

The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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Museum plans major redesign

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — After 27 years in existence, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will undergo a major redesign of its exhibition space over the next few years. Plans are being worked out now to tell more of the Seminole story beyond what it currently shows.

The process for the redesign has been underway since 2016 when the museum began asking the community about what they would like to see in its exhibits.

"We want to tell a complete story, not just from 1880-1920, but to tell who we are today and how we see ourselves," said Gordon Wareham, museum director. "We want to honor our heritage and acknowledge the Seminole Wars and the trauma our people went through to where we are today. That's what it means to be Seminole."

"This will give the community a perspective into what we do and how we are investing in preserving what is going on today and in the past, as well," said JoJo Osceola, assistant director. "We are able to tell our own story."

The exhibition space will be completely redone. The auditorium will become a flexible space for special events, meeting and films, but it will no longer be the starting point for visitors. Instead, they will enter the museum into the "Seminole Experience" area where they will view a much shorter video in a camp-like atmosphere.

◆ See MUSEUM on page 5A

Seminole Tribe's 'Zae' Thomas signs with Florida State Seminoles

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

PLANTATION — On Dec. 4, 2024, American Heritage School senior cornerback Greg Xavier Thomas became the first tribal member from the Seminole Tribe of Florida to sign a scholarship to play football for the Florida State Seminoles.

Thomas, who goes by Xavier and "Zae," signed while accompanied by his family and Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. during a ceremony for five Heritage players at the school. Thomas's family included his father Greg Thomas, who is a former Heritage football player, mother Alice Osceola, sisters Eliza and Cataleya, and grandmother S.R. Tommie.

The 6-foot-3, 190-pound Thomas grew up on the Hollywood Reservation; his family now lives in nearby Davie.

He will be headed to Tallahassee as a four-star recruit. He is the second Seminole to join FSU football. Wide receiver Justin Motlow, from Tampa, made the Seminoles as a preferred walk-on and played 2014-17.

Thomas will be joining a small group from the tribe who have played major NCAA college football; that group includes Motlow, Jarrid Smith (Florida Atlantic University) and Ivan Billie (Mississippi State).

Thomas said he's looking forward to representing the tribe at FSU.

"A lot of people looking up to me; that's something I need to keep in mind. That's extra special," he said.

Chairman Osceola said the signing was a big day for the tribe, but more importantly for Thomas and his family because it's the result of hard work.



Kevin Johnson

At American Heritage's signing ceremony on Dec. 4, 2024, are FSU-signee "Zae" Thomas, center, with his dad Greg and grandmother S.R. Tommie at the table. In the back, from left to right, are family friend Zack Lieberman, sister Eliza, mother Alice, sister Cataleya, and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr.

"He has the work ethic; I have no doubt," Chairman Osceola said. "I've seen him demonstrate it on the field over and over, and Florida State has recognized that

by asking him to come and play for them and go to school."

◆ See SIGNING on page 5C

Tribal students attend Intertribal Ag Council Youth Conference

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Ahfachkee School 11th graders Aiyana Crespo, Kaydence Green and Alice Jimmie attended the 2024 Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Youth Conference in Las Vegas Dec. 10-12, 2024. The trio was accompanied by Ahfachkee English teacher Dr. Rona Olukolu.

One of the IAC's missions is to educate and empower Native youth. The organization was founded in 1987 to pursue and promote the conservation, development and use of agricultural resources for the betterment of Native people.

In response to the growing age gap in the agriculture industry, IAC prioritizes youth and young adult programs. The youth program offers leadership development opportunities such as internships, fellowships and apprenticeships, plus technical assistance to support youth agricultural endeavors.

The conference opened each day with a flag procession of youth and young professionals followed by a general session,



Courtesy photo

From left to right, Ahfachkee English teacher and chaperone Dr. Rona Olukolu, Ahfachkee student Aiyana Crespo, IAC youth program director Elaini Vargas, former Board Rep. Joe Frank, Ahfachkee student Alice Jimmie, and Yolanda Jimmie attend the Intertribal Agriculture Council Youth Conference in Las Vegas.

speakers, panel discussions and workshops.

"The sessions looked at sustainable practices, how to get federal funding and take care of their own tribes," Dr. Olukolu said. "The message was to help youth understand they can sustain themselves."

Each student attending the conference submitted an essay about what they thought the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) can do for Indian Country. Prior to the conference, students were able to attend a webinar about the essay and learn about the TAC, whose role is to provide advice and guidance to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior on matters relating to Indian affairs.

In the information packet about the

essay, the IAC wrote that it believes the voice of youth is strong, passionate and informative and encouraged them to share their ideas with the TAC. The essays began with the students' personal experience and continued with suggestions they made to the TAC to help their tribes.

"The essay contest helped us learn about what IAC is, which is to continue the legacy of Indigenous agriculture," Crespo said.

During the conference, she met some interns who told her about all the resources available to students, including interning with the IAC. Crespo is interested in that possibility.

"One of them told me about a class she took about food and our culture; it changed how she looks at things," Crespo said. "Things people think are innovative have been done by Native Americans for ages."

During the conference, the students met Elena Terry, a Native American chef and founder of Wild Bearies, an educational outreach and mentoring organization that aims to bring ancestral foods to Native American communities. It also promotes traditional food systems and farming techniques.

Jimmie has a garden in her backyard where she grows squash, tomatoes, basil and other vegetables she uses in the kitchen.

"I kind of want to go into agriculture," she said.

The kids enjoyed the cold, Nevada winter weather and seeing the nearby



Courtesy photo

From left to right, Aiyana Crespo, Kaydence Green and Alice Jimmie during the flag procession.

mountains.

"The best thing was interacting with other Native Americans and comparing what they do to what we do," Crespo said. "It was fun being around people who understand."

She plans to stay in touch with the people she met at the conference, including some of the presenters who gave her their business cards.

"There are a lot of people who care about Indigenous agriculture," Green said. "I want to help my reservation. We learned about ways we can help by reaching out to

companies and organizations."

The students now have a greater understanding of Indigenous agriculture and how it impacts Native American tribes.

"From panel discussions to personal interactions with experts, every aspect of the 2024 IAC Youth Conference is designed to inspire young minds, amplify their voices and equip the next generation as champions for agriculture across their own Tribal communities." IAC youth program director Elaini Vargas wrote in an email to the Tribune.



Courtesy photo

Aiyana Crespo, left, and Alice Jimmie, right, meet Chef Elena Terry at the IAC conference.

Editorial

• Deb Haaland

Here are the prepared opening remarks by Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland on Dec. 9, 2024, during the Biden-Harris administration's fourth White House Tribal Nations Summit at the Department of the Interior.

Greetings Tribal leaders, elders, community members, friends, and colleagues – and happy White House Tribal Nations Summit!

Thank you so much to the Native American Women Warriors Color Guard for the beautiful presentation of colors. Thank you to the Warpaint Drummers out of North Carolina for the songs and for guiding us through this day. And thank you for that opening prayer, David. I'm so honored to have each of you with us for today's event.

Early on in my tenure as secretary – when this building was unfamiliar and the road ahead packed full – I knew one thing for sure: that while my role as secretary was new, my intentions for Indian Country were not.

I knew that it was my job – our job – to achieve enduring progress for our people with the time we were given.

January marks the 50th anniversary of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act – a seminal law that gave Tribes the right to administer and oversee the implementation of their own federal programs.

50 years of asserting that Tribes have the right to make decisions about the well-being of our own people. It gave us the power to chart much of our own course and to decide how our people could best thrive after generations of relocation, termination, boarding schools, underfunding, and neglect.

That Act was written into our country's lawbooks only after the federal government was swayed to action by gamechangers whose indisputable and unflinching activism spoke, clear and loud and unified: We are still here.

Well, my friends and family – a half-century later, we are still here, charting our own course. And together, with the Biden-Harris administration, we have made extraordinary accomplishments for Indian Country – progress that would make our trailblazing ancestors proud.

Transitions are disruptive, regardless of how we might feel about one leader or another. That's true on Tribal councils, and it's true in Washington. We don't know what the future may hold, but what I want to focus on today is the enduring progress we have made – progress that, no matter what, cannot be taken away, as long as we continue to press our voice and our action forward.

We're going to talk a lot today about the damage caused by federal Indian boarding school policies, and – in spite of the trauma this brings up for so many of us in this room – I wouldn't have it any other way.

I launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative in my first few months in office. I didn't know then where it would lead us, but I knew that its purpose was long overdue.

Over the past three years, this Initiative has shed light on this horrific era of our nation's history, but it also led to our two-part investigative report, which found that the federal government took deliberate and strategic actions through boarding school policies to isolate children from their families and steal from them the languages, cultures, and traditions that are foundational to Native people.

It created The Road to Healing, a 12-community journey for Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland, for our dedicated colleagues, and for me. Our visits to Indigenous communities gave survivors and descendants opportunities to share their boarding school experiences and the aftermath those schools left behind.

It also led to the creation of our oral history project. So many of you spoke bravely and forthright during The Road to Healing about the horrors you endured, or the trauma that was passed down over generations. Those stories must continue to be told.

That's why, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Mellon Foundation, we engaged the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition to help create an oral collection of first-person narratives from boarding school survivors.

Today, I am so proud to announce new agreements between the Department, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, and the U.S. Library of Congress that will preserve these survivor stories and experiences and share them through far-reaching resources, such as online, and both traveling and long-term exhibitions.

That is enduring progress. And because of this work, and because

of us, President Biden formally apologized for this brutality. He stood on Tribal land, he listened to our songs, and he honored us with his words.

As we heal from our past, we have worked to change the way the federal government engages with Indian Tribes. That includes enhanced involvement in land management decisions.

Over the past four years, our Administration has made co-stewardship of our lands and waters a top priority. While the concept is not new, the Biden-Harris administration is the first to make it a strategic priority for the health of our ecosystems and the durability of Tribal sovereignty.

Today, our Department is publishing our third Tribal co-stewardship annual report, which outlines the details of 69 new agreements from this year alone.

You'll hear me talk more about this in our afternoon panel, but here's the number I want to underscore. Between the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce Departments, our Administration has entered into 400 co-stewardship agreements with Tribes that span across our entire country.

Since time immemorial, ancestral homelands have been central to the social, cultural, spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.

Through this unprecedented number of co-stewardship agreements, the Biden-Harris administration demonstrates our commitment to acknowledge and empower Tribes as partners in the management of our nation's lands and waters. These agreements have become foundational to our work.

Add to that, the Tribally-led conservation efforts that we followed through on and that President Biden supported, like Avi Kwa Ame and Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monuments.

That is enduring progress.

We've also made quick work of delivering historic funding from President Biden's Investing in America agenda to projects that support Tribes and their access to critical resources. One area that I am deeply proud of is our effort to fulfill settlements of Indian water rights claims, long-promised water resources to Tribes that depend on them for resilience and long-term planning.

For those of you who have engaged in these settlement negotiations, you know they are long overdue. But even after the arduous process of negotiation, many Tribes have waited several more years to find financial resolution.

Thanks to President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, our Department was tasked with implementing an historic 2.5 billion dollars through the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund.

This work has never been more important, and today I am excited to announce a nearly 65-million-dollar investment that will help fund nine different settlements. This marks our final Indian water rights settlement allocation – meaning our team has exhausted every last dollar provided to us from the Law.

That is enduring progress.

Our expansive investments in Indian Country – to the tune of 45 billion dollars – will undeniably build a better future that our kids and grandkids will inherit.

But to build a better future for Indigenous peoples, we can't only rely on the federal government doing its job. We need to expand access to capital for Tribes to invest in their people, and on their terms.

We have talked in previous summits about access to capital. With tools like the Buy Indian Act, our Department has had an outsized impact on improving the funding that Tribes and Native business leaders receive. This past year alone, Interior awarded over 1.4 billion in contracts to Indian-owned and controlled businesses – up from just 317 million in Fiscal Year 2019.

Now, it's time to raise the bar even higher.

In partnership with Native Americans in Philanthropy and our colleagues at the Departments of Commerce, Treasury, Agriculture, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, today we applaud the launch of the Tribal Community Vision Partnership.

Over the next seven years, the Vision Partnership will raise and deploy 1.2 billion dollars in impact for Tribal communities – a historic effort that will support priorities like community development, new clean energy opportunities, and support for Native small businesses.

Now more than ever, these types of partnerships and allyship will be needed. By working together with partners in the philanthropic and private sector, I know we can support the advancements that have been made over the last four years to support Tribes' self-determination and their right to govern and grow on their own terms.

♦ See HAALAND on page 3A

Presidential Greetings



Courtesy photo
Santa Claus joined current President Holly Tiger, center, and former presidents, from left to right, Tony Sanchez Jr., Mitchell Cypress, Moses Osceola and Richard Bowers Jr.

STOF to host Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The 7th annual Seminole Tribe of Florida Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference will be held Jan. 27-29 at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood.

The conference “will focus on the

newly changing landscape for Tribal energy development and sustainability, including best practices, federal leadership, policy and regulatory changes, funding a project, and project planning/development trends.”

Tribes and First Nations will have the opportunity to learn about renewable energy

and sustainability and how to implement them. There will be presentations on various subjects like resources for energy projects, resource development, design and construction, funding and more.

The agenda is available at nativelearningcenter.com.

Senate's passage of children, families bill earns praise

BY KEVIN JOHNSON Senior Editor

Native child welfare officials praised the U.S. Senate's approval of the Supporting America's Children and Families Act on Dec. 20, 2024.

The National Indian Child Welfare Association hailed the approval as a significant victory for Native children and families.

“This legislation is critically important to Native children and families who are in

tribal or state child welfare systems,” said Sarah Kastelic, executive director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), in a statement. “It increases funding for tribal child welfare programs and courts, reduces administrative burdens, closes a gap in data collection for Native children and families who are in state child welfare systems, and requires the Department of Health and Human Services with the assistance of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to provide needed technical assistance to states and tribal nations to improve implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act. We are

very grateful for all of the tribal and larger child welfare community support and the engagement of House and Senate leadership to get this legislation across the finish line.”

The bill has also received support from the American Bar Association. After the bill passed the House earlier this year, the ABA described it as “a victory for lawyers and other legal professionals who have long pushed for reforms to ensure greater access to justice for children, parents, and families.”

The bill heads to President Biden, who is expected to sign it.

NICWA conference to be held in Orlando

STAFF REPORT

The National Indian Child Welfare Association's (NICWA) Protecting Our Children Conference will take place in Orlando from March 30 to April 2. Registration is open.

Themed “Honoring the Sacred,” the conference will offer keynote speakers, workshops, networking and immersion in Native culture. Topics range from trauma-informed care to ICWA compliance.

“This year's theme ... celebrates the enduring value Indigenous peoples place on their children, families, and traditions. It

emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the interconnected relationships between all elements in our world,” a NICWA release said.

There is a virtual option as well. Early bird registration discounts end Jan. 31. Visit nicwa.org/conference/ for more information.

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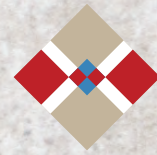
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CORRECTION

Bailey Marie Osceola Latchford's first name was incorrect in a photo caption on page B1 in the printed edition of the December 2024 Tribune.

Community



Concerts, car and bike show highlight Immokalee festival

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — Rockabillaque Florida, billed as the biggest festival of its kind in Florida, will celebrate mid-century and 1950s Americana with concerts, a car and bike show, burlesque shows, contests and more Jan. 18 at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee. The festival is free and open to all ages. A kick-off party will be held Jan. 17 in Zig Zag Lounge.

For more information, visit flocks.com.

Rockabillaque schedule

Friday, Jan. 17: Zig Zag Lounge, Kick-Off Party
 Doug Deming & The Jewel Tones 7 to 8:30 p.m.
 Burlesque Show: Miss Natrix's Ritz Glitz Revue 8:30-9 p.m.
 Shanda & The Howlers 9-10:30 p.m.
 Burlesque Show: Miss Natrix's Ritz Glitz Revue 10:30-11 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 18: Main Outdoor Stage
 Hillbilly Hellcats 11-11:45 a.m.
 Mozy Dee 12:15-1 p.m.
 The Surfaralettes 1:30-2:15 p.m.
 Contest: Tattoo, multiple categories & prizes 2:15-2:45 p.m.
 Southern Culture On The Skids 2:45-3 p.m.
 Contest: Beard & Moustache multiple categories & prizes 3:30- 4 p.m.
 The Bellfuries 4-4:45 p.m.
 Les Greene & Swayzees 5:15-6 p.m.
 Contest: Miss Rockabillaque Pin-Up 6-6:45 p.m.
 Pokey LaFarge 6:45-7:30 p.m.
 The Rhythm Shakers 8-9 p.m.
 Classic Car & Vintage Bike Show 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 Vendor Market 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 18: Zig Zag Lounge
 Jeff Vitolo & The Quarter Mile Rebels 1-2 p.m.
 The Patina Turners 2:30-3:30 p.m.
 Thee Stillnites 4-5 p.m.
 Little Rachel 5:30-6:30 p.m.
 Sasquatch and the Sick-A-Billys 7-8:30 p.m.
 CM Wolf And The Backbones 9-10 p.m.
 Burlesque Show: Miss Natrix's Ritz Glitz Revue 10- 10:30 p.m.; 11:30-12 a.m.
 Koffin Kats 10:30-11:30 p.m.
 Slip & The Spinouts 12 a.m. to 1 a.m.



FSU's Native American Indigenous Studies Center

Kevin Johnson

Seminole, Miccosukee tribes to participate in symposium

STAFF REPORT

Florida State University will host "Two Tribes of Florida: A Shared Environment," a symposium featuring tribal members from the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, and others. The event is a partnership with the tribes and FSU's Native American Indigenous Studies Center.

A reception will be held at 6 p.m. on Jan. 16 at the Florida Historic Capitol Museum in Tallahassee. Registration is encouraged.

The symposium will run from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Jan. 17 at FSU's Miller Hall. According to the event's website, the symposium will explore issues that the tribes face, including how their history is presented, how their cultures are maintained, and how they have maintained an essential role in guiding the state into the future.

The symposium is free and open to the public. It will conclude with a celebration of Seminole artist Erika Deitz's painting "Osceola Vision" from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the student union.

For more information, visit nais.fsu.edu/TwoTribesSymposium.

Symposium agenda

Friday, Jan. 17
 Miller Hall (DeVoe L. Moore Center at FSU)
 8:30 a.m. Coffee and Registration
 9 a.m. Welcoming remarks (Dr. Andrew Frank, Director of NAIS Center)
9:15 a.m. Tribal Stewardship of the Environment of Florida (Chaired by Dr. Kathleen Powers Conti, FSU History Department)
 • Michelle Diffenderfer, Esq. (President and Shareholder, Lewis Longman Walker, representing Seminole Tribe of Florida)
 • Edward R. Ornstein, Esq. (Deputy General Counsel & Tallahassee Embassy Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida)
10:15 a.m. Everglades Restoration (Chaired by Dr. Eren Erman Ozguven, Director of Resilient Infrastructure and

Disaster Response Center, FSU College of Engineering)

• Tina Osceola (Executive Director of Operations, Seminole Tribe of Florida)
 • Kevin Cunniff (Chief Sustainability Officer, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida)

11:30 a.m. Indian Removal Era (Chaired by Dr. Christine Rizzi (FSU, History Department))

• Dave Scheidecker (Senior Historian Seminole Tribe of Florida)
 • Dr. Jason Daniel (Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida)

1:30 p.m. Indigenous Education (Chaired by Dr. Stacey Rutledge FSU, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies)

• Michele Thomas (Administrative Assistant Pema'yevt Emahakv Charter School, Liaison to Glades County School District, Seminole Tribe of Florida)
 • Lymarie Muniz (Chief Education Officer, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida)

2:30 p.m. Language Preservation (Chaired by Dr. Kristin Dowell, FSU, Art History)

• Diane Smith (Director of Brighton Reservation Culture Program, Seminole Tribe of Florida) & Francine Osceola (Director of Tribal Language Programs, Seminole Tribe of Florida)

• Sec. William "Popeye" Osceola (Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida)

3:45 p.m. Climate Change and Indigenous Knowledge (Dr. Tyler McCreary, FSU Department of Geography)

• Juan Cancel (Assistant Director, Seminole THPO) and Lonnie Billie (Cultural Advisor, Seminole Tribe of Florida)

• Betty Osceola (Judge & Everglades Advisory Committee, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida)
 4:45 p.m. Concluding remarks.

Dr. Vandhana Kiswani-Barley receives family physician executive award

BY TATUM MITCHELL
 Staff Reporter

Dr. Vandhana Kiswani-Barley, the Seminole Tribe's Health and Human Services leader, was honored in December 2024 by the Florida Academy of Family Physicians (FAFP) with its Family Physician Executive Award.

The award was "created to recognize exceptional leadership by a full-time family physician and for his or her role as a physician executive, this award is reserved for FAFP members whose executive skills in healthcare organizations have contributed to excellence in the provision of high-quality healthcare, demonstrating that family physicians can greatly impact the nation's health," according to a FAFP press release.

Kiswani-Barley has been with the Seminole Tribe for more than six years. She started in Big Cypress as a family physician and now serves the tribe as tribalwide executive director of Health and Human Services.

"Love it, enjoy it, just because it feels very meaningful, and that's very important to me. It's not about the money, it's more about the impact. ... And I continue to give back to my home country. So, I am also licensed in Jamaica. I do go back and give to the inner city for free. There'll be weekends where I will just fly to Jamaica, do a program for people who can't afford healthcare, and then come back," Kiswani-Barley said. "That's the most meaningful and impactful part of my position for choosing medicine, to give back."

She said her dad told her medicine is not the best way to make money, and she said that isn't the reason she wanted to do it. She knew she wanted to be a doctor to have the most impact on someone.

"Without health, you don't have anything, right?" she said.

After earning her undergraduate degree in mathematics at Boston University, she studied medicine at St. Matthew's

University in the Cayman Islands, researched at Johns Hopkins and attended State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical Center for her residency in Brooklyn, New York, where she was chief resident.

After her residency, Kiswani-Barley moved to Iowa, where she practiced for about two years and was the chief medical officer overseeing four clinics. She said when she first drove through Big Cypress, the rural setting reminded her of Iowa.

"[I] loved [my job in Iowa] because of the purpose it was for FQHC, a federally qualified health center, so all I saw was individuals who were destitute, had no money for healthcare, or were undocumented individuals that just didn't have access to healthcare. So, it was very meaningful," Kiswani-Barley said.

During her time with the tribe, she has become triple boarded. Along with her family physician board certification, she is board certified in pain management and obesity management. She was recognized in April 2024 by the FAFP Physician Leadership Academy for "her outstanding contributions to the field of medicine and her exemplary leadership in healthcare management," a FAFP press release said.

The organization praised "her dedication to promoting health equity and improving healthcare outcomes for tribal members has been widely recognized and appreciated."



FFPA

FAFP highlighted Dr. Vandhana Kiswani-Barley in a Facebook post.

◆ HAALAND From page 1A

That is enduring progress.

If you take nothing else from my remarks today, let me say again: the Biden-Harris administration has ushered in a level of enduring progress that no one can take away.

This is my last year to address this audience as Secretary of the Interior, and I want you to know that I leave here inspired. I leave empowered by all that we have accomplished together.

When I was a young kid – moving from city to city and coast to coast with my family for my dad's military career – our people were demanding something simple: a seat at the table; a voice in the decisions that affected us; our self-determination.

And because our people spoke up, stayed engaged,

and remained unwilling to accept the status quo, we are here and finishing up a monumental Administration where Indian Tribes had a true seat at the table.

Everything that we accomplished was real and tangible. A transition was inevitable and even though some of the future seems uncertain at this point – one thing is certain: we're not going anywhere!

But it's on each of us to stay here, to stay engaged, to refuse to let anyone threaten the enduring progress we have worked so hard to accomplish.

Like our ancestors who made previously unimaginable feats possible, we must never back down.

So – to my friends and family from far and wide here today and online – thank you for joining in what has been the most incredible journey of my life. Indian Country is better because of each of you.

Dawaa'e – Thank you all so much for welcoming me here today.

CHEERS TO NEW BEGINNINGS!

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Kelly Farrell

Daniel Tommie, from the Big Cypress Reservation, demonstrates the traditional dugout canoe woodworking method during the Swamp Heritage Festival celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the nation's first preserve in Ochopee on Dec. 7, 2024.

Swamp Heritage Festival celebrates continued Big Cypress Preserve access

BY KELLY FARRELL
Special to the Tribune

OCHOPEE — Big Cypress National Preserve celebrated its 50th anniversary with the return of the Swamp Heritage Festival just days after the National Park Service announced tribal and public access is to continue throughout the Preserve.

"This preserve is the heart of our living culture," said Talbert Cypress, chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and featured speaker at the festival.

The Swamp Heritage Festival was held in the preserve Dec. 7, 2024, in Ochopee with Seminole and Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida tribal members; park leaders and nonprofit members, among others.

Festivities included live music; speeches and storytelling; food vendors; lessons in archery; basket weaving by Linda Beletso; Daniel Tommie demonstrating the traditional woodworking style of the dugout canoe, and several other Everglades cultural activities.

"Let's enjoy the celebration of our shared Florida heritage and of this special place," said Cypress, whose family name offered yet another connection to the land.

The Swamp Heritage Festival is an event that has come and gone over the years, being on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic and then brought back in 2023 for the first time in six years, said Scott Pardue, chief interpretation officer at Big Cypress National Preserve.

Big Cypress Superintendent Thomas Forsyth and Cypress kicked off the event with remarks on the clear, sunny December day under a festival tent.

Cypress had traveled to Washington D.C. over the summer to fight for continued Seminole, Miccosukee and public rights within the preserve, he said.

"The proposed Wilderness Designation threatened our continued access to this sacred area," said Cypress.

The recent announcement of continued access to the preserve added significance to the celebration, he added.

Wilderness Designation is an environmental protective measure that has the common result of removing Indigenous people's access to their ancestral lands across the U.S., tribal advocates have said.

Proponents of the Wilderness Designation have included nonprofits such as South Florida Wildlands Association, National Parks Conservation Association and chapters of the Sierra Club.

The hard work Cypress and others put into preventing a Wilderness Designation in Big Cypress paid off for the tribes—much the way the advocates for the preservation of the land made way for the creation of the nation's first preserve when Big Cypress was first established by President Gerald Ford in 1974. Environmental advocates had pushed for the preserve's creation to prevent the construction of what could have become the world's largest airport—Everglades Jetport.

In response to more recent tribal efforts to protect Big Cypress, federal officials withdrew their controversial Wilderness proposal, Cypress said, to applause.

"You can't tell the story of Big Cypress without telling the story of the Miccosukee. It saved us along with the Everglades. That's why we're trying to save it," said school teacher and Miccosukee Business Council Secretary William "Popeye" Osceola.



Kelly Farrell

From left to right, Talbert Cypress, chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida; William "Popeye" Osceola, Miccosukee Business Council Secretary; and Thomas Forsyth, Big Cypress National Preserve Superintendent, celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the nation's first preserve, Big Cypress National Preserve, during the Swamp Heritage Festival held in Ochopee on Dec. 7, 2024.

The National Park Service had recommended a Wilderness Designation in Big Cypress National Preserve that had the intent of protecting land by preventing most vehicular traffic, structures and other activities, advocates reported. But the federal-level designation, which would require Congressional approval or denial, also would have limited and prohibited tribal and public access to as much as 25 percent of Big Cypress National Preserve's 729,000 acres, including tribal homes, ceremonial areas along Loop Road, hunting areas and other portions of Big Cypress National Preserve that are of particular cultural significance to Seminole and Miccosukee tribal members.

There are preferred management methods, other than Wilderness Designation, in Big Cypress National Preserve that could better protect endangered species, limit invasive species and prevent oil drilling, among other needs within the Preserve, said Cypress. These would include tribal involvement, he added.

The Swamp Heritage Festival brought members of the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes together; as well as Gladesmen, who have lived in the area for generations; park service personnel and nonprofit members, along with the general public.

Although relief and celebration came with the removal of the recommendation for Wilderness Designation within the Big Cypress National Preserve, according to the National Park Service's most recent Backcountry Access Plan, continued advocacy for access and tribal co-management is necessary, tribal members said.

"Wilderness Designation had been a mechanism to keep Indigenous people off lands," warned Osceola.

"We can't take our eye off it," he added. "We've had people fighting for this land for a longtime."

Osceola spoke of the importance of knowing history.

"If you know what was, then you know what should be," he said.

Summit addresses language revitalization plan, tribal self-governance

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

A 10-year national plan for Native language revitalization was released Dec. 9 at the 2024 White House Tribal Nations Summit from the Departments of the Interior, Education and Health and Human Services.

It outlines a government-wide plan to aid the "the revitalization, protection, preservation and reclamation of Native languages. The plan, a joint effort of the agencies, charts a path to help address the United States government's role in the loss of Native languages across the continental United States, Alaska and Hawai'i," according to a Department of the Interior press release.

The plan includes an investment of \$16.7 billion toward language revitalization

efforts and is part of the Biden-Harris administration's work to address forced assimilation and eradication of Native language and culture, according to a Department of the Interior press release.

"Indigenous languages are central to our cultures, our life ways, and who we are as people. They connect us to our ancestors, to our homelands, and to our place in the world," Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland said in a press release. "This ambitious plan represents the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to address the wrongs of the past and restore what has been taken from us."

The list of initiatives includes funding Native language immersion schools, language preservation centers, mentorship programs, training teachers and more.

In addition to the release of the language revitalization plan, there were multiple

speakers and announcements. One of which being updated regulations that implement the Tribal Self-Governance program, announced by Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland.

The program allows programs and services piloted by tribes — like social services and law enforcement — when it would otherwise be under the responsibility of the federal government, according to a press release.

"For the past half century, the policy of tribal self-determination and self-governance has been an unqualified success," Assistant Secretary Newland said. "We worked closely with tribal leaders to develop regulations to take the next step in ensuring that tribes, not federal agencies, are positioned to meet the needs of their people."

Hall of Famer John Anderson, Native performers to be featured at Indigenous Arts and Music Festival

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — Country music's John Anderson, whose legendary "Seminole Wind" became a huge hit in the early 1990s and still reverberates at Seminole Tribe of Florida events, will perform at the third annual Indigenous Arts and Music Festival Feb. 6-8 on the Big Cypress Reservation.

In October 2024, Anderson was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. He is scheduled to perform on the first day of the festival at 6 p.m. Feb. 6. The festival runs 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day at the Junior Cypress Entertainment Complex.

Indigenous (Nakota Nation) will close out the day at 5:30 p.m. Feb. 7. The group has won Native American Music Awards, including album of the year and group of the year. The Nakota Nation members grew up on South Dakota's Yankton Indian Reservation, where their father, Greg Zepher became a spokesperson for Native American rights.

Other scheduled performances include Andy Buster and the Osceola Brothers Band, The Bearhead Sisters (Paul First Nation), Polynesian Proud, The Bird Family Performers, Cecil Grey (Kiowa Nation), Sage Cornelius (Navajo, Oneida, Potawatomi, and Kickapoo), Pura Fe (Tuscarora/Taino), and Creek Hymn Singers.

Indigenous speakers and actors from the U.S. and Canada will also be featured, including actors Graham Greene and Tantoo Cardinal on Feb. 8.

The festival, whose theme is "Honoring Our Elders," will also include Native food, wildlife demonstrations, art, crafts and more.

For more information go to <https://indigenouamf.com>.



Country Music Hall of Fame

John Anderson speaks at the Country Music Hall of Fame induction ceremony in October 2024.



The Osceola Brothers

The Osceola Brothers.

Seminole Hard Rock Winterfest Boat Parade lights up Fort Lauderdale waterways

STAFF REPORT

The Seminole Hard Rock Winterfest Boat Parade and its multitude of decorated boats took place Dec. 14, 2024. The 53rd holiday parade in downtown Fort Lauderdale — one of South Florida's largest annual events — started at the Stranahan House, traveled east along the New River to the Intercoastal Waterway and continued north to Lake Santa Barbara in Pompano Beach.

The tribe's partnership with the Winterfest organization began in 1995 when the tribe was invited to decorate a boat donated by Winterfest. Lisa Scott-Founds, CEO of Winterfest, said the collaboration has flourished over the decades and is rooted in a shared commitment to honor the environmental heritage of the Everglades.

"[Former Hollywood Councilman] Max Osceola Jr.'s realization of the tribe's ties to Fort Lauderdale and our waterways strengthened the relationship, and in 2001 he was honored as our Commodore," said Lisa Scott-Founds, CEO of the Winterfest organization. "His leadership paved the way for the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino to become the title sponsor of this signature holiday event.... Together, we celebrate the spirit of our community and encourage the continuation of the vibrant culture of the



Ginny Fujiino

Capt. Lee Rosbach, left, a star of the TV series "Below Deck," and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola enjoy the Seminole Hard Rock Winterfest grand marshal reception Dec. 12, 2024, at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Seminole Tribe to be part of our celebrations as the Seminole Hard Rock Winterfest Boat Parade."

Actor and singer Jack Wagner, best known for his longtime role on the soap

opera "General Hospital" and for winning celebrity golf tournaments, served as grand marshal.

White Pelican Celebration to be held Jan. 11

FROM PRESS RELEASE

CHOKOLOSKEE — The White Pelican Celebration will be held Jan. 11 at the Smallwood Store in Chokoloskee.

The event will feature Seminole actors/singers Aubee Billie and Spencer Battiest, a boat trip to a sandbar where pelicans reside in the winter, a music festival, arts and crafts, Native food and a silent auction.

The weekly Florida Folk Show with host Pete Gallagher will be broadcast live starting at 10 a.m. at radiostpete.com.

The event will benefit the Smallwood Store Museum and the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation.

For information and tickets, go to ESHP.org or call 239-719-0020.

Courtesy image

The Seminole Hard Rock logo is in lights on the top deck of a festively decorated boat with the theme "From Sawgrass to Seagrass: Waves of Holiday Cheer" during the Seminole Hard Rock Winterfest Boat Parade Dec. 14, 2024, in Fort Lauderdale.



Holiday Market provides festive shopping in BC

BIG CYPRESS — The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum hosted its fourth annual Big Cypress Holiday Market on Dec. 13-14, 2024, at the museum's festival grounds. The event featured authentic Native arts,

crafts, clothing, jewelry and Seminole food vendors. The event has grown since it first started with 10 vendors. This year featured nearly 50 vendors.



Virginia Osceola, left, and JoJo Osceola at the Holiday Market.

Calvin Tiger



A visitor looks at items at Sophia Mendez's display.

Calvin Tiger



Dorothy Doctor, left, and Veronica Langley present tribal jewelry and clothing at the Big Cypress Holiday Market.

Calvin Tiger



A tribal-made Otter bag.

Calvin Tiger



Marie Mann, left, and Olivia Johnson show their display of tribal jewelry, clothing and painted art decorations at the market.

Calvin Tiger

SFWMD approves two Everglades restoration projects

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

The Governing Board for the South Florida Water Management District (District) approved two projects to send more clean water south.

The District is taking over an aspect of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), according to a District press release. Construction is slated to start in 2025.

"This feature is known as the S-355 West structure, and it paves the way for the Blue Shanty Flow way, which will help restore the balance of water flows between the Central Everglades, Everglades National Park and Florida Bay," a District press release said.

The District will additionally support a conservation breeding program to help recover the endangered Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. The project from the Fish and

Wildlife Foundation of Florida includes enclosures and structures to manage the reintroduction of the species, according to the release.

"The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida sees annual catastrophic flooding on Tribal lands, submerging tree islands, eroding away our traditional lands, and devastating our local species. We are excited to see the South Florida Water Management District expediting the construction of the

S-355W feature, which will help to improve drainage of Tribal lands," Talbert Cypress, Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, said in the release. "We are similarly hopeful that the District's commitment of funds for the endangered Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow's management will ensure that the Tribe and this important species are no longer pitted against one another by federal decision makers in Everglades restoration and management.

We look forward to the more wholistic restoration of the Central Everglades, from Tribal tree islands to the wading bird habitat surrounding them, and from Shark River Slough in the east to Lostman's Slough in the west."

◆ MUSEUM From page 1A

"Coming into a camp is the experience we want guests to have," Wareham said. "When they come in to the museum we want to welcome them as if they are one of our own and welcome them to explore our story."

From there, visitors will explore areas called "Our Grandmothers' Grandmothers," "Strength and Survival," "Being Seminole Today," and "Community Gallery."

Some of the iconic items on display now, such as the stickball display, will be refreshed and reutilized. Excerpts of the 17-minute orientation film will be used in locations throughout the museum.

"We will have a more comprehensive display from antiquity to tomorrow," said James Patrick, head of exhibitions. "Whatever the community wants to show off, we will listen to them."

We have been reaching out at community meetings and with seniors. We want to be sure to give them what they would like to see."

Egmont Key and other Seminole stories will have a place in the new space. "With the new design, we will always be able to tell those stories on a permanent basis, not just as a temporary exhibit," said Tara Backhouse, museum curator.

"Being Seminole Today" will celebrate things the tribe provides for the community," Patrick said. "It is a reminder that Seminole people are here and flourishing. The Rez Janz area [Be the Maker] will highlight Seminole musicians. This was directly from community input; they requested more music."

"Being Seminole Today" is a flexible area that will be used to focus on different aspects and depths of the tribe with changing exhibits. In the "Strength and Survival" gallery, culture, people and time periods may be highlighted in changing exhibits. In "Our Grandmothers' Grandmothers" gallery, historic objects from the museum's collection and vault will be rotated in and out.

The "Community Gallery" will have temporary exhibits showcasing artists, subjects and culture, similar to how the "Mosaic Gallery" is used now for student work, recent acquisitions and Seminole artists. Patrick said it will be the most flexible

and ever-changing area of the museum.

"The museum will have more flexibility than it does today," Backhouse said. "It's very exciting for us to have such a broader story to tell. The museum is 27 years old and the exhibits need refurbishing or replacement."

Designs for the exhibits, lighting,

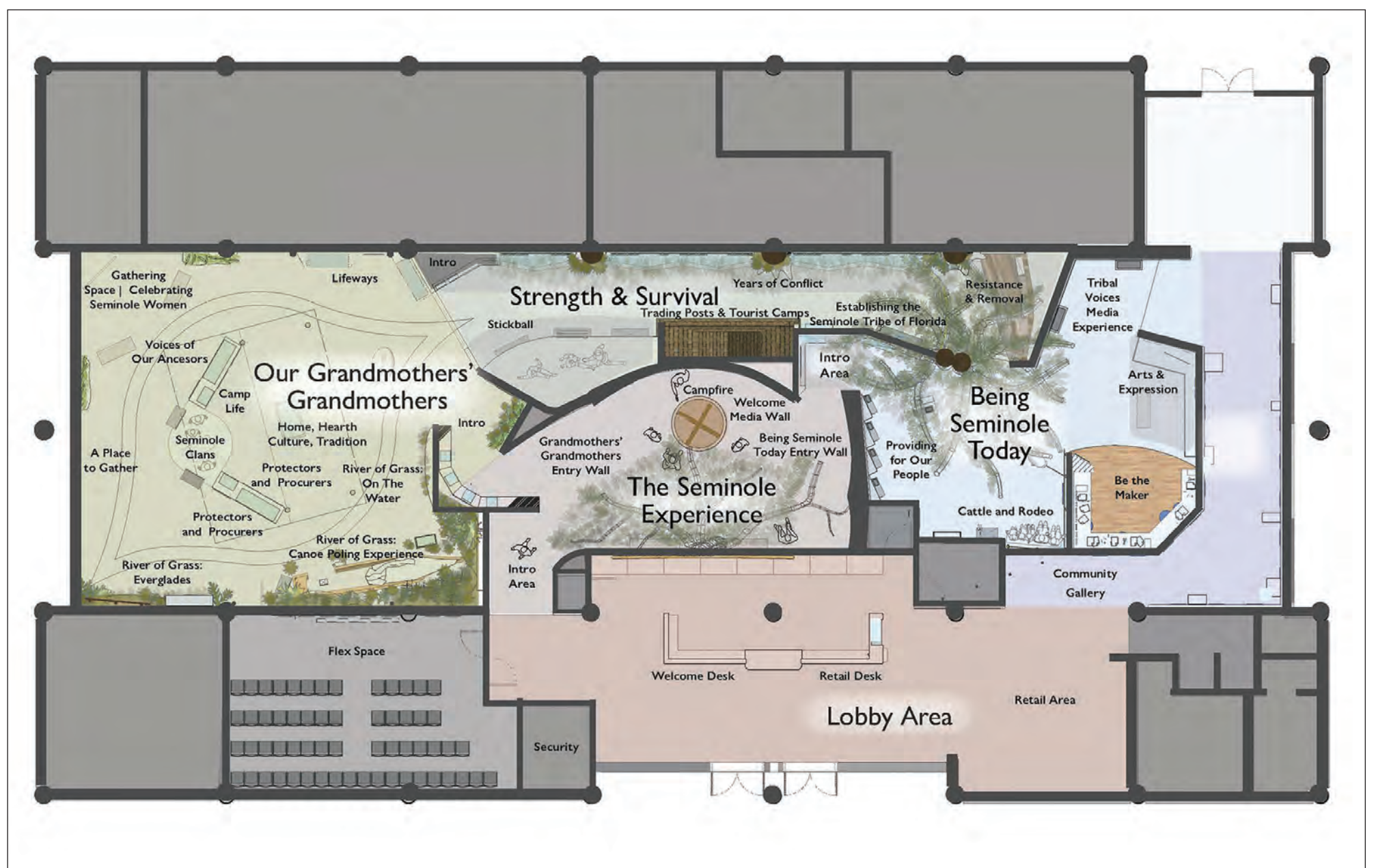
fabrication and rebuild of the museum are scheduled to go on for approximately the next nine to 12 months, followed by interior demolitions and rebuild. During this time, the museum will continue to reach out to the community for input to ensure tribal members' voices are heard.

"We're estimating that in two years, people will start to see big changes at the museum," Backhouse said.

With modern technology, the museum will be able to tell a more modern story in a more modern way.

"My aunt Carol Cypress said don't

lose yourself in the plastic," Wareham said. "Make sure our heart is in the building, tell the heart and make sure our spirit is there. Our staff has done a tremendous job of that and keeping our story alive."



The redesign plans for the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Area families benefit from President's Toy Drive

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The annual President's Toy Drive was held Dec. 6 and 7, 2024, at the Seminole Classic Casino in Hollywood.

Organized by the Seminole Tribe of Florida Inc., the drive helps bring Christmas cheer to families every year.

"I think it's always important to give

back. I think we are so blessed; our tribe is so blessed," President Holly Tiger said.

The drive partnered with the U.S. Marine Corps' Toys for Tots to collect and distribute a portion of the toys to Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital and other locations.

"The Marine Corps does a good job distributing the toys throughout the entire United States, and it gives us the opportunity to have that outreach way beyond what

we could do with our local communities," President Tiger said.

The tribe's area casinos traditionally account for some of the drive's largest contributions.

At the toy drive Dec. 6, Santa and some elves posed for photos and helped collect donations. Those who donated new, unwrapped toys were entered into a raffle.



Tatum Mitchell

Santa and his elves pose with Seminole Classic Casino General Manager Edward Aguilar, left, President Holly Tiger, center, and COO of Seminole Gaming David Hoenemeyer, on Dec. 6, 2024, at the Seminole Classic Casino Hollywood.



Tatum Mitchell

Santa waves to motorists outside the Seminole Classic Casino in Hollywood.



Tatum Mitchell

Boxes with toys collected for Toys for Tots are headed to kids for the holiday season.

Immokalee celebrates Thanksgiving



Beverly Bidney

Families gathered for portraits at the Immokalee Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 25, 2024. From left to right in this portrait are Nayeli Mariscal, Nancy Motlow, Dakota Mariscal, Katelyn Mariscal and Cheyenne McInturff.



Beverly Bidney

Nancy Motlow enjoys the company of her son Alan McInturff at the Immokalee Thanksgiving.



Beverly Bidney

Rosalinda Jimmie, left, and Maggie May Jimmie decide which blanket they want to bring home, courtesy of the President's office. The Chairman's office gifted cheese boards and cutting boards to tribal members.



Beverly Bidney

Immokalee seniors celebrated Thanksgiving Nov. 20, where they dressed in Thanksgiving patchwork. Front row from left to right are Mary Sanchez and Elizabeth Olea. Back from from left are Nancy Motlow, Linda Frank, Maggie Porter, Norita Yzaguirre, Rebecca Martinez, Connie Slavik, Sylvia Marrero and Frances Pelkey.



Beverly Bidney

The Sigurani family together at the Immokalee community Thanksgiving dinner. Sitting are mother Priscilla, left, and Aria. Standing are Andria, left, and Kamryn.

CDC Foundation names Oglala Lakota's Donald Warne to board

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Donald Warne, a tribal member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe from Pine Ridge, South Dakota, was appointed to the board of directors at The CDC Foundation on Dec. 18, 2024.

Warne, an advocate for Indigenous health, is the co-director of the Center for Indigenous Health and a tenured full professor and provost fellow at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University.

He served as a primary care physician for the Gila River Health Care Corporation in Arizona and later as a staff clinician with the National Institutes of Health.

Warne's experience also includes positions as health policy research director for the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, executive director of the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board, and faculty member at the Indian Legal Program of the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University.

He has also held leadership roles in

academia, including chair of the Department of Public Health at North Dakota State University and Indigenous Health Department chair and associate dean at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

The CDC Foundation is a nonprofit authorized by Congress to mobilize philanthropic partners and private-sector resources to support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's missions.

Kansas coming to Florida on Jan. 23

FROM PRESS RELEASE

COCONUT CREEK — The legendary band Kansas will perform in concert Jan. 23 at Seminole Casino Coconut Creek. The concert is scheduled to start at 8 p.m. For ticket information, go to ticketmaster.com.

The "garage band" from Topeka released its debut album in 1974 after being discovered by Wally Gold, who worked for Don Kirshner. Kansas has gone on to sell

more than 30 million albums worldwide.

Kansas appeared on the Billboard charts for over 200 weeks throughout the '70's and '80's and played to sold-out arenas and stadiums throughout North America, Europe and Japan. "Carry On Wayward Son" continues to be one of the top five most played songs on classic rock radio, and "Dust In the Wind" has been played on the radio more than three million times.

Hard Rock provides plenty of giving in December

STAFF REPORT

Latin Grammy Cultural Foundation receives \$100,000 donation from Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood

Prior to a soldout concert Dec. 20, 2024, by Carlos Vives, the 2024 Latin Recording Person of the Year, the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood made a \$100,000 donation to the Latin Grammy Cultural Foundation.

"We are thrilled to support the Latin Grammy Cultural Foundation and its incredible work in empowering young Latin music creators," Estefania Diaz-Balart, vice-president of Latin Business Development for Seminole Hard Rock, said in a press release. "Music is at the heart of our brand, and we are honored to play a role in shaping the future of Latin music."

"We are grateful to Seminole Hard Rock for their support in fostering the next generation of Latin music creators," Raquel "Rockie" Egusquiza, executive director of the foundation, said in the release. "Together, we will be able to provide educational opportunities to ensure the legacy of Latin music."

Seminole Hard Rock's donation will support the foundation's efforts to create new opportunities for aspiring musicians in Latin communities. The foundation provides educational programs, grants and scholarships.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City helps community with a dozen days of giving

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City and the Boardwalk 1000 Foundation celebrated National Giving Day on Dec. 3, 2024, by donating \$10,000 to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey.

"Your generosity means so much to us and the neighbors we serve, especially during the holiday season," the FoodBank posted on Facebook.

The donation marked the start of Hard Rock Atlantic City's "12 Days of Giving" campaign during which funds and services totaling more than \$50,000 were donated to 12 organizations.

Additional recipients included Covenant House Atlantic City, Kelly's Kidz, Live to Serve, Holidays for Heroes' Shop with a Cop, ARC of Atlantic County, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Atlantic County Toys for Kids, Garden State Equality, Atlantic City Rescue Mission, Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City, and Jewish Family Services.

"I am deeply grateful for our customers who generously donate to the Boardwalk 1000 Foundation which partnered with Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City in helping to make a difference this holiday season," George Goldhoff, president of Hard Rock Atlantic City, said in a statement.

Mental health organization receives support from Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana

Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana has partnered with Mental Health America of Northwest Indiana to assist the organization's 2025 initiatives, including a keynote speaker at its legacy breakfast. Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana made a \$35,000 donation in December.

Bristol team members, guests help community

Team members at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol in Virginia provided Christmas gifts for five local families as part of a program through the Salvation Army. Additionally, guests donated more than 1,000 toys for the Toys for Tots program.



The Latin Grammy Cultural Foundation receives a \$100,000 donation from Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood on Dec. 20.



The Community FoodBank of New Jersey receives a \$10,000 donation from Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City.



Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana makes a \$35,000 donation to Mental Health America of Northwest Indiana.



Boxes full of toys are collected at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol for the Toys for Tots program.

Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino begins accepting reservations

STAFF REPORT

BRIGHTON—The Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino, which is scheduled to open in February 2025, has begun accepting reservations.

Located on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Brighton Reservation, the new property will replace the existing Seminole Casino Brighton.

"Opening up reservations is yet another exciting step towards our grand opening," general manager Marty Johns said in a press release. "We can't wait to open the doors to this incredible property."

Guests can make reservations for March 2025 and beyond at <https://brighton.reservations.hardrock.com/or> call 800-360-

9875.

The 100-room hotel will include an outdoor pool, 10-lane bowling alley, and performance hall/banquet space. Room choices include deluxe king, deluxe queen, luxury king and Seminole suite.

Dining options include the Ee-To-Lee-Kee Grill, Josiah Steakhouse, Constant Grind Bistro and Slice pizza kitchen.

The casino will include space for 640 slot machines and 18 tables for blackjack, craps, roulette, and other house-banked card games. Smoke-free and high limit areas are also part of the gaming space.

The hotel/casino continues to fill positions. For more information about positions, go to gotoworkhappy.com.



Brighton Bay

A rendering of the outdoor pool at Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino.



Kevin Johnson

Workers on Dec. 6, 2024, continued to get the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino ready.

Hard Rock properties in Sacramento, Hollywood earn accolades

STAFF REPORT

Two Hard Rock properties earned top five honors in the Newsweek top 10 readers' choice for best casinos with live entertainment in the U.S. The list was released in November 2024.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sacramento at Fire Mountain captured the No. 1 spot while Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood was named No. 5.

"We are humbled that the public voted

for Hard Rock Live Sacramento to take the No. 1 spot in this year's Top 10," Randy Maddocks, director of Entertainment for Hard Rock Live Sacramento, said in a press release. "We dedicate our programming to reaching the largest audience with diverse shows that represent all genres."

The other venues in the top 10 were Pechanga Resort Casino (2), Choctaw Casino & Resort (3), Beau Rivage Resort (4), Borgata Hotel and Casino & Spa (6), Caesars New Orleans (7), Thunder Valley Casino and Resort (8), Mohegan Sun (9) and Grand Sierra Resort (10).

Slot player hits \$2.8M jackpot at Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD—A lucky winner from Plantation hit a record progressive jackpot on the Dragon Link slot machine by Aristocrat Gaming. The \$2.8 million jackpot was won with a \$250 bet at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, marking the seventh time the game has hit in excess

of \$1 million since January 2024.

"It's exciting to see a life-changing jackpot win," David Hoenemeyer, COO of Seminole Gaming, said in a statement on Dec. 9. "Our players love Dragon Link and today's win is one for the record books."

To date in 2024, Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood has paid out more than \$1 billion in jackpots.



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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

Do you recognize this skirt? ATTK staff seek additional information on new acquisition

BY LAURA DELLO RUSSO
Collections Manager

BIG CYPRESS — The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum receives additions to its permanent collection in a variety of ways. Sometimes, these objects are donated by private individuals who have discovered family photos or heirlooms in a dusty attic. Other times, the museum purchases directly from the talented artists within the Seminole community. The museum may also purchase historic objects from antique dealers, auction houses, and through various other cultural sources. Occasionally, the museum even receives objects in the mail with little to no information provided. In cases like this, staff are often led on a scavenger hunt to discover the object's history and where it came from.

The museum recently acquired a white patchwork skirt in just this way. Staff do know that it was mailed by a woman named Jeanie Low, who is on the Board of Textile Arts Council at San Francisco's de Young Museum. The de Young, along with the Legion of Honor, make up the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco. Opened in 1895, the de Young Museum is home to American art from the 17th century through today, including an extensive textile arts collection. The de Young also sits on the land of the Ramayush Ohlone, the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula.

The patchwork skirt was originally mailed to the de Young Museum, with only a note stating the skirt was a Seminole piece from Florida. It then made its way to Jeanie Low at the Textile Arts Council, who mailed it to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Fortunately, she was also able to reach out to



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Patchwork skirt donated by the de Young Museum, artist unknown.

ATTK's Collections staff via contacts on the museum's website. Besides originating in Florida, little else is known about the skirt; particularly, who may have made it.

This is where the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's Collections team is seeking assistance from the Seminole community. Do you recognize the skirt or the patchwork style? Perhaps, even the technique of the

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



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
The skirt remains unfinished.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Five patchwork samples were donated along with the skirt.

seamstress? The patchwork is minuscule and beautifully intricate, and it was most certainly created by a skilled seamstress. The cotton skirt appears to be relatively new, possibly created only within the past five to ten years. It also remains unfinished, as the hems are incomplete, and it has not yet been sewn closed; the cloth remains an open piece. Additionally, the skirt has come with

five patchwork samples of a similar style.

The skirt and patchwork samples have now been cataloged and housed in the museum's protective vaults. However, staff would like to find out more about this beautiful item. Who made this skirt? Did they live on one of the reservations? What is its history? Having this information adds to the cultural richness of the skirt and its

significance within the collection. Staff at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum are eager to complete this textile's story and fill in the missing pieces of its journey back to Florida.

Should you have any information on this skirt and the accompanying patchwork samples, please contact Laura Dello Russo at lauradellorosso@semtribe.com or 863-902-1113, ext. 12252.

Tribal Fair to be held Jan. 31-Feb. 2 in Hollywood

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe of Florida will host its annual Tribal Fair and Pow Wow Jan. 31 to Feb. 2 at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

The celebration will feature Native arts and culture, The Frontmen concert, wildlife shows, drumming and dancing competitions, clothing contests and more.

"Pow Wows are the Native American people's way of meeting together, to join in dancing, singing, visiting, renewing old friendships, and making new ones. This is a time method to renew Native American culture and preserve the rich heritage of American Indians," the Tribal Fair website said.

The Frontmen, whose concert will be at 4 p.m. Feb. 2, is a popular country music group made up of three former lead singers, Larry Stewart (Restless

Heart), Richie McDonald (Lonestar) and Tim Rushlow (Little Texas).

The Native Reel Cinema Fest will showcase Native American films, live Native American musical performances, Native arts, crafts and foods. Last year the fest featured Native American actors and filmmakers, such as Graham Greene, Shaadiin Tome, Stevie Salas, Justin Deegan, Martin Sensmeier, Billy Wirth and others.

Event admission and the concert is free. For more information visit semtribefair.com.



The Frontmen

Native hall of fame to hold gala

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The National Native American Hall of Fame will host its fundraising gala March 10 at the Palms Casino in Las Vegas. The Hall of Fame said the event is crucial in aiding its capital campaign to establish a permanent home.

For more information about the gala, including sponsorship opportunities, contact James Parker Shield, Hall of Fame founder and CEO, at james@nativehalloffame.org, or Frances Alvarez, Board president, at alvarez0seven@outlook.com.

More than \$200M high school project holds groundbreaking ceremony

STAFF REPORT

Described as a "campus modernization project," Many Farms High School, which serves Navajo Nation students, held a groundbreaking ceremony Dec. 4, 2024, in Chinle, Arizona.

According to a press release, the project is anticipated to provide more than \$200 million to modernize and improve the facilities at the school. The project is expected to take more than three years to complete. It is funded through the Great American Outdoors Act National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund.

Through the Great American Outdoors Act, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) receives up to \$95 million of funding each year for infrastructure projects including campus replacements, faculty and staff

housing improvements, and demolition of outdated, unused buildings.

Some of the project's highlights include consolidating current education programs and improve current facilities, such as the main building entrance, campus security systems, perimeter fencing, and employee housing; reducing annual operating costs; and improve Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility.

"The project at Many Farms High School, located in the heart of the Navajo Nation, embodies BIE's mission to provide Indian Students with a quality education and safe learning environment. Through the Great American Outdoors Act, we are investing in Native communities and paving the way for student success," Tony Dearman, BIE director, said in the release.

Shania Twain coming to Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Shania Twain will perform at Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood on

Aug. 1 at 7:30 p.m. For ticket information visit myHRL.com.

Twain, 59, from Canada, is a five-time Grammy winner and one of music and fashion's most renowned trailblazers. With

six albums released and more than 100 million albums sold, Twain remains the top-selling female country pop artist of all time. Her hits include "That Don't Impress Me Much," and "You're Still the One."

January 2025

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

In the time after the formal end of the Third Seminole War in 1858, the Seminole people kept their contact with white colonists to a minimum. The limited number of interactions between the two were largely centered around trade. During this period, colonists established trading posts, and the Seminole would come to sell their goods, which typically consisted of animal hides and bird plumes. They would also purchase products such as manufactured food items, glass beads, guns and ammunition. Through these trading posts, economic as well as cultural exchanges between the two peoples took place (Butler, 2023; Kersey Jr., 1972).

One of the most historically significant trading posts in Florida was Brown's Trading Post, located in the Big Cypress region. This trading post was established in 1910 by William H. "Bill" Brown and his wife Jane (Butler, 2023; Kersey Jr., 1972), who were invited to do so by the Seminole (Scheidecker, 2023).



Close-up image of the Brown's Trading Post site marker
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Brown's Trading Post was unique for the time in that it was built closer to the middle of the state, rather than on the coasts around white settlements as was typical. This location was quite convenient for the Seminole living in Big Cypress, who now no longer had to make the long trek to the coasts to buy and sell goods (ahatthiki, 2012).



THPO

Our January artifact is a remnant of this historic trading post. While it may be hard to tell, this object is actually a metal wagon wheel axle. The wagon that this axle belonged to might have been used to transport goods to and from the trading post. It was found between 1976-1981 by a descendant of the family and generously donated to the THPO in 2013.

To learn more about all the incredible artifacts within our collection, please visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com.

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - JANUARY 2025

SEMINOLE WAR: THE LONG WAR

American historians recorded three Seminole Wars in the first part of the 19th century. The First Seminole War that began with Andrew Jackson's invasion of Seminole Florida began in 1817 and ended with the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823. The Second Seminole War, referred to at the time as "The Florida War" began with the Dade battle and ended ambiguously in 1842 when America declared victory despite the Seminole presence still in Florida. And the Third Seminole War, also called Billy Bowlegs War despite his efforts to avoid it, was the last act of removal, beginning in 1855 and ending in 1858 when Bowlegs agreed to go west. This is the experience for the United States, marking the periods where Congress officially declared and funded military action.

For the Seminole people there was only one war. They came under armed and organized attack from America in 1812, five years before Jackson led his army into Florida. The "Patriot War" was an effort by militia groups in Georgia to try to take Saint Augustine and Spanish

Florida, attacking the Seminole when they refused to aid the 'Patriot' militias. From that time until Billy Bowlegs and the other captive Seminole were taken from Florida nearly half a century later, the Seminole were at war. While there were negotiations and times when the military did not directly lay siege, Indigenous Floridians faced regular aggression and violence from American settlers, militias, slave catchers, and even lawmen in a steady campaign. Native resistance or retribution was cast as aggression and used to drive calls for open war. If you were an Indigenous Floridian it didn't matter if the enemy was in uniform or not, it was still a war. In 1842, shortly after America called their 2nd war to an end, Congress signed the Armed Immigration Act, a law specifically designed to send armed settlers into Seminole lands and pressure them to leave under the threat of violence. Multiple generations of Seminole grew up in a state of war, always needing to be ready for when the soldiers would arrive to take them away. There was never truly a peace for the Seminole during this time, only one long war.



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

Painting "Three Seminole Scouts" by Noah Billie
Courtesy Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

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



Health

Native American traditional healing practices now covered under Medicaid in 4 states

BY BRIANNA CHAPPIE
Cronkite News (Phoenix, Arizona)

PHOENIX — Native Americans in Arizona and three other states could now see government health coverage for some traditional healing practices.

On Oct. 16, the Biden administration announced it had expanded both Medicaid coverage and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Oregon to cover traditional Native American healing practices through demonstration amendments to section 1115 of the Social Security Act.

"Traditional health care practices have been a way of life in many communities. And they are extremely important for American Indian and Alaska Native populations," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a news release. "But, too often, health insurance does not cover them. With Medicaid and CHIP's inclusion of traditional health care practices at certain IHS facilities, we are extending access to culturally appropriate, quality health care in Tribal communities."

In Arizona, traditional health-care practices received either through the Indian Health Service (IHS) or facilities independently operated by tribal nations are eligible for Medicaid and CHIP coverage.

Unlike California, New Mexico and Oregon, Medicaid coverage for Native American healing practices in Arizona will also extend to Urban Indian Organizations, which are nonprofit organizations that provide health care and other services to Native Americans and Native Alaskans.

Medicaid is government-run health insurance that offers low-cost or free coverage for low-income individuals in families in the U.S. CHIP works similarly but offers coverage specifically for children who are in families that fall outside of Medicaid eligibility but are not insured through a family plan.

Coverage for traditional healing

practices will depend on the individual facility that a patient visits, but covered treatments could include sweat lodging and music therapy.

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System had originally submitted a request to cover these services in 2015 but that request was denied.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a policy framework earlier this year for the four states that detailed how the amendments would ensure traditional healing practices are reimbursed at a 100% service match. Prior to the amendment, facilities that offered traditional healing practices were not reimbursed.

Arizona has long struggled to address health disparities for Native Americans in the state. The state has been plagued with fake rehab facilities that purposely targeted Native Americans. Recruiters for these facilities would often go out to Native American tribal lands or wait outside of health-care facilities for Native Americans, where they would lure people to sober living facilities that were often unsafe, provided inadequate care and defrauded Medicaid by billing the state's American Indian Health Program for treatments that weren't provided.

Last year, Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes launched an investigation in tandem with the FBI and various tribal authorities to bring charges against these facilities.

Native Americans have also been disproportionately affected by higher rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity. Substance abuse problems and suicide are also higher in Native Americans than other ethnic groups in the United States.

In 2022, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health found that suicide was among the leading causes of death for young non-Hispanic American Indians and Alaska Natives between the ages of 10 and 34.

◆ See HEALING on page 6C



Kevin Johnson

Walkers start the Jingle Jog 2-mile Fun Walk/Run on Dec. 20, 2024, along the bank of the canal on the Big Cypress Reservation. Organized by Big Cypress Integrative Health, the annual event serves a couple purposes: getting a healthy start to the holidays and as a reminder to sign up for Rez Rally, which will be held Jan. 4 in Immokalee.

Jingle Jog promotes healthy holidays



Kevin Johnson

Nena Waggerby, left, and Marlin Miller-Covarrubias won the 'Craziest Christmas Outfit' contest.



Kevin Johnson

Participants, staff and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, far left, gather before the start of the walk/jog.

IHS, Chickasaw Nation partner for new medical center

STAFF REPORT

Indian Health Service (IHS) announced an agreement that it planned to sign Dec. 30, 2024, with the Chickasaw Nation to develop and operate a new medical center.

According to a press release, the proposed Newcastle Medical Center in Newcastle, Oklahoma, would be a multi-year project built in three phases and incorporate multiple buildings on a 158-acre campus.

"I am very pleased the Indian Health Service and Chickasaw Nation have partnered to create and operate the incredible Newcastle Medical Center," IHS Director Roselyn Tso said in the release. "The Chickasaw Nation has a long and proud history of providing top-tier services to its citizens. I have no doubt this new healthcare facility will do much to further our mission to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level."

The medical center will serve patients in the Chickasaw's Ada Service Unit as well as patients from the surrounding area.

Health and Human Services names 'Employees of the Year'

STAFF REPORT

Health and Human Services Executive Director Dr. Vandhana Kiswani-Barley announced the department's employees of the year Dec. 16.

The department includes Advocacy and Guardianship, Animal Control, Behavioral Health, Elder Services, Environmental Health, Health Plan, Health Program and Grants.

In a letter to staff, Kiswani-Barley

wrote, "At our department heads meeting on Friday, we had the pleasure of honoring some special team members who stood out amongst their peers. These exceptional individuals were awarded Employee of the Year for their respective departments. A special congratulations to Ted Clewell, MSW, who was recognized as the overall Employee of the Year for HHS. His contributions have truly set a remarkable standard for all of us."

HHS "Employees of the Year" for 2024

- Dr. Monica Oban - Director of the Year
- Fiona Lawrence - Pharmacy staff of the year
- Luis Lopez - CBH staff of the year
- Mildred Ibarra - AGD staff of the year
- Edna McDuffie - Integrative Health staff of the year
- Angelita Arreguin - Dept. of Elder Services staff of the year
- Dr. Belleitha Lambkin-Alexander- Medical provider of the year
- Marie Dervil- Medical staff of the year
- Nicholas Persaud- Environmental Health staff of the year
- Dr. Oscar Reyes- Dentist of the year
- Raul Garcia- Dental staff of the year
- Sonji Beacham- Health Plan employee of the year
- Ted Clewell- overall HHS staff of the year



Courtesy photo

HHS employees of the year and other staff.

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Be kind

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SEMINOLE SCENES



Beverly Bidney

TIS UGLY SWEATER SEASON: The Immokalee community turned out to show off “ugliest” festive holiday sweaters Dec. 5, 2024, in the gym.



Beverly Bidney (3)

CLANS IN THE GARDEN: The Seminole clans are decked out for the holidays and on display at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum sculpture garden, which is located along Josie Billie Highway on the Big Cypress Reservation.

Top, Snake Clan looks dashing in its green hat and red bow; Panther wears that Christmas wreath well; and Bird holds a gift in its beak.

Middle, Big Town's chickees, which surround a festive Christmas tree, are decorated in plenty of tinsel and lights. Below, Bear Clan wears a necklace of colorful jingle bells; Otter sports a Santa cap; Deer's antlers are decorated with ornaments; and Wind blows snowflakes in Florida.



Beverly Bidney

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT: Pemaetv Emahkv Charter School students, from left to right, Nohea Collins, Kreed Snow, Messariya Hardy and Jaynaleigh Bert practice for their heats and races at the Okeechobee County track meet Dec. 13, 2024. The meet included eight schools and home schooled kids from the county plus PECS. About 60 PECS students competed in the meet.



Beverly Bidney

BUILDING UP: A new recreation complex is under construction on the Immokalee Reservation. It is scheduled for completion in February 2026. In addition to a new gymnasium, the project will have a new community pool, playground, Boys & Girls Club and fitness and workout areas.



Kevin Johnson

HOLIDAY LOBBY: The lobby at the Frank Billie Field Office on the Big Cypress Reservation features colorfully decorated, Christmas trees, wreaths, a bench, Santa and “snow.”



Kevin Johnson

BRIGHT LIGHTS: The Seminole Tribe's headquarters in Hollywood is festively decorated for the holidays.

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JAN 10
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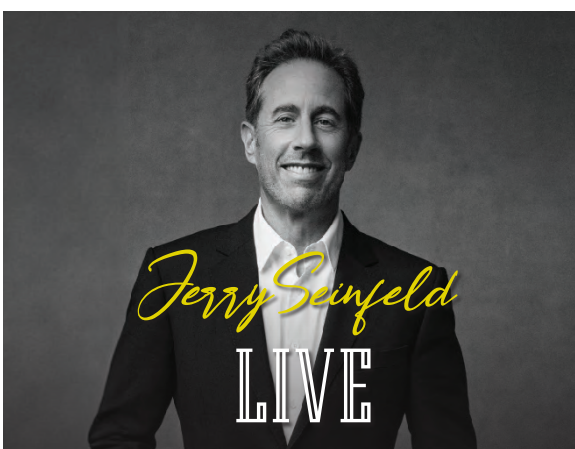
JAN 12
STYX



JAN 17
BILLY JOEL



JAN 18
MIAMI COMEDY FESTIVAL



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Education

B

Seminole students win Native American Heritage Month essay, art contests

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Seminole students showed off their knowledge of Seminole history and earned top-honors in the state-wide Native American Heritage essay and art contests.

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students Serenity Bishop and Bryant Hunsinger won the essay contest while Ahfachkee students Jayley Billie Perez, Stanley Cypress and Ziana Osceola won the art contest. The students were honored by Governor Ron DeSantis at a reception at the Governor's mansion in Tallahassee Nov. 21, 2024.

Fifth graders Serenity and Bryant both wrote essays about Betty Mae Jumper, the tribe's first chairwoman. They did research about Jumper online, with some help from their teacher Kelly Walsh, who also taught the students how to format an essay. Every student in the class wrote essays on a historical figure in Seminole history.

Serenity's essay concluded with this passage: "In conclusion, Betty Mae Jumper was well recognized because of her being elected first chairwoman, having an excellence in education, and being a huge help in creating the Seminole constitution. I feel that every woman should be able to do anything they put their mind to. I also think that every girl or woman could do something to help their community, their people, and help their world just like Betty Mae Jumper."

"I wrote about her excellence in education, how she helped create the Seminole constitution and became the tribe's first chairwoman," Serenity said. "I'm proud of myself that I did that essay. I was kind of nervous to meet the governor, but I was also proud of myself."

Bryant finds writing boring, but he said he guesses he is good at it.

His essay begins with this: "Did you know that Betty Mae Jumper was the first ever chairwoman of the Seminole tribe of Florida? She has an incredible legacy, she was a storyteller, and a trained nurse. Hear more about why she was a historical figure in the state of Florida."



Essay winners Bryant Hunsinger and Serenity Bishop pose with PECS principal Tracy Downing, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola at the reception in the Governor's mansion in Tallahassee on Nov. 21, 2024.

"I wrote about her legacy as a nurse and a storyteller," he said. "She had a big impact on our tribe. I was happy to meet the governor, even though he looked a little scary."

"The kids were surprised they won," said Walsh, who is in her first year at PECS and 20th as a teacher. "Both are excellent students and great writers. They went full steam ahead with it. I'm very proud of them."

The Native American month essay and art contests were created by a group of PECS 8th graders three years ago, who submitted the idea to the Governor's office. The governor approved and the Florida Education Department runs the contests annually.

The winning Ahfachkee students both drew pictures of someone who had an impact

on Florida. Art teacher Jennifer Brittingham suggested a few names including Betty Mae Jumper, Osceola, Sam Jones, Larry Howard and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola. They chose their subject and used a picture for reference.

"I made a picture of a sunset with Marcellus Osceola," said first grader Stanley, 7. "It's really hard to draw, but it makes me feel good. My mind makes me want to draw."

"I drew a picture of a woman with a feather on her head," said kindergartener Jayley, 5. "She also has a face and necklaces. I like to draw people. My mom was so proud of me. It feels good, I didn't think I would win."

♦ See WINNERS on page 3B

Serenity Bishop's essay on Betty Mae Jumper

Have you ever heard about Betty Mae Jumper? She was known for being the first chairwoman elected, recognized for her excellence in education, and known for creating a constitution for the Seminole people. I can't wait to tell you more about Betty Mae Jumper.

First and foremost, Betty Mae Jumper was well known for being the first chairwoman elected. One thing she did as chairwoman was improve conditions for the Seminole Tribe. According to the Women's Hall of Fame it states, "Betty Mae Jumper helped improve the health, education, cultural, and economic conditions of the Seminole people." This shows that we have better living conditions today because she helped improve those things. Betty Mae Jumper is well recognized for everything she has done for the Seminole Tribe. Another effect of being elected chairwoman was she worked for the tribal government. According to the website InfoPlease they stated, "she continued to work for the tribal government in various capacities, and in 1967 she was elected head of the Tribal Council, the first woman to serve as a leader of the Seminoles." This supports my point that she was a really important woman in the Tribe. As you can see she worked in various jobs within the tribal government to make sure the Seminole Tribe was the best. She has

impacted the Seminole people in so many different ways.

In addition, Betty was a really important woman because of her excellence in education. One way she had a great education was she made her education her top priority. For example, I read from Florida Memory that Betty could not attend schools in South Florida because of racial segregation, so at the age 14 she moved to North Carolina to go to a Cherokee Indian boarding school with her cousin and her younger brother. This shows that she was one of the first two Seminole Indians to get a high school diploma. This led her to getting in the nursing program and earning her nursing degree. Another effect of Betty Mae having an awesome education was getting her nursing degree. According to the textual information from the Seminole Tribune it states that Betty worked as a nurse for 40 years to help improve health care for the Seminole Tribe. This is why we have great health care today! This led her to being the first female chief and the first healthcare director of the Seminole Tribe.

Lastly, Betty Mae Jumper also helped create a constitution for the Seminole People. I read from the Seminole tribe of Florida that "she was part of the original Constitution Committee that set the Tribes governing and allowed the tribe to attain federal recognition." The effect of this

was allowing the Seminole Tribe to act more independently. The Seminole tribe improved their independence by adopting a constitutional form of government. Another reason why the constitution was really important was because it was a two tiered government. I read on the Seminole Tribe of Florida site that it said "in 1957 a constitution was forged establishing a two tiered government, composed of a Tribal Council and a Board of Directors, with elected representation from each reservation community." This is important because it shows how Betty Mae was pushing for more of the tribe to be a part of the government. I feel that a woman being able to achieve these goals that the Seminole Tribe had made is very amazing and shows that women and girls can do anything. As you can see Betty felt that government was really important for the Seminole people.

In conclusion, Betty Mae Jumper was well recognized because of her being elected first chairwoman, having an excellence in education, and being a huge help in creating the Seminole constitution. I feel that every woman should be able to do anything they put their mind to. I also think that every girl or woman could do something to help their community, their people, and help their world just like Betty Mae Jumper.

Bryant Hunsinger's essay on Betty Mae Jumper

Did you know that Betty Mae Jumper was the first ever chairwoman of the Seminole tribe of Florida? She has an incredible legacy, she was a storyteller, and a trained nurse. Hear more about why she was a historical figure in the state of Florida.

First of all, her legacy is important to the Seminole tribe of Florida. She helped make the first Seminole constitution. According to Tribal Community Development, "She helped organize the constitutional committee and create the constitution of the Seminole Tribe of Florida". This means she helped make the group that made the constitution. She also made the constitution but with other people. Another thing about her is when she was chairwoman. I read that on Wikipedia, in 1967 Betty Mae Jumper was elected to office as chairwoman for the Seminole Tribe

of Florida. She had helped with improving the financial situation of the tribe and improving health care. She also provided better education to the tribe. Her legacy will live on forever.

By the same token, she was also a storyteller. She also wrote books. I read on google that in 2001 she wrote her autobiography titled A Seminole Legend. She also wrote another book titled Seminole Legends. In her lifetime she wrote 2 books. She also has books other people wrote about her. She also helped write the Seminole Tribune. She served as an editor for the Seminole tribune. She co-founded the tribe's first newspaper in 1956. I wish I had some of her books.

Last but not least, she was a nurse. She was one of the first nurses for her tribe. I

read that on Wikipedia she worked as a nurse for more than 40 years. She helped with giving children vaccines. She was the first Seminole to graduate from nursing school. She also has a building named after her. I read on Tribal Community Development "The Hollywood BMJ Clinic is located in the Seminole Estates area of the Hollywood reservation". It has approximately 40,000 square feet of interior. It was completed and opened to the tribal community in 2020. I think that her being a nurse impacted the tribal community.

In a nutshell, I think Betty Mae Jumper has impacted the Seminole tribe by her legacy, being a storyteller, and being a nurse. I think Betty Mae Jumper is one of the most important Seminoles. I hope you learn more about this historical Seminole figure.

PECS teachers of the year named

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON – Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School principal Tracy Downing announced the school's teacher of the year Tracy Phillips, culture employee of the year Taylor Johns and employee of the year Cindy Pearce.

"We are thrilled to announce and celebrate the outstanding achievements of three incredible members of the PECS family," Downing wrote in an email. "Their dedication, talent and commitment to our students and community exemplify the values that make our school a place of excellence."

Teacher of the year Tracy Phillips is a first grade teacher who creates a nurturing and engaging environment for the students. She is known for her innovative teaching strategies, ability to connect with each student and a commitment to academic excellence.

A 24-year veteran teacher of Okeechobee County schools, Phillips is in her third year at PECS and loves the school community.

"Everyone here works together as a team and have the best interests of the students at heart," Phillips said. "Parents, teachers and the administration all put children first. I

have a wonderful class that is always ready to learn."

Culture employee of the year Taylor Johns, who has been at PECS for nine years, is an arts and crafts teacher who also teaches the Creek language to Pre-K and Kindergarten students. She plays an essential role in preserving and sharing Seminole culture, including beadwork, sewing and basket weaving. She helps students develop their creative talents while instilling a deep appreciation for their cultural heritage.

"I like teaching the language because it helps me learn it, too," Johns said. "It's like a family here; I know every student and teacher."

Employee of the year Cindy Pearce is the school's office manager, who serves as the backbone of the school's daily operations, according to Downing. She has been at PECS for three years and her welcoming presence is what visitors and parents see when they first walk into the front office. Pearce's job includes coordinating schedules, managing school communications and lending a helping hand when needed. Pearce likes everything about the job.

"I love the people, the family feel and it's the cleanest school I've ever worked in," Pearce said. "The best thing is that it is like one big family here."



PECS culture employee of the year Taylor Johns.

Beverly Bidney



Cindy Pearce, employee of the year.

Beverly Bidney



Tracy Phillips, teacher of the year.

Beverly Bidney

Brighton preschool celebrates Christmas season



Calvin Tiger
Raiden Herrin, dressed in a Santa Claus outfit, and Denice Gary at the Brighton preschool Christmas celebration Dec. 16, 2024.



Calvin Tiger
Giana Smith happily dances with Santa Claus.



Calvin Tiger
Kaylynn Pewo, Ajay Smith and Santa Claus pose for a photo.



Calvin Tiger
Dallyn Nunez sits on Santa Claus' lap and smiles for a photo.



Calvin Tiger
Santa Claus waves and poses with Mahaila Henderson and her mom Mary Henderson.

Ahfachkee students put on a Christmas show

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS – Ahfachkee School students rang in the holiday season with a Christmas show Dec. 19 in the school's gym. As family and friends watched, the K-5

students sang holiday songs while the middle and high school students performed "The 12 Days of Christmas" and played in the school band. Music teacher Cesar Tavares conducted the show, which went off without a hitch.



Beverly Bidney
The Ahfachkee school band performs at the school's Christmas show.



Beverly Bidney
Kindergarten students perform at the Ahfachkee School Christmas show Dec. 19.

Ahfachkee tree lighting rings in holidays

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — About 215 Ahfachkee students gathered in the school's atrium Dec. 10 to celebrate the lighting of the Christmas tree.

The tree, which is flanked by life-sized statues of a reindeer and Santa Claus, is impossible to miss when entering the building. Music teacher Cesar Tavares played holiday songs on the

sound system as "snow" fell from a second floor window onto the delighted children. Some students had seen real snow and weren't fooled by the fake stuff, but enjoyed it regardless.

Students watched as assistant principal Nuria Suarez flipped the switch and brought the tree to life. Afterward, it was time for photo ops, catching the snow and to enjoy the festive atmosphere.

Principal Phillip Baer said he hoped to make it an annual tradition at Ahfachkee.



Beverly Bidney

From their perch on the second story corridor overlooking the school's atrium, Ahfachkee students enjoy the "snow" as it falls during the school's Christmas tree lighting ceremony Dec. 10.



Beverly Bidney

Young students play in the "snow" as music teacher Cesar Tavares plays Christmas music in the background.



Beverly Bidney

Ahfachkee students have a blast playing in the "snow" by the school's Christmas tree for tree lighting ceremony.



Beverly Bidney

Jakolby Bear, left, and Aero Osceola smile in front of the Christmas tree.

PECS principal named Glades County Principal of the Year

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School principal Tracy Downing earned the Glades County Principal of the Year honor, the county announced in November 2024. By winning, she has been nominated for the Florida Department of Education's 2025 Principal of the Year.

Downing has been a teacher, reading coach, assistant principal and principal for more than two decades in Okeechobee Schools and six years as principal of PECS.

"I feel honored and privileged," she said. "I'm accepting this distinction on behalf of my students who work very hard every day. They are motivated and dedicated to learning. That's a tribute to the quality of our teachers and staff members. The family members are our education partners by helping students study and motivating them at home."

Downing believes every student should be able to learn in a safe, comfortable environment.

"PECS is a close-knit community, like a family," Downing said. "It's unique and special. I wish all kids could have this type of education."

Each of the state's 67 school



Beverly Bidney

PECS principal Tracy Downing with students.

districts nominates one principal, regardless of the grade level of the school. Finalists will be announced in January or February and the winner will be named by the end of April 2025.

NIEA to host Hill Week in Washington

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) is hosting Hill Week 2025 Feb. 11-13 in Washington D.C.

NIEA members will have the

opportunity to meet with representatives from Congress, organizational partners and others. Educational issues for Native students, advocacy and legislation are some topics of discussion according to the NIEA website.

"The week will culminate with a day of congressional advocacy on

Capitol Hill, where attendees will engage directly with policymakers to push for meaningful changes that support Native education," the NIEA website said.

Registration is open.

WINNERS

From page 1B



Courtesy photos (2)

Art winners Jayley Billie Perez, above, and Stanley Cypress, below.

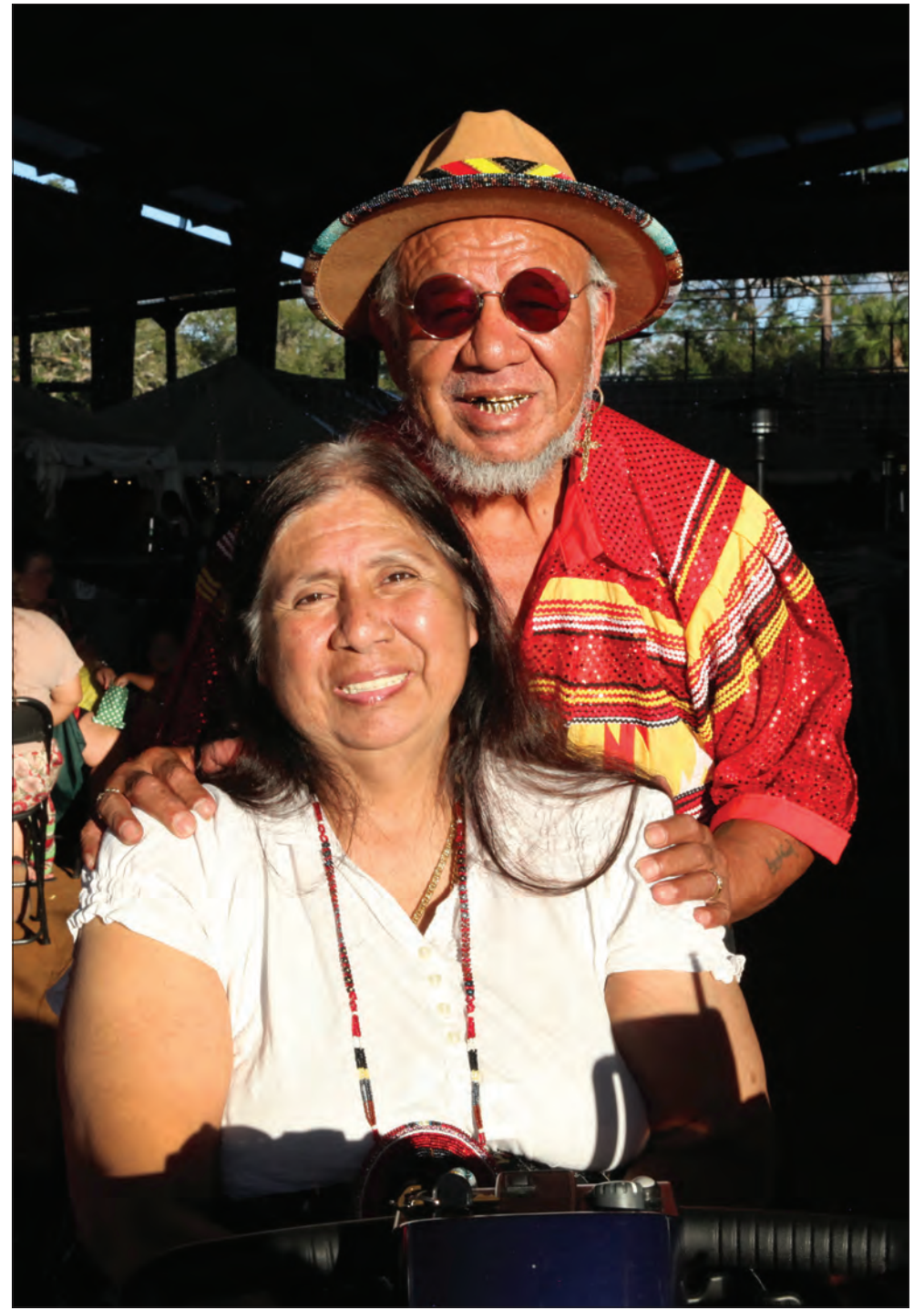


Holiday celebrations abound on Seminole reservations



Beverly Bidney

BRIGHTON – Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, President Holly Tiger and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard at the Brighton Christmas celebration Dec. 19, 2024.



Beverly Bidney

BRIGHTON – Betty and Sandy Billie enjoy being together at the Brighton Christmas party.



Tatum Mitchell

BIG CYPRESS – Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola, left, and Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas pose under some Christmas lights Dec. 13 at the Big Cypress Christmas party.



Beverly Bidney

BRIGHTON – Leilani Burton, Brydgett Maldonado and CiCi Smith pose together with the tables filled with hundreds of sweet treats baker Maldonado made for the Brighton Christmas party.



Tatum Mitchell

BIG CYPRESS – The Big Cypress churches chorus sing carols onstage at the Christmas party in Big Cypress.



Tatum Mitchell

BIG CYPRESS – Audrean Cypress, left, and Malila Cypress enjoy a ride at the Big Cypress party.



HOLLYWOOD – President Holly Tiger and Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall on stage at the Christmas party.

Calvin Tiger



HOLLYWOOD – Jacelyn Billie, left, Santa Claus and Soriyah Cypress at the Hollywood Christmas party Dec. 21, 2024.

Calvin Tiger



HOLLYWOOD – Spencer Battiest performs at the Hollywood Christmas party.

Calvin Tiger



TRAIL – Kathy Mackenzie Billie, left, and Ma'at Osceola-Hart listening to directions for a festive game.

Tatum Mitchell



TRAIL – Caryn Billie, left, Makynna Ramirez, center, and Mercy Perez with the Grinch.

Tatum Mitchell



TRAIL – Gianna Steve runs around the dance floor with elves dancing in the background.

Tatum Mitchell

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Sports



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Everglades City's Amos Huggins, Jovanny Torres, Homer Huggins, Kingston Billie and Kelvin Huggins warm up before facing Donahue on Dec. 12, 2024, in Ave Maria.

Everglades City's all Native lineup shows plenty of promise

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

AVE MARIA — The Everglades City School boys basketball team featured an all-Native lineup in its game against Donahue Academy on Dec. 12, 2024, in Ave Maria.

Players from the Miccosukee Tribe and Seminole Tribe of Florida comprised the entire eight-man lineup. The team's only two non-Native players did not make the trip.

Led by Kingston Billie (14 points), all eight Natives scored points in the team's 65-46 loss to Donahue. The other scorers were Amos Huggins (9 points), Jovanny Torres (5), Randell Billie (5), Tayin Fairclough (4), Homer Huggins (4), Jamere Osceola (3) and Kelvin Huggins (2).

Amos Huggins led the way from beyond the arc with three 3's; Kingston Billie sank two.

The lead seasawed throughout the first half, which ended with Everglades City in front, 25-23.

In the second half, Donahue opened a 43-30 lead before Everglades City battled back to pull within six points early in the fourth quarter. Donahue didn't flinch and went on a 23-6 run to end the game.

"We played a good first half; we played a poor second half and that's what hurt us. We need to play complete games, but we're learning and we're young; we're learning how to complete games," said Everglades City coach Gerald Lewis.

Donahue's Isaac Loboda (26 points) and Max Allen (20 points) were the game's top



Kevin Johnson

Everglades City's Jamere Osceola drives toward the basket against Donahue.



Kevin Johnson

Everglades City's Jovanny Torres dribbles past an opponent.

scorers.

The following night Everglades City got back on the winning track with a 65-56 win at home against Marathon.

Everglades City reached the new year with a 5-6 record. Its other wins have come against Marco Island Academy twice and one each against the Village School of

Naples and Naples Classical.

"We're shooting the ball really well and we're playing much better defense than we did last year, and I'm proud of the boys," Lewis said. "They don't quit, they play hard right up to the end, and I like that about us."

Everglades City's roster is young. In fact, there are no seniors. Lewis said

improving throughout the season is crucial, and using games against Donahue could be a measuring stick.

"We want to beat them by the end of the season. This is one of the best team's in our district. We want to beat them by the end of the season; that's our goal, to beat teams like this," he said.



Kevin Johnson

Everglades City's Kelvin Huggins, left, and Homer Huggins go airborne for a loose ball.



Kevin Johnson

Tayin Fairclough gets past a Donahue defender.



Kevin Johnson

Amos Huggins takes a 3-point shot.

In second year, PECS co-ed soccer continues to accumulate experience

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

CLEWISTON — The final score wasn't indicative of how far the Pemayetv Emahavk Charter School co-ed soccer team has come this season.

PECS lost 6-2, against Clewiston Middle School on Dec. 16, 2024, in Clewiston, but PECS coach Abril Bert said her team is far better compared to where it was at the start of the season.

"At first, we needed some work, but since we started practicing, I have seen a change from when we started. It's a big difference," Bert said.

In her first season with the team, Bert said all aspects of the team have improved: forwards, middle and defense. Her assessment was evident in the game. For example, forwards Ross Jones and Amalia Estrada had strong rushes up front and flashed their speed; defenders Elainna Fonseca, Braylen Hunsinger and Teodoro Estrada each delivered strong clears; and Miguel Estrada and Onnie Cypress were among the team's most physical defenders.

Josephine Snow, who made some tough saves, and Miguel Estrada shared keeper duties.

Aven Fonseca and Jones scored the team's goals.

Being co-ed, the team features nearly a 50/50 split between boys and girls. Some of the team's top players — and most physical players — are girls. At times, they won one-on-one battles against Clewiston boys.

"They're not scared," Bert said. PECS notched a win against Moore Haven early in the season. While wins haven't come often in the team's two years of existence, Bert said everything is headed in the right direction as players gain more experience.

At its final game of the season Dec. 18 at home, PECS honored its eighth graders who will be headed to high school. The players are Amalia Estrada, Elainna Fonseca, Ross Jones, Karter Puente and Josephine Snow.

PECS soccer vs Clewiston

- Coach: Abril Bert
- 2 – Josephine Snow
- 3 – Elainna Fonseca
- 4 – Amalia Estrada
- 5 – Ciel Cypress
- 6 – Bentley Osceola
- 7 – Alakai Bert
- 8 – Aven Fonseca
- 11 – Miguel Estrada
- 12 – Karter Puente
- 13 – Onnie Cypress
- 14 – Ross Jones
- 15 – Braylen Hunsinger
- 16 – Ianna Cypress
- 17 – Dylanne Peak
- 18 – Teodoro Osceola



The PECS co-ed soccer team, with coach Abril Bert, standing far left, gathers following its game against Clewiston Middle School on Dec. 16, 2024.

Kevin Johnson



PECS goalkeeper Josephine Snow leaps as she makes a finger-tip save Dec. 16, 2024, against Clewiston Middle School.

Kevin Johnson



Aven Fonseca delivers a powerful kick with Elainna Fonseca behind her.



PECS forward Ross Jones, right, battles a Clewiston player for the ball.

Kevin Johnson

Kevin Johnson



PECS' eighth graders were honored along with their family members at the team's final game Dec. 18, 2024. The eighth graders (holding gift baskets) are, from left to right, Amalia Estrada, Karter Puente, Josephine Snow, Elainna Fonseca and Ross Jones.

PECS



Kevin Johnson (2)

“Zae” Thomas holds the Class 4A state championship trophy after American Heritage defeated Jones, 40-31, on Dec. 13, 2024, at Florida International University. At right, Thomas and the Patriots celebrate, including coach Mike Smith (raising the trophy).



‘Zae’ Thomas, American Heritage cap wild season with state championship

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MIAMI — In mid-October, the American Heritage School-Plantation football team stared at a very un-Heritage like record. Through seven games, the frustrated Patriots were 3-4, having lost all four of its “marquee games” to date.

The Patriots were close in all four losses, but had no wins to show for their efforts against Milton (Georgia), Chaminade-Madonna, Miami Central and Miami Norland.

But when Central and Norland forfeited their wins due to the use of ineligible players, the tide began to change for Heritage’s season, and the Patriots turned it into a tsunami that couldn’t be stopped.

Heritage won its final 11 games (including the forfeits and a victory against 5A state champ St. Thomas Aquinas).

The Patriots dominated the Class 4A playoffs, notching wins against Jensen Beach, Dillard, Norland and St. Augustine before capping off the remarkable year with a 40-31 win against Jones-Orlando in the 4A state championship Dec. 13, 2024, in front of nearly 4,000 fans at Florida International University’s stadium in Miami.

Heritage led Jones, 17-10, at halftime. Each time Heritage seemed ready to pull away, Jones battled back. In fact, Jones rallied from a 31-17 deficit to tie the game at 31-31 with 9:07 left in the fourth quarter, but Heritage surged ahead for good on an 80-yard touchdown run by Florida-signee Byron Louis.

For the Seminole Tribe’s “Zae” Thomas, a senior cornerback, the state championship culminated a remarkable few weeks for him that included:

- Nov. 29: Recovered two fumbles in the regional final win against Norland.



Kevin Johnson

American Heritage cornerback “Zae” Thomas stretches out to wrap his arms around a Jones receiver in the Class 4A state championship.



Kevin Johnson

“Zae” Thomas closely guards a Jones receiver.

- Dec. 4: Signed with Florida State.
- Dec. 6: Returned an interception 80 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter to seal a 38-28 state semifinal win against St. Augustine.
- Dec. 13: Made five tackles in the 4A state championship win against Jones.

Mike Smith, who has seen Thomas develop every step of the way at Heritage — first as an assistant coach and the past two years as head coach — was thrilled with the way Thomas ended his high school career.

“That’s a kid who has been here a long time,” Smith said. “Just to watch his development from a kid that was a JV player and then became a backup and then last year became an elite player... Even his

season being up and down this year, the way he finished off his season and the way he finished off his career and the way he just stepped up and battled through the playoffs, it’s a fitting end. I’m so proud of that kid because he really made himself into that. Yes, he’s got natural talent and he’s blessed, but he made himself into that. It’s a testament to his work ethic.”

“Battle through adversity” is the way Thomas summed up the team’s season.

“It’s been a crazy turn of events,” he said.

Thomas can add his name to the list of Heritage’s state champions from the tribe, which, in recent years, has included brothers Andre and Blevyns Jumper (football), Ahnie

Jumper, Budha Jumper and Kiauna Martin (softball) and the Stubbs sisters — December and Tiana (basketball).

With the state championship conquered, Thomas can shift his focus to starting his college career at Florida State.

“I’m ready to get started on the next step,” he said.

According to Heritage stats, Thomas finished the season with 56 tackles, including 34 solo.

“Now he’s a Division I player,” Smith said. “He’s going to go off to Florida State and he’ll do great things at Florida State, but he’s leaving here a champion.”



Kevin Johnson

“Zae” Thomas has plenty of reasons to smile after American Heritage won the 4A state championship.



Kevin Johnson

From left to right, Florida-signee Byron Louis, Texas-commit and injured QB Dia Bell, and Florida State-signee “Zae” Thomas bask in the aftermath of winning the 4A state championship.

Tribal kids receive taste of football under the lights at Hard Rock Stadium



Mayli Tommie

Former Dolphin Lamar Thomas talks to kids at the Miami Dolphins junior flag football clinic Nov. 26, 2024, at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens. Tribal youth, including several from the Hollywood and Big Cypress reservations, participated in the clinic. The two-hour event was held in the evening, so the kids had a chance to be on the field when the stadium was all lit up.



Mayli Tommie (3)

At left, Aubrey Cypress, and in center, Zoie Foster-Snow, participate in the clinic. At right, youth from the tribe enjoy their time at the stadium.



Mayli Tommie
Kids at the clinic gather for a large group photo.



Mayli Tommie
Jayda Torres participates in a drill at the clinic.

PECS track and field students compete in county meet

OKEECHOBEE – Dozens of Pemaaytv Emahakv Charter School students participated against other schools in the Okeechobee County track and field meet Dec. 13, 2024, at Okeechobee High School.



Beverly Bidney

PECS' Cordey Jumper, far left, and Silas Snow, center, lead the way to start the one mile race at the Okeechobee County track and field meet Dec. 13, 2024.



Beverly Bidney

With baton in hand, PECS' Asaiah Fludd, left, battles a fellow runner from North Elementary School.



Beverly Bidney

The eyes of PECS' Elainna Fonseca are focused on the finish line.



Beverly Bidney

PECS' Kaliya Hodge shows plenty of determination and speed in this sprint.



Beverly Bidney

PECS' Kali Jumper hands the baton to Rowan VanHouten during a relay race.

✦ SIGNING
From page 1A

The signing confirmed Thomas's decision to attend FSU. He made his commitment announcement June 30, 2024, when he picked FSU over Clemson University during a ceremony with friends and family at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Thomas, who blossomed into a major recruit during his junior season, had scholarship offers from more than 30 colleges.

In addition to Thomas, the signing ceremony in the lobby of the school's basketball arena included his teammates Omarian Abraham (North Carolina State), Mekhi Hicks (Harvard), Byron Louis (Florida) and Dayen Marouf Araibi (Rhode Island).

Kevin Johnson

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. congratulates "Zae" Thomas after Thomas signed with FSU on Dec. 4, 2024, at American Heritage School.



Kevin Johnson

University of Florida signee Byron Louis, left, and Florida State University signee "Zae" Thomas, center, congratulate each other during a signing day ceremony at American Heritage School. At right is Harvard-signee Mekhi Hicks.

Fort Lauderdale player wins big at WPT

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Dylan Smith, of Fort Lauderdale won first place worth \$662,200 in the World Poker Tour (WPT) Championship which was part of the "Rock 'N' Roll Poker Open" (RRPO) in December at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Smith bested 1,435 entries in the series finale, winning his first major live tournament title. This year, he broke through with a major victory in a live tournament, defeating Matthew Beinner in a heads-up battle to win the RRPO Championship. The tournament generated a prize pool worth over \$4.5 million easily eclipsing the \$3 million guarantee.

- Championship Final Table Results:
- 1st: Dylan Smith (Fort Lauderdale) \$651,800 + \$10,400 WPT World Championship Seat
 - 2nd: Matthew Beinner (New York, Fla.) \$440,000
 - 3rd: Florian Ribouchon (La Trinité, France) \$325,000
 - 4th: Landon Tice (Boca Raton, Fla.) \$245,000
 - 5th: Francis Anderson (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.) \$184,000
 - 6th: Paul Domb (Key Biscayne, Fla.) \$140,000

The 49 primary events RRPO kicked off on Wednesday, Nov. 20 with a \$400 Deep Stack NLH. The series opener drew 6,480. The event concluded with Eric Yanovsky of Brooklyn, N.Y. winning \$261,920.

In addition to Smith, other signature event winners include:

- Luke Brereton (Prestbury, UK.), won the \$1,100 Triple Stack NLH for \$78,030
- Daniel Neilson (Sydney, Australia), won the \$5,000 Deep Stack NLH for \$201,500
- Faraz Jaka (Las Vegas, NV.), won the \$10,000 Deep Stack NLH for \$313,495
- Brandon Wilson (Chicago, IL.), won the \$25,500 High Roller NLH for \$602,900

Poker action will return to Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood, Fla. in the New Year with the Lucky Hearts Poker Open (LHPO) Jan. 9 through Jan. 21, headlined by the Deep Stack NLH series opener with a \$1 million guarantee and the WPT NLH Championship boasting a \$2 million guarantee.

Future tournament information and poker hotel rates are available at SHRPO.com.

Heisman winner's trophy on display at First Americans Museum

FROM PRESS RELEASE

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — The Heisman Trophy won by Cherokee Nation citizen Sam Bradford in 2008 is on display at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Bradford won college football's top honor in 2008 as quarterback for the University of Oklahoma.

Bradford went on to become the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 NFL Draft by the St. Louis Rams. He played eight seasons in the NFL and retired in 2018.



FAM

The Heisman Trophy won by Sam Bradford.

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'Fresh' Walters shines in national title game with 6 catches

STAFF REPORT

Roger "Fresh" Walters, a Seminole Tribe descendent from Port St. Lucie, has been one of the top producers for the Iowa Western Community College football team all season, and the national championship game was no different.

Walters, a 5-foot-10, 180-pound wide receiver, hauled in a game-high six catches for 59 yards in the National Junior College Athletic Association's Division 1 national championship game Dec. 18, 2024, in Canyon, Texas.

Iowa Western started the title tilt against Hutchinson Community College, of Kansas, in good shape, leading 14-0 after the first quarter.

But Iowa Western's 17-7 halftime lead

evaporated as Hutchinson scored three unanswered touchdowns in the third quarter and went on to notch a 30-23 win.

Walters' longest reception of the game was an 18-yard grab on 3rd down and 8 in the first quarter. Two plays later, Iowa Western scored the game's first touchdown.

On special teams, Walters returned two kickoffs for 51 yards. His 37-yard return in the second quarter led to a drive in which he caught two passes, leading to a field goal and a 17-7 lead.

Iowa Western finished with an 11-2 record.

Walters led the team in receptions – 75 – which produced 870 yards and seven touchdowns in 13 games.

He also led the squad with 444 yards on 18 kick returns.



Roger "Fresh" Walters (No. 1) gets revved up with teammates prior to playing in the NJCAA Division 1 national championship game Dec. 18, 2024, in Canyon, Texas.



Roger "Fresh" Walters makes one of his game-high six catches in the national championship game.



January schedule

FROM NATIVE LEARNING CENTER

HOLLYWOOD — The Native Learning Center (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: NAHASDA Essentials Training Day 1-5

Instructor: Cheryl A. Causley (Bay Mills Tribe of Chippewa Indians) Principal
Cheryl A. Causley & Associates
Date: January 6-10, 2025
Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Training Description:

These webinars will provide a comprehensive introduction to the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA). Attendees will become familiar with regulations, program guidance, and PIH Notices. We will review eligible participants and activities including rental housing, homebuyer programs, rehabilitation and housing, and crime prevention.

Training Objectives:

-This class will provide a basic summary of the NAHASDA program rules and key elements to webinar participants, thereby enhancing overall capacity at their housing program and ensuring on-going compliance with the array of NAHASDA federal requirements

-Multiple sessions will provide a thorough understanding of Indian Housing and NAHASDA which is a critical element fundamental to the success of a Housing Authority

Podcast Release: Getting Excited for Native Reel Cinema Fest at Seminole Tribal Fair & Powwow

Guest: Everett Osceola (Seminole Tribe of Florida) Film Liaison
Florida Seminole Tourism
Seminole Tribe of Florida

Release Date: January 8, 2025
Time: 12:00 pm EST

Episode Description:

This week, join us as we sit down with Everett Osceola, Seminole Tribe of Florida Member who is the Tribe's Film Liaison. As discussed in a previous episode (ep. 161 "A Celebration of Native American Voices in Film"), Everett is also the founder of the Native Reel Cinema Fest! Native Reel, established in 2014, will be celebrating a decade in existence this year at the upcoming Seminole Tribal Fair & Powwow, happening January 31st to February 2nd, 2025, at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood, FL. We get the inside scoop on what we can look forward to from Native Reel this year along with hearing about its history up until this point and Everett's vision for the future.

Webinar: Land Acquisition Planning

Instructor: Amy Wilson, Founder & Principal Consultant
SEE Renewal, LLC
Date: January 14, 2025
Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Training Description:

Land acquisition planning provides

a strategic approach to acquiring and assembling land, minimizing ad hoc decision-making and potential risks. It optimizes costs and ensures that acquired lands align with Tribal goals by considering land goals, community needs, and market conditions. The webinar will be used to discuss the benefits of land acquisition and the land acquisition planning process. Featured materials for this webinar include a PowerPoint slide presentation and informational course resources to refer to when developing a land acquisition plan.

Training Objectives:

-Understand the key differences between land acquisition, land assembly, and land aggregation

-Recognize key features of land acquisition plans

-Identify how land acquisition plans can be used to achieve Tribal land acquisition Goals

Webinar: Homelessness in Native American Communities

Instructor: Shelly Tucciarelli, Executive Director
Visionary Ventures NFP
Owner,
Turtle Clan Development Services
Date: January 16, 2025
Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Training Description:

One of the most marginalized communities yet a vibrant part of Chicago's landscape. The Native American community has struggled with homelessness and a lack of affordable housing since the Indian Relocation Act of 1956. While many returned to the reservations, those that remained in Chicago lived in poverty, poor health, homelessness, and a loss of connection to Tribal and cultural identities. Focusing on case studies and the history of Urban Native Americans in the Chicagoland area, we will discuss community engagement and the design/development process that seeks to enhance the connection to Tribal and cultural identities while providing trauma informed designed housing for a vastly underserved and historically ill-treated community.

Training Objectives:

- Major misconceptions – all Native Americans do not live on reservations

- Homelessness hard to define in Indian Country

- Barriers to housing
- Native Americans uniquely understand the true meaning of homelessness

Webinar: Land-Use Evaluation

Instructor: Amy Wilson, Founder & Principal Consultant
SEE Renewal, LLC
Date: January 21, 2025
Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Training Description:

Land use evaluation is used to determine how suitable a given land area is for different types of development and involves assessing a piece of land's potential for specific uses based on its physical characteristics. Land use evaluation is essential because it helps decision-makers understand the potential of land, allowing them to make informed choices about land development and management. The webinar will be used to discuss different land types, zoning, and land use planning. By understanding and applying the principles of land use evaluation, Tribal professionals can pave the way for a sustainable and prosperous future for their land. This webinar is a step towards that future, providing attendees with the knowledge and resources to make

informed decisions and achieve your Tribal goals. Featured materials for this webinar includes a PowerPoint slide presentation and informational course resources to refer to when conducting land use evaluations and preparing land use plans.

Training Objectives:

-Understand the key differences between land use types

-Recognize key features of land use regulations

-Identify how land use evaluation and subsequent land use plans can be used to achieve Tribal goals

Podcast Release: Building a Greener Future: A Conversation with Suffolk Construction on Sustainability

Guests:
Steven Burke, LEED and WELL Faculty, CPHC
Senior Director of Sustainability
Suffolk Design
Suffolk Construction

Mike Swenson, CCP, CEM, LEED AP BD+C

Director of Sustainability
Suffolk Design
Suffolk Construction

Release Date: January 22, 2025
Time: 12:00 pm EST

Episode Description:

We sit down with Steven Burke and Mike Swenson, Senior Director and Director respectively of Sustainability at Suffolk Construction. We are very excited to welcome Suffolk in January, as they will be giving the first lunch hour "Spark Chat" presentation at the Seminole Tribe of Florida's 7th Annual Renewable Energy & Sustainability Conference, happening January 27th-29th, 2025. Steven and Mike share what exciting developments are going on with sustainable materials and builds in the world of construction as well as offering some helpful tips for Tribal Housing Professionals. Come hear more about their exciting work and what they offer the worlds of sustainable construction and Tribal Housing!

Webinar: Effective Pre-Planning for Grant Applications

Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST
Grant Professionals Association
Approved Trainer

Owner, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC

Date: January 23, 2025
Time: 2:00 – 3:00 pm EST

Training Description:

This training will help you have a solid understanding of pre-planning strategies and tools. It will help your pre-planning efforts be effective as possible, which can translate into additional grant dollars.

Training Objectives:

- How to identify applications to conduct pre-planning activities for

- How to identify and form a team for pre-planning activities

- How to facilitate pre-planning activities

Seminole Tribe of Florida Renewable Energy & Sustainability 7th Annual Conference

Location: Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood – Grand Ballroom A/B/E/F/M

Date: January 27-29, 2025
Time: 7:30am – 5:30 pm EST

The 7th Annual Seminole Tribe of Florida Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference will focus on the newly changing landscape for Tribal energy development and sustainability, including best practices, federal leadership, policy and regulatory changes, funding a project, and project planning/development trends. The Conference will give Tribes and First Nations an opportunity to explore the range of renewable energy and sustainability opportunities that exist and how to start the process.

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.

HEALING From page 9A

Ongoing and historical trauma perpetuated by the United States government has contributed to many of the health disparities faced by Native American communities.

Genocide, the forced relocation of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans from their homelands onto reservations with poor living conditions, the near-eradication of a primary food source of buffalo and introduction of unhealthy food rations, along with assimilatory boarding schools that ran until the 1970s, have left haunting generational trauma in many Native American families that have contributed to poor diets, substance abuse and physical and mental health problems found in these communities.

For decades, the federal government also barred many Native American communities from being able to practice traditional medicine.

Tribal leaders say the move could decrease health gaps for Native Americans by incorporating sacred healing practices that have been used and trusted for generations.

"This groundbreaking approval reflects the understanding that health is more than physical; it is spiritual, emotional, and deeply tied to our culture," Navajo President

Buu Nygren wrote in a recent post on the social media platform X. The Navajo Nation is the largest Native American tribal nation in the United States, with a land base as large as West Virginia. "Traditional healing — including ceremonies and treatments — will now be more accessible through hospitals, clinics, and tribal programs, providing holistic care for our people."

Many traditional Native American healing practices have proven health benefits. Sweat lodges, for example, have been documented as being helpful in ridding infections from the body, helping with pain relief and rheumatic diseases like arthritis, alleviating insomnia and promoting healthy skin.

Sweat lodges hold spiritual significance with many Native American communities and can also help with detoxification — a rehab treatment that could help mitigate substance abuse problems within Native American communities.

"By strengthening access to traditional health care practices, these innovative state demonstrations can play a crucial role in reducing health disparities and improving health across tribal communities," CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure said in a news release.

Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC), IHS' largest Indigenous care facility in the Phoenix metro area, provides direct health services to over 150,000 individuals.

PIMC offers spiritual care services, described on the website as "person-centered care provided to meet a suffering individual's needs in the present moment."

"PIMC is unique in that it is located in a major metropolitan area and serves a large patient population that is representative of more than 74% of the 574 federally recognized tribes," wrote PIMC CEO Deb Ward Lund in a statement to Cronkite News. "The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) coverage of traditional health care practice will support the growth of PIMC's spiritual care program and we look forward to supporting the IHS in implementing this initiative across the agency."

The spiritual care coverage isn't permanent. It's part of a pilot program that will be reviewed for the next several years and is set to expire on Sept. 30, 2027, if not extended.

"American Indian and Alaska Natives have been endowed by our ancestors a deep and priceless wealth of traditional healing knowledge," said IHS Director Roselyn Tso in a news release. Tso is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and is from LeChee, Arizona.

"These practices have sustained our people's health for generations and continue to serve as a vital link between culture, science, and wellness in many of our communities," she said.