultation process, as that's between them."

Jackson did not respond May 30 to a voice mail message left with the legal office for the Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Judicial nominees usually do not talk to the media.

Following her nomination, Jackson had the support of Montana's Democratic Sen. Jon Tester.

"As a born-and-raised Montanan, her extensive experience at every level of Montana's legal system makes her well qualified to serve our state and I'm looking forward to getting her nomination across the finish line with bipartisan support in the Senate," Tester said in a statement in late April.

Jackson previously worked at the U.S. Department of the Interior as a senior counselor to the director of the Bureau of Land Management.

She also worked as the chief legal counsel at the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation in Helena, Montana, and as an assistant U.S. attorney and tribal liaison in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Montana.

There are four federal judges who are Native American and two who identify as partly Native American, according to the American Bar Association. Those judges represent four-tenths of 1% of federal judges, according to the ABA.

- States Newsroom

Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior, addresses Harvard Law School

Looking out at a crowd of 804 about-to-be Harvard Law School (HLS) graduates at class day May 22, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland spoke about work. After years of tiring study, graduates might not want to think more about labor. But Haaland did not discuss individual accomplishments. Instead, she reflected on how many people are needed to accomplish a mission.

Haaland, the first Native American Cabinet member, shared a brief anecdote from her ancestral homeland, Chaco Culture National Historical Park in northwestern New Mexico. Between 850 and 1150 C.E., Native Americans there constructed a massive house, Pueblo Bonito, out of 100 million pounds of stone. "I pictured hundreds of Pueblo peoples gathering stones, making the mud mortar, and hauling water to make it all possible," she said. "No one in this world does anything alone."

Now, more than ever, Haaland understands the importance of collaboration. As Secretary of the Interior, she manages a staff of 60,000 people. To accomplish her department's goals, she must incorporate the labor of that entire group, from bottom to top.

Given the audience, Haaland focused on one type of staffer: lawyers. "I know for a fact you're all powerful," she told the crowd. "Harvard Law graduates and former faculty have helped lead our momentous efforts at the department since day one."

To share Interior's accomplishments during her three-year tenure, Haaland praised three department lawyers with HLS ties. First, she thanked Bob Anderson, solicitor of the Department of the Interior, who formerly served as the Oneida Indian Nation visiting professor of law, for his work defending the Indian Child Welfare Act. That law, which

Anderson helped defend before the Supreme Court this year, restricts the removal of Native children from their families and communities. Haaland knows the pain of Native family separation. A close friend of Haaland's was adopted out of her family, as were her six siblings, and raised apart. It's not a new phenomenon. Haaland's grandparents were removed from their family homes and sent to government-sponsored schools that "stripped them of their languages, their cultures, and their ways of life," she said. "Indian Country breathed a collective sigh of relief when the Supreme Court announced its decision" upholding the law, "and we have Bob Anderson to thank."

Next, she praised Natalie Landreth, J.D. '01, deputy solicitor for land resources. Landreth helped secure several new national monuments. These newly-designated lands, including Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni-Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument and Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, she said, protect "ancestral homelands sacred to numerous Tribal Nations."

Finally, she turned to Laura Bloomer, J.D. '19, senior adviser to the solicitor. Bloomer is helping reshape rivers in the Pacific Northwest, whose flows have been altered by dams. These dams have cut off "entire swaths" of the region from salmon, on which local Native American tribes had relied. Recently, the Department of Interior mapped a path toward salmon reintroduction in the Upper Columbia River. "Generations of children will grow up with healthier waterways and a stronger connection to the lands and waters that can sustain them because of her efforts," she said.

"When I think about the legacy our team is building," Haaland continued, "I think about entire landscapes—entire regions of our country—that are benefiting from our lawyers' determination in the face of complex, oftentimes decades-long challenges."

On one of those complex issues, she challenged Harvard. Too often, she said, universities and museums have "under-prioritized" returning sacred objects and human remains to Native American tribes—including Harvard's Peabody Museum. But, she did offer the Peabody some credit. In December, Interior announced a streamlined process for item identification and return, prioritizing "tribal consent." Several museums including the Peabody, she continued, "are changing the policies and procedures that govern this work."

In closing, Haaland challenged HLS graduates to follow in the footsteps of these three change-making lawyers. "Seize your newfound power, your influence...and your expertise, and put it to good use," she said. "We can't build the world we deserve without each of you."

- Harvard Magazine

Ontario First Nation legislator makes history in legislature

TORONTO — After decades of being told his first language should be forgotten, Sol Mamakwa stood on the floor of the Ontario (Canada) Legislature about to make history.

But he couldn't shake the thought that he should continue in English and not Anishiniimowin, also called Ojji-Cree, the language his mother taught him.

"I thought I was breaking the laws and the rules of this house and I tried to remind myself that there's nothing wrong with this, 'You're allowed to speak,'" Mamakwa said. And so he did.

In a moment that made history, the New Democrat — and the only First Nation legislator in the province — addressed Queen's Park in his own language May 28, marking the first time a language other than English and French has been allowed by officials in Ontario's legislative chamber.

In the process, the 53-year-old Mamakwa secured a pledge from the premier to build a long-term care home in Sioux Lookout, Ont.

"I want to say thank you to everyone present. I'm very grateful, thankful for the opportunity to be able to speak my Anishiniimowin, in Indigenous Ojji-Cree language in this legislature," Mamakwa said through an interpreter at the start of his speech.

"I am speaking for those that couldn't use our language and also for those people from Kiiwetinoong, not only those from Kiiwetinoong, but for every Indigenous person in Ontario."

Ontario's legislature had not previously allowed interpreting and transcribing a language other than English and French.

About 100 supporters gathered in Toronto to watch the historic moment, including Mamakwa's mother, siblings, friends and First Nation leaders. It was a gift to his mom, Kezia Mamakwa, who turned 79 on Tuesday.

Politicians sang "Happy Birthday" to her and gave several standing ovations to Sol Mamakwa in an emotional question period.

"Today was monumental for me," Mamakwa said afterward.

After his speech, Mamakwa took the lead questions during question period, grilling the government in his language about elder care in the north. He demanded to know if, or when, the government would follow through on its commitment to build 76 more beds at a nursing home in Sioux Lookout.

"I'm committing today in the public: we will be building those beds. We'll be building a home in Sioux Lookout," Premier Doug Ford said.

The premier said he was proud of Mamakwa, who sits directly across from Ford in the chamber.

"No one's ever done this, what you're

doing today," Ford said. "I just want to tell you how proud I am of you, how proud everyone here in the legislature is, how proud everyone is in the First Nations."

Mamakwa and Ford met in the middle of the room and hugged.

Over the last century, Indigenous languages across Canada have been dying. Governments in the past, along with help from the Catholic and Protestant churches, ripped First Nation children from their homes and forced them to learn English in residential and day schools. Children would be punished for speaking their own language.

Mamakwa was no different.

He spent two years as a teenager in a residential school in northwestern Ontario. He and his friends would be punished if he spoke Anishiniimowin. Sometimes it would be detention, other times it would be worse. Similar punishment would be doled out across the country at the residential schools, the last of which shut down in 1996.

"Sometimes even soap was used to wash their mouth for speaking Anishiniimowin, Ojji-Cree language," Mamakwa said through the chamber's first interpretation of an Indigenous language.

"They were given manual labour for speaking in their own language in residential schools."

Kezia Mamakwa looked on from the gallery as her son spoke in the language she taught him.

"She used to take me out into the wilderness, into the land, teaching me the language," Sol Mamakwa said of his mom.

"She taught me and also other people — also the youth, the children, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren, they need to continue on in their First Nations language so that they can speak their own language."

Mamakwa called on First Nations to save their languages while there are still older generations who speak it.

"Everyone that's listening: we need to revitalize our First Nations language, teach your children to speak the First Nations language and to be proud of it."

- Canadian Press

South Dakota governor banned from all tribal lands in her home state

All of South Dakota's nine indigenous tribes have voted to ban Gov. Kristi Noem from their lands.

On May 21, the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe executive council ruled in favor of barring the Republican governor from its reservation.

In response to a request for comment on May 22, the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe sent a readout of its president's interactions with Noem ahead of the vote. Flandreau President Tony Reider called an emergency meeting last weekend in response to Noem's comments, according to the readout. The meeting was "contentious at times, as some members vocalized their opposition." After that Reider set up a meeting with the governor's office, which took place on May 22. That conversation was "respectful and productive."

"President Reider informed the governor that a ban from our territories is imminent and requested that the Governor refrain from making future blanket statements that offend the tribes within the boundaries of the State of South Dakota, some of which depend on state services for the needs of their people. It was recommended that the Governor clarify her statements and issue an apology to all tribal nations for the misunderstanding," the readout said. "Until such a time, the Executive Council and the people of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe stand with our fellow nations."

That vote bookended a ripple effect of tribes with reservations that stretch into South Dakota moving to prevent Noem from setting foot on their land, spurred by comments she made earlier this year. During a town hall, she argued that tribal leaders were profiting off of drug cartels in the state and prioritizing those cartels over parenting children on their reservations. Noem has since doubled down on saying Mexican drug cartels were rampant on Native American reservations in South Dakota.

Those comments sparked a domino effect of tribes denouncing Noem and voting to bar the governor from their lands. According to The Argus Leader of South Dakota, leaders of the Flandreau Santee Sioux had been receiving pressure from local citizens to do something in response to Noem's comments.

In a statement to CNN on May 22, the governor did not directly address the ban, but said she hoped to work with tribal leaders going forward.

"I only want to speak truth to the real challenges that are being faced in some areas of Indian Country. I want to focus on solutions that lead to safer communities for all our families, educational outcomes for all our children, and declining addiction numbers for all our people. We cannot tackle these issues without addressing the problem: dangerous criminals who perpetuate violence and illegal activities in all areas of our state," Noem said in the statement. "We need to take action. It is my hope tribal leadership will take the opportunity to work with me to be an example of how cooperation is better for all people rather than political attacks."

Earlier in May, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe and the Yankton Sioux Tribe voted to bar Noem from reservation land. The Standing Rock Sioux, Crow Creek Sioux, Rosebud, Cheyenne River Sioux, Oglala Sioux and Lower Brule Sioux tribes all had similar votes earlier this year.

The votes came as Noem found herself in the national spotlight over anecdotes from her recently released book describing killing her 14-month-old wirehair pointer, named

Cricket, and an unnamed goat. The book included anecdotes about Noem meeting with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un and cancelling a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron. Noem and staff have since indicated that the Kim anecdote did not happen and should not have been in the book. French officials have denied any such meeting between Macron and the South Dakota governor, while she was a member of Congress, ever took place.

Before her book rollout, Noem's name had been mentioned on the shortlist to be Donald Trump's vice presidential pick in 2024. But her standing has faded.

Noem has not softened her rhetoric about tribes and Mexican cartels. Instead, she's repeatedly stressed the importance of border security and warned that the Southern border between Texas and Mexico was experiencing an "invasion" of immigrants. Noem has scheduled press conference about border security and how it affects South Dakota.

"Banishing me does nothing to solve this problem or to help those who are suffering horrific tragedies," Noem said in a statement from her office last week. "Yesterday, I returned home from the dangerous, deadly warzone at our nation's Southern Border. South Dakota National Guard soldiers have helped the Texas National Guard construct miles of border wall in 100-degree weather to keep the American people safe — and keep cartel-driven drugs and human trafficking out of our great country."

Over the last few months, Noem and other top South Dakota officials have announced new programs for tribal law enforcement. In April, Noem and state Attorney General Marty Jackley rolled out a certification program to help speed up training for local law enforcement. And earlier this month, Noem named Algin Young, previously the chief of police for the Pine Ridge Reservation, as South Dakota's Tribal Law Enforcement Liaison.

- CNN

Smithsonian museum honors Indigenous US service members on Memorial Day

Each Memorial Day, Washington, like cities across the U.S., offers events to honor members of the military who died while serving their countries — a parade through the streets, a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, and motorcycles rolling through the city. Alongside these widely known events are other services for Memorial Day, observed last Monday in May. One of these events honored Indigenous service members.

According to the Defense Department, the first national ceremony was May 30, 1868, in Arlington National Cemetery. Then known as Decoration Day, flowers were added to soldiers' graves. The holiday later became Memorial Day. Now, celebrations take place around the country, from city or county parades to larger scale events like those happening in Washington.

Some service members, however, particularly Native Americans, in the past have been overlooked in the remembrance.

Indigenous people have served in every major conflict the United States has fought in for the last 200 years, according to the U.S. State Department.

An event this Memorial Day, hosted by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, specifically honored Indigenous service members who have died. Each year, the museum commemorates Memorial Day with a service, such as lighting the flame of their national Native American Veterans Memorial.

"Memorial Day: Honoring Native Servicemembers," featured a film screening, a book talk, and a book signing. Visitors were also encouraged to explore the museum grounds and the National Native American Veterans Memorial, where they could both commemorate service members and honor loved ones.

The event began with "The Warrior Tradition," a 56-minute film from 2019 directed by Lawrence R. Hott. It probes the often-untold story of indigenous people in the military and examines these service members' tumultuous relationship with the U.S. government. The screening was held in the museum's Rasmuson Theater.

Museumgoers then met author Alexandra N. Harris for a discussion of "Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces," a book co-written with Mark G. Hirsch. The book, which complements the National Native American Veterans Memorial, is a multimedia exploration that includes photographs, sketches, and images of objects from the museum's collections.

The book tells the "groundbreaking history [that] honors the diversity of Indigenous people and the complexity of their experiences. In doing so, it challenges stereotypes commonly applied to Native service members and pays tribute to the men and women whose contributions have shaped America's wars — and the country's history," according to the National Museum of the American Indian's website.

"The story of Native American service in the United States military has really, I hope, expanded the view of Native American service to include the diverse traditional approaches and the diverse experiences of the last 250 years of service from the Revolutionary War until today," said Harris to the Voice of America.

The Memorial Day commemorations are a microcosm of the larger, ongoing exhibition, "Why We Serve," a project created by the National Museum of the American Indian. The project, which looks at the history of indigenous people in the service since the American Revolution, addresses the tension of individuals serving

a government that has taken their people's land and suppressed their culture. The interactive, online project explores the legacy of these service members and their reasons for joining the military.

"I found out I am not only fighting for the little bit of land I talk about, [or] my immediate family. I found out I was fighting for all the Indian people, all of the people of the United States," said Navajo Code Talker Samuel Tso, who served in the United States Marine Corps.

- Voice of America

8 members of Mohawk tribe arrested after protest over ownership of island in St. Lawrence River

MASSENA, N.Y. — A protest by a group of Native Americans over the ownership of an island in the St. Lawrence River has led to the arrest of eight people this week.

Members of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe were arrested May 21 and charged with intentionally damaging property on Barnhart Island, according to Trooper Brandi Ashley, a spokesperson for State Police, and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council.

The island near Massena was historically Mohawk land but its ownership has been disputed since 1820. It's currently owned by the New York Power Authority. There are ongoing legal cases over the land's ownership.

At 7:30 p.m. May 21, troopers found the people attempting an excavation with a backhoe at the New York Power Authority's St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project, said Paul DeMichele, a spokesperson for the power authority. DeMichele said there was no damage to any equipment.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, and Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs addressed the incident on Facebook, saying that it was a small group of individuals who were responsible for the incident.

The individuals erected signs regarding a reclamation of the land on the island, the council said. The council wrote that they do not condone the actions of these individuals.

"We understand the feelings of some tribal members that we own Barnhart Island since it is part of our historic homelands," the council wrote. "However, we do not feel this action is productive or helpful and can set back our progress in the land claim settlement, which is nearing a positive resolution and could bring over 14,000 acres of Mohawk homelands to the community, the council wrote.

Currently, there is legal action around land in the area, including the island, possibly being returned to the Mohawk nation, the council wrote.

Each of the individuals were ticketed for trespassing and fifth-degree conspiracy, Ashley said. All were released on their own recognizance, she said.

- Syracuse.com (New York)

Student petition effort leads to renaming of Menominee school

A predominantly Native American high school will have a new name next year after students led a two-year effort for the change.

Menominee Indian High School will become Menominee Nation High School when the district's newly built high school building opens in the fall.

The school in Keshena, Wisconsin, is on the Menominee Indian Reservation. The district had 991 students enrolled this school year, and 870 of them were Native American, according to state data.

In 2022, the school's human rights club discussed the history of the term "Indian" for Native Americans. It is believed to derive from the mistaken view of 15th century explorer Christopher Columbus, who landed in the Americas believing he was in India. To the students, the term is simply inaccurate, and the club's members decided to create a petition to change the name.

Two of the students involved, Mikko Guzman and Francis Dodge, were both sophomores at the time. They are now finishing their junior year of high school. They were part of the effort to gather support for the change.

"Indian" is not widely considered to be a slur, and Native Americans hold a range of opinions about the term. Guzman said that was true even within his family.

"My great-great grandma ... told me she had no issue with 'Indian,' that she grew up with it," Guzman said. "But my youngest grandma, she told me that she hated 'Indian,' that she grew up knowing what it meant, where it came from. She knew that 'Indian' wasn't our name."

Students collected 180 signatures within the school and presented the petition to the school board. Guzman said he was intimidated.

"I felt like I was going to say the wrong things (or) that they wouldn't agree with us," he said. "But surprisingly, the school board was with us 100 percent."

But the board assigned the students more work. They would have to get buy-in from the tribal government, and survey the broader community for their input on the name.

That process took much longer than the initial petition, and the students would return to the school board several more times. But this year the Menominee Indian School Board voted unanimously to enact the change. The new name will apply to the high school only, not the district's other schools nor its official name.

- Wisconsin Public Radio

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Education



Florida SouthWestern State College President Jeffery S. Allbritten hands diplomas to CeCe Thomas, left, and Saniya Rodrigues at the school's graduation ceremony May 3 in Fort Myers. Florida SouthWestern State College (2)

Brighton high school students earn college degrees

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

FORT MYERS — Seminole Tribe of Florida students Saniya Rodrigues and CeCe Thomas graduated from Florida SouthWestern State College in Fort Myers on May 3, three weeks before they were scheduled to graduate from Moore Haven High School.

The students, both from the Brighton Reservation, were in the high school's dual enrollment program for two years, during which they did their high school coursework along with the college curriculum. Both graduated with an Associates of Arts degree before receiving their high school

diplomas.

"It's been tough, but it was a good experience," Thomas said. "I had time to get my AA degree and now I don't have to go to college for as long."

Thomas will attend Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, where she plans to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous and American Indian Studies.

"I'm not sure what I want to do, but I can do anything," Thomas said. "It's a broad program of study."

Rodrigues also took advantage of the dual enrollment program, which she saw as a great opportunity.

"It allowed me to get ahead

in my education," she said. "It's always better to be ahead and I knew my capabilities."

Rodrigues got all As and only one B during the two-year program. She plans to attend Florida State University in the fall, where she will study accounting.

"I love math," she said. "I want to come back and work for the tribe in the Treasury Department."

With their first graduation walk behind them, Thomas and Rodrigues focused on their second graduation, which was held May 24 with their Moore Haven High School classmates.

Beverly Bidney

It's graduation day for CeCe Thomas, left, and Saniya Rodrigues.



Big Cypress Preschool graduates honored by community

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Big Cypress Preschool held its graduation May 14 in the Ahfachkee gym, where 14 proud youngsters walked down the aisle as they received their well-earned diplomas.

Preschool center manager Andrea Jumper and lead teacher Tara Pruitt led the class in two songs, although some children couldn't resist the urge to wave to their families. Before the students went backstage to don their caps and gowns, tribal dignitaries spoke to them and the crowd of family and friends gathered for the occasion.

"You guys are the future for our tribe and our world," said Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. "Thank you, parents, teachers and support teams for making the children feel loved and supported."

President Holly Tiger and Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers told the grads how proud they are of them.

"You showed determination," Rep. Bowers said. "We are so proud of you parents and thank you for trusting the preschool with their education."

After receiving their diplomas, the graduates ran into the arms of waiting families who embraced them lovingly and proudly.



Beverly Bidney

Graduate Newton Shaffer sits with his great-grandmother Nancy Motlow after the preschool graduation ceremony May 14 in Big Cypress.

♦ See BC PRESCHOOL on page 4B



Beverly Bidney

Graduates Jakolby Lino Bear, left, and Nalanie Mae Bear-Rodriguez pose for a photo in front of a cool backdrop after receiving their diplomas.



Beverly Bidney

Former Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students Lexi Thomas, left, and Sydney Matthews participate in the school's grad walk May 17 for alumni who graduated high school this spring.

PECS alumni walk halls as high school graduates

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Sixteen former Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students returned to the school they graduated from four years ago May 17 and proudly walked the hallways in their caps and gowns as high school graduates from the class of 2024.

It was the school's sixth year holding the traditional alumni walk, during which the grads strolled through the hallways that were lined with students, teachers and school staff who cheered, applauded and hugged them.

Before they took the celebratory walk, the alumni met in the gym for snacks, a slide show of their earlier years and some words from Principal Tracy Downing and Education Department employees.

They were known as the PECS class of 2020 when they completed their 8th grade year virtually from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. High school began much the same way, yet these students persevered to get their education and earn their diplomas.

♦ See GRAD WALK on page 4B



Beverly Bidney

Wyatt Thornton, at left in back, Zach Riley, center, and Marcos Reyna are doused with confetti as they take part in PECS' grad walk.

Diné College, ASU collaborate on Navajo law program

BY SHONDIIN SILVERSMITH
Arizona Mirror

Navajo students interested in studying the fundamentals of Navajo Nation law can now do so closer to home, as Diné College and Arizona State University are joining forces to offer a new Bachelor of Arts in Navajo Law.

"We wanted to have a program that would meet students where they are," said Stacy Leeds, dean of the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University.

The new bachelor's law program, which will launch at Diné College in the fall, is the first of its kind collaboration between a tribal college and a top public law school.

"The inception of the BA in Navajo Law program predates the pandemic, born out of the pressing need for legal professionals deeply versed in Navajo fundamental law, federal and state statutes, and Navajo Nation legal frameworks," Patrick Blackwater, dean of the School of Business and Social Sciences at Diné College, said in a press release.

Diné College said the curriculum will cover various aspects of the legal system, including regulations, policy development, the judicial structure, and formal and informal legal methodologies.

"This program is meticulously crafted to furnish students with a holistic comprehension of legal fundamentals, empowering them to pursue impactful careers as legal scholars, advocates, policymakers, and educators within the legal sphere," Blackwater added.

The new program will offer students an immersive, hands-on learning experience, according to Diné College, and it will emphasize the practical application of laws and the nuanced navigation of legal landscapes.

"Our mission is to furnish students not only with theoretical knowledge but also with the practical acumen to effectively apply laws and legal processes within the Navajo Nation and beyond," Diné College President Charles Roessel said in a written statement. "This program serves as a beacon of hope, a testament to our steadfast commitment to advancing justice and sovereignty through education."

Leeds said both schools worked together to develop the bachelor's program curriculum, and Diné College examined what courses they may have had that would qualify for this type of program.

"Each university will be working with people who have practiced law on the Navajo Nation," Leeds said.

She said that the programs are also looking to include community input because they want to ensure that the students are getting the best experiences and are on their best path if they are going to take the Navajo bar.

"It really was a collaborative effort, and we'll continue to have it be a collaborative effort moving forward," Leeds said.

Leeds told the Mirror that the bachelor's degree program offered at Diné College in collaboration with ASU is designed for undergraduate students fresh out of high school, starting an undergrad degree or transferring schools.

Students in the bachelor's program will get their undergraduate degree entirely at Diné College. When they complete the program, they can quickly enter the workforce or continue their education in the graduate programs available at ASU.

If the bachelor's degree is all the education the student wishes to pursue, Leeds said they will be prepared to be legal professionals, hopefully on the Navajo Nation.

But alongside the new bachelor's program, Leeds said that ASU now offers graduate-level Master of Legal Studies and the Master of Laws degrees in tribal policy, law, and government, with an emphasis on Navajo law.

"When they finish that master's degree program, they would be equipped to take the Navajo Bar and pass that and be an advocate there on the reservation," Leeds said.

The ASU law school has a long-standing partnership with the Navajo Nation, including recruiting and retaining Navajo students within ASU Law's Juris Doctor program, which features an Indian law certificate program.

From the bachelor's program to ASU's juris doctor program, there are now four interrelated degree programs available to Indigenous students that maximize their opportunities in education.

According to ASU, the degree programs will collectively increase the number of legal professionals licensed to practice law on and around the Navajo Nation.

Leeds said they focused on Navajo Nation law because its legal system is special. The tribe has been able to retain traditional law and legal systems.

"It's very impressive," Leeds said because, over the last century, the Navajo Nation has held on to those foundational laws while many other tribes have not had the same experience.

She said that is why it was important for the Navajo Nation to take the lead on their collaboration with the ASU law school, which provides a way for the tribe to continue to retain and grow their body of laws significantly.

"I really think that this model that we've mapped out could really be replicated with other tribes and other universities," Leeds said.



The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's 8th grade class of 2024 gathers by the chickees in the school's culture area May 24.

Beverly Bidney

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School honors eighth graders as they head to high school

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — By the time Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students finish eighth grade, they are accustomed to the K-8 school's familiar classrooms and hallways.

On May 24, 18 members of the class of 2024 walked those hallways for the last time as middle school students. In the fall they will attend high school, most of them at Moore Haven High School or Okeechobee High School.

Before the traditional walk, PECS's annual eighth grade awards ceremony was held in the gym for students and parents. Principal Tracy Downing announced the school had been recognized by the state as a "School of Excellence," making it one of the top 20% in the state. She credited the students for their accomplishments, efforts and commitment to their education that helped the school earn the prestigious designation.

"As you move on to high school, you will be facing new challenges and opportunities that will shape your future," Downing said. "High school is a great place to explore your passions and discover new ones. High school is a time to learn, grow and make memories that will last a lifetime. Take advantage of all the opportunities that come your way and enjoy the ride."

Academic, citizenship and athletic accolades were awarded to top performing students, followed by the awards named for the three founding women of PECS: Louise Gopher, Lorene Gopher and Jennie Micco Shore.

Louise Gopher Award

Qualifications for a student to earn the Louise Gopher Educational Award for academic achievement include having attended PECS for three consecutive years, maintain a 3.5 or higher GPA, exhibit positive moral attributes, take pride in their studies while achieving excellence, be engaged and enthusiastic in academics and never give up, even when tasks are difficult to master.

Rita and Carla Gopher introduced the Louise Gopher award by showing a film about their mother's life. The award was presented to Eleanor Osceola.

Lorene Gopher Award

Qualifications for the Lorene Gopher Award for Cultural Achievement include attending PECS for three consecutive years, maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA in Seminole Creek language classes, be knowledgeable in Seminole culture, show enthusiasm and willingness to learn more about Seminole history and culture, display leadership qualities in school and in the community and believe culture should be present everywhere, not just the classroom.

Gopher's granddaughter Winnie Gopher introduced the Lorene Gopher award and presented it to Melaine Bonilla.

Jennie Micco Shore Award

Qualifications for the Jennie Micco



PECS' 8th grade winners of the Lorene Gopher, Louise Gopher and Jennie Micco Shore awards pose with families of the founding mothers and Jennie Micco Shore. In the front row, from left to right are Winnie Gopher, who is holding her niece Amaya Houze, Melaine Bonilla, Zooney Bowers, Jennie Micco Shore, Eleanor Osceola, Rita Gopher and Carla Gopher. In the back row, are TL Gopher, left, and Lewis Gopher Jr.

Beverly Bidney



PECS 8th graders greet teachers and students as they walk through the hallways on their last day at the school as students.

Beverly Bidney

Shore Award for Academic and Cultural Achievement include attending PECS for three consecutive years, maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA, work hard and strive for excellence in academic and Seminole Creek language classes, show enthusiasm and willingness to learn more about Seminole history and culture and exemplify Seminole Creek virtues: Eyasketv- to be humble, Vnokeckv-to be loving, Mehenwv- to be truthful, Kvcvcpkv- to be meek, Vrakhueckv-

to be respectful/honoring.

Shore, who is part of the Immersion School, has worked in education since 1949 and helped lay the guidelines and framework of PECS. She presented the award to Zooney Bowers.

After the awards ceremony, the students walked through the school's hallways, which were lined with students and teachers applauding their accomplishments.



Jaelee Weimann greets kindergarten kids as they congratulate her on her last day at PECS.

Beverly Bidney

CNAY announces fellows for 'Remembering Our Sisters' program

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON —The Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) is proud to announce the 2024 cohort of the Remembering Our Sisters Fellowship, a virtual storytelling and digital arts program that supports individuals with a demonstrated commitment to raise awareness about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S+) epidemic.

The Remembering Our Sisters Fellowship equips Fellows with tools, resources, and a platform to advocate for increased visibility and action to end the

MMIWG2S+ crisis and advance policies to end violence against Indigenous women and girls. Through this six-month program, Fellows create digital art and digital storytelling projects that bring attention and awareness to this critical issue.

"We are honored to welcome the 2024 Remembering Our Sisters Fellows into our CNAY family," said Cheyenne Brady, Associate Director of Youth Programs. "By uplifting their voices through the arts, these young leaders are fueling the powerful and relentless movement that is working to protect our Indigenous sisters, daughters, and relatives."

The 2024 Remembering Our Sisters

Fellows are:

- Sage Chief (Oglala Lakota and Diné)
- McKaylin Peters (Menominee Nation)
- Linaly Miyamoto (Coast Salish Cowichan)
- MarLynn Cloud (Apsáalooke Nation)
- Christina Kaltsukis (Yakama)
- Summer Wildbill (Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation)

The Fellowship kicked off with the 2024 Remember Our Sisters Week, where the new cohort came together virtually to discuss their goals, learn from one another,

and hear from influential women working to address the MMIWG2S+ epidemic.

Throughout the Fellowship, participants receive stipends, technical assistance, mentorship, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and a platform to share their projects. By amplifying the voices and stories of these young leaders, CNAY aims to drive meaningful change and honor the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit individuals affected by this ongoing crisis.

For more information about the Remembering Our Sisters Fellowship and the Center for Native American Youth, visit CNAY.org.

Immokalee Preschool graduates ready to take next step

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — The graduates of the Immokalee preschool seemed to run away with the circus May 23 as they received their diplomas in the festively decorated, circus-themed community center.

The families of the 10 graduates watched the children as they said the pledge of allegiance in English and Elaponke, performed a few songs and listened to tribal leaders speak to them before receiving their diplomas.

Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie complemented the young graduates on their performance before giving them some sage advice.

“You have a lot of confidence today,” Councilwoman Billie said. “Continue to be confident and always be proud of yourselves.”

President Holly Tiger thanked parents and family members for taking the time from the work day to support the children by attending the graduation.

“I see their excitement, just look at these expressions,” President Tiger said. “It’s a hard job to raise kids, they don’t come with an instruction manual. Just support them, they need us and we need them.”

Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers said teachers are the superheroes in



Proud graduate Amiliana Guerrero smiles at family members as she walks down the aisle at the Immokalee Preschool graduation May 23.

the classroom

“Preschool is such a special time filled with fun, learning and growth,” said Rep. Bowers. “Never be afraid to try new things.”

Immokalee Council Liaison Jaime Yzaguirre thanked the preschool teachers, staff and the student’s parents for doing such a great job.



The class of 2024 receives congratulations from, left to right, Immokalee Board liaison Rafael Sanchez, Immokalee Council liaison Jaime Yzaguirre, President Holly Tiger, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers.



Performing a few songs at their preschool graduation May 23 are, from left to right, Amias Guerrero, Elena Felton and Amiliana Guerrero.



Graduate Manuel Garza Jr. is embraced by his aunt Demi Garza at the graduation.



Immokalee Board liaison Rafael Sanchez shakes preschool graduate Elias Frank’s hand as Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers looks on.



Grandma Marianna Cardenas gives Khaleesi Cardenas a congratulatory hug after the graduation.



Jenna Billie and her brother Joah.

At 12, Jenna Billie prepares to enter first year of high school

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — A typical summer for most 12-year-olds might be playing video games and maybe thinking about starting sixth or seventh grade.

Jenna Billie is not a typical 12-year-old, nor will her summer be typical for her age.

Jenna will be tackling a college course in geometry – at age 12 – and preparing to enter high school this August – at age 12, making her perhaps the youngest ever from the Seminole Tribe to attend high school.

The daughter of Jennifer and Jonah Billie was deemed gifted at age 3 when she scored in the top two percent of an IQ test which earned her way into Mensa, a worldwide organization for bright people.

Nearly a decade later, the straight-A student is still far ahead of her peers, which is why she’ll be a 12-year-old freshman at NSU University School in Davie with a full course load of honors classes.

She’s been attending University School since grade four, and she’s long accustomed to being in grades with older kids. So she doesn’t view entering high school at such a young age as daunting. When she spoke to the Tribune in early May, she was more concerned about her upcoming finals, which she said can be overwhelming.

“It’s usually at the end of the year, and I have seven finals. When it’s all done, yippee,” she said.

The good news for Jenna is that she loves studying, and, as her mother says, she loves to learn.

“Her biggest hobby is reading. She always has a book in her hand,” Jennifer

said. Fantasy and fiction are at the top of her favorite genres. She’s also an excellent artist and she speaks Spanish, which comes in handy for conversations with her grandmother, who is from Cuba.

She doesn’t have her head stuck in a book 24 hours day. Recreationally, she likes bowling and playing games at Dave & Buster’s.

Jenna is setting a good example in academics for her younger brother, Joah. He’s 10 and finishing up grade four at University School. He hasn’t jumped ahead in classes, but he does have excellent grades, and loves history and math – especially division.

“I like learning new things,” he said.

He’s also a sports fan with basketball and the Miami Heat being his favorites. Similar to his sister, he also scored high on an IQ test when he was three or four and made it into Mensa.

Jennifer and Jonah encourage other parents who might have a child who exhibits high learning comprehension for their age to get tested or delve into resources offered by the tribe.

When Jenna first learned the alphabet and was reading words and easy books before other kids her age, they researched what to do.

“She was in VPK for one week, and they were like, what is she doing here. She knows everything that we have to teach her,” Jennifer said.

“It’s OK if your child is not interested in what the norm is; sometimes you have to think outside the box. We never push [our kids]. We always try to understand their point of view.”

College Fund partners for Native Arts

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The American Indian College Fund announced May 21 new efforts to enhance Native arts curriculum development programs at six tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). Each of the participating TCUs will receive \$100,000 to enrich their curricula by integrating Indigenous education values and incorporate Native knowledge, language, and cultural practices. The six participating TCUs and their programs are:

Ilisagvik College, Barrow, Alaska

Northwest Indian College, Bellingham, Washington

Salish Kootenai College, Pablo, Montana

Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Stone Child College, Box Elder, Montana

United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck, North Dakota.

Presented By Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Background Art by Elgin Jumper.

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◆ **BC PRESCHOOL**
From page 1B



The Big Cypress Preschool class of 2024 proudly stand on the stage for the graduation ceremony in the Ahfachkee gymnasium May 14.

Beverly Bidney



From left to right, Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers, Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Board President Holly Tiger and preschool center manager Andrea Jumper congratulate graduate Xylianna Rose Gutierrez as she receives her diploma.

Beverly Bidney



The Big Cypress graduating class performs a song for friends and family before the graduation ceremony. In center, with her arm up, is Lucianna Tiger.

Beverly Bidney

GRAD WALK
From page 1B

"You have worked hard to reach this point and you should be proud of all you have accomplished," Downing said. "Now is the time to take what you have learned and apply it to the real world. You will face challenges, setbacks and uncertainties along the way, but remember that these are opportunities for growth and learning. Life is a series of moments and it's important to savor each one. Celebrate your successes, learn from your failures and cherish the relationships you build along the way."

The graduates, wearing caps and gowns from their high schools – Okeechobee and Moore Haven – delighted in the attention and seeing each other again. The walk is meant to be an inspiration for current students.

"I'm so proud of you," said Nancy Jimmie, Brighton Education K-12 advisor assistant. "We have almost 100% graduation rate in Brighton. We want to see you all succeed."

The graduates have a variety of plans for the future including college, the military and trade schools. After posing for a few group photos, the graduates said another goodbye before they departed.



Former PECS students, now high school graduates from the class of 2024, gather in the school's gym before the annual grad walk

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney

PECS alumni in the high school class of 2024 gather before taking to the hallways of their elementary and middle school alma mater May 17 for the traditional grad walk.

From left to right, high school graduates Eric Puente, Nena Youngblood and Cece Thomas are joined by PECS principal Tracy Downing, far right, during the school's annual grad walk May 17.

Hollywood Preschool graduates soar to new heights

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Hollywood Preschool graduation program featured an “Out Of This World” theme, including a space ship journey around the solar system.

Students performed space-related songs, including “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” “Space Race,” “Eight Planets,” and “Climb Aboard the Spaceship” on May 10 at the Seminole Estates clubhouse. A slideshow highlighted the class’s school year and showed the students participating in different school activities and learning tribal culture.

Before the graduating class received their diplomas, Board President Holly Tiger and Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall spoke to the students and parents.

“We’re always here for you, all your tribe is here. We are here to support you in everything that you do, so just ask for help whenever you need it,” Rep. McCall said.

President Tiger also congratulated the class on its accomplishments and reminded the students and families that there will always be support educating tribal youth.

Graduates Charlie Stewart and Daniel Josh were awarded the Outstanding Student Award.



The class of 2024 Hollywood Preschool graduates gets ready to say goodbye during their graduation ceremony May 10 at Seminole Estates clubhouse in Hollywood.

Calvin Tiger



Hollywood Preschool graduates Kenzley Gentry, left, and Luis Escobar walk to the stage before they receive their diplomas May 10 at the Seminole Estates clubhouse.



Hollywood Preschool graduate Alcie Bowers receives her diploma and shakes hands with Board President Holly Tiger as Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall and tribalwide Preschool Director Tommy Doud offer their congratulations, too.

Calvin Tiger



Calvin Tiger

Preschool graduate Norrin Noah says a few words in the Elaponke language at the graduation ceremony.

Brighton Preschool graduates shine in the limelight

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Nineteen four-year-old preschool graduates proved they could put on a show before they received their diplomas from the Brighton Preschool on May 17.

The Florida Seminole Veterans Building was crowded with family and friends as the graduates recited the pledge of allegiance in Creek and English, sang a few songs and came out in costumes depicting various professions, numerous superheroes and one astronaut, who read a book to the audience. It was an ambitious, but successfully executed, program for these young graduates.

Before they received their diplomas, dignitaries spoke to the youngsters, including Brighton Councilman Larry Howard who told them he has known them from when they were babies.

“Grow up and go on to higher education,” Councilman Howard said. “Your parents and teachers will get you on the right path. Parents, cherish your little ones with everything you’ve got.”

Board President Holly Tiger noted that this ceremony is the children’s first big milestone.

“Make sure you pay attention and listen to your teachers,” President Tiger said. “Parents, our children are the best of us. Please show them respect, honor and trust.”

Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge asked the graduates if they were ready for “the big school”, to which they all answered



Beverly Bidney

Proud grandma Emma Urbina holds her three graduating grandsons. From left to right are Nathan Gopher, Sam Gopher-Santibanez and Zwaylo Orozco.



Beverly Bidney

Jaxxon Gopher celebrates receiving his diploma.

with an enthusiastic “yeah!”

“These kids are our future,” Rep. Arledge said. “Parents, it all starts with you.

Guide them and be there for them.”

As the graduates went backstage to put their caps and gowns on over their colorful

patchwork clothing, parents were treated to a slide show of baby pictures. Then they joined the children on their walk down the aisle to receive their diplomas.

The graduates will attend Pema yetv Emahakv Charter School for pre-K in the fall.



Beverly Bidney

Preschool graduate Rosalie Tommie-Runkles helps her class sing an animated song at the graduation ceremony.



Beverly Bidney

Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and President Holly Tiger celebrate with the Brighton Preschool class of 2024 after the ceremony May 17.

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Sports



Kevin Johnson

Evangelical Christian School players erupt as Keaunna Green scores the winning run in the Class 2A state championship May 22 in Clermont.



Kevin Johnson

Seminoles on the 2024 state championship Evangelical Christian School softball team are, from left to right, front row: Angelina Yzaguirre and Riley Yzaguirre; back row, Paiton Billie-Alvarado, Haydn Billie-Alvarado and Paizley Billie-Alvarado.

Evangelical Christian wins state softball championship on Paiton Billie-Alvarado's walk-off hit

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

CLERMONT — Facing a hard-throwing pitcher in the FHSAA Class 2A state championship softball game, Evangelical Christian School employed a strategy to try and capitalize whenever a slower pitch was delivered.

For six innings, the strategy struggled to materialize as the Fort Myers school mustered just one hit against University Christian-Jacksonville ace Sophia Kardatzke.

But ECS's patient persistence finally paid off thanks to the Seminole Tribe's Paiton Billie-Alvarado. In a dramatic moment for the eighth grader and her team, Billie-Alvarado chopped a single over the head of University Christian's third baseman with one out in the seventh inning. As the ball rolled into no-man's land along the left field line, speedy Keaunna Green, who had reached on a bunt, scored from first base to give ECS a thrilling 1-0 late afternoon win May 22 at Legends Way Ball Field in Clermont.

Billie-Alvarado said she knew Green has the speed to make things happen. But it was up to Billie-Alvarado to advance her; she did more than that. She delivered the walk-off hit that won the state championship.



Kevin Johnson

Paiton Billie-Alvarado delivers the game-winning hit to give ECS the Class 2A state championship.

"I was trying for the changeup. I was really anxious," said Billie-Alvarado, who batted fifth in the order and was in the designated player spot.

ECS players bolted from the dugout and

celebrated with Green at home plate before darting to third base, where they mobbed Billie-Alvarado, who wound up at the bottom of a joyous pile.

ECS coach Johnny Manetta said Billie-Alvarado made the most of a starting opportunity this season when she replaced an injured player.

"All she has done is bat close to .500 and hit double after double after double. She has a tremendous future. The kid has incredible hand-eye coordination," Manetta said.

ECS generated the better scoring chances throughout the game, including twice getting runners to third base and, in the fifth, Samantha Yzaguirre reached second via a walk and steal.

ECS senior standout Zoe Yzaguirre battled Kardatzke in an instant classic pitchers' duel. Yzaguirre threw a complete game no hitter — her third in a row — with 11 strikeouts. Only two University Christian players reached base — one on a first inning infield error and the other on a fourth inning walk.

Yzaguirre is not tribal, but she is the teammate and aunt of tribal member sisters Angelina Yzaguirre and Riley Yzaguirre.



Kevin Johnson

ECS celebrates with the Class 2A championship trophy.

Other tribal members on the team include Paiton Billie-Alvarado and her sisters, Paizley and Haydn.

Haydn is in line to move up to the top pitcher's spot next season with the departure of Zoe Yzaguirre.

"[Haydn] had a tremendous year," Manetta said. "She struck out almost 100 batters in 60-some innings. She'll be the No. 1 and we look forward to her being in the circle next year. She's very good. She's had a very good tutor in front of her in Zoe."

When ECS needed defense, it rose to the occasion, namely Green, who was sharp at shortstop, and centerfielder Kylie Shaw, who ran down and caught a deep fly ball that would have gone for extra bases in the second inning.

ECS finished its season with a 28-2 record. Players said afterwards that the championship was their

toughest game against a foe which beat them a year ago in the championship.

"This means a lot to our team. We came here last year and we lost to (University Christian). Coming here and beating them means a lot; we're losing a lot of seniors, too," Angelina Yzaguirre, a sophomore, said.



Kevin Johnson

Angelina Yzaguirre, center, and Riley Yzaguirre are introduced during pregame announcements.



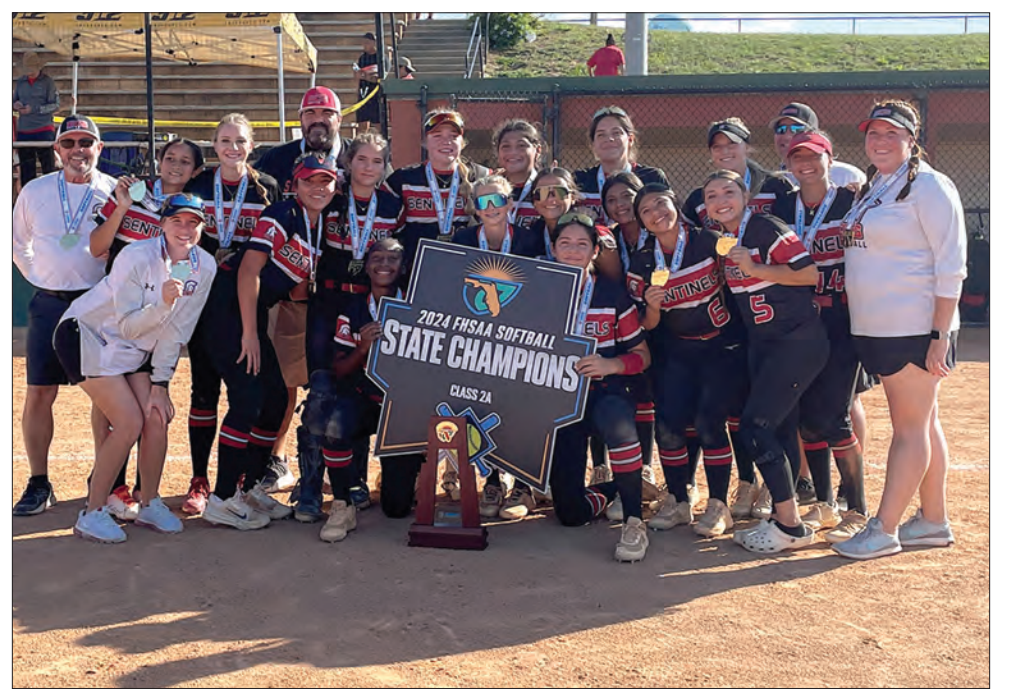
Kevin Johnson

Angelina Yzaguirre, left, and Samantha Yzaguirre proudly wear their medals.



Kevin Johnson

Emotions fill ECS moments after winning the state championship.



Kevin Johnson

The 2024 Class 2A state champions Evangelical Christian School.

PECS student-athletes receive awards, praise

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School honored its student athletes at the annual end of the school year athletics sports banquet May 15 at the Florida Seminole Veterans Building.

Athletes and coaches in JV volleyball, varsity volleyball, co-ed soccer, the pep squad, boys basketball, girls basketball and softball were honored. Team awards were given to all players and individual awards were given for Most Valuable Player, offensive and defensive players of the year, most improved player, rookie of the year and the Seminole award in each sport.

PECS principal Tracy Downing told the students what they have done as student athletes is remarkable.

“Your dedication to sports, academic excellence and well-roundedness is truly commendable,” Downing said. “As you continue to pursue your athletic and academic goals, remember that the skills and values you have cultivated through sports will serve you well in all aspects of life. You have already proven that you have what it takes to succeed.”

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard grew up with former professional baseball player Charles Johnson and said no one had any idea Johnson would become a major league catcher for the Florida Marlins and other teams from 1994 to 2005.

“I see our future here,” Councilman Howard said. “We never know what someone will do in their life. You never know where your journey will take you. Everyone here gave it their all; you have put this school on the map.”

PECS Athletics Director Jovanny Torres told the students this was one of the best groups the school has had since he has been there.

“We want the high schools to see that PECS players are ready for the next level,” Torres said.

After the awards were handed out, Downing recognized the coaches as the backbone of the teams.

“The coaches are the unsung heroes who give up their precious time and work tirelessly to guide and inspire others toward greatness,” Downing said. “Coaches are mentors, leaders and role models who cultivate character, instill discipline and foster a sense of unity among their players. Their dedication is nothing short of extraordinary and we owe them our utmost respect and gratitude.”



BOYS BASKETBALL Individual Awards: From left to right are Logan French, Damahni Bonilla, Amani Billie and head coach Preston Baker.



GIRLS BASKETBALL Individual Awards: From left to right are head coach Jovanny Torres, Cordelia Snell, Eleanor Osceola, Jalene Smith, Kulipa Julian, Zoie Foster-Snow, Azariah Washington and assistant coach, Amanda Julian.



SOFTBALL Individual Awards: From left are coach Mallorie Thomas, Rosalie Jones, Caysie Platt, Kulipa Julian, Jalaaya Hunsinger, Dyani Kayda, Melaine Bonilla and coach Elle Thomas. Both coaches are PECS graduates who came back to coach..



VOLLEYBALL Individual Awards: From left to right are coach Suraiya Smith, Zoey Bowers, Meleah Billie, Bobbi Johns-Osceola, Jaelee Weimann, Caysie Platt, Jaiden Fludd and coach Monica Koger.



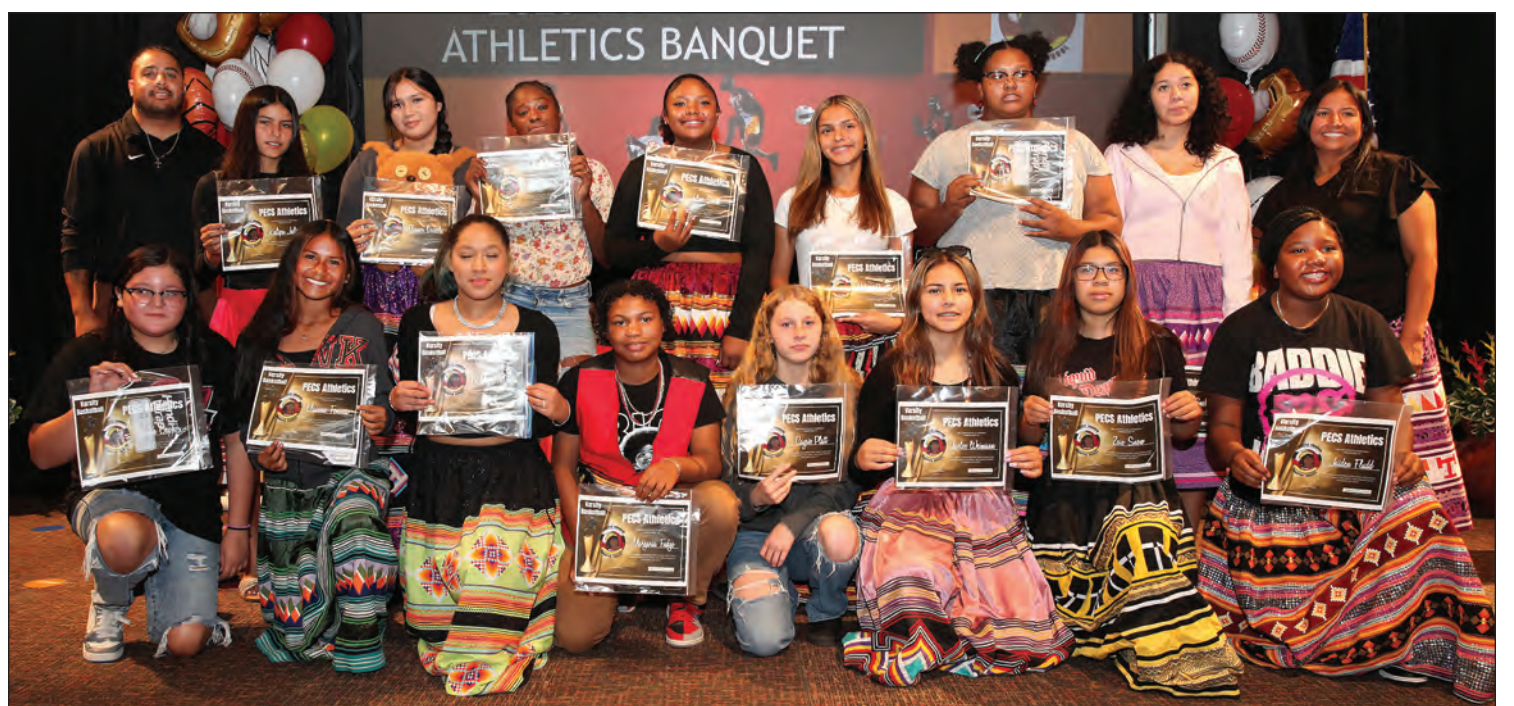
CO-ED SOCCER Individual Awards: From left to right are assistant coach Marci Garcia, Troy Billie, Jenna Huff, Alanna Pritchard, Josephine Snow, Ross Jones, Amalia Estrada and head coach Amber McKinney.



JV VOLLEYBALL: The junior varsity volleyball team with coaches Monica Koger and Suraiya Smith.



PEP SQUAD: The Pep Squad with coaches Brianna Nunez, left, and Deanna Nunez at far right.



GIRLS BASKETBALL: Standing at left is head coach Jovanny Torres, the team and at far right standing is assistant coach Amanda Julian.



BOYS BASKETBALL: The boys basketball team with coach Preston Baker, far right.



COACHES: From left to right are softball coaches Elle Thomas and Mallorie Thomas, girls basketball assistant coach Amanda Julian, volleyball coaches Suraiya Smith and Monica Koger, Pep Squad coaches Deanna Nunez and Brianna Nunez, PECS athletic director and girls basketball coach Jovanny Torres and PECS principal Tracy Downing.



SOFTBALL: The softball team with coaches Mallorie Thomas, far left, the team and Elle Thomas, far right.

Alana Cypress delivers dramatic hit as Western goes on to win 7A state championship

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Alana Cypress produced a lot of hits – more than 100 – in her four years as a varsity starter for the Western High School softball team in Davie, but none was as memorable as her final one.

With her team's season just one out away from being ended in a state semifinal, Cypress came through in an ultra-high pressure situation and delivered a walk-off two-run single in the bottom of the eighth inning that gave Western a dramatic 4-3 extra innings win against Jupiter on May 24 at Legends Way Ball Fields in Clermont.

The following day Western won the Class 7A championship, 2-0, against Seminole High School from Sanford.

"That hit was the biggest hit of my softball career because if I didn't hit our season would've ended," Cypress said.

Cypress is not Seminole, but she is the daughter of tribal member Jason Cypress, who works in the Seminole Tribe's Public Works Department in Hollywood. Western had strong teams in all four of her years, including 2023 which ended with an upset loss to eventual state champion Spanish River in a regional quarterfinal.

Entering this season as a senior co-captain, Cypress was confident her team would rebound.

"I thought we should've won it last season, so this season I knew we had the talent to win. I had 100% confidence we would win it," Cypress said.

After an outstanding regular season, Western earned the No. 1 seed in its region and cruised to comfortable wins in its first two state tournament games but needed extra innings to edge Park Vista in a regional final.

In the state semifinal, Cypress already



Alana Cypress with the state championship trophy and her parents, Syreeta and Jason.

had two hits in the game when she came to the plate with her team trailing 3-2. With runners in scoring position, Cypress said she felt comfortable that she could bring in one

run to tie it.

"In my mind, I just was thinking I know I'm going to hit one run in to tie it up. I didn't know both of them (would score), but I knew I was going to come in clutch," she said.

Cypress's hit came on an inside screwball with a 2-1 count.

"I was just thinking if it's a strike, swing; and lay off her rise ball," she said.

The hit vaulted the team into the championship where Western ace Ali Solo fired a two-hit shutout with nine strikeouts and her team scored the only runs it would need in the fifth inning.

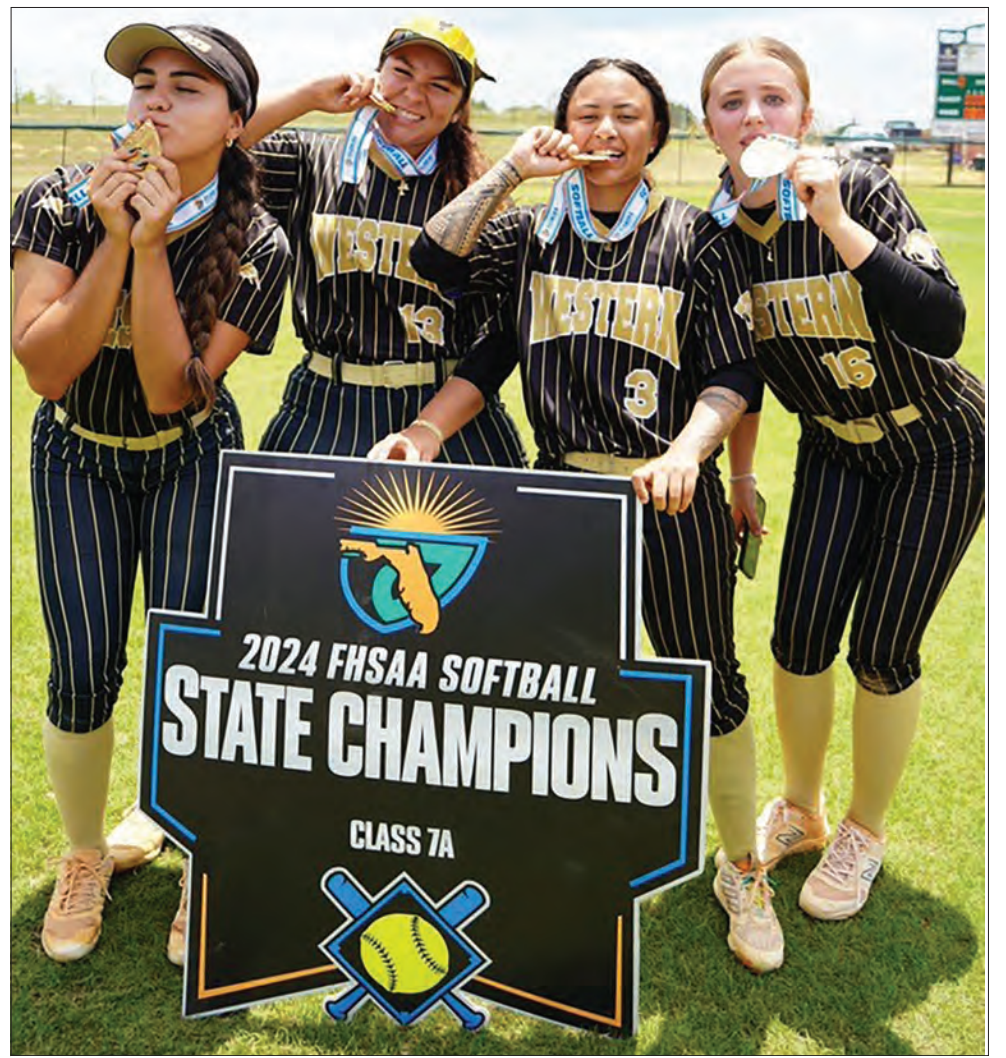
"The championship game was a pitchers' game. I knew we'd eventually score runs and that's what we did and played clean defense," Cypress said. "We were all just so happy that we finally did it and beyond proud of each other."

Western finished with a 27-4-1 record. The championship victory was the program's second; the first came in 2018. Cypress served as the team's sparkplug as the leadoff batter and right fielder all season. She batted .340 with a team-high 35 hits, which included eight doubles, one triple, one home run and 16 RBI.

The next phase of Cypress's softball career will be in Daytona Beach where she'll attend Bethune-Cookman University. Bethune is a Division I program. Cypress is unsure what her major will be, but she would like to become a firefighter after college.

Wherever her path takes her, she'll always have memories to treasure from the 2024 season and the hit that saved the team's season.

"I feel like this year's team we all just were a big family with the same goal and there are eight seniors including me, so we all wanted to go out with winning a championship," she said.



Alana Cypress (No. 3) and three of her Western teammates celebrate after winning the Class 7A title.

PECS From page 2C

2023-24 PECS Sports Award Winners

JV volleyball

MVP- Jaiden Fludd
Offensive POY- Bobbi Johns-Osceola
Defensive POY- Jaelee Weimann
Seminole Award- Caysie Platt
Most Improved- Meleah Billie
Rookie of the year- Zooney Bowers

Varsity volleyball

MVP- Azariah Washington
Offensive POY- Melaine Bonilla
Defensive POY- Amalia Estrada
Seminole Award- Ciani Smith
Most Improved- Kulipa Julian
Rookie of the year- Elanor Osceola

Girls basketball

MVP - Azariah Washington
Offensive POY - Kulipa Julian
Defensive POY - Jalene Smith
Seminole Award - Eleanor Osceola
Most Improved - Zoie Snow
Rookie of the year - Cordelia Snell

Boys basketball

MVP- Amani Billie
Offensive POY- Logan French
Defensive POY- Milo Osceola
Seminole Award- Lliam Berry
Most Improved- Damahni Bonilla
Rookie of the year- Storm Osceola

Soccer

MVP - Amalia Estrada
Offensive POY - Ross Jones
Defensive POY - Josephine Snow
Seminole Award - Dominic Gaucin
Most Improved - Jenna Huff
Rookie of the year - Troy Billie

Softball

MVP - Melaine Bonilla
Offensive POY - Rosalie Jones
Defensive POY - Kulipa Julian
Seminole Award - Dyani Kayda
Most Improved - Caysie Platt
Rookie of the year - Jalaaya Hunsinger



CO-ED SOCCER: The co-ed soccer team with assistant coach Marci Garcia, far left, and head coach Amber McKinney, far right.



JV VOLLEYBALL Individual Awards: The JV volleyball team award winners are, from left to right, Zooney Bowers, Meleah Billie, Bobbi Johns-Osceola, Jaelee Weimann, Caysie Platt and Jaiden Fludd.



From left to right, American Heritage's middle school track and field athletes Annora Osceola, Eliza Osceola-Thomas and Mailanie Doctor receive awards at the team's end of season gathering May 9 in Plantation.

American Heritage middle school track and field athletes from tribe earn honors

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

PLANTATION — A trio of Seminoles received well-earned recognition at American Heritage School's awards ceremony for the middle school track and field team.

Sixth grader Mailanie Doctor, eighth graders Eliza Osceola-Thomas and Annora Osceola, and their teammates were honored during a program May 9 in the school's student center.

All three student-athletes received participation awards. Doctor also received the Quiet Storm Award. Heritage coach Nagelah Cohen praised Doctor for not shying away from entering field events.

"I asked her to give the field events a try; she did. I showed her how to do the shot put, how to do the javelin, and how to do the discus, and she actually placed in a lot of the events," Cohen said.

Doctor excelled immediately. In the team's first meet of the season at Calvary Christian Academy on March 7, Doctor finished in second place in shot put with a toss of 9.13 meters, which was close to the

state qualifier mark of 9.25 meters.

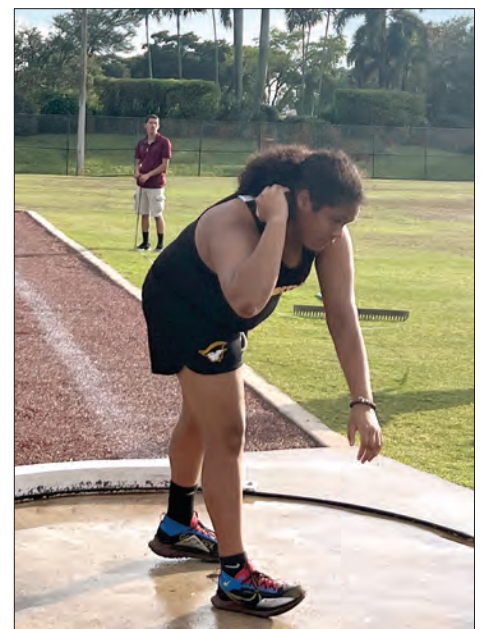
Osceola-Thomas established herself as one of the team's fastest runners. Cohen said "the fastest" would often be between Osceola-Thomas and another teammate.

"I would ask them, 'Which one of you is the fastest?' It would go back and forth," she said.

Similar to Doctor, Osceola-Thomas barely missed hitting a state qualifying mark in the Calvary Christian meet. Osceola-Thomas finished 7th in the 100 meter dash with a personal record of 13.89 seconds, less than one second off the state qualifying mark of 13.00.

Osceola-Thomas continued to put up impressive numbers the rest of the season in sprints and relays, placing in the top three in several meets. She finished first in a meet with a time of 14.13 seconds. She also placed in the top three in the 200 and 400, and 4x100 relay. In the 400, her personal best 64.37 seconds was less than two seconds from the state qualify mark of 62.70.

Cohen said Annora Osceola didn't place in any events, but that she did well in a variety of distances, including the 100, 200, 400 and 4x400 relay.



Mailanie Doctor, a sixth grader, competes in discus throw for the American Heritage middle school track and field team.

NABI games to air on Arizona sports network

FROM ARIZONA FAMILY

PHOENIX — Arizona's Family Sports network will broadcast Native American Basketball Invitational games this year.

"Arizona's Family Sports is proud to add NABI to our programming lineup, which also includes the Phoenix Suns, Mercury, Phoenix Rising, and AIA high school championships," said Debbie Bush, VP and

general manager of Arizona's Family. "We are excited to bring NABI to even more sports fans across Arizona and learn more about NABI's mission and accomplishments off the court as well."

This year, more than 200 teams applied to compete in the tournament and a record-breaking 196 will participate from more than 180 Tribal Nations. Pool and bracket games will be played at Grand Canyon University and at various Valley high schools but

the final four teams in the boys' and girls' divisions will play at the Footprint Center in downtown Phoenix, home of the Suns and Mercury.

"Not only will this give more of our athletes the chance to play in this iconic arena, but it will allow more people the opportunity to come and cheer them on—or watch from home," said NABI President GinaMarie Scarpa.

NABI will be held July 22-27.

Young Moore Haven squad shines in postseason

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

NAPLES — Seeded No. 7 in its region, the Moore Haven High School softball team wasn't expected to make much noise in the playoffs.

But the Terriers found their groove at the plate and upset two higher ranked opponents on the road to reach the Class 2A regional final.

Moore Haven reached double digits in runs 10 times in the regular season and kept their production going in the playoffs.

After eliminating Admiral Farragut in regional quarterfinal, 10-4, in St. Petersburg, Moore Haven received a big day from Seminoles in a 16-9 regional semifinal win against Seacrest on May 14 in Naples.

Pitcher/outfielder Preslynn Baker belted a two-run home run and had five RBIs, shortstop Carlee Osceola smacked three hits and drove in four runs and third baseman Teena Maree Covarrubias delivered three hits and three RBIs. All three players hit the ball hard in all of their at-bats.

Baker was the starting pitcher. She moved to center for a few innings while eighth grader Brooklyn Sargent took over, and then returned to the circle for the final inning.

Moore Haven trailed 5-1 early but didn't panic.

"It was wonderful. It was awesome. They played their butts off," said Moore Haven coach and tribal member Preston Baker. "They did all the work themselves. I'm proud of them."

Others from the tribe on Moore Haven include players starting first baseman Tahnia Billie, Jayleigh Braswell, Halley Balentine and team manager Willo James.

The Terriers were one of only two teams in the entire state this postseason to reach a regional final being seeded outside of the top



The Moore Haven High School softball team with Seminoles, from left to right, head coach Preston Baker, Halley Balentine, Neska Blissett (United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians), Tahnia Billie, team manager Willo James, Jayleigh Braswell, Preslynn Baker, Carlee Osceola and Teena Maree Covarrubias.



Carlee Osceola makes solid contact against Seacrest Country Day in a Class 2A regional semifinal May 14 in Naples.



Moore Haven third baseman Teena-Maree Covarrubias applies a tag.

four (No. 7 Pembroke Pines Charter in Class 5A was the other).

Even though their season ended three days later with a regional final loss to Evangelical Christian School, this year's postseason experience for the Terriers should help next season when nearly all of the team will be back; Hayden Davis was the team's only senior.



Moore Haven first baseman Tahnia Billie makes a long stretch to record an out.



After moving from the pitcher's circle to centerfield, Moore Haven's Preslynn Baker makes a tough catch with shortstop Carlee Osceola also in pursuit.



From left to right, Carlee Osceola, Tahnia Billie, Preslynn Baker and Teena Maree Covarrubias have plenty of reasons to smile during Moore Haven's regional semifinal win.

Moore Haven, ECS meet in playoff game loaded with Seminoles

STAFF REPORT

FORT MYERS — In a game that featured 11 Seminoles in uniform, Evangelical Christian School ousted Moore Haven, 14-0, in a Class 2A softball regional final May 17 in Fort Myers.

Moore Haven has six players who are tribal members while ECS has five.

Paiton Billie-Alvarado was the star of the night as she went 3-for-3 with one RBI and three runs scored. Angelina Yzaguirre

and Riley Yzaguirre each scored one run.

Moore Haven's bats were strong for most of the season, but the Terriers struggled against ECS pitching. In the regional final, Moore Haven was held hitless by Zoe Yzaguirre.

It marked the fourth meeting between the teams this season; ECS won all three matchups in the regular season by comfortable margins.

The loss ended Moore Haven's season with a 15-10 record while ECS advanced to the state final four in Clermont.



ECS's Paiton Billie-Alvarado takes a lead off third base with Moore Haven's Teena Marie Covarrubias close by during a Class 2A regional final May 17 in Fort Myers.



ECS's Riley Yzaguirre safely slides into home plate as Moore Haven's Preslynn Baker receives the ball.

Josiah Johns Memorial Rodeo to be held in Brighton

STAFF REPORT

BRIGHTON — The Josiah Johns Memorial All-Indian Rodeo will be held July 12-13 at the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena on the Brighton Reservation.

Up first will be the adult rodeo July 12 at 7 p.m. The schedule includes bareback riding, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, tie down roping, ladies breakaway roping, team roping, ladies barrel racing and bull riding.

On July 13, the kids rodeo will be held at 6 p.m. and feature dummy roping, mutton busting, youth pony riding, pony riding, jr. bareback riding, calf riding, steer riding, jr. bull riding, chute doggin, jr. breakaway roping and barrel racing.

For more information call (863) 254-7871.

Strong showing by Calgary Johns in Texas rodeo

STAFF REPORT

Calgary Johns continues to produce impressive performances in barrel racing this season.

Johns, from the Brighton Reservation, competed in the Resistol Rookie Roundup rodeo April 26-27 at the Cowtown Coliseum in Fort Worth, Texas. The rodeo was broadcast on the Cowboy Channel.

Johns started off on a high note in round one by finishing with the third fastest time

out of 15 racers. Her time was 13.82 seconds and she earned \$982 in prize money.

In round two, her time of 13.73 placed her fifth as she just missed making the final four.

Oceane Veilleux, of Quebec, Canada, won the Rookie Roundup finals and earned \$2,500. Veilleux is No. 1 in the overall Resistol Rookie standings, having earned more than \$24,000. She placed 12th at the Brighton Field Day Festival in February.

The Rookie Roundup featured first year Women's Professional Rodeo Association

(WPRA) and Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association (PRCA) card holders. They vied for \$100,000 in purse money.

As of May 30, Johns was in 14th place in the WPRA rookie standings in barrel racing with earnings of nearly \$2,800.

Some of her other top finishes in recent months include first place at the Junior Cypress Memorial All-Indian Rodeo, second place at the Bill Osceola Memorial INFR Tour Rodeo; third place at the Country Way Town Square Pro Rodeo; and fifth place at the Brighton Field Day.

MMA fighting to be held at Hard Rock Live

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD -- The Professional Fighters League's global season playoffs will be held Aug. 16 at Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. Start time is 5:30 p.m. For ticket information, visit myHRL.com.

According to PFL, it's the only organization in MMA with a sports-season format, where individual fighters compete in a regular season, playoffs, and championship each year.

Student-athlete leadership seminar offered in July

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Florida Student-Athlete Leadership Seminar will be held July 16 at Faith Christian Academy in Orlando and July 18 at Santaluces High School in Lantana. The first session of each conference will begin at 9 a.m. and the seminar will last until 1 p.m.

The one-day seminar offers student-athletes an opportunity to develop leadership skills so they can be a positive influence in their school, teams, and communities.

Cost is \$32. Lunch will be provided. For more information visit fhsaa.com/sports/2020/3/16/Awards_SLS.aspx or contact Quinten Ershock at qershock@fhsaa.org or (352) 372-9551 ext. 190.

Stillaguamish Tribe partners with University of Washington athletics

FROM PRESS RELEASE

ARLINGTON, Wash. — The Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians and its Angel of the Winds Casino Resort announced May 6 a multi-year partnership with University of Washington Athletics as the official casino resort partner statewide for the Huskies.

"This is a dynamic alliance that not only represents a significant milestone for our casino resort but also for Huskies fans and the wider community. We believe this is a great opportunity to share the Stillaguamish Tribal history and culture that has been in this area since time immemorial," Eric White, chairman of The Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, said in a news release.

The partnership provides Angel of the Winds Casino Resort with exclusive marketing and promotional rights across the University of Washington's athletic programs. This includes high-visibility branding at Husky Stadium, Alaska Airlines Arena, and other athletic facilities, as well as a strong presence during game broadcasts and various digital platforms, according to the release.

Angel of the Winds' investment with UW Athletics was approved by the Stillaguamish Tribe, and the partnership will highlight the legacy, culture, and traditions of the Stillaguamish People to UW student-athletes, alumni, and fans. The investment also includes access for Stillaguamish Tribe members and their families to attend UW home games, youth camps and clinics.

Python Challenge coming to Everglades in August

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Florida Python Challenge will run Aug. 9-18. It is now open. Participants will have a chance to win a share of more than \$25,000 in prizes for removing invasive Burmese pythons from the wild, including the Everglades.

The competition is open to both professional and novice participants. Online training is required.

According to the state, last year's challenge removed 209 invasive Burmese pythons from the Everglades and drew more than 1,000 registrations.

For more information visit fpythonchallenge.org.

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Must present ad at time of arrival to receive offers. Some customers may not qualify. On select in-stock models. See dealer for details. All offers expire month end. Not valid on previous purchases. May not combine with other offers. *In lieu of any additional discounts. **With approved credit. Payments may be deferred for first 90 days through dealer preferred lender. Interest accrues from inception/contract date. See dealer for complete details.



ED MORSE CADILLAC

S A W G R A S S



NEW 2024 CADILLAC
XT4
LUXURY

\$399
LEASE FOR PER MONTH

36 Months • \$3,319 Due At Signing

With approved credit. Must finance with Cadillac Financial. On select in-stock models. 36 month lease, 10k annual miles. \$3,319 down, \$0 security. Plus tax, tag, title, first payment and fees. For Current Lessees of 2019 model year or newer select GM vehicles. May not combine with other offers. See dealer for details. Expires month end.



NEW 2024 CADILLAC
LYRIQ
TECH

EXCEPTIONAL SAVINGS UP TO
\$10,000

COURTESY TRANSPORTATION VEHICLE

With approved credit. Some customers may not qualify. On select in-stock models. Example: New 2024 Cadillac Lyriq, STK#R2116432. Courtesy Transportation Vehicle with less than 2K miles. Plus tax, tag, title, first payment and fees. Must qualify for all rebates and incentives. May not combine with other offers. See dealer for details. Expires month end.



ED MORSE SAWGRASS

BUICK • GMC



NEW 2024 BUICK
ENCLAVE

LEASE FOR **\$239** PER MONTH


With approved credit. Some customers may not qualify. On select in-stock trims. 24 month lease, 10k annual miles. \$3,999 down, \$0 security. Plus tax, tag, title, first payment and fees. Must qualify for all rebates and incentives. May not combine with other offers. See dealer for details. Expires month end.



NEW 2024 GMC
SIERRA MODELS

SAVE UP TO **20% OFF MSRP**

With approved credit. Some customers may not qualify. On select in-stock models. Example: New 2024 Chevy Silverado 1500 Crew Cab, STK#R2219856. Plus tax, tag, title, first payment and fees. Must qualify for all rebates and incentives. May not combine with other offers. See dealer for details. Expires month end.



ED MORSE SAWGRASS

CHEVROLET



NEW 2024 CHEVY
SILVERADO MODELS

SAVE UP TO **20% OFF MSRP**

With approved credit. Some customers may not qualify. On select in-stock models. 27 month lease, 10k Miles, \$0 security, \$4,699 down, 1.9% APR financing for up to 36 mos, \$28.60 per \$1,000 financed monthly. Plus tax, tag, title, first payment and fees. Must qualify for all rebates and incentives, including GM lease loyalty and conquest. May not combine with other offers. See dealer for details. Expires month end.



NEW 2024 CHEVY
BLAZER EV

LEASE FOR **\$299** PER MONTH

With approved credit. Some customers may not qualify. On select in-stock models. 36 month lease, 10k Miles, \$0 security, \$4,995 due at signing. Plus tax, tag, title, first payment and fees. Must qualify for all rebates and incentives. May not combine with other offers. See dealer for details. Expires month end.

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2021 MAZDA CX-5 SPORT FWD	STK# PB198608A	\$19,499
2021 TOYOTA C-HR LE FWD	STK# PJ340967M	\$19,899
2019 CHEVROLET SILVERADO 1500 LD	STK# RG133708B	\$20,899
2022 BUICK ENCORE GX SELECT FWD	STK# 3RB017872A	\$21,499
2019 CADILLAC XT4 FWD PREMIUM LUXURY	STK# 2RZ731761B	\$21,999

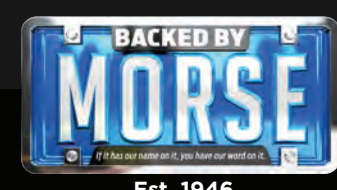
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Jim Thorpe honored with Presidential Medal of Freedom

BY KOLBY KICKINGWOMAN
(Blackfeet/A'Anih)
Indian Country Today

One of the greatest athletes of all time, Jim Thorpe, racked up a number of achievements over the course of his career.

Now, posthumously, the Sac and Fox Nation and Potawatomi citizen is being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom; the nation's highest civilian honor.

Recipients of the medal are "individuals who have made exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavors," a press release from the White House stated.

Thorpe joins an exclusive list of Native people to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In 2019, Suzan Shown Harjo, Cheyenne, Hodulgee Muscogee received the medal from then President Barack Obama; Louise Cobell, Blackfeet; and Billy Frank Jr., Nisqually, are among other Native recipients over the years.

Discussing the recipients in opening remarks, President Joe Biden called Thorpe a "one-of-a-kind champion" and said his grandfather used to tell him stories of Thorpe when he was growing up.

"I grew up always hearing about Jim Thorpe. I'm serious, as the greatest athlete, not just the greatest ball player; the greatest athlete of all time," Biden said. "He [Biden's grandfather] talked about them all the time."

Jim Thorpe showcased unparalleled athleticism and he transcended racial barriers through the power of perseverance, sheer will and determination," Biden added.

The medal was accepted by Thorpe's oldest living grandchild, Lynn Hannon.

Wa-Tho-Huk or Bright Path, Thorpe's Sac and Fox name, perhaps is best known for his performance at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden.

Thorpe dominated the pentathlon and decathlon, winning the gold medal in each event by a wide margin and becoming the first Native American to win Olympic gold. However, it should be pointed out, American Indians were not considered citizens until 1924 when then-President Calvin Coolidge signed a bill in June of that year.

His performance was so exemplary at the 1912 games, King Gustav V did not mince words when congratulating Thorpe on his win.

"You, sir, are the greatest athlete in the world. I would consider it an honor to shake your hand," Gustav V said after placing two gold medals around Thorpe's neck.

Controversy struck a year later when the International Olympic Committee stripped Thorpe of his medals after it was discovered he had been paid to play professional baseball. Ultimately, in 1982, replicas of his medals were returned to his family but it wasn't until July 2022 that the official Olympic records recognized Thorpe as the sole gold medal winner.

In the official announcement of the



Jim Thorpe

record change, Thomas Bach, president of the IOC, said the solution was reached "thanks to the great engagement of Bright Path Strong."

"This is a most exceptional and unique situation, which has been addressed by an extraordinary gesture of fair play from the National Olympic Committees concerned," Bach said at the time.

Bright Path Strong is a nonprofit organization created "to share and amplify authentic Native American voices and stories, past and present," its website states.

A Jim Thorpe biopic, "Bright Path: The Jim Thorpe Story," is in the works through the organization.

The White House press release called Thorpe "the country's original multi-sport superstar," as he excelled in football, baseball and basketball "while breaking down barriers on and off the field."

He is enshrined in both the college and pro football halls of fame and he served as the first president of the American Professional Football Association, which would eventually become the National Football League.

Thorpe was also recognized by the Associated Press as the greatest athlete and the greatest football player of the first half of the 20th century, leaving an indelible mark on what would become America's biggest sport.

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Laguna Pueblo, posted on X (formerly Twitter) that Thorpe "was an icon and a hero to all."

Haaland thanked President Biden in the post for recognizing Thorpe and congratulated all of the recipients.

In 1953, Thorpe died of a heart attack and was buried in a Pennsylvania town that bears his name.



White House

On behalf of her late grandfather, Jim Thorpe, Lynn Hannon receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Joe Biden on May 3.

June calendar for Native Learning Center

FROM NATIVE LEARNING CENTER

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

Webinar: Admissions & Occupancy Series

Instructor: Cheryl A. Causley, Principal Cheryl A. Causley and Associates
Date: June 3-7, 2024
Time: 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Training Description:

Admissions & Occupancy is a 5-day interactive webinar series designed to enhance the job performance of admissions and occupancy staff and other tribal housing professionals working on admissions and occupancy issues.

This course will cover admissions and occupancy program management with topics to include the application and selection process, eligibility for housing assistance, calculating annual income, determining monthly rental or homeownership payments, occupancy standards, collections practices and compliance, effective communication techniques with residents, lease agreement compliance, and collections. The course will also examine how maintaining high standards in the admissions and occupancy program affects the overall management of tribal housing programs.

Note: Participants are encouraged to have a calculator on-hand.

Training Objectives:

- Recognize NAHASDA requirements for establishing policies describing rent, insurance, admissions & occupancy, maintenance, inspections, conflict of interest
- Identify key provisions of NAHASDA that apply to admissions and occupancy
- Learn how family income levels and other program requirements determine eligibility for NAHASDA assistance

Hoporenkv Native American Podcast Release: "Get Your Hands Dirty: Dig into Gardening for National Gardening Week"

Special Guest: Krystle Bowers (Seminole Tribe of Florida)
Climate Resiliency Policy Coordinator
Heritage and Environment Resources Office

Seminole Tribe of Florida
Date: June 5, 2024
Time: 12 p.m. EST

Join us as we celebrate National Gardening Week with a Native American perspective! We'll show you how to cultivate a thriving garden while honoring the land that sustains us all.

We sit down with Seminole Tribe of Florida Member and Heritage and Environment Resources Office Climate Resiliency Policy Coordinator Krystle Bowers. We discuss her journey growing her organic home garden, the Big Cypress Community Garden coming to fruition, and helpful steps and advice that listeners can benefit from when starting their own gardens. Learn about the importance of native vs invasive plant species, the sacredness of food sovereignty, and the joy of eternal trial and error in the life of gardening.

Webinar: What's the Wi-Fi Code? An Update on Internet Accessibility in Indian Country

Instructor: Marie Bonville, Tribal Housing and Education Consultant
MPA, C2EX, ePro, REALTOR®
Sunlight Armour Training, LLC
Date: June 12, 2024
Time: 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Training Description:

Join us as we discuss internet accessibility and how Tribal Housing can help. This webinar will review the current state of the digital divide in Native Communities and highlight the specific challenges Tribal Governments face to improve broadband infrastructure.

Training Objectives:

- Highlight case studies and best practices from successful initiatives aimed at improving internet accessibility
- Examine the unique challenges faced by Tribal Governments and organizations

♦ HEALTH From page 9A

"Learning their perspectives was invaluable," Cosby said. "Seeing the problems they face on a daily basis firsthand, it opens your eyes to the world of medicine I'll be stepping into."

Cosby said an unexpected part of her rotations in school was seeing how Native doctors took the time to sit and listen to their patients.

"It really means a lot to folks when



in enhancing broadband infrastructure and connectivity

-Gain insights into how internet connectivity positively impacts Tribal Communities across various sectors such as education, healthcare, economic growth, and cultural preservation

Webinar: Strategies for Navigating Change with Your Tribal Department Staff 2

Instructor: Lisa Perez, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Human Resources Consultant
Founder & CEO, HBL Resources, Inc.
Date: June 13, 2024
Time: 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Training Description:

Change creates new demands and challenges for employees. Top performing organizations expect everyone at all levels to share in leadership responsibilities, to take the initiative, and to ride the waves of change necessary to improve performance. This session helps participants navigate the troubling challenges of dealing with uncertainties of change.

Training Objectives:

- Understanding and acknowledging our own reactions to change
- Assessing the impact of the change and potential resistance to changes
- How to effectively seek and acknowledge others' reactions to change
- How to take position action individually and with others as you navigate change

Note: This is Part 2 of a 2-part series. Even if you missed Part 1, this session's recording is available on our Kerretv Webinars website.

Webinar: Closer Look: Tribal HUD-VASH and Addressing Homelessness Supportive Services for Native American Veterans

Instructor: Marie Bonville, Tribal Housing and Education Consultant
MPA, C2EX, ePro, REALTOR®
Sunlight Armour Training, LLC
Date: June 18, 2024
Time: 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Training Description:

The Tribal HUD-VASH (Housing and Urban Development - Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) Program is a collaborative program that aims to provide housing assistance and supportive services to Native American and Alaska Native Veterans who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Let's take a closer look at the program and its wide range of support services found in Indian Country.

Training Objectives:

- Explore the range of supportive services offered to Native Veterans enrolled in the program, including case management, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and other resources
- Understand the importance of case management in the context of the Tribal HUD-VASH program, including its role in helping Veterans access healthcare, employment assistance, and essential resources
- Discuss the significance of collaboration between Tribal housing authorities, the VA, and local service providers to create culturally response to delivering supportive services to Native American Veterans

Webinar: Native Business Counseling 101

Instructor: Russ Seagle, Executive Director
The Sequoyah Fund, Inc.
Date: June 20, 2024
Time: 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Training Description:

If your organization works with small businesses or if you are just looking for a way to grow your local economy, this webinar will give you a step-by-step process for help small business owners (or prospective owners) be all they can be and get the most out of their venture. You may be an experienced business owner yourself, an educator, economic developer, lender, investor, or just a concerned citizen. Whatever your expertise or comfort level, this webinar can help you and your clients enjoy a smooth and productive relationship.

Training Objectives:

- Identify the unique challenges and

opportunities faced by small business owners

- Recognize the diverse needs of small businesses at different stages of development
- Create a systematic approach to support small business owners in their journey
- Outline key steps for establishing and growing a small business

- Equip participants with effective strategies for providing support to small businesses

- Improve communication skills to better understand and address the concerns of small business owners

- Provide tools and resources to empower small business owners in maximizing their potential

- Foster a mindset of resilience and adaptability among small business owners

- Explore techniques for building strong and productive relationships between support providers (educators, lenders, investors, etc.) and small business owners

- Emphasize the importance of collaboration and mutual understanding

- Train participants to customize their guidance based on the specific needs and goals of each small business

- Develop the ability to provide personalized advice that aligns with the unique circumstances of different ventures

- Prepare participants to handle common challenges and questions that small business owners may encounter

- Develop effective responses to frequently asked questions related to entrepreneurship

2024 NAIHC Annual Convention & Tradeshow

Date: June 24-27, 2024
Exhibitor Booth

We at the Native Learning Center are excited to announce our participation as exhibitors at the 2024 NAIHC Annual Convention & Tradeshow. As a program supported by the Indian Housing Block Grant and associated with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Native Learning Center is dedicated to offering free Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) to Native Americans and those working within Indian Country. At the convention, we look forward to engaging with community leaders, housing professionals, and advocates who are passionate about improving tribal communities through enhanced housing practices. We encourage you to stop by our booth to learn more about how our offerings can benefit your community, register for free training sessions, and discuss potential collaborations. We're excited to meet each of you, share knowledge, and together, advance the housing practices that support thriving Native communities. Join us in making a positive impact!

Webinar: Independent Contractors VS Employees: Are You Misclassifying Your Workers?

Instructor: Lisa Perez, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Human Resources Consultant
Founder & CEO, HBL Resources, Inc.
Date: June 27, 2024
Time: 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Training Description:

This session explores the crucial distinctions between 1099 independent contractors and W-2 employees, highlighting the risks of misclassification. Gain insights into legal criteria, identify potential risks, and learn practical strategies to ensure accurate classification and compliance with labor laws.

Training Objectives:

- Understand Legal Distinctions: Learn the key legal factors differentiating independent contractors from employees
- Identify Risks: Explore consequences and liabilities linked to misclassification
- Implement Best Practices: Acquire actionable strategies to accurately classify workers and ensure compliance

Follow the Native Learning Center on social media or visit www.nativelearningcenter.com to keep up-to-date. For technical assistance, feedback, or more information, please contact us through our website or call (954)-985-2331. The Native Learning Center values your input and welcomes your questions. Let us know what courses you and your community would like to see offered or if there are insights and lessons you and your community would like to share with others through the Native Learning Center.

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you just take that time to understand where they are coming from," she said. "We look at the patient as a whole and we realize that everything plays a part in their well-being. It goes way beyond medicine to help people live a better life."

In the days leading up to graduation, the Native graduates were honored with a ceremony. Representatives from five different tribes gave gifts to the aspiring doctors, such as a stole, sash or beaded stethoscope.

"In the spirit of your ancestors, you

have embraced the path of healing, not just for individuals but for communities and cultures," Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton told the graduates at the ceremony.

For Thompson, these are the types of moments she wants to hang onto when beginning her residency. She's staying in Tahlequah and working for a family medicine practice.

"I already feel like I've learned so much from this community," she said. "I'm excited to give back to it now."