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Voice of the Unconquered

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Hundreds of acres enter trust process

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Since late 2024, the Seminole Tribe of Florida submitted applications to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for more than 800 acres of land to be put into trust adjacent to and near the Brighton, Immokalee and Hollywood reservations.

"I like to see land that was taken away from Native Americans given back to them," said Jonathan Levy, executive director of Seminole Real Estate Fund, who is responsible for submitting the land to trust applications to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Seven applications are awaiting BIA approval and applications for six more parcels are being prepared now. Under new rules for taking land into trust which were put into place in December 2023, the BIA has 120 days from the acceptance of the application to provide a notice of decision. According to the BIA, the new rule streamlines the process to about two and a half years.

"There was a document from the late 1800s that was standing between us and the Sweetgrass [Brighton] application," Levy said. "I suggested to the BIA that the paperwork may have been lost during the Civil War. The BIA relented and said the document was so old and unnecessary that they didn't need it. They have the discretion to make common sense decisions."

◆ See TRUST on page 3A

Florida CattleWomen install Lucy Bowers as president, Emma Johns Brown as parliamentarian

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

MARCO ISLAND — For the first time, Florida CattleWomen Inc. has two Seminole tribal members on its executive board. Lucy Bowers was installed as president and Emma Johns Brown joined the leadership team as parliamentarian at the group's annual convention June 26 on Marco Island.

Bowers, who grew up in her family's pastures in Brighton, is the first Seminole woman to lead the statewide organization. She joined FCW in 2017 and the executive board as parliamentarian in 2022. As is the custom, she moved into a new position every year, culminating with her position as president.

"I joined FCW because I was curious about the beef industry outside of the pasture," Bowers said. "I step into this role with a full heart and big boots to fill. Long before Florida had highways, my ancestors were working with cattle. Cattle is my passion, my home and my heritage. It's the story I was born into."

The slogan Bowers chose for her year as president is "Come Together Over Beef" and asked Kentucky-based singer/songwriter George Molton write a song about it. He chose to use the Beatles melody of "Come Together" and wrote new words to fit the cattle industry and the Seminole history in it.

The primary goal of FCW is to promote beef consumption, educate the public about the industry's environmental and animal welfare practices, promote legislative awareness and educate the FCW membership and youth.

FCW was founded in 1961, in cooperation with the Florida Cattlemen's Association and Florida Beef Council. It has 650 members, of which about 150 attended



Beverly Bidney

FCW President Lucy Bowers, back row, third from left, and Parliamentarian Emma Johns Brown, middle row, second from right, are surrounded by Seminole family and friends after the installation.

the installation of the new executive board.

A video produced by Seminole Media Productions was aired during the installation ceremony. In it, Bowers identified the goals she has for her time as president which

include elevating FCW's outreach, continue to grow the next generation of leaders and protect the freedoms ag producers need to thrive. The organization is committed to creating opportunities for women to come

together in support of agriculture and the cattle industry.

◆ See FCW on page 5A

Xavier Osceola signs with FSU basketball

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

HOLLYWOOD — Xavier Osceola doesn't have a lot of history with Florida State University. He's never attended a Seminole basketball game and his only FSU football game came about 12 years ago.

But all it took was one visit to FSU to make him realize where he wants to spend his college career as a student and basketball player.

"The biggest thing when I took my official visit there [is that] they treated me as a recruit, but they showed a lot of love – the whole coaching staff – not only to me, but to my family. That was really important to me. I really like the whole coaching staff," he said.

Osceola, a smooth shooting 6-foot-1 point guard from the Hollywood Reservation, will join the FSU men's basketball team on a full scholarship, which his family proudly announced just before he did a mock signing June 30 with about 50 family members, relatives, friends and tribal officials in his backyard on the reservation.

The official announcement of the signing came the previous week and quickly proved to be a popular move. Within two days of the news being posted on FSU basketball's Instagram, the post had already generated nearly 3,000 likes.

Indeed, there is a lot to like about Osceola and his journey to become what is believed to be the first NCAA Division I men's basketball player from the tribe.

A big-time college program seemed an unlikely destination when Osceola was involved in a serious car accident midway through his high school career. He broke two bones in his neck and had to wear a neck brace for six months. Even after the brace came off, there were three additional months he couldn't go on a court.

After no basketball for nine months, Osceola had recovered enough to play his senior year this past winter for NSU University School in Davie. He said he wasn't 100 percent during the season and it's only been within the past couple months that he feels fully recovered.

Before he heads to FSU, he'll be able to test the waters in mid-July when he plays in the Native American Basketball Invitational in Phoenix.



Kevin Johnson

Xavier Osceola, center, holds a signing ceremony in front of family, President Holly Tiger and Councilman Chris Osceola on June 30 at his home on the Hollywood Reservation. He will play for FSU basketball.

News of Osceola's signing was met with praise throughout the tribe.

"I think it's unbelievable," said Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola. "It says a lot about his will because I know he's faced a lot of challenges along the way with his health. There are so many different things that can grab him and pull him away from what his goals are. Fortunately, with the support of his family they've been able to keep him on the right track and help him realize what his full potential is."

"It's great to have more representation," said FSU alumnus Kyle Doney, who accompanied Osceola on the official visit.

Osceola said he was grateful for the

scholarship offer.

"That's awesome. I'm thankful to the coaching staff and the university," he said.

Osceola said being the first Seminole to suit up for a major college hoops program won't be taken lightly.

"It makes me feel very blessed," he said. "In a way, I feel like I shouldn't be the first one; it's a little bit of guilt that comes with it, but I'm still very proud of myself and my family for helping me, but I feel like it would be wrong not to acknowledge the people who should have made it before me. I definitely took some pointers from guys like Hunter [Osceola] and Jerome Davis. They've helped me a lot."

He also said Duelle Gore – a Seminole who starred at Haskell Indian Nations University and went on to play professionally in Mexico – has also been a key figure in his development.

"He's helped me a lot. He's a good inspiration, good role model," Osceola said.

Surrounded by his family, including his mom Tasha, grandmother Virginia Osceola and grandfather Lawmaker, Osceola signed, took photos with attendees and started looking forward to his college career. One stop on FSU's schedule that has already caught his eye is the team's annual trip to Sunrise – about 10 miles from the reservation – for the Orange Bowl Classic.

"It will be a surreal experience. I try to visualize it in my head," he said.

No doubt there will be plenty of patchwork in the stands at Amerant Bank Arena. Osceola appreciates the support through the years that has helped him become a FSU Seminole.

"I had support from everybody; my whole family, Recreation, everybody," he said.

When he arrives at FSU, Osceola won't be the only STOF athlete on campus. Zae Thomas is a freshman defensive back on the football team. Coming soon, another Seminole, OB Osceola III, who has committed to FSU's baseball team.

Editorial

Double down on what works: Invest in Native CDFIs, don't eliminate them

• Pete Upton

Twenty-three years ago, Congress confronted a hard truth: Indian Country faced systemic financial exclusion — and Native-led solutions were the key to change. At a Senate hearing prompted by The Native American Lending Study, witnesses like Elsie Meeks of First Nations Oweesta Corporation and Roger Boyd of the U.S. Treasury's CDFI Fund called for a new federal commitment to Native-controlled lenders.

That call led to the creation of the Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) program — the only federal funding stream tailored to the unique challenges of lending in Indian Country. And it worked.

Today, 69 federally certified Native CDFIs — and dozens more in development — serve some of the most economically underserved communities in the United States. These Native-led institutions turn modest amounts of federal seed capital into real results: small business growth, homeownership, credit access and culturally grounded financial coaching. They don't just fill gaps left by traditional banks — they rewrite the rules to serve communities left out of the mainstream financial system for generations.

Yet this proven model now faces an existential threat.

The Trump administration plans to claw back \$24 million — or 86 percent — of the NACA funds already appropriated for FY 2025. Worse, the president's FY 2026 budget would scrap NACA altogether. Native CDFIs would be pushed into a new \$100 million rural funding pool, where they would go head-to-head with CDFIs holding hundreds of millions—even approaching

\$1 billion—on their balance sheets and unburdened by the trust-land, jurisdictional, and distance barriers Native lenders navigate daily. On paper, Native CDFIs might qualify. In practice, they wouldn't stand much of a chance.

We've seen this movie before. Under the New Markets Tax Credit program, Native-led groups captured less than 0.004 percent of total awards. That's not reform — that's erasure.

The irony of all this is hard to miss. Native CDFIs align perfectly with the Trump administration's stated goals. Treasury and the CDFI Fund have repeatedly described their mission as providing "seed capital" to community lenders. The administration insists the industry has "matured" beyond that need.

That is certainly not true for Native CDFIs. Most manage portfolios under \$6 million with fewer than five employees and total assets below \$20 million. They are still scaling to meet surging demand.

And the demand is real. According to a 2024 study by the Philadelphia Federal Reserve, 46.4% of Indian Country remains a banking desert — nearly twelve times the national rate. In response, Native CDFIs have stepped in where traditional finance has failed.

They are not "woke." They are not charities. They are not window dressing. Native CDFIs are fiscally disciplined, community-rooted lenders that uphold the federal government's trust and treaty responsibilities while delivering measurable results.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle recognize what Native CDFIs do and how they do it. In a 2025 Senate Banking Committee hearing, Senator Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) put it plainly: "Native CDFIs are important to fixing the housing

crisis in Indian Country. They are a way for Tribes to attract capital that leave Tribal members in control. And in Indian Country, it's very important that Tribal members be in control."

Congress has consistently expressed bipartisan support for Native CDFIs. Now is the time to turn those words into action.

We urge Congress to protect NACA and commit to a \$50 million annual seed-capital fund for Native CDFIs. That investment would allow Native lenders to scale, meet local needs, and close persistent capital gaps — on Native terms.

We don't need a new solution. We need to fund the one that's already working.

Every federal dollar invested in a Native CDFI is multiplied — on average, generating \$8 in matching private, philanthropic, or state capital. That leverage turns modest grants into millions of dollars for new housing, thriving Native-owned businesses, and living-wage jobs in rural and urban Native communities. Ending NACA's seed capital support now wouldn't just slow Native CDFIs — it would undermine co-investment strategies that rely on a consistent federal baseline.

The fiscal debate in Washington is moving fast. As budget negotiations unfold, Congress must protect Native CDFI funding and lock in a \$50 million commitment before the next vote. Doing so would strengthen rural economies, uphold tribal sovereignty, and fuel the next generation of Native-led economic growth.

Pete Upton is the CEO of the Native CDFI Network and Executive Director of Native360 Loan Fund. He is an enrolled member of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. This opinion appears at NativeNewsOnline.net.

STOF to host annual energy, sustainability conference in 2026

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — The eighth annual Seminole Tribe of Florida Renewable Energy & Sustainability Conference will be held Jan. 26-28, 2026, at the Seminole Hard

Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Join tribal leaders, energy experts, and sustainability champions for three days of impactful discussions, innovative solutions, and meaningful collaboration focused on tribal energy development, renewable energy

projects, and sustainability initiatives across Native communities.

For more information contact: Jasmine Rahming at jasminerahming1@semtribe.com or 954-985-2331.

Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue's Lt. Jeremy Smith receives 'First Responder of the Year' honor

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue Lt. Jeremy Smith grew up around a fire station because his dad was a firefighter in Okeechobee, but he didn't know he wanted to pursue a firefighting career until he volunteered at a station nearly 20 years ago.

"I was like, man, I really like this," Smith said. "Get to help people, and it's rewarding and seemed like a cool job. But it was a lot more in depth once I got hired on and going on calls and stuff. It was nice to help people. And you know, it felt rewarding; felt like I was doing something with my life, and it led into now, 18 years later, still doing it. I love it."

Smith, who is based on the Brighton Reservation and has worked for the tribe since 2014, received a statewide recognition in May when the Florida State Elks Association honored him as First Responder of the Year – Firefighter/Paramedic. The award was presented during the Elks' annual state convention in Orlando.

"It's cool to get something like that," Smith said. "It'll be nice memorabilia for my daughter when she gets older...It's not something I get every day. It was pretty neat. I was excited. I appreciated it."

Being named First Responder of the Year came as a shock to Smith. He was picking up his daughter from school when he saw the email saying he was getting the award. He was going through his inbox and initially thought it was spam but read it anyway.

"And I was like, 'holy smokes, that's from the Elks. Dang it, that's awesome.' It surprised me. I was by myself in my car. I was calling my wife. ... She was excited too," Smith said.



Courtesy photo

Lt. Jeremy Smith

For the award process, fire departments from across Florida submit nominations and one is selected to be honored. Smith was nominated for the award by Louis Valdes, Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue division chief of operations.

"Lt. Smith has consistently demonstrated exceptional skill and leadership, often excelling under the most challenging circumstances," Valdes wrote in his nomination letter.

One example of Smith's excellence, Valdes wrote, came when Smith responded to an ATV accident involving a pediatric patient who was unconscious.

"Recognizing the severity of the situation, he quickly assessed the patient's condition and determined that immediate

transport to a trauma center was necessary. Despite severe weather preventing Air Rescue from landing at the scene, Lt. Smith took swift and decisive action. He began driving the patient to the nearest hospital with a suitable landing zone while maintaining constant communication with dispatch. His calm demeanor under pressure was instrumental as he coordinated with Air Rescue, overcoming multiple failed attempts by other helicopters, due to the adverse weather. Ultimately, Lt. Smith successfully transferred the patient to a helicopter that transported the patient to a pediatric trauma center more than 80 miles away," Valdes wrote.

Valdes praised Smith, noting that his "composure, quick thinking and dedication likely saved the patient's life."

Responding to those types of serious calls has changed Smith's perspective on life.

"It took me a little while, and I was like, man, I'm not going to get upset about little things anymore. Getting stuck in traffic ... I just don't let it bother me. Things could be different. Try to be happy with what I got," he said.

Before going to the award ceremony at the Elks convention, Smith thought he would be one of multiple "firefighters of the year." To his surprise, he was the only one who received the honor.

Smith said the Brighton community and the department take care of each other.

"I like all of it. It's not boring; it's fun," he said. "Anything could happen at any time. You're taking care of people, and people respond well to you helping them. So, it feels good ... if you get something that is serious and you make a change in somebody's life, it's nice. Because, as you can see, the change, it feels good. It's rewarding.

"I love my job, love my family, and love the co-workers I have, and love my career."

Potential NYC casino to be operated by Hard Rock clears hurdle

BY KATIE HONAN
THE CITY

The plan from New York Mets owner Steve Cohen to build a casino on the parking lot next to Citi Field cleared another hurdle [May 27] as the State Senate approved so-called parkland alienation, which allows for development on the site if it is selected for a gaming license.

The Queens project, dubbed Metropolitan Park, would turn the parking lot next to the stadium — which is technically state parkland — into a 50-acre entertainment complex that also includes 25 acres for a park, hotel, community space, food hall and more.

In April, Cohen's group announced a plan to build 450 units of affordable housing nearby on another existing parking lot in Corona.

The team has also promised repairs to the nearby subway station, better bike paths, a food hall, and other investments into nearby neighborhoods — but only if they get a casino license, which should be decided by the end of the year. The venue would be operated by Hard Rock.

The Senate passed the alienation motion 54-5 late Tuesday afternoon — despite the area's representative, State Sen. Jessica Ramos, opposing it.

A similar alienation bill passed earlier [in May] overwhelmingly in the Assembly, 138 to 7.

The bill was sponsored by Asm. Larindra Hooks who represents parts of East Elmhurst and Corona, and who has been supportive of the casino.

The five-member board of the Gaming Commission will ultimately decide where to locate up to three downstate casinos through licensing, which is expected at the end of the year.

The senate's parkland alienation bill was introduced by Sen. John Liu, who represents neighboring Flushing and was promised a "Skypark" — a bridge over Flushing Creek — by the Mets owners as part of his introduction of the bill.

On the floor of the senate, Ramos — who is running for mayor — testified that many members of her district, which includes Corona, East Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights, were opposed to the casino plan. She said the proposal "has deeply divided my community."

"We want investment, we want good jobs, we want green space, housing, and real opportunities for our children," she said.

"But after decades of public neglect it feels like the first serious proposal on the table is a casino," she added. "That is not the kind of development my community deserves."

Ramos said while the neighbors who were in favor of the casino plan had good intentions for broader development, she was skeptical of Cohen, whose financial firm paid the largest insider trading fine in United States history.

"Who stands to win and who's being asked to take the risk? This is not about a building or about a parcel of parkland, it's about power," she said.

"It's about whether communities like mine are treated like partners or pawns."

Manhattan State Sen. Liz Krueger also voted against the parkland alienation move, saying "I don't like gambling. I particularly don't like government co-sponsored gambling."

Liu, who co-authored an op-ed last year critical of casinos preying on predominantly Asian communities like his own, told THE CITY in April that the casinos were happening no matter what and he wanted to improve his community.

"There's going to be three casinos nearby anyway and there are lots of people in favor," he said at the time, adding that Cohen's team was "vigorous" in their push for his sign-on — even though his district is merely adjacent to the one where the casino would be located.

"The support in my community — notwithstanding my warnings — far outweighs and outnumbers the few who are opposed."

He did not speak at [the May 27] hearing.

Prospective casino operators have spent millions of dollars lobbying lawmakers, including Mayor Eric Adams, throughout the competition for three new downstate casino licenses.

Six of the top 10 spenders lobbying city officials were all bidding for casinos last year, according to data from the City Clerk's office.

In recent weeks, some of the bidders have pulled out, including Wynn Resorts that had a plan at Hudson Yards and Sands Corp. that aimed to build at the former Nassau Coliseum.

The Hudson Yards casino developers blamed local opposition to the project, and said they would build housing instead. On Wednesday, the New York State Gaming Commission is holding a virtual public scoping session as it continues its environmental review of a proposed Caesars Palace Times Square Casino, which is in Krueger's district.

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Community



Seminole artist experience draws record crowd in Tampa debut

FROM AH-TAH-THI-KI MUSEUM

TAMPA — The Seminole Tribe of Florida's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum proudly celebrated a milestone with its fifth Seminole Artist Experience Art Sale, held for the first time at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa on June 21. The free cultural event welcomed a record-breaking crowd of over 300 attendees—marking the largest audience ever for a first-time host location.

Held in the Hard Rock Event Center, the event transformed the space into a vibrant celebration of Seminole artistry, tradition and community spirit. Guests experienced a powerful mix of contemporary and traditional Native American art, live performances, and cultural storytelling, all led by members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The event featured over 14 Seminole crafters exhibiting a diverse range of traditional and contemporary handmade works.

The lineup of featured Florida Seminole artists included beadwork artisan Brian

Zepeda, who demonstrated his skills on a Star Wars-themed beaded belt designed to complement one of his iconic bandolier bags. Fine artist Erica Deitz painted live at her booth, completing her latest watercolor piece titled Medicine Woman: Susie Jim Billie, to the awe of onlookers. Crafter Megan Otero showcased her hand-sewn and beaded creations, sharing that her late grandmother, Margaret John Cypress, inspired her journey into traditional crafting.

Showcasing filmmaking and acting as an art, Everett Osceola film liaison and founder of Native Reels shared unique and innovative Indigenous films set to inspire others by highlighting several films. Some of the short films included "The Art of Alligator Wrestling," "Ghost," directed by Seminole Tribal Member Doc Native, and "Mary Margaret Road Grader," directed by Steven Paul Judd.

The event began with a Pow Wow exhibition by Little Big Mountain's Iron Horse Dancers, drawing the crowd into the rhythm and beauty of Indigenous dance. Throughout the day, guests enjoyed additional performances, including wildlife shows by Pharoah's Wildlife Kingdom and photo opportunities with baby alligators. The dynamic entertainment blended perfectly with the immersive atmosphere of live music, Seminole oral storytelling, and visual art.

The Seminole Artist Experience Art Sale series began in July 2022 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress and has since grown in reach and impact, with successful events in Hollywood and Immokalee. The Tampa debut set a new standard, with over 300 guests participating—more than any previous first-time location.

The series will continue with its next stop at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee July 19. Full details will be announced soon on the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum website at www.ahtahtiki.com.



Artist Erica Deitz displays her work at the Seminole Artist Experience Art Sale on June 21 in Tampa.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Go Native Now performs at the Tampa event.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum
Ralph Smith, left, and
Bryan Zepada at the
Artist Experience

New princesses to be crowned

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — One of the biggest nights of the year in the Seminole Tribe of Florida will take place July 26 when a new Miss Florida Seminole and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole will be crowned.

The 68th annual Seminole Princess Pageant will be held in the

auditorium at tribal headquarters in Hollywood. The pageant begins at 7 p.m. A community dinner will be held at 4 p.m.

After watching contestants on stage in various categories, a panel of judges will select the winners as the one-year reigns of Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet

Osceola come to an end.

The princess tradition dates back to 1957 when Connie Frank Gowen, of the Hollywood Reservation, served as the first Miss Florida Seminole.

♦ TRUST From page 1A

The tribe is waiting for a decision on one of the Brighton parcels, the first one under the new regulations. However, the approval process may be delayed since the Nashville office of the BIA lost employees during the recent Department of Government Efficiency downsizing of the federal government.

"It's an operational challenge for any workplace and makes the process slower," Levy said.

The new BIA regulation governs four types of land acquisitions that may be put into trust on behalf of federally recognized tribes or individual Indians, including on-reservation, contiguous, off-reservation and initial acquisitions. When properties are adjacent or across the street or a canal, BIA pledges to

fast-track the application.

The parcels currently under review by the BIA include more than 78 acres adjacent to the Hollywood Reservation in Broward County, 285 acres adjacent to the Brighton Reservation in Glades County and 500 acres adjacent to the Lakeland Reservation in Polk County.

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Immigration detention center in Everglades evokes protests

BY KELLY FARRELL
Special to the Tribune

Seminole and Miccosukee families living along Tamiami Trail in Ochopee mobilized a resistance to an immigration detention center in Big Cypress National Preserve within hours of the "Alligator Alcatraz" public announcement in late June. The first of two protests was organized by Ochopee resident Betty Osceola and held on June 22, drawing hundreds of people and up to 1,000 attendees to the site located off U.S. 41 near the Collier and Miami Dade County line. The second protest was held June 28, with at least as many attendees. By then, the speed of construction materials heading into the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport (TNT) was rapid. The property is owned by Miami Dade County and located within Collier County. Collier County deeded the approximate-28-acre site to Miami Dade County several decades ago, Dan Summer, Collier County Emergency



Kelly Farrell

Betty Osceola speaks at a protest against an immigrant detention center in the Everglades.

Management director said.

"Don't give up," said Osceola. "If my ancestors gave up, I wouldn't be here," she said.

The site was once planned to be the world's largest airport but was stopped by Marjorie Stoneman Douglas and others who founded the Friends of the Everglades and eventually Big Cypress National Preserve—to protect the area from such development.

Osceola is a member of the Panther Clan of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida with Seminole family roots as well. She grew up with ancestors actively protecting threats to the Everglades.

There are at least a dozen other tribal family camps, Seminole and Miccosukee, along the Tamiami Trail near the site.

Their rally cries were heard by

residents, environmental activists and Everglades supporters from throughout the state, leading to online and in-person protests. A lawsuit being filed on June 27 by Friends of the Everglades and the Center for Biological Diversity on the grounds of the lack of an environmental impact study and due process. The immigration detention center proposal was first announced by Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier as "Alligator Alcatraz" on his social media page on the platform X on June 19.

Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie began action almost immediately sending county officials a letter of intent to purchase the land for \$20 million.

What was initially to house 1,000 immigrants within 30 to 60 days ended up growing in scope to house 5,000 detainees to become the largest detention center in the state open within about 10 days of the initial announcement.

Some officials early on said they did not respond quickly because they thought it was a political hoax.

William "Popeye" Osceola, secretary of the Miccosukee Business Council, attended the protests outside the gates of the old airport-turned-detention center. The protests were educational and prayerful with organization and leadership from by Betty Osceola and Garrett Stuart, who is also a resident of Ochopee and of the Lakota Nation.

"To me, this is a repetition of history," Popeye said.

The reservation system and the concentration camps, come to mind with this, he said, this is what happens when people are perceived as less than human.

"It's rubbing that history in our face, saying, 'We did it before and we are doing it again,'" Popeye said.

Though Uthmeier described the detention camp as being temporary with trailer-like housing, hundreds of trucks also carried in wood, fencing, piping, electric, fill and many other materials throughout the week.

Numerous other sites that already have infrastructure, including abandoned prisons in South Florida, could have been chosen as sites with fewer environmental impacts and much lower costs, opponents say.

Department of Homeland Security estimated "Alligator Alcatraz" to cost \$450 million per year and the Federal Emergency Management Agency is to be reimbursing state costs for the facility.

Furthermore, the idea from Uthmeier that the alligators and pythons will create a safety barrier is untrue, Everglades residents said.

"We live out here with the alligators. We know they're not dangerous," Popeye said.

Mae'anna Osceola-Hart's grandfather, Wild Bill Osceola, helped stop the development there decades earlier.

"We are the reason the Everglades are standing here today. We are the stewards of the Everglades," Osceola-Hart said.



Kelly Farrell

Jessica L. Osceola, Sharlane Roberts, Katrina Bowers, Sharyn Roberts, Caryn Billie and Shayna Roberts gather at the site of the protest.

Indigenous art event comes to Hard Rock



Calvin Tiger (2)

At left, Wilson Bowers hosts the Indigenous Art & Entertainment Expo at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood June 28-29. Above, Camisha Cedartree has her various artwork on display.

EEO holds tribal employee career day

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The tribe's Executive Operations Office held its Tribal Member Career Day at tribal headquarters June 27. Multiple departments gave presentations about what each department does for the tribe and how it impacts the tribal community.

The Executive Operations Office, Budget, Human Resources and Education Departments shared slideshow presentations and answered questions from tribal members.

Tribal employees Marcella Billie, NAGPRA Liaison, Tribal Historic Preservation Office; Ollie Wareham, Director, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum; Jojo Osceola, Assistant Director, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum; Debbie Carter, Administrative Services Manager, Environmental Protection Office, Krystle Bowers, Assistant Director, Environmental Protection Office; and Justin Osceola, Water Resources Mechanic, were showcased.

Executive Director of Operations Tina Osceola gave her insight into the importance of having tribal members to work for the tribe.



Calvin Tiger

The attendees at the EEO Tribal Member Career Day June 27 listen as executive director of operations Tina Osceola, at left with back to camera, talks about employment opportunities with the tribe.

"We need to build that culture," Osceola said. She emphasized the importance of different departments collaborating with each other to be successful, which benefits

the tribal community.

"Once you get your foot in the door, you can get to wherever you need to go," said Justin Osceola.



Calvin Tiger (3)

From left to right, Savannah Cypress, an Education Department summer work experience employee, Justin Osceola, Water Resources mechanic, and Carlise Bermudez, an Education Department summer work experience employee, speak at career day.

Sidewalk installation continues in Big Cypress

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS —The streets of the Big Cypress Reservation are about to become a lot more people-friendly thanks to a new sidewalk now under construction on Josie Billie Highway from the Ahfachkee School to near the Eight Clans Bridge near Sadies.

The project to upgrade the roadway and

add sidewalks has been in the planning stage for a couple of years and will eventually go from north of the Mabel T. Frank residential community to the bridge.

The sidewalk will be mostly on the southwest side of Josie Billie Highway – the reservation's main road – but will vary depending on the location. A multi-use trail will be built north of the Mabel T. Frank community.

Ground crews have been busy on the

site and plan to have the entire 3.5 mile project completed by February 2027.

"This is part of an initiative so people can get around the reservation easier and get more exercise," said James Jackson, Public Works manager.

Ditches will be dug for pipes which will also be installed for fiber optic cable for IT, which will be added sometime in the future.



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◆ **FCW**
From page 1A

“I have no desire to reinvent the wheel,” Bowers said in the video. “I would just like to enhance the strong foundation that has been entrusted to me.”

As president, Bowers plans to honor the past, defend the present and feed the future. “My vision is to come together as a unified voice for women and men in the cattle industry- honoring our heritage while embracing innovation and future growth,” Bowers said in the video. “When we come together, we create a legacy that not only

preserves our way of life but propels it forward.”

Johns Brown joined the Okeechobee County chapter of the FCW in 2019. About seven months ago Bowers asked her to join the board. Her new grandson, a real estate business and a 150-head cattle ranch keeps her very busy, but she decided she could make it work.

“I started tagging along with Lucy to everything and started to learn the ropes,” Johns Brown said. “Lucy wanted to make sure she had a strong team coming up behind her.”

Over the last seven months, Johns Brown was busy getting to know FCW



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, President-elect Deborah Whaley, President Lucy Bowers and Past President Eden Yarborough celebrate during the FCW installation ceremony June 26.



Beverly Bidney

FCW Parliamentarian Emma Johns Brown during the installation ceremony in Marco Island.



Beverly Bidney

The FCW executive board for 2025-26 includes President Lucy Bowers, far left, and Parliamentarian Emma Johns Brown, fifth from left.

and attended the legislative session in Tallahassee and the group’s annual retreat where she met and bonded with members of the organization.

As Bowers talked about her heritage during her acceptance speech, Johns Brown said watching her was an emotional experience.

“It was pretty powerful,” she said. “I realize that I’m following that and thought about my heritage as a Seminole and Florida cracker. Watching this tradition continue had my emotions going.”

Johns Brown grew up in Brighton with her father Timmy Johns’s herd. Her husband Travis Brown has been ranching since he was a teenager. Together they own the B-5 Cattle Company, a cow calf operation on 7,500 acres in Martin County. She also sits on the Okeechobee Education Foundation board, substitute teaches at Penayety Emahakv Charter School and babysits for her infant grandson.

“I’m the type of person that when I commit to something, I want to do a good job,” Johns Brown said. “I thought about the shoes I’m going to fill of the women who came before me. I’m honored and proud to be a part of it.”

Johns Brown will move up each year to another position on the executive board until she becomes the next Seminole woman to lead the FCW four years from now.



Beverly Bidney

FCW President Lucy Bowers, at right, with her brother Marvin Bowers, left, and uncle Andrew J. Bowers Jr., center, after the installation.

Trio performs poetry, music in BC

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — The Education Department and the Willie Frank Memorial Library hosted “The Poetry & Music Alliance” on June 16 with Elgin Jumper, Gordon Wareham and Mark O’Bryan at the field office on the Big Cypress Reservation.

Jumper read poetry aloud, along with an excerpt from a children’s book he is working on. Wareham played the flute, and O’Bryan, who is Jumper’s guitar instructor, played various guitars. The group played and presented to an audience and included an open mic for others to share their work after the event.

A couple of Jumper’s paintings were on display as well. After reading some of his poetry, Jumper played the guitar in a somewhat unconventional way – with the guitar laying on a table and using various tools to make different sounds.



Tatum Mitchell (2)

Above, Mark O'Bryan performs at the poetry and music event June 16. At right, Elgin Jumper and Saylor K. Gowen.



Tatum Mitchell

Gordon Wareham plays a flute with a painting by Elgin Jumper in the foreground.



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Tribe celebrates Father's Day

Big Cypress

Tribe celebrates Father's Day

Brighton



The Big Cypress Father's Day celebration turned the clock back to the 1950s and 60s with a rock-n-roll and diner theme that included an Elvis impersonator, right. At left, Brian Billie with family.



Tatum Mitchell (2)



From left to right, Sienna Smith, Jared Smith and Caleb Smith.

Tatum Mitchell



From left to right, the BC Council Office's Barbara Billie, Heather Billie and Cherelee Hall get into the 50s spirit at the Father's Day event.

Tatum Mitchell



Above and below, the Father's Day celebration in Brighton was like a trip to Polynesia, with dads and kids learning how to do a hula dance from the dancers who entertained the crowd at the Florida Semiole Veterans Building on June 13.

SMP (2)



Aaron Tommie gives a thumbs up as he enjoys playing an arcade game during the Hollywood Father's Day event at Xtreme Action Park in Fort Lauderdale.

Calvin Tiger



Byron Osceola

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola goes around a curve at Xtreme Action Park.

Hollywood



Byron Osceola

Vince Billie focuses on making a shot in the basketball hoop game at Xtreme Action Park.



Calvin Tiger

From left to right, Kenny Tommie, Leon Wilcox, Peter Billie and Zachary Billie get ready to hit the racetrack at Xtreme Action Park.



Byron Osceola

Damion Frank, standing, and Rafael Guevara, sitting with daughter, enjoy the Father's Day event in Fort Lauderdale.

Seminole art sale to be held in Immokalee on July 19

FROM PRESS RELEASE

IMMOKALEE — The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum will present the “Seminole Artist Experience Art Sale” at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee on July 19 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Seminole Center. The free event will feature fine art by Native American artists from the Seminole Tribe of Florida such as Erica Dietz, Bobby Henry, Tylor Tigertail, and more.

The featured artists will demonstrate live paintings, exhibit original works, hand crafts such as Seminole Sweetgrass basketmaking,

and other traditional native Florida Seminole artists’ works.

Additionally, guests will be immersed in live musical soundscapes and oral traditions that will channel the flow of the true creative Seminole experience.

Guests can enjoy fresh traditional favorite dishes from Seminole food vendors while experiencing the Seminole Immokalee community’s talented authentic artisans, craft vendors, and more.

For more information, visit ahtahtiki.com/seminole-artist-experience-art-sale/.

Hard Rock Bet offers enhanced rewards, promotions for customers

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Hard Rock Bet announced June 19 the launch of Legendary Reward Drops, a new online rewards program that will engage players with monthly Levels and guaranteed weekly rewards and promotions.

In addition, Hard Rock Bet has fully integrated into Unity by Hard Rock, where play on Hard Rock Bet will simultaneously earn players Unity Points, Unity Tier Credits, and Level Credits to ‘level up’ towards more valuable weekly Legendary Reward Drops.

The new Legendary Reward Drops will provide players with weekly rewards like bonus bets, parlay insurance, and Unity

Point multipliers - all presented through an immersive experience of a custom guitar case unveiling the contents of each Drop. The program features eight monthly levels that will provide players with Drops of increasing value based on their play. Players will be able to track their progress towards ‘leveling up’ within the rewards experience.

Hard Rock Bet has also streamlined its loyalty program through Unity by Hard Rock, providing players with a true omnichannel experience and the ability to earn and redeem incredible rewards at participating hotels, cafes, casinos, Rock Shops, and more. Additionally, rewards in the online Rewards Store have been upgraded to recently include merchandise, local concert

tickets, and hotel stays at resort properties in Hollywood, Punta Cana, and the Maldives.

“With our combination of a top-rated product and omnichannel benefits that can score players concert tickets, enhance their play, and send them on vacations around the world, we’ve created a connected entertainment experience and further solidified Hard Rock Bet as the best place to play,” said Mike Primeaux, Hard Rock Bet’s executive managing director - chief operating officer.

More information on Legendary Reward Drops is at hardrock.bet/legendary-reward-drops/.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol presents \$50,000 donation to school

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRISTOL, Va. — During this year’s “Moving Mountains with Morrison” event, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol presented the organization with a \$50,000 donation.

“We are extremely grateful for this generous donation,” Jami Verderosa, Head of School at Morrison School, said in a news release. “This is such a significant contribution and will help with the education of our future leaders.”

The funds were raised by Hard Rock

Bristol team members.

“Our team is so thrilled to present this donation to Morrison School,” said Michele Fick, Internal Communications & Community Outreach Manager at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol, in the release. “Supporting education and giving back to the community we’re in is so important to Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol.”

Morrison School is a private school that “...equips and empowers students who learn differently to achieve up to their maximum potential...,” according to its website.

Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino to start bowling leagues

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON — The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino will host men’s and women’s bowling leagues starting in July.

Brighton Bay Bowling features 10 lanes and covers 7,044 square feet.

The Women’s Tuesday Night Singles Bowling League starts July 15, with the Men’s Wednesday Night Singles Bowling League beginning July 16. The action will take place from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday and will cover 12 weeks. Both leagues will have a minimum of 12 players and the cost for each league is \$25 a week (which includes shoes), plus a \$75 deposit. Each week \$7 will go into the prize pool for both leagues, so the more players there are the bigger the payout.

The leagues will feature three games per week and include handicaps. Scores, standings and high scores will be posted



File photo

Brighton Bay Bowling.

weekly and there will be prizes for the top finishers.

Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino is located on the Seminole Tribe’s

Brighton Reservation. Its address is 15005 Reservation Road, Okeechobee, Florida.

For more information call (863) 467-9998.



Hard Rock Bristol

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol presents a \$50,000 donation to Morrison School in Virginia.

Hard Rock Tejon continues to take shape



Hard Rock Tejon/Facebook

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tejon, which is being constructed about 70 miles north of Los Angeles, continues to take shape. The property posted aerial video June 19 on social media. Phase one of construction, which includes gaming, dining and retail, is expected to be completed in late 2025. The second phase of construction will include a 400-room hotel, additional dining, pool and 2,800-seat Hard Rock Live.



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Seminole Hard Rock Tampa sponsors St. Pete Pride Parade



Hard Rock Tampa/Facebook

Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa served as the presenting sponsor for the St. Pete Pride Parade on June 28 in St. Petersburg. The parade traveled along Bayshore Drive and culminated at Vinoy Park.

Historic Seminole tourism seen through postcards and art at museum

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Curator

BIG CYPRESS — The Seminole Tribe has a long history of tourism. In fact, Florida tourism and Seminole entrepreneurialism have been woven together since the first visitors came to Florida in the late 1800’s, after hostilities with the U.S. army had finally died down. However, this did not mean the war was over, the tactics had just changed. In the early 1900’s, the draining of the Everglades was another form of war. This time the U.S. government attacked the environment and the Seminole way of life. The Everglades were drained, and roads were built through Seminole homelands. To adapt

to the changing waterways, enterprising Seminole people began selling crafts and performing on roadsides and in villages, for tourists to enjoy. This provided much needed currency and substance for Seminole people that could no longer fish and hunt like they used to.

The museum’s collection has many historic postcards and photographs that show examples of early Florida tourism. Many show the ways that some Seminoles earned a living. They wrestled alligators and demonstrated Seminole cooking and crafts. Children sang and people posed for photos during fake wedding ceremonies. One of the earliest and most longstanding tourism arenas was Musa Isle Indian Village, which



Women show visitors how they sew and create patchwork at Musa Isle in the early 1900’s.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum (2)

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

opened around 1918. These two postcards show women demonstrating sewing and making patchwork in chickees at that attraction. It is clear from the hundreds of postcards and thousands of photographs that show these and similar activities in tourist camps during the early and mid 20th century, that new Floridian photographers were very active in tourist camps. They documented many of them through camera lenses over the decades. But the art collection at the Museum also reveals a painter that may have used tourist camps as his studio. Carl Folke Sahlin was an illustrator and advertising executive in New York and Chicago before he retired to Miami in 1940. It was after retirement that he became well known for his

painting. Some of his frequent subjects were the Seminole performers and demonstrators in tourist villages such as the women sewing in this painting. Since he was in Miami, it’s possible he painted the women he saw sewing at Musa Isle.

We’ll most likely never know for sure, but it’s fun to make connections between the historic objects at the museum. This time we connected postcards and art. Keep an eye out for articles in the coming month where we talk about other artists and artwork in the ATTK collection. If you want to see some of the art in person, just let us know and we can arrange a time to do that. Call 863-902-1113 ex12246 or email me at tarabackhouse@seminoletribe.com.



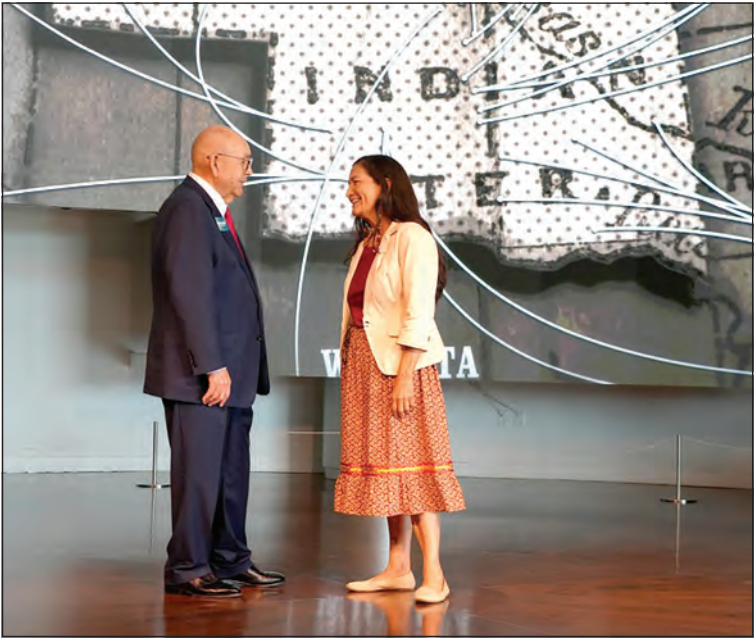
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Carl Sahlin’s painting “Seminole Women” is another window into the world of Seminole tourism in the early 20th century

Deb Haaland visits First Americans Museum

FAM/Facebook

First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City hosted former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) and Chickasaw Nations Governor Bill Anoatubby. Their visit was part of the 2025 Sovereignty Symposium that was held June 12-13. Haaland is a candidate in the New Mexico governor’s race.



Vermont museum breaks ground on Native art building

STAFF REPORT

On June 23, Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont, broke ground for the construction of the Perry Center for Native American Art, an 11,200-square-foot building that will feature the museum’s collection of more than 500 Indigenous items from 389 tribal nations.

According to the museum, the building has been designed in partnership with more than 90 tribal members, culture bearers, and experts.

“In planning for the Perry Center, Shelburne

Museum was intentional in collaborating with tribal nations and culture bearers whose works are represented in the collection. The result is a building and integrated landscape design that honors the traditional stewards of the site and is referential to the many cultures whose items will be housed in the Center,” its website states.

Two Row Architect, from Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve in Ontario, Canada, is one of the project’s architects.



Perry Center

A rendering of the Perry Center for Native American Art in Vermont.

July 2025

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

The THPO Collections team recently traveled to the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, where staff graciously took the time to show us their pottery collections and teach us about the different tools and techniques we can utilize in our artifact analyses. Since returning from our trip, we have already been putting our newly acquired knowledge to use. We’ve started a new project where we’re looking back through our pottery collection and reassessing the types. This month’s artifact is one of these reidentified pieces.

This pottery sherd, pictured below, was originally identified in 2007 as St. Johns cord marked pottery. St. Johns pottery can be distinguished by its spiculate paste and chalky surface (Butts, 2013), and several types within the St. Johns series feature different surface decorations. One of these decorative types is cord marked pottery, which was commonly made by wrapping cord around a paddle and impressing the pattern onto the clay (Pluckhahn & Cordell, 1994).

When we reexamined this sherd, we found that although it is decorated St. Johns pottery, it lacks the distinct cord impressions you would find on cord marked pottery. Rather, the this sherd more closely resemble simple stamped pottery. Pictured below, you can see examples of St. Johns cord marked and St. Johns simple stamped, respectively. Take a look and compare the decorations of each of these sherds for yourself!

St. Johns Cord Marked (Florida Museum of Natural History)

St. Johns Simple Stamped (Florida Museum of Natural History)

THPO

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 - JULY 2025

A WAR OF ATTRITION

“If the devil owned both Hell and Florida, he would rent out Florida and live in hell.”

ANONYMOUS US SOLDIER - CIRCA 1833

The years of conflict that followed the Indian Removal Act were brutal and bloody, and it soon became apparent that the Seminole had the advantage. The United States entered the war with weapons, uniforms, and tactics that were not fit for the harsh wetland conditions. Meanwhile the Seminole knew how to utilize Florida’s environment, moving through swampy regions that slowed or stopped horses and wagons, and using the thick hammocks as concealed bases. The Seminole fought a guerilla campaign, using hit and run tactics, and staying on the move. Not only the active warriors, but every man, woman, and child were constantly moving camp to keep ahead of the Army, who burned every town and camp they found.

This period of conflict, what the United States would later call the Second Seminole War, turned out to be the longest and most expensive of America’s “Indian Wars”, costing the nation over \$30 million (equivalent to \$1.2 billion in 2025 dollars) and the lives of over 1,500 soldiers and sailors.

But the United States had the advantage of numbers. The Army continuously called in new men to replace those they lost. The Seminole were estimated to have roughly 1,400 warriors in 1832. For the defenders, every single loss was a harsh blow. In battle the Seminole continuously inflicted more casualties than they took, but there were no reinforcements to replace their dead and wounded. Still, despite this, the Army would spend the next seven years trying to force the Seminole out of Florida.

For more Seminole History Stories visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com

Picture: “Charge With Every Man,” by Jackson Walker, depicting the Battle of Micanopy, which took place on June 9th, 1836. Image courtesy the Micanopy historical Society

Firecracker walk provides healthy spark to start 4th festivities

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Big Cypress community gathered on the canal bank early on June 24 to participate in the “Firecracker Walk,” sponsored by Big Cypress

Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Big Cypress Rep. Nadine Bowers and the Big Cypress Integrative Health department.

American flags lined the path and participants received red, white and blue bead necklaces and other mementos upon completing the

walk/run. The stretch was around 3 miles.

A large clock timer met the participants at the end of the route along with fruit cups, souvenirs, like stress balls, and cheering from the event organizers.



Tatum Mitchell

Brian Billie finishes the walk/run with an American flag in hand.



Tatum Mitchell

From left to right, Miranda Rosa, Nina Wagerby and Councilwoman Mariann Billie walk along the canal.



Tatum Mitchell

At left, Mary Tigertail walks along the canal bank. Above, From left to right, Jamie Diersing, Jasmine Tennie and Edna McDuffie help organize the event.

Klamath Tribes member sworn in for HHS position

STAFF REPORT

The appointment of Mark Cruz, from the Klamath Tribes, as Senior Advisor to the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, was met with praise from Indian Country health organizations.

On June 19, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. swore in Cruz during a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

According to the National Indian Health Board, Cruz steps into a newly created position as Senior Advisor for Indian Health.

“Mark Cruz brings to this new role a powerful combination of lived experience, deep policy expertise, unwavering integrity, and an enduring connection to community. As a citizen of the Klamath Tribes and a respected leader in Indian health policy, Mark has consistently demonstrated a fierce commitment to improving the health and well-being of Our People,” the NIHB said in a statement.

“The National Council of Urban Indian Health



HHS

Mark Cruz, left, is sworn in by HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

commends Mr. Cruz on this important appointment, and looks forward to working with Mr. Cruz and the HHS team to elevate urban Native health and uphold the trust responsibility to all Native communities, no matter where they live,” the Council said in a statement.

Cruz has degrees from Pepperdine University and Brown University. He previously served in staff roles in Congress, the Department of Interior and Oregon legislature.

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Health

Award-winning dietician Karen Two Shoes connects culture, history to diet

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Nutrition coordinator and Seminole tribal member Karen Two Shoes recently won the Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (FAND) President’s Award for her volunteer work with the organization.

Two Shoes was presented with the award at the group’s April 27 symposium in Orlando for her work as chairwoman of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee and for putting together an e-cookbook with a DEI grant from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The cookbook is comprised of recipes from a cultural and health point of view submitted by Florida dietitians, including Two Shoes.

“I wanted to bring awareness to the diversities in our dietitians,” said Two Shoes, who has been a dietician for eight years. “Over 80% of dietitians in the country are Caucasians. Florida is such a cultural melting pot. Fry bread is my comfort food; but there is room

for both comfort and cultural food in your diet.”

For the last four years, Two Shoes has made presentations to groups at the University of Florida, Florida State University and Nova Southeastern University. She also gives the presentation to new employees of the Health and Human Services department and medical staff.

The focus of the presentation is cultural awareness and how history has influenced Native Americans’ diets.

“We [Native Americans] used to have a great diet, eating off the land and natural foods,” Two Shoes said. “Then colonization happened, and everyone was rounded up to reservations and given their food. That food was nothing like what we were eating; white flour and sugar were foreign to our bodies. It’s hard to metabolize those foods and leads to health problems, like diabetes. In this day and age where food is abundant, it doesn’t mean we will go out and eat a salad. Once your pallet adjusts to the new foods, you eat them. Stressed out people don’t

go looking for salad, they want energy rich food.”

Two Shoes has had diabetes since 2001, which led her into the health care field. She worked hard to turn her health around, learned about food and nutrition and changed her eating habits.

“I didn’t want to be another statistic like my patients who have a hard time,” she said. “Being a dietician was perfect for me. I knew I could help other people make better choices. I think that’s key; to understand what foods do to you body. Once you know what food does, you can make your choice.”

Two Shoes also gives presentations to tribal students, adolescents and adults, during which she always encourages them to consider going into the health care field.

“Who can take care of us better than us?” she said. “I want to encourage more Seminoles and Native Americans to get into the health care profession. This is a message I spew whenever I can, and I encourage all ethnicities to do the same.”



Beverly Bidney

Karen Two Shoes



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SEMINOLE SCENES



Courtesy photo

FATHERS FESTIVITIES: Attendees at the Immokalee Father's Day event June 12 join Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers, left, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, center, and Immokalee Council Liaison Jaime Yzaguirre.

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BRYAN ARLEDGE
Brighton Representative

NADINE BOWERS
Big Cypress Representative

SMP

OFFICIAL PORTRAITS: Portraits of the Tribal Council and Board of Directors. Inauguration Day for the reservation representatives was held June 2.



Beverly Bidney (2)

SUMMERTIME FUN: Kids at the Immokalee Boys & Girls Club and Recreation Department camp enjoy the warmth of late June as they frolic on the playset and play a game of flag football. Above, wearing red, Cleofas Yzaguirre gets his flag nabbed by Jayce Rodriguez as River Hernandez watches the action during a friendly game. At right, a group of 6-to-9-year-olds show off their super-villains capes and masks.



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum/Facebook

JULY JINGLE BELLS: Seminole doll ornaments for sale are part of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum store's "Christmas in July", which runs throughout the month with special deals.



Osceola Brothers/Instagram

BROTHERS ON THE ROAD: The Osceola Brothers' summer 2025 tour included a performance at Conduit music venue and bar in Orlando on June 15 with the Saints of Saturn band. The Osceola Brothers also played at Bayboro Brewery in St. Petersburg and Poorhouse in Fort Lauderdale in June.



Gumball3000 (2)

GUMBALL GEAR: The Gumball 3000 motor rally, which will cover eight European countries in September, features Hard Rock clothing items, including T-shirts, hats and jackets. Hard Rock is one of the event's major sponsors. Visit gumball3000.com for more information.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

University of Arizona faculty say administrator causing severe harm to Native students

TUCSON, Ariz. — After several Native students at the University of Arizona expressed their concerns about student safety regarding an assistant vice provost, multiple Native faculty members are calling for immediate action from university leadership to ensure that Indigenous students receive the support they need for success.

The Native American Faculty Group wrote in a letter to UofA President Dr. Suresh Garimella and other top administrators that “Tessa L. Dysart is actively causing and has caused severe harm to the UA Native American community” since she was appointed assistant vice provost for the Office of Native American Initiatives (NAI) in 2024.

Six Native faculty members wrote that students have approached them since the fall of 2024 to voice their concerns about their safety on campus.

“In our culture, we allow our children to speak, and we listen,” the group wrote.

The faculty members who signed and sent the letter include Karletta Chief (Diné), Andrew Curley (Diné), Stephanie Russo Carroll (Ahtna-Native Village of Kluti-Kaah), Jameson D. Lopez (Quechan), Sheilah E. Nicholas (Hopi) and Valerie Shirley (Diné).

As professors, they said that they have witnessed “disturbing events” that do not align with leading protocols to support Indigenous students in higher education.

The letter outlines the concerns raised by students since Dysart took office, including her lack of support for student-led academic work on the Land Back movement, community panels and discussions, and her physical attempt to silence a student during the Tribal Leaders Summit.

Nearly 100 people — some faculty, some students, some alumni — have signed onto the letter to back the faculty calling on the university to remove Dysart as assistant vice provost.

“We find Dysart’s actions to be unprofessional, misaligned with the interests of students, and, at times, clear attempts at intimidation — behavior that is unbecoming of a senior administrator who claims to advocate for Native American students,” the letter states.

Several Native students and staff have shared with the faculty group how Dysart is “sowing harm, district and division within the UA Native community.”

Dysart lacks the qualifications to be the assistant vice provost, according to the faculty group, because she has never worked with Native American student admissions, retention or service programs in higher education, nor has she published any work related to Native American student retention or advancement.

During Dysart’s interview process, the faculty group alleged that she claimed to have longstanding relationships with Native law students, but they had consistently heard otherwise from the Native law community.

“Dysart’s portrayal of her experience is misleading,” they wrote, adding that she has worked at UofA since 2017 but only became involved with the Native Faculty Group within the past three years.

Dysart has no prior connection with the Native American communities at UA, in Tucson, Arizona or the Southwest, according to the faculty group.

The faculty group also expressed concerns about leaders in the Native American Advancement and Tribal Engagement (NAATE) office, including Levi Esquerria and Kari McCormick.

Due to the ongoing concerns involving NAI and NAATE leadership, the faculty group said they cannot in “good faith” recommend UofA to Indigenous students.

The group wrote that they would rather refer Indigenous students to Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University due to the well-qualified administrators running their Native American initiatives.

Dysart lacks the stellar reputation and qualifications of the Native Higher Administrators at ASU or NAU, according to the faculty group, and she does not possess the qualifications of many researchers in Native American education.

“Dysart earns \$167,116 per year, yet there is no accountability, review, or annual reports showing her performance serving Native American faculty and staff,” the letter states. “We have no confidence in Tessa Dysart.”

The Arizona Mirror reached out to UofA and Dysart for comment, but did not receive a response.

- Arizona Mirror

Wisconsin lawmakers cut a tribal liaison with prisons from the budget. Tribes say they think it would help.

At a state prison in Stanley, Wisconsin, participants in a Native American-focused group take part in traditional cultural practices.

According to Ryan Greendeer, executive government relations officer with the Ho-Chunk Nation, Stanley Correctional Institution’s chaplain recently reached out to the tribe with requests for the group’s programming.

The chaplain wanted teaching materials, as many materials in the current selection were old. He said that men learn songs and Native language with the materials, as well as history and culture.

The chaplain said the men are eager to learn more about all things Native, according to Greendeer. He was also seeking a larger pipe bowl and poles to help build a new lodge. The pipe has a history of ceremonial use.

The prison’s annual report for fiscal year 2024 mentions a Native American smudge and drum group. The report says that each month, several religious organizations and volunteers come in to hold various services, and the list includes “Sweat Lodge (Native American).”

There were 79 American Indian or Alaska Native people at Stanley Correctional as of April 30, according to the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC).

Gov. Tony Evers’ budget recommendations for corrections included a tribal liaison position for the DOC. The liaison would be responsible for working with Native American tribes and bands on the agency’s behalf.

Each of the governor’s cabinet agencies has already set at least one staff member to be a tribal liaison. The governor’s proposal would create a new position, set aside for the job of tribal liaison for corrections.

Evers also proposed creating a director of Native American affairs in the Department of Administration and tribal liaisons in several other agencies, including the Department of Justice and Department of Natural Resources.

“Gov. Evers’ commitment has been—and always will be—to ensure that the state maintains strong partnerships with the Tribal Nations by recognizing and respecting the needs and perspectives of the Nations and Indigenous people,” Britt Cudaback, communications director for the governor’s office, said in an email.

The Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee removed the proposed positions in May, along with hundreds of other items proposed by Evers.

“Unfortunately, [Evers] sends us an executive budget that’s just piles full of stuff that doesn’t make sense and spends recklessly and raises taxes and has way too much policy,” Joint Finance Committee co-chair Mark Born (R-Beaver Dam) said in May.

Tribes already work with the state, including the Oneida Nation, which is located in northeast Wisconsin. The tribe told the Examiner that it continues to work with the state to make sure incarcerated Native Americans have proper access to culturally based practices and resources.

With a tribal liaison that can help navigate the corrections system, the tribe’s efforts to make sure resources are provided and distributed appropriately make better progress, the tribe said.

“These efforts will continue whether or not a tribal liaison position exists, although the impact on incarcerated individuals who use culturally based resources may be greater as efforts take longer,” the tribe said.

The Oneida Nation said it “supports tribes’ efforts to ensure incarcerated members maintain access to appropriate support services as provided by tribal, state, and federal laws.”

Maggie Olson, communications coordinator for the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, said the tribe is not located close to the corrections facilities where their tribal members are incarcerated. This is a significant barrier, she said.

“It would be nice to be able to have a better handle on where our people are within the system to ensure they are having their spiritual and cultural needs met,” Olson said in an email to the Examiner. “It is much easier (at this time) to meet religious needs (think Christianity) within the correctional system than it is to meet the spiritual and cultural needs of Native Americans within the system.”

A great first step would be having a dedicated person who can build relationships with incarcerated Native Americans, she said.

In a statement, the tribe said the liaison “would be a start to developing and enhancing tribal input with State initiatives.” The tribe said it wants to work with the DOC on access to supportive services in county jails.

Olson said she met DOC Secretary Jared Hoy at an event on June 5 and that they had a great discussion about the potential benefits of a tribal liaison at the agency.

“With the uncertainties surrounding federal funding, we are hopeful state funding will be increased to tribal programs in Wisconsin,” Olson said.

The tribe’s criminal justice work involves partnership with the DOC. In the St. Croix Tribal Reintegration Program, case managers work with tribal members before and after their release from prison or jail, the tribe said. The program has a memo of understanding with the Department of Corrections, providing guidance for working relationships between tribal reentry and probation.

All of the governor’s cabinet agencies have consultation policies that say how they will work with tribal governments. Agencies and tribal elected officials have annual consultation meetings to talk about programs, laws and funding that may affect the tribe.

Discussions at the annual state-tribal consultation tend to be about high-level policy, but they can delve into specifics, Greendeer said. He gave an example related to tribal members who are on probation or parole.

“For example, a topic that keeps coming up is re-entry programming for enrolled tribal member offenders,” Greendeer said. “A concern discussed at a recent consultation was that probation/parole officers might not consider tribal norms/values, citing a lack of eye contact in saying a client is disengaged or disconnected.”

The co-chairs and vice-chairs of the Joint Finance Committee did not respond to requests for comment. DOC communications director Beth Hardtke did not answer a question from the Examiner about the responsibilities and goals of the

tribal liaison position.

- Wisconsin Examiner

Tribal governments, conservation groups urge feds to keep Chaco protections

Tribal and Pueblo governments, elected officials and conservation groups this week intensified calls for federal officials to limit the areas surrounding Chaco Canyon from further oil and gas development.

Situated in the Mancos Shale formation in the San Juan Basin, Chaco Canyon holds paramount spiritual and cultural significance to several New Mexico Pueblos, the Hopi Indians of Arizona and the Navajo Nation.

Since the Trump Administration took office, the federal government has moved to reverse a Biden administration policy — Public Land Order No. 7923 — that banned further oil and gas development on federal lands within 10 miles of the historic site for 20 years. This includes a Republican-backed bill in Congress to terminate the order.

On June 17, The National Congress of American Indians, a congress of American Indians and Alaska Natives, adopted a resolution calling on Congress to ratify federal legislation from the New Mexico delegation to make the withdrawal permanent. The resolution further called on the U.S. Interior Department to complete a study looking at the area’s resources and consult with tribal governments before any final decision is made.

The buffer zone policy was hard-won, said Pueblo of Acoma Governor Charles Riley, who carried the resolution in the National Congress of American Indians.

“Over a thousand years ago, our Pueblo ancestors called Chaco Canyon and the Greater Chaco Region home, creating one of the most magnificent civilizations in North America,” Riley said in a written statement this week. “Today, we stand at a crossroads where we must choose between short-term energy profits and the permanent preservation of our most sacred ancestral homeland. The choice is clear – we cannot allow the desecration of this World Heritage Site for minimal energy gains.”

A coalition of more than two dozen conservation, Indigenous and historical preservation groups and 38 members of local and state government also [in June] submitted letters to U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, urging him to reverse course on removing the buffer zone.

“Chaco Canyon transcends politics—it is a place of reverence that is beloved throughout our nation,” the letter reads. “The 20-year mineral withdrawal represents years of careful tribal consultation, a tribally-led ethnographic study, collaborative design, and thoughtful balancing of multiple uses. It provides essential protection for sacred sites and cultural resources while respecting Tribal sovereignty and development rights.”

- Source NM (New Mexico)

Wisconsin’s Brothertown Indian Nation is fighting for federal acknowledgement

There are nearly 1,000 Native American tribes. But according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, there are 574. What happened to the other 400?

The answer is right there on the Bureau’s website with a prefix and a caveat that may not even register if you’re not Indigenous — the term “federally recognized.”

Federal recognition is a legal status that grants sovereignty to tribes, allowing them to have a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

Recognized tribes have rights that unrecognized tribes do not. Non-recognized tribes missed out on Covid relief funds. They don’t have access to funding for language preservation. They are not covered by the Indian Child Welfare Act, the Indian Arts and Crafts Act or any other laws designed to protect tribes. Unrecognized tribes are sometimes not even recognized by other tribes.

“There was a time when a lot of other tribes did not recognize us,” Phyllis Tousey, chair of Wisconsin’s only unrecognized tribe, the Brothertown Indian Nation, explained to WPR’s “Wisconsin Today.”

“I can remember when I was a lot younger, if you said you were a Brothertown Indian, somebody might say, ‘What, who?’ That can be quite detrimental to your self-concept and your identity,” she said.

For the Brothertown, lack of federal recognition has even threatened the tribe’s ability to preserve its own heritage. Tousey told a story about how a non-Native man came in possession of a trove of tribal documents that he tried to sell to the tribe for \$1 million. “We had no ability to reacquire that,” she said.

The Oneida Nation, a recognized tribe that often acts as an ally to the Brothertown and has some shared history, stepped in to protect and preserve the Brothertown’s collection.

The story highlights the vulnerability of unrecognized tribes; they are at risk of losing control of their own history. In a “Los Angeles Times” article, Indigenous scholar and author Olivia Chilcote wrote, “In pursuing federal recognition, tribes confront the United States’ enduring power to define Indigenous identities on its own terms.”

Chilcote is an assistant professor of American Indian Studies at the University of California San Diego and the author of “Unrecognized in California: Federal Acknowledgment and the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians.” She is also a member of that tribe.

Many tribes — more than 100 — that lack recognition lost that status in the 1950s and ‘60s, when Congress passed a series of laws ending the government-to-government relationship between tribes and the U.S. This so-called “termination era” of federal policy was cast as a way to grant tribes greater freedom from the government. The era actually resulted in loss of crucial rights — and millions of acres of land.

However, the majority of tribes that lack recognition today never had that status in the first place, Chilcote explained.

“Some had the status at one time, but for various reasons the government-to-government relationship ceased and wasn’t actually terminated through legal mechanisms,” Chilcote wrote in an email.

This is the case for the Brothertown. In the 19th century, the government terminated the Brothertown’s sovereign status without the tribe’s knowledge.

The Brothertown people were forced to move many times over the course of their history, eventually making their way from the East Coast to Wisconsin. When the government tried to force the tribe to move again in the 1830s, this time to Kansas, the tribe refused via legal maneuvering. They requested allotment of their land and for U.S. citizenship.

“There was a belief that owning our land individually — which tribal people were not used to — and being citizens would protect us and would prevent us from being removed to Kansas,” Tousey said.

“I believe that our ancestors, our leadership, looked around and realized, of course, that no one was asking the non-Indians to move so their land could go to someone else,” Tousey said.

The strategy worked. The Brothertown were able to stay in Wisconsin. But unbeknownst to the tribe, the government had terminated the Brothertown’s sovereign status when they became citizens.

The tribe has spent the last 45 years trying to get the government to fix this problem. For three decades, the Brothertown worked to gather the necessary documentation to apply for federal recognition. But the government rejected the tribe’s petition in 2012, informing the tribe they should have been petitioning for restoration, not recognition.

The onus is on tribes to correct the government’s wrongdoings in this arena, and it’s not easy. In California alone, which has the most unrecognized tribes of any state, 81 tribes have petitioned for recognition, while only one succeeded.

“I make sense of [the history and current federal recognition process] in understanding that in a lot of ways, it’s by design,” Chilcote said. “Because ... the United States is a settler colonial nation. It’s a kind of colonization that happens here in the United States, in Canada, Australia, New Zealand ... all with that same goal of taking Native people’s land. And the lack of access to land, in many cases, then creates this condition in which tribes lack federal recognition.”

The Brothertown are still fighting for restoration of that government-to-government relationship today.

“We are still here. We are still operating as an Indian tribe, but we are doing that on our own power,” Tousey said. “This is a hard road, but we’ve been through a lot.”

- Wisconsin Public Radio

MOU will establish government-to-government relations between the sovereign nation and state agency

TOKELAND, Wash.—The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe and Washington State Department of Commerce signed a historic memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishing government-to-government relations between the Tribe and the agency. The agreement removes administrative barriers, improves communications, implements culturally appropriate data privacy and security measures, and more. Shoalwater Bay Chairman Quintin Swanson and Commerce Director Joe Nguyen signed the agreement June 23.

“This MOU represents more than a formal agreement — it’s a gesture of trust and a reaffirmation of our sovereignty, our partnership, and our shared responsibility to uplift our people,” said Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribal Chairman Quintin Swanson. “By solidifying our partnership through this MOU, it will only strengthen communication and allow more focus on solutions rooted in tribal values and priorities. We appreciate Commerce’s commitment to working with us government-to-government, and we look forward to what this collaboration will bring for our community.”

- From press release

Tribes move to join lawsuit challenging Montana election laws

A group of tribes in Montana alleges a new election law will disenfranchise Native voters and has moved to join a lawsuit challenging it.

On June 24, the ACLU of Montana, American Civil Liberties Union nationally and Native American Rights Fund filed a motion to intervene in an existing case on behalf of a group of tribal plaintiffs, including the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Fort Belknap Indian Community and Western Native Voice.

In their complaint, the group of tribal plaintiffs argues the changes to Election Day voter registration outlined in Senate Bill 490 disproportionately harm Native Americans in rural and tribal communities who already face significant barriers to voting.

Sponsored by Sen. Mike Cuffe,

R-Eureka, SB 490 changes the deadline for registering to vote or changing voter information. Where previously anyone in line by 8 p.m. on Election Day could register to vote and then cast a ballot, the new law, signed by Gov. Greg Gianforte on May 5, closes voter registration at noon on Election Day (generally Tuesdays) and ends the ability to register on the Monday before an election. State lawmakers who supported the legislation argued it would curb long lines and benefit election workers; opponents said it was unconstitutional.

“[SB 490] disproportionately burdens Native voters compared to non-Native voters due to inequities in mail delivery service, internet access, access to post offices and post office boxes, and increased burdens on Native voters due to disproportionate rates of poverty and lack of vehicle access,” tribal plaintiffs allege in their complaint.

Northern Cheyenne Tribal President Gene Small called SB 490 “anti-democratic.” “When you live miles and miles from the nearest polling place, and the roads are snowed in all morning, taking away eight hours of Election Day registration creates real life problems for everyday voters,” he said in a statement.

The lawsuit, originally filed in May by the Montana Federation of Public Employees, also challenges Senate Bill 276, also brought by Cuffe, which revises voter identification laws. The law requires a voter’s ID to be “current, valid and readable” and eliminates the ability for a voter who cannot provide an ID to provide other forms of identification to vote. Those forms could include a bank statement or utility bill.

While tribal plaintiffs did not address SB 276 in their complaint, the Montana Federation of Public Employees, the state’s largest union, called SB 276 and SB 490 “plainly unconstitutional,” saying they infringe on Montanans’ right to vote. The organization specifically alleged that SB 490 would cause confusion among voters and election workers, and that SB 276 “arbitrarily heightens the requirements for acceptable voter IDs” while eliminating “an important safety net for those who are unable to meet them.”

The Montana Federation of Public Employees filed the lawsuit in the Montana First Judicial District Court of Lewis and Clark County on May 12, just seven days after Gianforte signed the bills into law.

- Montana Free Press

In California’s largest landback deal, the Yurok Tribe reclaims sacred land around Klamath River

More than 17,000 acres around the Klamath River in Northern California, including the lower Blue Creek watershed, have returned to the Yurok Tribe, completing the largest landback deal in California history.

The Yurok people have lived, fished, and hunted along the Klamath for millennia. But when the California gold rush began, the tribe lost 90 percent of its territory.

For the last two decades, the Yurok Tribe has been working with the nonprofit Western Rivers Conservancy to get its land back. The 17,000 acres composes the final parcel of a \$56 million, 47,097-acre land transfer that effectively doubles the current land holdings of the Yurok Tribe.

The tribe has already designated the land as a salmon sanctuary and community forest and plans to eventually put it into a trust and care for it in perpetuity.

“No words can describe how we feel knowing that our land is coming back to the ownership of the Yurok people,” said Joseph James, the chairman of the Yurok Tribal Council, who is from the village of Shregon on the Klamath River. “The Klamath River is our highway. It is also our food source. And it takes care of us. And so it’s our job, our inherent right, to take care of the Klamath Basin and its river.”

The land transfer comes just months after the utility PacifiCorp removed four dams on the Klamath River, the largest dam removal project in U.S. history. The removal of the dams enabled coho and Chinook salmon that had been blocked to finally swim upstream to spawn for the first time in more than a century. The deal is also part of a broader push to revitalize the Klamath River Basin, where water diversions and pollution have long strained the wildlife and the Indigenous peoples who rely on them.

Josh Kling, conservation director at the Western Rivers Conservancy, said the nonprofit acquired the land in pieces from Green Diamond, a timber company, and paid for it using a combination of private funding, tax credits, carbon credit sales, low-interest loans, revolving loans, federal revolving loan programs, and settlement funds. The project was also partially funded by the state of California, which returned 2,800 acres of state land along the Klamath River to the Shasta Indian Nation last year.

Kling said the 47,000 acres of land returned to the Yurok Tribe includes redwood forests that help protect against climate change and protect crucial habitat for birds such as the marbled murrelet, Humboldt marten, and northern spotted owl, just as the trees were becoming ripe for a fresh round of logging.

“The project was really timely to get in there before a new round of timber harvest and the associated road building,” said Kling. He is particularly excited about how Blue Creek, a cold-water tributary just 16 miles from the mouth of the river, is now protected because of how the tributary provides an essential place for salmon and steelhead to cool off before heading further upstream to spawn”

- Grist

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JULY 11
FREESTYLE FREE FOR ALL



JULY 12
BKFC



JULY 19
DARIUS RUCKER



JULY 20
KEYSHIA COLE



JULY 22
COUNTING CROWS



JULY 26
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Education

Parade in Big Cypress honors academic achievements

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

BIG CYPRESS — Riding a police motorcycle, SPD’s Jeffrey Maslan led a convoy of vehicles that contained graduates and other students, parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, firefighters, elected officials and even one alligator.

The procession to recognize students’ accomplishments tribalwide started in the parking lot at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on May 31. Many participants rode in the back or on top of pickup trucks and vans. 2025 Ahfachkee graduate Sarah Robbins carried a small alligator in her hands while sitting atop a SUV in the parade. Sagemont School graduate Rylin Billie-Osceola tooted a red horn.

The procession slowly ventured south for two miles, passing the Big Cypress Reservation’s more notable landmarks — including the Frank Billie Field Office, the Herman L. Osceola gym and the Ahfachkee School — before pulling into the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena where enthusiastic “cheerleaders” from the Education Department provided a boisterous welcome.

Inside the arena, a variety of vendors greeted the participants. A photo shoot with Signature Soiree, gifts and goodies from the Council office and Education Department, and food, including a popular taco offering, were among the attractions. A large screen was set up with dozens of chairs for those who wanted to watch “Minecraft.”

Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie read each name of the students who participated. Councilwoman Billie said the event not only recognized graduates’ accomplishments, but also the work of students of any age who moved on to their next grade.

♦ See PARADE on page 4B



2025 Ahfachkee graduate Sarah Robbins brings an alligator along for the ride during a parade May 31 in Big Cypress as students were honored for their academic accomplishments.

Kevin Johnson

PECS students focus on studies in summer

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School (PECS) held its annual summer school program for Pre-K to eighth grade students. The program ran from June 9-26 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday through Thursday. About 30 students participated in the program.

During summer school, students were taught the Creek language, learned about Seminole history and culture, math, reading, and did a variety of arts and crafts projects.

Summer school aims to help students stay engaged and continue learning over the summer. During the three-week program, students were able to catch up on missed

school material, develop their studies and discover new subjects and interests.

PECS also provided students a safe, comfortable environment while they learned, played and were served breakfast and lunch

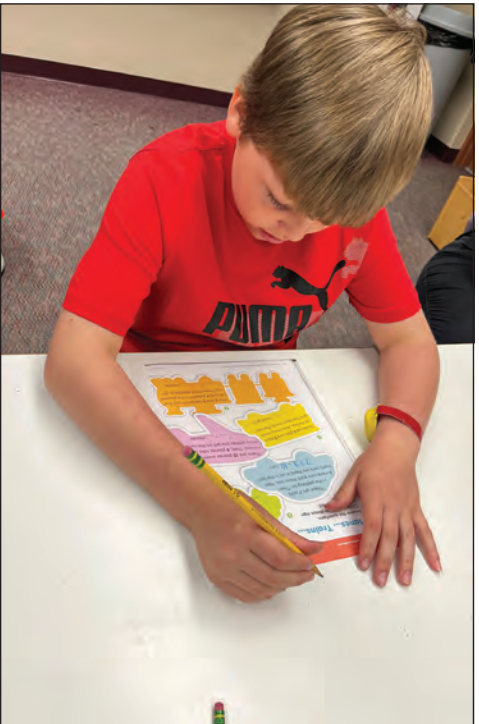
“We try to make it a really fun time for the kids to because they work so hard throughout the school year,” Principal Tracy Downing said.

According to the National Summer Learning Association, students who attend summer school are less likely to experience learning loss over the summer. Research also indicates that they are more likely to stay on track for graduation and perform better academically overall.



PECS (2)

Above, a group of PECS summer school students work on an activity in the classroom. At right, PECS first grader Holden Smith examines a worksheet during summer school.



Scholarships presented to OHS graduates

STAFF REPORT

Ace Youngblood, representing the Seminole Tribe of Florida, presented two scholarships for \$2,500 each to Okeechobee High School students Juan Munoz Garrido and Kasandra Merilus on Scholarship Night on May 8.

Merilus will attend Florida Southwestern State College in Fort Myers and study nursing. She graduated Okeechobee High School with a weighted GPA of 4.3. She also completed the CTE Nursing Assistant program at OHS and earned her Certified Nursing Assistant industry certification.

Munoz Garrido plans to attend Indian River State College to earn a bachelor degree in finance or business. He plans to continue his education with a goal of giving back to his family and his community who have supported him. He is motivated by his goal to be a role model for others.

“If I can overcome the challenges I’ve faced, I believe anyone can,” he said.



OHS

Ace Youngblood, center, on behalf of the Seminole Tribe, presents scholarships to Okeechobee High School class of 2025 graduates Juan Munoz Garrido and Kasandra Merilus.

Library summer reading challenge going strong

STAFF REPORT

Tribal libraries on every reservation are in the middle of the annual Summer Reading Challenge, which continues until Aug. 1.

The library program welcomes readers of all ages to visit any of the four libraries, located in Big Cypress, Brighton, Hollywood and Immokalee, to sign up for a library card and dive into a variety of fun activities such as story time, cultural arts and crafts, hands-on STEM activities, board games, anime or teen club or relax together with a family movie.

A summer reading activity log and monthly activities calendar are available at all libraries. After receiving a library card, readers may check out books and find a cozy reading spot in the library or at home. Reading 15-30 minutes daily is all it takes to participate in the program. When the reading and activity logs are complete, prizes will be awarded and announced in the library’s quarterly newsletter. There will be one winner from each reservation.

The library program is all about helping the tribal community stay strong in literacy.

“Research shows that students can lose up to two months of reading progress over the summer if they don’t continue to read,” wrote library program supervisor Padmini Dukharan in an email. “That’s why we’re here to help prevent the “summer slide” and keep those reading skills sharp all year long.”

Class of 2025



Abbigale Green
Clewiston Christian School
Abbigale will attend Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, where she will study forensic psychology.



Airo Tommie
Penn Foster
Airo will attend South Florida State College in Avon Park, where he will study culinary arts. He would like to become a chef.



Allie McInturff
GED
Allie isn't yet sure what she will do next, but she has been thinking about becoming an esthetician.



Ashton Scheffler
GED
Ashton is interested in game design, digital arts, art school, finance and real estate. He hasn't yet decided which he will pursue.



Candice Melton
Sherman Indian High School (Calif.)
Candice plans to attend Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, where she will major in Native American studies.



Greg "Zae" Thomas
American Heritage School
Zae will attend Florida State University and play football for the Seminoles. He is only the second tribal member to play for FSU football. He has aspirations to play professionally after college.



Denise Gonzales
Gateway Charter School
Denise plans to attend the Skin Care Academy of Florida in Bonita Springs and become an esthetician.



Eliska Slavik
Naples HS
Eliska will attend esthetician school at the Skin Care Academy of Florida in Bonita Springs.



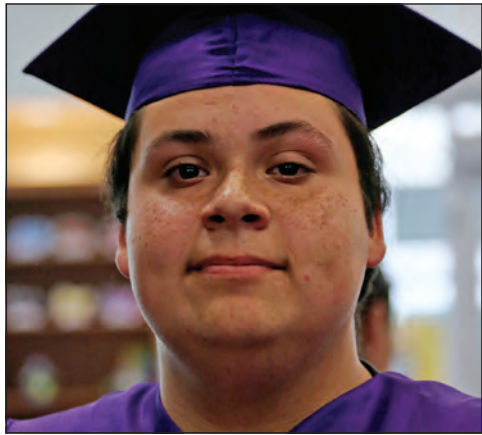
Eric Green
Clewiston High School
Eric will attend Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California. He plans to get an Associate degree in film and television and then transfer to a university to earn a Bachelor degree.



Gilbert Guerrero
Ahfachkee School
Gilbert interned in the maintenance department of Ahfachkee and plans to work there when the new school year begins.



Ian Hernandez-Osceola
Ahfachkee School
Ian plans to travel to pow wows with his family and help his mother Justine Osceola sell her soap and other products.



TL Gopher
Okeechobee High School
TL plans to go to trade school for HVAC and buy a house.



Janah Cypress
American Heritage School
Janah will attend Syracuse University in New York. She will study law, policy and society. She would like to be a lawyer.



Jody Cabral
Ahfachkee School
Jody plans to take a year off. He would eventually like to work at Ahfachkee in the front office.



Jordan Johnson
Okeechobee High School
Jordan hasn't decided on a career yet, but it could be working with animals.



Kalissa Huff
Okeechobee High School
Kalissa plans to attend cosmetology school and make a living doing what she loves for other people.



Kobe Micco
home school
Kobe plans to attend Fort Myers Technical College where he will study carpentry.



Lason Baker
Penn Foster
Lason plans to go into real estate and sell homes.



Xiya Osceola
Hollywood Hills
Xiya will attend Millennia Atlantic University in Miami. She is continuing her career as an athlete, playing volleyball, and majoring in business. She hopes to come back and help her family business.



Maleah Rodrigues
Moore Haven High School
Maleah will attend Florida SouthWestern State College and study business. She hopes to open her own business someday.



Victoria Osceola Benard
NSU University School
Victoria will attend the University of New Mexico and major in Indigenous history. She wants to work for the tribe in the future, potentially as a representative. Victoria wants to learn and work with other tribes to advocate for and help their communities.



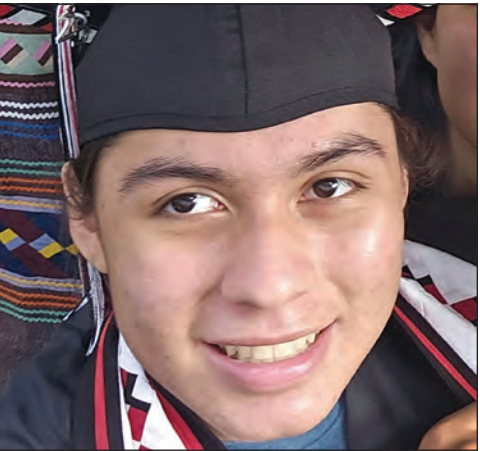
Merlelaysia Billie
Okeechobee High School
Merlelaysia would like to go to the University of Miami and study law.



Neela Jones
Okeechobee High School
Neela will attend Stetson University in DeLand, where she will study psychology. She would like to be a therapist.



Preslynn Baker
Moore Haven High School
Preslynn will attend Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, where she will play softball and volleyball. Her career aspiration is to be an athletic trainer.



Rylin Billie-Osceola
Sagamont School
Rylin plans to look for opportunities to work for the tribe. He would like to work in a variety of departments to see which one fits him well.

Class of 2025



Sarah Robbins
Ahfachkee School
Sarah writes poetry and wants to publish books of her poetry one day. She also plans to open a car detailing business in Big Cypress, with plans to expand to other reservations.



Serenity Micco
Moore Haven High School
Serenity will attend Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia, where she will study elementary education.



Liyah Cifuentes
St. Michael's School
Liyah will attend the University of Miami. She plans to study communications and would like to pursue a career in journalism.



Aaliyah Billie
Ahfachkee School
Aaliyah will attend the Aveda Institute where she will study cosmetology. She also plans to go to business school so she can open her own salon and make people feel beautiful.



Jonah Garcia
Okeechobee High School
Jonah will enroll in the welding program at Indian River State College next spring. Then he plans to attend UTI in Orlando to pursue a career in auto mechanics.



Willo James
Moore Haven High School
Willo will attend Haskell Indian Nations University where she will study elementary education. She would like to come back and teach at PECS.



Xzavion Tommie
Ahfachkee School
Xzavion wants to become an auto mechanic and will go to school to learn the trade. He believes it will be good for him.



Adeline Garcia
Okeechobee High School
Adeline will attend Barry University to study psychology. She wants to become an occupational therapist.



Adrianna Cypress-Ramirez
American Heritage School
Adrianna will attend Nova Southeastern University and major in English.



EvaRay Stewart
Hollywood Hills
EvaRay is planning to attend Nova Southeastern University and major in marine biology. She wants to be a livestock veterinarian.



Skyla Petrillo
American Heritage School
Skyla is planning to attend Nova Southeastern University to study business and marketing.



Maddux Motlow-Acosta
NSU University School
Maddux is going to college at Lynn University. He plans to become a psychologist or a therapist.



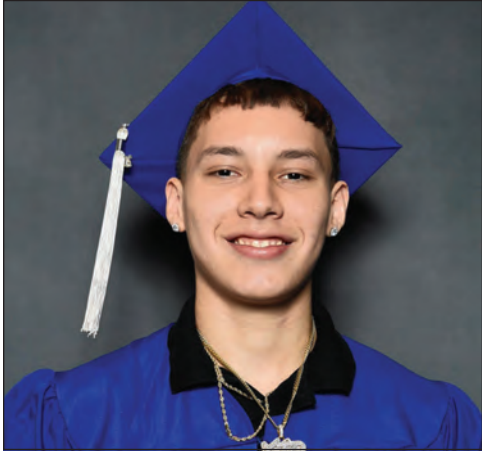
Presleigh Osceola-Hahn
NSU University School
Presleigh is attending FSU and studying biochemistry. She wants to do sports medicine and work with athletes on the pro level.



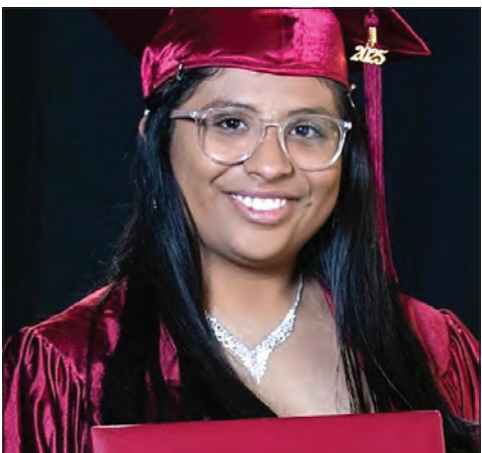
Rainbow Jackson
Know-It-All Prep
Rainbow is taking a break post-grad to spend time with family and help out with her brother's baby. She isn't sure on her career plan yet, but is considering art or jewelry.



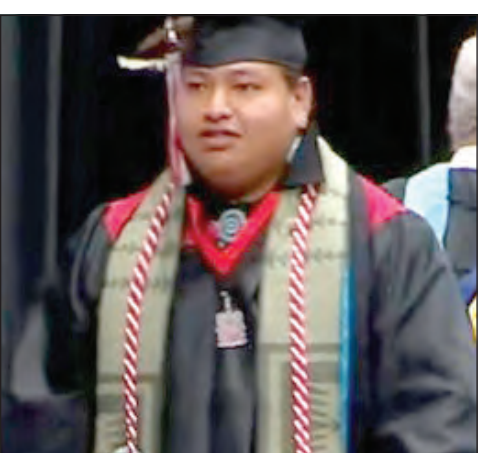
Gabriella Diaz
NSU University School
Gabriella's immediate plans are to go to Pace University and study musical theater. She hopes to get an agent later in college. Her dream role is Eurydice in "Hadestown" on Broadway.



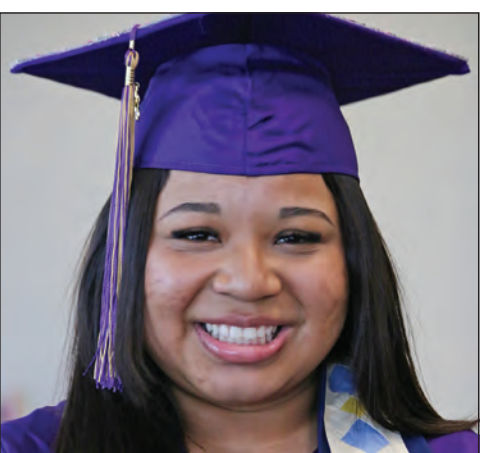
Xavier Osceola
NSU University School
Xavier will attend Florida State University, where he'll play for the men's basketball team. He plans to study business. After college, he would like to play professionally and eventually attend culinary school and open his own restaurant.



Sahara Calderon
Alpine Academy (Oviedo)
Sahara will attend Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, where she plans to study criminal justice.



Aarron Josh
Coconino High School (Ariz.)



Maylon Foster
Okeechobee High School



Danielle Colon Hernandez
Hibertan High School (N.C.)



Jacob Colon
East Lee High School



Shyla Herrera
East Lee High School



Peggy-Sue Cypress
AEF Schools



Malachi Colon
Hibertan High School (N.C.)

Additional high school students from class of 2025

(The Tribune was unable to get additional information about these high school students who were scheduled to graduate in 2025).

Felicia Buck
Nayanashree Billie
Lucee Cypress
Darwin Brooks
Maycee Holata
Sebastian Motlow
Kendra Thomas
Jaydance Urbina
Maricella Garcia
Akeelh Mitchell
Angeleah Gore
Austin Thomas
Carlee Osceola
Justin Billie
Myracle Tommie
Naleah Billie
Noah Osceola
Bennie Motlow
Rickkel Osceola
Kaya Malu
Dorian Osceola

LaBelle High School
Rosemount High School (Minn.)
Penn Foster
NSU University School
Penn Foster
Glades Virtual
Know-It-All-Prep
Penn Foster
Know-It-All-Prep
Penn Foster
Penn Foster
Okeechobee High School
Penn Foster
Okeechobee High School
Penn Foster
Penn Foster
Okeechobee High School
GED
Miccosukee Indian School
Davenport High School
Penn Foster

◆ PARADE
From page 1B



Kevin Johnson

Rylin Billie-Osceola, a 2025 Sagemont School graduate, toots a horn as the May 31 celebration parade for graduates and other students passes by the Ahfachkee School in Big Cypress.



Kevin Johnson

Ryder Frank-Bad Bear, left, and Gunnar Frank-Bad Bear celebrate moving on to their next grades from the back of a truck during the parade.



Kevin Johnson

After the parade, some of the participants gather at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena, where food, gifts and a big screen movie were offered

Higher Education Graduates 2024-25

Student	Institute	Degree	Major
Dothan Osceola-Rodriguez	GED	GED	
Analysse Stockton	GED	GED	
Keith Osceola	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Roberto Osceola-Benard	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Jahbahn Arnold	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Sage Motlow	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Lexi Thomas	Indian River State College	Vocational Certificate	Esthetician
Skyler Burke	Penn State University	Masters	Communications
Ryan Cypress	Keiser University	Associates	General Studies
Jillian Rodriguez	Florida International Univ.	Masters	Curriculum Instruction
Milyn Jamieson	Institute of Beauty Career	Vocational Certificate	Esthetician
Marcela Osceola	GED	GED	
Rickela Rodriguez	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Sheyanna Pietras	Grand Canyon University	Masters	
Victoria Smith	University of Tampa	Bachelors	
Jenice Martin-Anderson	San Jose State University	Masters	Business Admin.
Aaliyah Rediker	Keiser University	Associates	Finance
Skyla Osceola	Nova Southeastern Univ.	Masters	Library, Information Science
Nena Waggeberby	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	Business Admin./Gen. Studies
Nigel Wells	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	Leadership
Neo Motlow	GED	GED	
Chasyn Yescas	Universal Technical Institute	Vocational Certificate	
Skye Stubbs	Louisiana State University	Bachelors	Automotive
Benny Motlow	GED	GED	General Business
Bryce Osceola	The Skincare Academy of Fl.	Vocational Certificate	
Jay Holata	Florida International Univ.	Masters	Esthetician
Leisset Baker	Keiser University	Bachelors	Business Admin.
Rylee Smith	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	Exercise, Sports Science
Roberto Osceola-Benard	Penn Foster	Vocational Certificate	
Natomah Robbins	Cinema Art College	Vocational Certificate	
Alexis Foreman	Univ. of Central Oklahoma	Bachelors	Electrician
Eden Jumper	I-Tech Immokalee	Vocational Certificate	Makeup Certification
Elijah Osceola	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	Biology-Biomedical Sciences
Tirell Timothy	United Education Institute	Vocational Certificate	Digital Media
Billie Garcia	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Thoya Robbins	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Charlie Osceola	Florida Gulf Coast Univ.	Bachelors	Electrician
Krysta Burton	Indian River State College	EMT Certificate	
Maryjane Osceola	Broward College	Associates of Arts	
Kamyah Fudge	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Crystal Sneed	Florida Atlantic Univ.	Certificate	
Rocky Garcia	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	
Eric Puente II	South Florida State College	Certificate	
Malaina Billy	Mississippi State University	Bachelors	
Layne Thomas	Liberty University	Masters	
Richard Primeaux	Penn Foster	High School Diploma	

International and local tribes connect for Big Mamma Day

BY KELLY FARRELL
Special to the Tribune

MIAMI — International Big Mamma Day connected tribes from around the world to honor Earth Day at the Miccosukee Village in the Everglades on Saturday, April 19.

“The ancient tribes knew of this as a spiritual place,” said Samuel Tommie, of the Seminole Tribe and who was one of the event’s presenters.

He added that his ancestors brought the people to the Everglades through the three Seminole Wars.

Tommie played flute and offered blessings to the audience, children around the world, ancestors and the planet through his music and words.

“We’re so thankful you’ve come here to join us. We’re so thankful for your high intentions,” he said to the audience.

The annual Big Mamma Day Festival at the Miccosukee Village was born from an idea from Garrett Stuart of Ochopee three years ago with organization and leadership by Betty Osceola, of the Panther Clan of the Miccosukee Tribe.

This year, tribal members from around the world offered their gifts and talents alongside Floridians.

“Swampman” Paul Simmons, Seminole, and Joseph Osceola, Miccosukee, demonstrated alligator wrestling.

Isiah Cruz, a Taino of Puerto Rico and founder of Ama Earth Group, gave away native wetland plants. Cruz is working with the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida to bring more native plants to the Everglades, which is now consisting of more than half nonnative and invasive plant species, he said.

“This is an urban re-wilding initiative, so people will plant them in their backyard or even put the plants in holders,” Cruz said, as he gave visitors sprouts, seedlings and even mature plants.

Cruz’s company is a solar artificial intelligence firm, which is what funds the re-wilding work, he said.

Tools and technology, such as AI, can be for good or for bad, it’s about how we choose to use them, said Betty Osceola.

Josie Osceola of Swampy Meadows, a community garden in the Everglades, also offered and sold numerous species of native and edible plants, including sweet potato vine, moon flower and corky stem passion flower.

“I like to call passion flower the powerhouse of the native plants,” said Jean Sarmiento, cofounder of Love the Everglades Movement with Houston Cypress. This is because passion flower and its purple pigmented berries attract zebra long-wing butterflies, Gulf fritillary and birds, Sarmiento said.

Among the numerous people sharing their gifts were the Bird Clans near and far.

Seminole elders have said that the bird makes sure that all things are put in their proper places on earth.

“Elders are sacred. They are our books,”



Kelly Farrell

Arassari Pataxó, of the Bird Clan of the Brazilian forest’s Pataxo Tribe during the International Big Mamma Day Festival on April 19 at the Miccosukee Village in Miami.



Kelly Farrell

Alice Billie paints on a card to Mother Earth in honor of Earth Day at the International Big Mamma Day Festival.

said Arassari Pataxó, of the Bird Clan of the Brazilian forest Pataxo tribe, through his interpreter, Beatriz Carvalho.

Arassari is a species of bird that is smaller than a toucan and flies high. The bird symbolizes connection to fish, water and wisdom, Pataxó said.

Local Bird Clans included the Billie family of Florida’s Miccosukee Tribe.

Both honored nature and ancestors, teaching as they demonstrated.

Pataxó acknowledged that Indigenous people are responsible for much of the intact nature around the world.

Pataxó made bird calls through a wooden flute and danced with his feathered headdress demonstrating the prayers of his Bird Clan. He offered hand carved animals and spoke of the qualities that each animal demonstrates. Among them he gifted Betty Osceola a hand carved crocodilian.

“Everything in nature is sacred, always teaching us something,” Pataxó said.



Kelly Farrell

Delores, Lois and Barbara Billie of the Bird Clan each wearing fashion of different eras with Delores representing the past; Barbara the modern times of the 1950s and ‘60s; and Barbara wearing present day fashion, at International Big Mamma Day Festival.

NATIVE LEARNING CENTER

July schedule

Webinar: Roles & Responsibilities of the Board of Commissioners 5-Day Webinar Series

Instructor: Cheryl A. Causley, (Bay Mills Tribe of Chippewa Indians) Principal, Cheryl A. Causley and Associates Housing Consulting & Management Services
Date: July 7-11 Time: 2-3:30 p.m.

Training Description:
The Board of Commissioners Training will cover the history of Indian Housing, the key requirements of the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) Program, NAHASDA funding requirements, and the oversight responsibilities of the Housing Board.

Webinar: Federal Grants 201: How to Feel Confident as You Click Submit

Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST Grant Professionals Association
Approved Trainer President, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC
Date: July 17 Time: 2-3:30 p.m.

Webinar: NAHASDA Tribal Council Roles & Responsibilities 5-Day Webinar Series

Instructor: Cheryl A. Causley, (Bay Mills Tribe of Chippewa Indians)

Principal, Cheryl A. Causley and Associates Housing Consulting & Management Services
Date: July 21-25 Time: 2-3:30 p.m.

Training Description:
Participants will have a greater understanding of Tribal Council roles and responsibilities when accepting Indian Housing Block Grant funds. The required HUD submissions and timelines the Tribe must meet.

Webinar: Grant Writing 101: How to Write a Competitive Fundable Grant

Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST Grant Professionals Association
Approved Trainer President, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC
Date: July 31 Time: 2-3:30 p.m.

Onsite Training: Property Maintenance for Tribal Housing

Instructor: Jeff Ackley Jr., (Sokaogon Chippewa) Executive Director
Lac Du Flambeau Chippewa Housing Authority Chairman
Great Lakes Indian Housing Association Co-Founder
Native Land Construction & Consulting LLC

Date: July 31– Aug. 1
Time: 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. MT
Location: AMERIND | Plaza Conference Room 502 Cedar Drive, Santa Ana Pueblo, NM.

(For full descriptions and schedule of NLC offerings, visit nativelearningcenter.

Hollywood preschoolers celebrate graduation in style

STAFF REPORT

HOLLYWOOD — The preschoolers of Hollywood celebrated their graduation in style, with cowboy and cowgirl themed clothes May 20 on the Hollywood

Reservation. They recited the pledges, performed songs and dances, and walked the stage in their caps and gowns. Cowbone played the guitar and sang along with the preschoolers to a couple of songs. President Holly Tiger and Hollywood

Councilman Chris Osceola attended and spoke. Afterward, the students and their families had lunch and spent time together.



Starlynn Brea sings and dances at graduation.



Melody Jamieson speaks to the audience.



Amira Camper enters the graduation ceremony.



Cowbone, left, plays the guitar as the students perform. Kaynce Solano is at far right.



Richard Primeaux accepts his diploma from President Holly Tiger.



Antonio Alcantara makes his way to the graduation stage.

GOP lawmakers' bill would shift Haskell oversight

BY ANNA KAMINSKI
Kansas Reflector

TOPEKA, Kan. — Four Republican lawmakers want oversight of a Kansas Native American university to shift from the federal government to a board of regents under proposed legislation.

It's a move that follows cuts to the Haskell Indian Nations University's programming from Trump administration policies, years of congressional inquiries into staff misconduct and months of weighing input from tribes and the university, lawmakers said.

The university, located in Lawrence, is under the purview of the Bureau of Indian Education within the U.S. Department of the Interior. U.S. Sens. Jerry Moran and Roger Marshall of Kansas, along with Kansas U.S. Reps. Tracey Mann and Derek Schmidt and Oklahoma U.S. Sen. Markwayne Mullin, say a change is needed. Some tribal and Indian education leaders agree, arguing a shift to a board of regents would empower tribal communities.

"The bureau has failed to protect students, respond to my congressional inquiries or meet the basic infrastructure needs of the university," Moran said in a news release. "It is clear that the best path forward is for the university to be led by an independent Board of Regents nominated by the Tribal community and no longer obstructed by the BIE."

Moran and Mann introduced companion bills Monday in the House and Senate. The Senate bill was referred to a finance committee, and the House resolution was sent to three separate committees for review. However, the process began six months ago, when Moran and Mann announced their intentions to draft legislation to charter the university and transfer governance to the Haskell Board of Regents, while maintaining federal funding for the school.

The board currently has 15 members. Thirteen are appointed through tribal or intertribal resolutions, making certain to represent the broader Alaska Native and American Indian communities. The remaining two members are designated by the university's student body government and alumni association.

Dalton Henry, president of the board of regents, said the university has succeeded in advancing Native students and strengthening tribal nations for decades.

"Yet, persistent challenges under federal oversight have limited its potential," Henry said.

Shifting oversight to a Native-led board of trustees cements the notion that tribal nations are the most qualified candidates to shape the university's future, he said.

"This is how we secure Haskell's legacy," Henry said, "not just for today's students, but for the next seven generations."

The four-year university enrolled about 900 students from nearly 150 federally recognized tribes in 2024. In 2023, a federal report that wasn't made public until more than a year later revealed the university failed to implement adequate sexual assault policies, that it wrongfully terminated some staff and employees, and that university leadership intimidated students.

Under the proposed legislation, the university's headquarters will remain in Lawrence with the option to establish branches elsewhere. The president of the university would serve as CEO of the university and would be appointed by the board of regents. If passed, the legislation would establish a trust fund for the university and require stringent, annual reporting to Congress.

Moriah O'Brien, vice president of the Congressional and Federal Relations of American Indian Higher Education Consortium, said the legislation reaffirms the federal government's treaty responsibility for higher education and the importance of culturally relevant education to the survival of tribal nations. O'Brien said the legislation also "rightfully empowers" the board of regents with decision-making authority while it currently serves on an advisory basis.

The bill, called the Haskell Indian Nations University Improvement Act, also earned the support of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians tribal chief, the National Congress of American Indians, the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, the National Indian Education Association and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation.

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Chief Cyrus Ben said the change will offer the university "the stability, autonomy and leadership it needs to thrive."

"Haskell holds a special place in the hearts of many of our Tribal students — past, present, and future — who attend with deep pride and commitment," he said.

A spokesperson for the Bureau of Indian Education said in an emailed statement that the bureau does not comment on proposed legislation.

Big Cypress honors preschool graduates

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — The Big Cypress Preschool's class of 2025 was the center of attention May 22 as the school held its graduation ceremony.

Each graduate received congratulations from Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Board Rep. Nadine Bowers and President Holly Tiger.



With diploma in hand, Sienna Little Star Carter beams with joy.



Councilwoman Mariann Billie congratulates graduate Roger Jumper.



The Big Cypress Preschool class of 2025 with, from left to right, President Holly Tiger, Board Rep. Nadine Bowers and Councilwoman Mariann Billie.

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Florida State University freshman defensive back Zae Thomas speaks to the media in Tallahassee on June 24.

FSU’s Zae Thomas embarks on freshman season

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Florida State University football freshman defensive back Zae Thomas met with the media June 24 in Tallahassee as part of player availability sessions. Thomas, who as a senior helped American Heritage-Plantation win a state championship last December, has been at FSU since May preparing for the upcoming season. He is the second Seminole Tribal of Florida tribal member to play for FSU football, following in the footsteps of Justin Motlow.

In his chat with the media, Thomas said he is settling into his new environment.

“Obviously, Florida State was a school that I was really big on before my recruiting process and throughout it. It’s a great opportunity to come and represent. Playing on the next level has always been a dream of mine,” he said.

Thomas, a 6-foot-3, 189-pound defensive back, said changes that FSU made to the defensive coaching personnel since he was recruited haven’t impacted his thoughts about his choice.

“Most importantly, Florida State, aside from the coaching changes, it’s the place I wanted to be. I believe in [head] coach [Mike] Norvell, and he didn’t leave. I believed in him, and he believed in me, and that’s all I needed.”

Thomas was asked about the importance of his Seminole heritage.

“It’s definitely a great honor to be here and to be part of the tribe. I take pride in it. It’s something that not many people from the tribe have done. It’s cool to see kids ask me how it is,” he said.

Thomas’s uniform number is 22, which is also shared by kicker Jake Weinberg, who played for American Heritage, but the one in Delray Beach, not Plantation.

FSU’s 12-game regular season opens with a heavyweight clash. The Seminoles will host Alabama on Aug. 30 at Doak Campbell Stadium. Game time is 3:30 p.m. The game will be televised on ABC.

2025 FSU Football Schedule (home games in bold)

- Aug. 30 vs Alabama 3:30 p.m.
- Sept. 6 vs East Texas A&M 12 p.m.
- Sept. 20 vs Kent State TBA
- Sept. 26 at Virginia 7 p.m.
- Oct. 4 vs Miami TBA
- Oct. 11 vs Pittsburgh TBA
- Oct. 18 at Stanford 10:30 p.m.
- Nov. 1 vs Wake Forest TBA
- Nov. 8 at Clemson TBA
- Nov. 15 vs Virginia Tech
- Nov. 21 at NC State 8 p.m.
- Nov. 29 at Florida TBA

Fresh Walters picks Youngstown State

STAFF REPORT

Thanks to an All-American junior college season last fall, Seminole descendant Roger “Fresh” Walters received multiple offers from FBS schools. In late May, he announced that he picked Youngstown State University in Ohio.

Youngstown plays in the Missouri Valley Football Conference, an NCAA Division 1 FCS (Football Championship Subdivision) conference that includes teams such as Southern Illinois, Missouri State and traditional powerhouse North Dakota State.

Walters, a 5-foot-10, 180-pound speedy threat at both wide receiver and kick returner, opened a lot of eyes last season as one of the nation’s top JUCO receivers. He averaged 11.6 yards per catch last season and

caught 75 passes for 868 yards and seven touchdowns for Iowa Western Community College in 2024.

After his season ended, he received multiple offers, including from Rutgers, West Florida, Tennessee State, Alabama A&M, Florida A&M, Alabama State, Valdosta State, and others.

He opted to go with the school in northeast Ohio, 70 miles south of Cleveland. It will be Walters’ third college. He spent the first two years of his college career at Charlotte in North Carolina before shifting to Iowa Western for one season.

Youngstown’s season starts Aug. 28 at home against Mercyhurst. Two weeks later, Youngstown will play at Michigan State.

Walters is the son of tribal member Sheree Sneed.



Fresh Walters gets used to his new colors and mascot as a new member of the Youngstown State football team.

Big Cypress Recreation camp offers campers varied program

STAFF REPORT

Campers in the Big Cypress Recreation summer program enjoyed a variety of

activities in June, including trips to water parks on the east and west coasts of the state, field trips to Lion Country Safari, Jungle Island, movies and arcades.



Equoni Cypress and Allie Billie get some exercise at the fitness trail June 24.



Campers race around the fitness trail on scooters in Big Cypress. The two campers in front of the pack are, at left, Mason Bear and Zhane Carter.



The Public Works Department isn’t a place children would typically see on a normal day, but one of the things about camp is that it is a break from the typical. The campers enjoyed an educational tour of the facility on June 24.



8U Darling teammates Mahala Bishop, left, and Jasie Smith will be headed to Ruston, Louisiana, to play in the the Dixie World Series July 25-30.



Melaine Bonilla delivers a pitch for the 15U Belles.



From left to right, 10U Angels Nohea Collins, Serenity Bishop, Isabella Spencer and Willena Tommie.

Strong showings for Chobee teams at states

STAFF REPORT

Softball teams from the Okeechobee Citizens Recreation Association (OCRA) had

solid performances at the state tournament in June. Some of the teams include Seminole players, such as the 8U Darlings, which won the state championship. The Darlings will head to Ruston, Louisiana, to play in

the Dixie World Series from July 25-20. The team includes Jasie Smith and Mahala Bishop.

The 15U Belles, which includes Melaine Bonilla and Amalia Estrada, came

up just short of winning a state title. They finished runner-up. The 10U Angels also competed in the state tournament. The team includes Nohea Collins, Serenity Bishop, Isabella Spencer and Willena Tommie.

Bishop blasted her first-ever over the fence home run.

Tribal youth learn, paddle, and lead on restored river

FROM PRESS RELEASE

In June, tribal youth and partners [in California] gathered at the former Iron Gate Dam site for an Indigenous

Science Camp rooted in river education, cultural connection, and the celebration of restoration. As the Klamath River runs free through areas that were blocked by dams for over a century, young people are now rafting through landscapes that haven’t seen salmon



A trip on the Klamath River for youngsters in California and Oregon.

for generations.

“Klamath River families worked for decades for dam removal”, said Regina Chichizola, Executive Director at Save California Salmon. “It is so special that we get to raft through the areas where the dams used to be, and host field trips and camps for local youth so they can see salmon spawning and experience a restored river that is not full of toxic algae.”

The two-day camp, held June 20–21, included hands-on science activities, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), and a rafting trip through newly restored river sections, including through the Iron Gate dam site. It was co-hosted by the Karuk Tribe, Yurok Tribe, Mid Klamath Watershed Council, Save California Salmon, and RES. The camp is part of a larger effort by Save California Salmon and Klamath River Tribes to make sure local youth can be part of, and learn from the historic restoration on the Klamath. They will be hosting events on the river all summer and field trips in the fall.

Morek O’Rourke, age 9, a Yurok Tribal member with Karuk heritage, shared his hopes for the river’s future, “I hope the river will be cleaner for future generations—maybe it’ll be muddy in the winter, but in the summer it could be clearer, and it could be safe to swim in.”

Reflecting on his experience rafting



Youth cover themselves with a tribal blanket at Klamath River.

through areas where dams once stood, Morek added “It felt really special to raft where the dams used to be because not a lot of people have gotten to do this. For me, it felt really cool.”

This camp is part of a growing effort to ensure Indigenous youth lead the way in healing rivers and communities through education and experience.

“Removing dams and restoring rivers is

restoring the path for our youth, as the dams come down our people and our youth step up” said Star Gibbens, Youth Coordinator at Save California Salmon. “These programs help young people reconnect with culture, science, and the land. They are the future water protectors and leaders.”

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COMMUNITY DINNER | JULY 26 @ 4:00PM

PECS honors its student-athletes



PECS

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School held its sports awards banquet in May. Teams and players and were recognized with awards. Boys basketball, from left to right, Eli Finney, assistant coach; Maddox Osceola, Rookie of the Year; Gus Jumper, Most Improved Player; Zaden Spencer, Defensive Player of the Year; Josiah Gopher, Seminole Award; Kamani Smith, Head Coach.



PECS

Softball, from left to right, Kohlani Ridriguez-Osceola, Offensive Player of the Year; Macayden Sardina, Rookie of the Year; Jaelle Weimann, Seminole Award; Miranda Tommie, Most Improved Player; Ameliana Osceola, Defensive Player of the Year; Amalia Estrada, Most Valuable Player; Elle Rivero, head coach.



PECS

Cheer Team, from left to right, Okalani Collins, Hayden Nunez, Ciani Smith, Kahnayah Billie, Jaelle Weimann.



PECS

Coed soccer, from left to right, Abril Bert, coach; Amalia Estrada, Most Valuable Player; Miguel Estrada, Defensive Player of the Year; Josephine Snow, Seminole Award; Ciel Cypress, Rookie of the Year; Dyanie Peak, Offensive Player of the Year.



PECS

PECS coaches, standing from left to right, Suraiya Smith, head JV volleyball coach; Monica Koger, head varsity volleyball coach; Abril Bert, head soccer coach; Melanie Bonilla, asst. girls basketball coach; Adryauna Baker, Head Girls Basketball Coach; Kamani Smith, Head Boys Basketball Coach; Eli Finney, asst. boys basketball coach; Deanna Nunez, head cheer coach; Brianna Nunez, asst. cheer coach; Elle Rivero, head softball coach; Front, Jovanny Torres, athletic director.



PECS

Zaden Spencer and Hayden Nunez, Scholar Athletes with the highest GPA.



PECS

Girls basketball, from left to right, Adryauna Baker, head coach; Dallyse Baker, Rookie of the Year; Azariah Washington, Most Valuable Player; Kanae Jumper, Most Improved Player; Jalene Smith, Offensive Player of the Year; Caysie Platt, Defensive Player of the Year; Ameliana Osceola, Seminole Award; Melanie Bonilla, assistant coach.



PECS

Varsity volleyball, from left to right, Suraiya Smith, assistant coach; Amalia Estrada, Defensive Player of the Year; Kaliyanita Hodge, Most Improved Player; Jalene Smith, Offensive Player of the Year; Kanae Jumper, Rookie of the Year; Ciani Smith, Seminole Award; Azariah Washington, Most Valuable Player; Monica Koger, head coach.



PECS

Scholar Athletes - Bottom row, left to right, Amalia Estrada, Caysie Platt, Hayden Nunez, Dyanie Peak. Top row, left to right, Okalani Collins, Elainna Fonseca, Jalaaya Hunsinger, Ciani Smith, Azariah Washington, Zaden Spencer

Seminole cowboys, cowgirls compete in Kissimmee rodeo

STAFF REPORT

Cowboys and cowgirls from the Seminole Tribe of Florida competed in the 155th Silver Spurs Rodeo on May 30-31, 2025, in Kissimmee.

Seminoles who finished in the money included Josh Jumper, who teamed with Scott Martell for fourth place in team roping,

and Kalgary Johns, who finished third in barrel racing.

Josiah Johns, who was recently approved for a Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) bullfighting permit, was one of the bullfighters. Five Star Rodeo, owned by Marty Johns and Paul Bowers Jr., was a stock sub-contractor for the event.



Boogie Johns competes in barrel racing at Silver Spurs Rodeo in Kissimmee.

Jessica Burns



Jobe Johns goes after his target in calf roping at Silver Spurs Rodeo.

Jessica Burns



Josh Jumper, right, and Scott Martell earned fourth place in team roping at the Silver Spurs Rodeo in Kissimmee.

Jessica Burns



Kalgary Johns and her horse make a turn around a barrel at the Silver Spurs Rodeo. Johns finished third.

Jessica Burns



Bullfighter Josiah Johns shows no fear trying to contain a bull at Silver Spurs Rodeo.

Jessica Burns



Squirr Osceola battles a bull in bull riding at Silver Spurs Rodeo.

Jessica Burns



Kalgary Johns smiles as she leads her horse to a sprint to the finish line in barrel racing at Silver Spurs Rodeo.

Jessica Burns

First Nations partner with city, province in hosting World Cup 26

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Musqueam, Squamish Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, the Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver have signed a historic memorandum of understanding (MOU) committing to work together as partners to host FIFA World Cup 26 matches in Vancouver.

“Musqueam is excited and honoured to be working alongside Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, the Province of B.C. and the City of Vancouver for the upcoming FIFA World Cup 26 Vancouver,” said Chief Wayne Sparrow, Musqueam. “Throughout the planning and negotiations, Musqueam has been a part of all discussions across every table with FIFA. We are continuing to strengthen and build on the 2010 Olympic legacy with the opportunity to share our history and culture with the world. We’re thankful to be able to have our voice heard and to take part in the planning process of a successful FIFA tournament on our traditional territory.”

Wilson Williams, spokesperson, Squamish Nation, said: “We at Squamish Nation believe deeply in the power of sport as a catalyst for growth and change. We are honoured to welcome guests to our shared traditional territories for FIFA World Cup 26. These matches provide an opportunity for us all to share our history and culture with a global audience. And as a true partner throughout every step of the planning process for FIFA World Cup 26, this tournament will generate legacies that will bring positive and lasting benefits to each of our communities for years to come.”

Chief Jen Thomas, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, said: “We’re excited to welcome FIFA World Cup 26 to our shared, traditional territories next year and proud that the world will learn more about the passion that our Tsleil-Waututh community has for the beautiful game. The signing of this MOU is significant as it recognizes the role our Nations have as equal partners at the table in our active collaboration with the Province and the City of Vancouver to host this historic tournament.”

This landmark agreement reflects a shared commitment to deliver a world-class event that honours Indigenous rights, advances reconciliation through collaboration on FIFA World Cup 26, and brings lasting benefits to people throughout British Columbia.

“British Columbia is ready to welcome the world for the biggest event our province has ever hosted,” said Premier David Eby. “I want to thank the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations for their ongoing contributions toward making this a memorable event for all. It represents our commitment to work together to realize the benefits of some of the Men’s World Cup being played on their shared traditional territories in Vancouver. We are ready to showcase our welcoming and open province to guests from every corner of the globe.”

The MOU sets out a framework for how x̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱7mesh U̱x̱w̱m̱ix̱w (Squamish Nation), sə̱ḻḻw̱ə̱ṯəl (Tsleil-Waututh Nation), the Province and the city will work together to plan, stage and host the FIFA World Cup 26 matches, while ensuring interests of the Nations are reflected throughout and approaches to shared opportunities are co-developed.

“Hosting FIFA World Cup 26 is an extraordinary opportunity to showcase our province to the world, and we are determined to do it in a way that reflects who we are and what we value,” said Spencer Chandra Herbert, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. “This partnership ensures that First Nations are at the table from planning through to match day, so the cultural, social and economic opportunities of the FIFA World Cup reach these communities.”

FIFA World Cup 26 is expected to draw approximately 350,000 spectators to BC Place, generate significant economic activity and create opportunities for local businesses, artists and workers across sectors.

“Partnerships with First Nations strengthen everything we do here in B.C. and hosting FIFA World Cup 26 is no exception,” said Christine Boyle, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. “As we prepare to welcome thousands of visitors to Vancouver next year, our partnership with the City of Vancouver and Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh honours the resilience, legacy and leadership of these Nations.”

The Province and its partners are committed to helping ensure the event leaves social and cultural legacies that benefit British Columbians well beyond the final whistle.

“FIFA World Cup 26 is set to unite our region through sport and celebration, and with the signing of today’s historic MOU, we take the next step forward,” said Ken Sim, mayor of Vancouver. “Vancouver is proud to be the city of reconciliation. As was the case with the 2010 Olympics, it is our hope that FIFA World Cup 26 will serve as an opportunity to showcase the art, culture and history of the Musqueam, Squamish Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation peoples.”

Planning for FIFA World Cup 26 is underway. Seven matches are scheduled to be played in Vancouver in 2026.

Two First Nations hockey players selected in 1st round of NHL Draft

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

Two First Nations hockey players were selected in the top 13 picks at the 2025 National Hockey League draft on June 27 in Los Angeles.

Jack Nesbitt, from Wiikwemkoong First Nation, was selected by the Philadelphia Flyers with the 12th overall pick. Nesbitt, a 6-foot-4 forward from Sarnia, Ontario, plays for the Windsor Spitfires in the Ontario Hockey League.

“Big shout out and sending a huge congratulations to Wiikwemkoong member Jack Nesbitt being selected 12th in the 1st round 2025 NHL draft. Hard work and dream big anything is possible, chi miigwetch for being a respected role model for our youth in

Wiikwemkoong,” the Wiikwemkoong First Nation posted on Facebook.

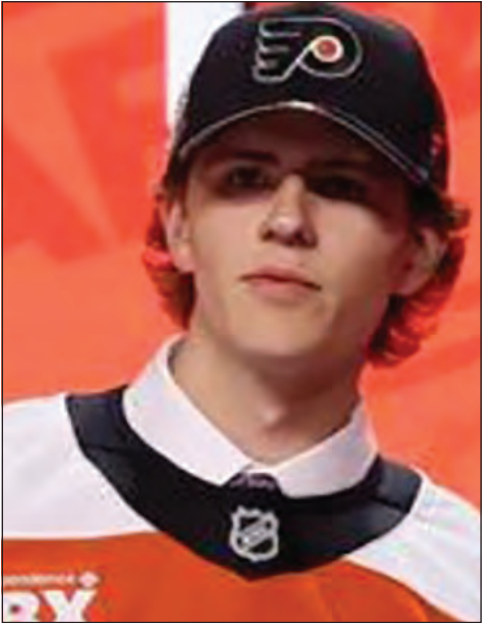
With the next pick – 13th overall – the Detroit Red Wings selected Carter Bear, a member of Peguis First Nation, from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Bear, a 6-foot forward, led his junior team in the Western Hockey League in goals and points in the 2024-25 season.

“This is a historic and proud moment for Carter, his family, and his Nation, and a testament to the hard work, talent, and dedication he has shown throughout his hockey journey,” the Southern Chiefs’ Organization, which represents 32 Anishinaabe & Dakota Nations in southern Manitoba, posted on Facebook.

Hayden Paupaneakis (Norway House Cree Nation) was drafted by the Montreal Canadiens in the third round.



Carter Bear



Jack Nesbitt



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Atlanta Braves showcase features 50 Native American players

BY RICK FARLOW
MLB.com

ATLANTA — The Atlanta Braves hosted their fourth annual Native American All-Star Showcase June 21-22 at Truist Park, and the showcase has evolved immensely since its inception.

The showcase, which featured 50 high school baseball players of Native American descent who aspire to play baseball at the next level, included a pro-style workout on June 21 and an exhibition showcase game on June 22.

The players and coaches represented 31 tribes from across 22 states and Canada, and they worked closely with Braves alumni (who coached the teams) such as Jerome Walton, Johnny Estrada, Julio Franco, Pete Smith and Terry Harper.

Another former Brave -- Greg McMichael, Braves senior director of alumni relations and growing the game -- has been instrumental in the showcase since its inception.

“It gets better every year,” McMichael said. “We’ve seen an uptick in talent. We’re continuing to try to refine ways to get the word out. We’ve done some media with some of our tribal affiliates, and I think it’s important for us to continue to spread the word. We’re seeing the value in it.”

In 2024, 10 mentor Native American coaches participated in an hour-long question-and-answer session with McMichael, former Brave Collin McHugh, former Emory University head coach Mike Twardoski and Braves scout Alan Butts.

This season, the players were not only involved in off-the-field learning, they were also in Atlanta on Thursday (earlier than prior years), were recognized on the field prior to the Braves’ series finale against the Mets and attended the game.

“We took it to another step,” McMichael said. “We did a lot of breakout sessions, specifically with our Native American mentors/coaches. We did that at the hotel. [The players and coaches came to Atlanta] earlier this year. They were here for [Thursday’s game against the Mets], and we recognized them on the field. They were out there for the national anthem [and] for the first pitch. We got to recognize them in front of all of our fans, which was really cool. It was great for them to experience that. We haven’t been able to do that before.”

The Braves are attempting to get other MLB organizations involved in order to further grow the showcase in the future. They’ve reached out to four teams so far.

“[There are] no takers yet, but we are [going to] continue to knock on their [doors] and say ‘Listen, there’s no reason in the world you shouldn’t be doing this. This is a great thing. Partner with us on it,’” McMichael said.

Michael Stopp, the executive director for the Native American Athletic Foundation who works on the Atlanta Braves Native Working Group, is a liaison for Native American representation across multiple sports.

“Over the past four years, we’ve learned a lot about the way to do this,” Stopp said. “It’s become so much smoother. One of the best things about it is that we’re a known

[entity] in Indian Country now. Before we made the announcement [about the showcase], I had parents reaching out to me on Facebook [or] going to our website and asking questions. It’s gotten to the point where this is expected, because the Braves have been so faithful. Every year there’s been a bit of a change.”

For the Braves and the Native American Athletic Foundation, one goal is to use the showcase as a way to help selected players make it to the next level while also honing in on their off-the-field qualities.

“The overall operations are much smoother, but this year we added another day for programming,” Stopp said. “The Native American Athletic Foundation uses sports to help develop our players into a whole person, not just [as athletes]. This year, we added an extra day where we worked with a mental health professional and the coaches about what it’s like to move on from high school and into college. We also talked about what recruiters are looking for.”

Davonte Ross, an outfielder who is from South Dakota’s Lakota Tech High School and is affiliated with the Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe, walked and singled out of the cleanup spot in the showcase game.

“I [wanted to] go,” Ross said when he found out about being selected for the showcase. “There’s nothing more to it. I wanted to go and be known as one of the top 50 Native American players in the United States. I couldn’t be here without my family. I just wanted to come here and dedicate it to them.”

2025 Atlanta Braves Native American Baseball Showcase

NAME	HIGH SCHOOL	STATE	TRIBAL AFFILIATION
Ethan Abram	Fleming Island	Florida	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Brayden Allen	East Jessamine	Kentucky	Chickahominy Indian Tribe
Elijah Beck	Sapulpa	Oklahoma	Cherokee
Pierce Caton	Red Lodge	Montana	Northern Cheyenne
Aidan Chapman	Menominee Indian	Wisconsin	Menominee
Tristan Cheek	Great Bridge	Virginia	Comanche Nation
Cashin Clifft	Kiowa	Oklahoma	Chickasaw/Choctaw
Nicholas Shade Cody	Rattan	Oklahoma	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Kollin Davis	Crowder	Oklahoma	Choctaw
Maxim Dillon	Redwood Valley	Minnesota	Lower Sioux Indian Community
Tyrese Eagletail	Manyhorses	Alberta, Can.	Tsuut’ina Nation
Taden Fine	Jenks	Oklahoma	Creek/Cherokee
Ty Freeman	Greenwood H	Oklahoma	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Adrian Garrison	Lawton	Oklahoma	Comanche
Kaleb Gilreath	Dallas Christian	Texas	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Aven Goodlin	Wagoner	Oklahoma	Cherokee/Choctaw
Easton Hancock	Toppenish	Washington	Nez Perce Tribe
Talon Herring	Huntsville	Arkansas	Comanche
Sanjiya Hickman	Nanih Waiya	Mississippi	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
Lucas Johann	Weld Central	Colorado	Yankton Sioux Tribe
Takoda Jones	Santa Fe Indian School	New Mexico	Ohkay Owingeh
Ronald Jones III	Arabia Mountain	Georgia	Cherokee
Wesley Quinn Jumper	Robbinsville	North Carolina	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Eric Keesis	American	California	Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
Rajon Kenton	Alchesay	Arizona	White Mountain Apache Tribe
Kash Knowles	Purcell	Oklahoma	Chickasaw
Boston Knowles	Purcell	Oklahoma	Seminole
Manuel La Chappa III	Orange Glen	California	Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians
Gavin Lain	Valwood	Georgia	Catawba Nation
Jordan Lesley	Tuscon	Arizona	Tohono O’odam Hopi-Tewa
Eddie Lucero	Huntington Beach	California	Navajo
Joshua Mescal	Ganado	Arizona	Navajo
Nicky Navarro	Analy	California	Round Valley Indian Tribes
Jace Paul	Muskogee	Oklahoma	Cherokee Nation
Wakinyan Raines	Cherokee	North Carolina	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Bryce Roberts	Idabel	Oklahoma	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Davonte Ross	Lakota Tech	South Dakota	Oglala Lakota
Florentino Salinas	Wellington	Texas	Ponca Tribe of Nebraska
Noah Sandoval	Canyon View	Utah	Navajo
Bas Stice	Oakdale	California	Tuolumne Band of Me Wuk Indians
Cade Stick	Ada	Oklahoma	Chickasaw
Tayton Threet	Wyandotte	Oklahoma	Cherokee
Kason Threet	Wyandotte	Oklahoma	Cherokee
Tahj Totten	Moapa Valley	Nevada	Navajo
Isaac Tsonetokoy	Fort Cobb-Broxton	Oklahoma	Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma
Hage Tsosie	Chinle	Arizona	Navajo
Christian Ugalde	Nimitz	Texas	Muscogee Nation
Max Williams	Wichita Collegiate	Kansas	Muscogee Nation
Matthew Wise	Inola	Oklahoma	Choctaw
Kanyon Wright	Grace	Louisiana	Jena Band of Choctaw Indians



Atlanta Braves

The Atlanta Braves hosted the annual Native American All-Star Showcase in June.

World Cup matches at Hard Rock Stadium less than a year away

STAFF REPORT

MIAMI GARDENS — The one year countdown to the World Cup 26 soccer tournament has begun.

In June and July, 2026, Hard Rock Stadium will play a big role in the World Cup soccer tournament. Matches will be played throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens is slated to host four group stage games, one Round of 32 game, one quarterfinal and the bronze final. (Tournament organizer FIFA is using the generic name “Miami Stadium” instead of Hard Rock Stadium. The Tribune

will continue to refer to the stadium with its proper name: Hard Rock Stadium).

For ticket information, go to hardrockstadium.com.

The championship game will be played July 19 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

FIFA World Cup matches (June–July 2026 at Hard Rock Stadium

- June 15: Match 13 – group stage
- June 21: Match 37 – group stage
- June 24: Match 49 – group stage
- June 27: Match 71 – group stage
- July 3: Match 86 – round of 32
- July 11: Match 99 – quarterfinal
- July 18: Match 103 – bronze final



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A **Climate Action Plan** is a tool for communities to guide effective climate action through community-wide programs, projects, and policies.

Immokalee - July 8th
Naples - July 10th
Hollywood - July 31st
Big Cypress - August 7th
Brighton - August 14th

All events are from 5:30 - 8:30 PM



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