



Minors' trust trial starts
COMMUNITY 5A



Battlefield trip for PECS 4th graders
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Moore Haven boys win district title
SPORTS 1C

The Seminole Tribune

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Tribe opens new casino, hotel in Brighton

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — A new era for the Brighton Reservation dawned Feb. 6 with the grand opening of the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino. The ceremony drew more than 1,000 people, and included tribal leaders and gaming executives cutting a red ribbon before the doors opened to the public.

The large porte-cochere in front of the casino entrance is embellished with tribal references including medicine colors and stylized patchwork to create a welcoming driveway area. For the grand opening it was transformed into an event space complete with stage, band, a huge video screen and podium for speeches.

The ceremony opened with the Seminole Honor Guard followed by students from Pemayetv Emahakv Charter school, who said the pledge in Creek and English. Medicine man Bobby Henry led a stomp dance consisting of Seminole tribal members down the center aisle.

Former Brighton princesses guided a parade of former Seminole princesses from the very first one, Connie Gowen in 1957, to the present-day Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola. Each princess was announced by name and date of their reign and they gave royal waves as they made their way down the aisle.

Although they were a hard act to follow, Tribal Council members did just that. Each spoke to the standing-room-only crowd.

Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. thanked their ancestors who sacrificed so the tribe could exist today.

“Without the Creator, this is not possible,” Chairman Osceola said. “This has been a monumental task. This is a truly amazing place.”



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Seminole Gaming COO David Hoenemeyer, Seminole Gaming CEO and Hard Rock International Chairman Jim Allen, Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino General Manager Marty Johns, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola, President Holly Tiger, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola celebrate after cutting the ribbon to officially open the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino on Feb. 6

The history of gaming in Brighton began with Josiah Johns, who in 1980 opened a bingo hall in a small red barn and served as its first general manager. His son,

Marty Johns, helped his father build it and took over as general manager when he died in 1983. Johns has been general manager ever since, including at the previous location

a few miles away and he will continue in the same role at the new property, which is located on Reservation Road, near the Trading Post and RV Resort.

◆ See BRIGHTON BAY on page 6A

Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference hosts largest audience yet

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — With more than 25 sessions, multiple vendors and exhibitors, and about 200 registered attendees from 50 tribes and First Nations – the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s seventh annual Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference saw some of its highest numbers in attendance this year.

Sessions ran from Jan. 27 to Jan. 29 at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood, and topics ranged from renewable energy to funding breakdowns. The Native Learning Center team organized the conference.

Some common themes included building climate resilience, involving tribal government and communities in strategies and finding renewable energy solutions that best suit certain communities. Many sessions covered challenges with climate change and climate solutions in tribal communities.

Jill Horwitz and Krystle Bowers from the tribe’s Environmental Protection Office presented on policy development and a climate action plan on Jan. 29. Their program goals include climate change education,

peer learning, representing tribal interests, research, communication strategies and community engagement.

The Climate Resiliency Department received a grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and they recently hired two people to assist with the climate action plan. Their next steps to construct the plan includes meeting with tribal members in the community.

“We want the community and departments to be involved in it and figure out what we need to do and what we want to do. A lot of tribes [will] have climate impacts in their climate action plan and how it will affect certain things that are important to them in their community. Some will do surveys on what the community thinks about what they should be doing,” Bowers said. “I think we’re going to be working on building codes and landscaping and food sovereignty issues and solar, of course. And then reaching out to the community and seeing how we can do all that, because each community, each reservation is going to have a different opinion on it.”

◆ See CONFERENCE on page 9A



Tatum Mitchell

Jill Horwitz, right, and Krystle Bowers, both from the tribe’s Environmental Protection Office, present at the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s seventh annual Renewable Energy and Sustainability Conference on Jan. 29 in Hollywood.

Hoop dancing plays big role at pow wow

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Eric Michael Hernandez, a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, is a Native American hoop dancer with more than 20 years of experience. He brought his talents to the Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood for the second time on Feb. 2.

“I loved it. It’s always really fun. We have so many friends from the Seminole Tribe, and we have so many friends that go to that pow wow. It’s also one of the few pow wows where I get to see a lot of other Lumbee people from my tribe,” Hernandez said. “It’s a really great, energetic pow wow. They put on a really great event. And I love how they – it’s not many pow wows you go to where they have a jumbotron above you with a live feed. It was really fun.”

The hoop dance comes from the Taos Pueblo tribe from New Mexico, Hernandez said.

“It was originally used as a healing ceremony, and the hoops were originally made out of willow. And when, originally, when they were finished dancing, they would only use the hoops once, and then they would set the hoops on fire. That’s a lot of the tradition that I share with the dance. And we believe that every time that the hoop passed through our body, that we added time to our life,” he said.

At Tribal Fair, Hernandez hoop danced with a full audience and an emcee, who was acting as a hype man and helping with the energy of the crowd.

“Sometimes there’s different kinds of crowds, depending on where I am. There’s non-Native, there’s non-Indigenous crowds, there’s Indigenous crowds. There’s people who have seen what I’ve done before, and they’ve seen other hoop dancers before or there’s people who have never seen the hoop dance before, and this is the very first time they’re ever gonna see it,” Hernandez said. “And I felt like that audience [at Tribal Fair], it was a good blend of both. I felt like there were a lot of Native people from the Pow Wow there and Seminole people. And then there also were, what we call allies, non-Natives there that maybe got to see the hoop dance for the first time. So it was a great blend of an audience. And it was an amazing audience.”

Hernandez brought out volunteers from



Tatum Mitchell

Eric Michael Hernandez hoop dancing at Tribal Fair on Feb. 2.

the crowd, mostly children, to learn some parts of the hoop dance.

“That seems to be one of people’s favorite part. I think that they can understand the difficulty of the dance, and they can also feel the human aspect of the dance. When they’re able to touch the hoops and see the way that they move,” Hernandez said. “Some people think that I interconnect the hoops with one another, and I have a bunch of little tricks that I’m doing to keep them together, but it’s nice for them to come try the hoops and see how they work. It is something that I do pretty often. I do a lot of school assemblies, and I often let the kids come up and try the hoop.”

In June 2023, Hernandez gave a TEDx talk about his personal story. This was different from previous work he’s done since he would perform and leave the stage when he was with Cirque du Soleil, and during assemblies he said he would normally cover the history and meaning of the hoop dance. Giving a TEDx talk about his messages was a stepping stone into another version of storytelling, Hernandez said.

“My TED talk was the first time that I

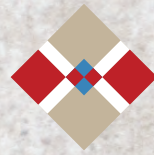
ever got to dig deep into my story and find ways that my story can help others and find you know moments where people can feel like they can relate to my story, and I feel like it kind of went past just being in entertainment or being a history lesson. ... I wanted to be able to have people take my story, take the message, and apply it to their life. And the TED talk really gave me the opportunity to do that. ... And the greatest value that I took away from that experience was just the process of understanding the parts of my story that resonate with people and now I carry that into every show that I do.”

A part of that story is how his uncle Terry Goedel taught him the hoop dance, which he seriously picked up at 12 years old.

“I didn’t really understand what he was giving me, what he was teaching me. And it wasn’t until I got a little bit older that I started to realize how powerful it is to be able to express myself and to share my culture through this dance,” Hernandez said.

◆ See TRIBAL FAIR on page 4A

Community



Q&A with John Anderson

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

Prior to his appearances and performances at the Indigenous Arts & Music Festival in Big Cypress and the grand opening of the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino, both on Feb. 6, the Tribune had the opportunity to talk with country music artist John Anderson about his career and 1992 hit song, "Seminole Wind." Anderson was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2024.

Quotes and questions have been edited for clarity.

Tribune: What do you remember about the writing process of "Seminole Wind"?

Anderson: I was driving down — we just passed over the Suwannee River — and we're heading that way. As far as writing that song, it was a trip down here to see my grandmother, who was ailing, and she was 96 years old. ... This title, 'Seminole Wind,' came to me. My sister was riding with me, and I remember asking her, 'Do you know if Will McLean wrote a song called 'Seminole Wind'?' Because I thought I must be getting that from somewhere. Will McLean was an old songwriter and singer who wrote songs pretty much specifically about Florida. So, she said, 'No, John, he didn't. But boy, you should.' And I thought, 'I've got this idea, and I started working on it. I remember thinking to myself, I'd like to write a song that I can be proud of, being from Florida, and maybe all my old buddies can relate to it and would like it too. And I really wasn't looking for the song to be nearly the commercial success that it was. I wrote the song out of a love of Florida and the Seminoles and the people in Florida, and a love of all that.'

Tribune: In what ways did Seminoles inspire or influence your thoughts with the song?

Anderson: When I was very young, I remember riding through the Big Cypress Reservation, and I was just so intrigued seeing the way that the Seminoles lived at the time — mostly all chickees. I remember it being just beautiful on the ride. The landscape and the lifestyle of the Seminoles has always been a real inspiration to me.

Tribune: After the song was released, what kind of response did you receive?



Beverly Bidney
John Anderson shakes hands with Seminole medicine man Bobby Henry at the grand opening of the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino on Feb. 6. Henry appeared in Anderson's 'Seminole Wind' music video in 1992.

Anderson: It was a wonderful response, and I made many friends in the tribe. Among them being [former Seminole Chairman] Jim Billie, who, without him, none of the video would have been possible at all. He and I have become friends. I'm hoping to get to see him down on this trip. I hope he's doing well enough, but maybe we get together and say hello. But also Bobby Henry from over in Tampa. He's the one that brought the dancing group over in the video, which is such a strong part of that video. As well as us riding the air boats. We did several shows for the Seminoles in the 10 years that followed 'Seminole Wind.' And I always remember the wonderful, wonderful experience and great people.

Tribune: What else do you remember about making the music video?

Anderson: It was a chance for me to go down and spend four or five days in one of my very favorite parts of the world. I say I made some dear friends during that time. And the video was up for a [Country Music Association] video of the year.

Tribune: Do you still have the Seminole patchwork jacket that you wore in the video? Is there a story behind it?

Anderson: I do have it, yes. We were fortunate to get booked at a tribal Christmas party. It was right after 'Swinging,' which was about 10 years before 'Seminole Wind.' We went and we played, and that night, a couple of elderly ladies from the tribe presented me with that jacket and said, 'We want to give you this. And it's part of all the joy that your song brought to the children.' And that was 'Swinging'. So, they gave me this jacket, which I treasured very much. In fact, it's still one of my lifetime treasures. And I kept thinking, I need to do something for the Seminoles. And maybe that's a big part of how 'Seminole Wind' eventually came about.

Those were great times. I was almost in disbelief when they presented me with this jacket. I'll never forget, one of them said, 'Try it out and see if it fits. We're pretty sure it will fit.' I put it on, and it fits perfect. And I wondered, 'How did y'all do that?' And they just smiled. It was very sweet.

Tribune: In what ways did "Seminole Wind" help your career?

Anderson: I won a pop award for 'Seminole Wind' as a songwriter. Also, the American Lung Association sent me one of their real, prestigious annual rewards. It's



Beverly Bidney
John Anderson performs at the grand opening for Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino.



Beverly Bidney
John Anderson and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. enjoy a conversation at the grand opening.

called the Blue Sky Award, for making a difference in how people perceive ecology and the well being of nature.

There were many, many other musical awards as well. 'Seminole Wind' the video, went number one in the charts, went number one in several music charts, went number two in Billboard, and it ended up selling close to 3 million albums, which was very, very speakable at that time.

Tribune: How does that make you feel that it's kind of become an iconic song within the tribal community?

Anderson: Only hope that they'll continue and keep it. I'm very honored that the tribe accepted it like they did and helped me with it like they did. The video could have never been possible without the help of James Billie and the tribe.

Tribune: What do you like about performing down here?

Anderson: I love performing anywhere. But being down here is one of my very



Via YouTube
'Seminole Wind' video from 1992.

favorite places in the world, and has been since I was a little boy, so I always look forward to coming down that way.

I want to say how honored and proud we always are to play for the Seminoles. I thank them for all their support and friendship through the years.



Beverly Bidney
John Anderson, far left, enjoys a lighter moment with the Tribal Council at the grand opening.


SAVE THE DATE

2025

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ANNUAL SHAREHOLDERS MEETING

SATURDAY, MARCH 29th, 2025


Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood Seminole Ballroom

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Doors open at 9:00 am
Meeting starts at 10:00 am

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◆ TRIBAL FAIR

From page 1A

"My Uncle Terry is known for a hoop dance style that is very smooth and very graceful. Hoop dancers that come from different regions all have different styles. If you watch a lot of dancers from the southwest, they'll dance a little bit faster, a little bit harder. My uncle, you can kind of tell who has learned from my uncle, because they dance with a constant flow. And a lot of people have looked up to my uncle and his style, and he really is one of the legendary hoop dancers at the moment."

Hernandez said his uncle was impactful in keeping hoop dancing alive and sharing it.

"My uncle taught me to focus on the positive things of our culture. There's a lot of things that are frustrating about history. There's a lot of things that we can focus on, that can be hard to talk about. My uncle has always taught us to focus on shining a light on our culture and representing our people in a graceful, beautiful way," Hernandez said.

As a freshman in high school, Hernandez was asked to share his hoop dance with other students. He said the experience performing in front of his entire school gave him a lot more confidence, and that he didn't need to blend in.

"I want others to be able to have that same courage as well. I've learned that it's not about me getting the accolades or having this title and being this person. Most of the fulfillment comes through others telling me how they felt [or] telling me that they've been inspired to dig deeper into their story. Or they saw my TED talk, and then they went and they asked their grandmother some questions and learned a little bit about themselves," Hernandez said. "And that that's where I get the greatest fulfillment, and that is where my mission is. That's my mission, to have an impact on others, to have an impact on specifically the youth, the next

generation, because that's when it was really important for me. ... I want the youth who are going through those moments – these eighth graders, these freshmen – those years where you're finding who you are. And I hope that my story, and now also my short film called "Courage", I hope that it can have an impact on them and give them some of the confidence that I was able to find."

For updates and to learn more about his short film, "Courage", see @couragefilm on Instagram.

Hernandez said, while he was with Cirque du Soleil, he was focused a lot on performing arts. After his time there, he realized he wanted to dig deeper with his purpose and add more activism for Indigenous people.

"I'm very, very honored and very happy to say that I get to share my culture and dance and advocate for my people full time as a full-time artist. And it feels like a dream come true," he said.

One of the challenges of what he does, besides the physical demands, is the narratives people have surround Native American people.

"A lot of people have a certain narrative around Native people. A lot of people see Native Americans as in a stereotypical way," Hernandez said. "They feel like they should look a certain way, they should talk a certain way, they should dress a certain way. ... I think my biggest challenge is that I'm trying to rewrite this narrative for a lot of people and kind of change their vision and their mindset around Indigenous people in the fact that they are not only something of the past, but present, and our songs and our dances and our traditions and our and our ways of living are still alive and they are valuable. There's valuable lessons within them that can be applied to today's modern way of living."



Tatum Mitchell

The arena-like room at the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow fills with Natives during the grand entry Jan. 31.



Calvin Tiger

On Feb. 1 at Tribal Fair, the annual Native Reel Cinema Fest's panel discussion featured, from left to right, Eugene Brave Rock, Jhane Myers, Jessica Matten, Martin Sensmeier, Wes Studi and the Seminole Tribe's Justin Gopher, who rode horses as a stuntman in the TV show "Yellowstone."



Tatum Mitchell

Kyle Doney, left, and Evangelina during the fashion show at Tribal Fair.



Tatum Mitchell

After this group of dancers, audience members were invited to the stage area to take photos with their favorite dancer.



Tatum Mitchell

Women's fancy shawl dance.



Calvin Tiger

A clothing contest at Tribal Fair.



Tatum Mitchell

Above the floor, a giant circular jumbotron makes its Tribal Fair debut, while on the floor, the Seminole Honor Guard participates in the grand entry.



Tatum Mitchell

Cameron Osceola, from The Osceola Brothers, performs at Tribal Fair.

Bobby Frank recalls being part of 'The Last of the Mohicans'

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The announcement that “The Last of the Mohicans” would be shown at the Native Reel Cinema Festival in Hollywood brought back memories for Bobby Frank.

Frank, a tribal member from Hollywood, was among a handful of Seminoles who appeared in the movie, which was released in 1992 and stars Daniel Day-Lewis when the three-time Academy Award winner for Best Actor was in his early 30s.

The showing on Feb. 1 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood included an appearance by Wes Studi, whose role as Magua in the film was among the Cherokee actor’s first few films in a career that has spanned more than 80 movies and TV shows and includes an Honorary Academy Award.

Frank, who was unable to attend the showing, appeared in “The Last of the Mohicans” as an extra, portraying a member of the Huron Tribe. Other Seminoles who also appeared as extras include Luke Tiger, Roger Tucker, Alex Tucker and Marl Osceola. Most of Frank’s scenes from the

movie took place in various parts of North Carolina.

“We caught the bus. We went to North Carolina, and we ran into a whole bunch of other Natives from out west,” Frank said.

Frank recalled the different aspects of training for the movie, including how to shoot and reload a musket rifle.

“We did a lot of training on site. We had to learn how to run, load, and shoot the muskets. We had to be efficient,” he said.

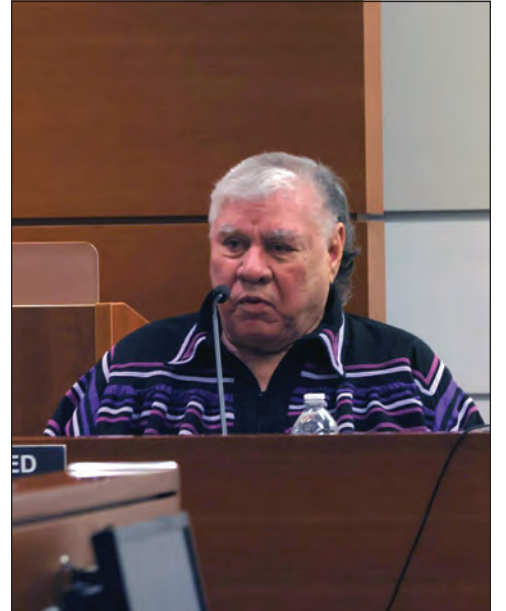
One of Frank’s vivid memories from working on the movie was called “camera time,” which meant extras who wanted to be in the background of a specific scene would have to spend most of the day outdoors.

“The Last of the Mohicans” was also the first film role for Russell Means (Oglala Lakota), who stars as Chingachgook. Means went on to appear in about 30 films and several TV shows in a career that also included being an artist, writer, and a well-known activist for Native American rights.

The movie won several awards, including an Academy Award for Best Sound. It is available on several outlets, including AppleTV, Amazon Prime, Google Play and Tubi.



Courtesy photo
After hair and outfitting on the set, Bobby Frank poses for a photo during the making of “The Last of the Mohicans,” circa early 1990s.



Kevin Johnson (3)

From left to right, Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Amy Johns and James E. Billie testify in February during the court trial in Fort Lauderdale involving the Seminole Tribe of Florida minors’ trust.



Kevin Johnson

Plaintiffs Lewis Gopher Jr., far right, Nancy Jimmie, second from right, and Quentin Tommie, center, stand at the plaintiffs table during a break on Feb. 12.

STOF minors' trust trial against Wells Fargo starts in Fort Lauderdale

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

FORT LAUDERDALE — Seminole patchwork filled six rows of benches on one side of a courtroom on the 15th floor of the central courthouse Feb. 12 as a trial involving the Seminole Tribe of Florida minors’ trust started its first week.

In a show of unity, about 30 tribal members – including three Tribal Council – attended in support of the plaintiffs’ suit against Wells Fargo Bank and others in the 17th Judicial Circuit in Fort Lauderdale. Represented by law firm Conrad & Scherer, the named plaintiffs are Providence First Trust Company, the current manager of the Seminole minors’ trust; tribal members Lewis Gopher Jr. and Quentin Tommie; and Nancy Jimmie, a mother of tribal children.

In 2005, the tribe entered into an agreement with Wachovia Bank (Wells Fargo purchased Wachovia in 2008) to manage the minors’ trust as the sole investment authority. In its opening statements, the lawyers for the plaintiffs said the bank charged unauthorized fees and mishandled

investments for more than 10 years. The lawyers said the bank breached its fiduciary duties to the beneficiaries, paid itself more than \$7.1 million in unauthorized fees, and mismanaged the trust investment resulting in upwards of \$800 million in damages.

In the first few weeks of the trial, the 10-person jury heard testimony from current or former tribal leaders including James E. Billie, Andrew J. Bowers Jr. and Amy Johns as well as plaintiffs and former STOF CFO

Jim Raker. Attendance by tribal members has varied from a few on some days to more than two dozen on other days. All sit on the plaintiffs’ side of the room with STOF General Counsel Jim Shore in the first row.

The trial was expected to last about four to six weeks.



Kevin Johnson

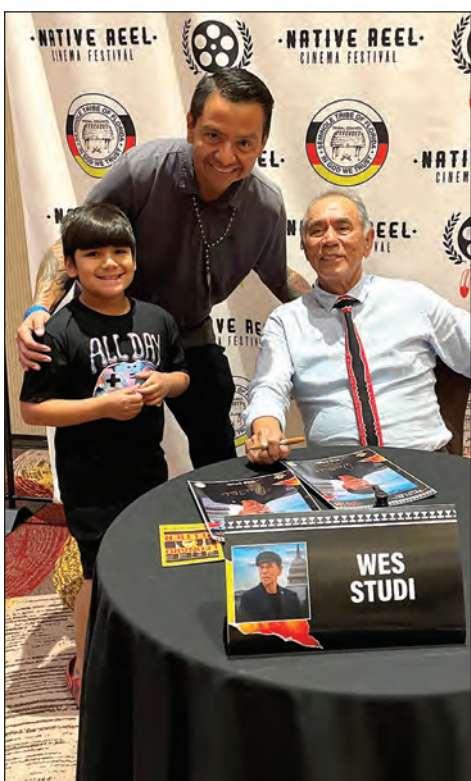
Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola and STOF General Counsel Jim Shore (front row) and President Holly Tiger (second row) watch opening arguments Feb. 12 in a Fort Lauderdale court room.

Native Reel Cinema Fest hosts meet and greet



Kevin Johnson

Patrick Doctor, center, enjoys being in the company of, from left to right, Wes Studi, Jhane Myers, Martin Sensmeier, Jessica Matten and Eugene Brave Rock during the Native Reel Cinema Fest’s meet and greet Feb. 1. The Cinema Fest is held during the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.



Kevin Johnson

Edward Aguilar and his son, Izayah, meet actor Wes Studi at the meet and greet.



Kevin Johnson

Lenora Roberts meets actor Eugene Brave Rock.



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

RICHARD CASTILLO
FLORIDA CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY
WWW.CASTILLOLAWOFFICES.COM

◆ **BRIGHTON BAY**
From page 1A

“Marty, thanks to you and your family and the legacy your father has left,” Chairman Osceola said. “This wouldn’t be here if Josiah didn’t build that bingo hall. Without this, we aren’t able to feed, educate and provide for our children and give them a strong future. Be mindful when you walk inside that our children are the beneficiaries of this. Get ready Brighton, this place is about to explode.”

President Holly Tiger was raised in Brighton and worked at the original red barn bingo hall and casino.

“This spot was always going to be held for future gaming opportunities,” President Tiger said. “Now it’s your turn Brighton.”

Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, who previously served on the Board, said he brought up building a hotel in Brighton in about 2011. He was elected to Tribal Council in 2017, and made sure it got done.

“We were talking about our projects around the world, and I said why don’t we take care of our own backyard?” Councilman Howard said. “I feel proud to be a part of this. At the end of the day, folks around us will appreciate what we have done. But it took the vision other leaders – Howard Tommie, James Billie and Marcellus Osceola, who works relentlessly for this tribe 24/7, and then some.”

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola said he enjoys the slower pace of Brighton.

“Brighton is my second home; I love it out here,” he said. “You guys deserve this. When you put Larry into this office, he really pushed. We got it done and here we are today in this beautiful facility. This is our livelihood; we are building for our future and creating jobs for the surrounding communities. This place would not be here if not for Marty Johns. I remember his dad, he was a rough cut. Marty, I bet he’s looking down on this today and couldn’t be more proud of you.”

Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas thanked everyone who has been part of the process of bringing the casino to fruition.

“The tribe is making a better future for all tribal members,” she said. “I’m very thankful for what you have given me and everyone else.”

CEO of Seminole Gaming and Chairman of Hard Rock International Jim Allen thanked Tribal Council for supporting him through his 24 years working for the tribe.

“This is an emotional and beautiful day,” Allen said. “The building is a tribute to the tribe and its culture. Hundreds of people were on this job site and we made a commitment to get this done before Field Day. Everyone came together, even with the hurricanes.”

Finally, Marty Johns had his moment to

speak. He thanked Tribal Council for their support and mentioned Allen’s meticulous attention to detail and thanked him.

“You have entrusted me and said this is my baby, you do it,” Johns said. “I wanted to bring our culture out. To tribal members and my family, we are giving this to you. The first high-stakes bingo hall was at the Classic Casino in Hollywood. The little red barn was the second one. My grandmother was there every night.”

After the ribbon was cut, the doors were opened and everyone streamed inside. At a luncheon for tribal members, country music star John Anderson performed. He introduced his final song, “Seminole Wind,” by stating his love for the Seminole people. He has had a relationship with the tribe for 33 years and said the video for the song would not have happened without the help of Bobby Henry.

Later that evening, legendary rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd performed.

Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino

The Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino replaces the Seminole Casino Brighton a few miles away.

The property has a 38,000-square foot casino, a 24-hour restaurant, steak house, fast-service carry-out café and a pizza kitchen. There is also an event space for banquets and performances and a bowling alley. The hotel is a first for the Brighton Reservation. The property has become one of the Lake Okeechobee area’s largest employers with more than 500 team members.

The four-story, 72,000-square foot hotel has 100 guest rooms, including three suites, a fitness center and a swimming pool in the shape of the tribe’s Man-on-Horse patchwork design. The pool area includes a bar and entertainment stage.

The event space can hold 400 seats for banquets or bingo games and 900 seats as a performance hall.

The 10-lane, 7,044-square foot bowling alley is a first for any Seminole casino.

Several dining options are available. Josiah Steakhouse is a classic American steakhouse featuring steaks cooked on a wood fire grill. The atmosphere is upscale and offers wines, beer, spirits and handcrafted cocktails.

EE-TO-LEE-KE Grill is an American diner with fresh seasonal ingredients. The menu features all-day breakfast, skillet, salads, burgers, sandwiches and classic Diner entrees.

Marketplace is a quick service restaurant space that offers pizza, sweet snacks and coffee. The casual sit-down or grab-and-go restaurant also has sandwiches and freshly made pastries and chocolates.

Center Bar is a high energy atmosphere and entertainment hub on the casino floor.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino General Manager Marty Johns, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard, S.R. Tommie and Mitchell Cypress enjoy the grand opening Feb. 6 on the Brighton Reservation.



Seminole Brighton Bay

The grand opening draws a big turnout.



Beverly Bidney

A 10-lane bowling alley is part of the new property.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, the Honor Guard's Paul Downing, Curtis Motlow, Gary MacInturff and Sallie Josh enter the ceremony.



Beverly Bidney

As he is introduced, Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino General Manager Marty Johns waves to the audience.



Calvin Tiger

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, left, and Brighton Councilman Larry Howard walk through the entrance shortly after cutting the ribbon.



SMP

An aerial view of Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino.

Brighton Bay emphasizes Seminole culture

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY AND CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporters

BRIGHTON — The Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino acknowledges its heritage even before guests enter the building. Seminole culture's iconography is integrated into the design of the structure itself with patchwork designs on the exterior walls, over the front door and on the overhead chandeliers in the porte-cochere.

Seminole artwork and photography, which chronicles the history and culture of the tribe, are displayed throughout the property. Paintings by Jimmy Osceola and Noah Billie as well as prints of old Seminole postcards grace the walls. Patchwork designs are integrated into the décor throughout, including on the seats in the Center Bar and on many walls in the casino. Artifacts including sweetgrass baskets and patchwork clothing are safeguarded in niches and behind glass for guests to admire.

The swimming pool is constructed in the shape of Man-on-Horse patchwork and chickees line the pool deck.

Culture is what general manager Marty Johns had in mind for the property. This is the third version of Brighton's casino Johns has managed. The first was at a little red barn

started by his father Josiah in 1980 and the second was a few miles down the road from the new property.

"It's about the culture, keeping that alive," Johns said.

During a speech before the ribbon cutting, Johns recalled going to Tribal Council meetings over and over to present his ideas for expanding the casino. He said one day Chairman James Billie mentioned his persistence. Johns thanked Billie for his support. Billie, who was seated in the audience, smiled and nodded.

After the doors opened to the public, members of the Brighton community said they were pleased with the new property.

"This is a step in the evolution of our reservation," said Wendy Riley. "We aren't that small reservation back in the woods anymore. We said here we are, come and see us."

"It will bring a lot more to Brighton," said Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge. "It will expand our culture to visitors and open their eyes to the Seminole people. And now we have a lot more food options here."

"It's a place where everyone can enjoy themselves," said former Chairman and President Mitchell Cypress. "The hotel will help a lot; it's Brighton's gold mine."



The hotel pool is designed in the shape of Seminole Man-on-Horse patchwork. Chickee huts, another staple of Seminole culture, provide shaded areas.



Beverly Bidney

A painting by renowned Seminole artist Noah Billie appears to stand guard over the wine and diners in the Josiah Steakhouse.



Beverly Bidney

A display in the casino features Seminole baskets used to make the fine corn grain for sofkee, and men's patchwork shirts.



Beverly Bidney

A painting by prolific Seminole artist Jimmy Osceola graces the wall in the Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino.



Beverly Bidney

A display of tribal patchwork and sculptures is located in the casino near the entrance to the bowling alley.



Beverly Bidney

Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall, a former Miss Florida Seminole, waves to the audience during the parade of former princesses.



Beverly Bidney

Former Brighton Miss Seminole Clarissa Randolph Urbina leads the parade of former Miss Florida princesses during the grand opening ceremony.



Beverly Bidney

A group of women who served as Miss Florida Seminole gather together after the ribbon cutting. The first princess, Connie Gowen, is in the center of the front row. The current princesses, Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola and Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, are wearing the crowns.

Genus Crenshaw's Super 8 tapes and the importance of personal histories

BY CONOR ANDRICH
Registrar

BIG CYPRESS — Genus and Carolyn Crenshaw requested an assignment as missionaries to Florida's Indigenous population from the Florida Baptists' Home Mission Board in 1951 and spent the next five decades stewarding Baptist churches on the Hollywood, Brighton, and Big Cypress reservations, along the Tamiami Trail, and across Florida. They involved themselves in the community and raised a family. During that time, Reverend Crenshaw also made home movies.

Over the past year, the Crenshaws' four daughters, Carol, Martha, Mary, and Beth,

have donated dozens of reels of Super 8 film taken by their father to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. They are an incredible time capsule of life in the Seminole community in the 1960s and early 1970s and are significant for the personal touch they give to history. For those who were there, they may breathe new life into fond memories. For those of us who weren't, it can often be difficult, using only historical records, to imagine what it might have been like to experience a given period of time. The footage in these reels puts us right at the heart of it all, as if we were really standing there watching it unfold.

For one, they give us an idea of what it would have been like to be on the ground at major events of the time. You can see



Women and children outside what is believed to be an old schoolhouse on Big Cypress

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA AH-TAH-THI-KI MUSEUM

A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

people's reactions, sense their emotional states, and gauge the general mood. These personal elements – laughter at a sad time, say, or fanfare at a rodeo - which may not have been noted in official records or reporting of the event, can give us essential historical context even if they seem inconsequential. It is important to consider not only the facts but also how people respond to events and the emotions that they bring about in order to understand their full significance. Events featured in the tapes include Christmas 1966 on Big Cypress, the 1970 Brighton Family Pow Wow, the 1971 Trail Mission Rodeo, and Easter 1972 in Hollywood.

The footage also gives us a more realistic idea of people's daily lives and routines - children wrestling in the grass, climbing trees, and catching snakes, women doing their hair and preparing food in cooking chickees, new construction and older dwellings, school days and church on Sunday. These intimate moments often slip through cracks in the historical record, especially when looking back on an era most widely documented through postcards and other products of tourist camps or the work of non-Tribal visiting photographers and researchers. They are just as important to our understanding of a given historical period as names, dates, and places.

Personal histories like those contained in the Crenshaw reels and other home movies, or, similarly, personal photographs and even oral histories are an integral part of a truly comprehensive and representative historical record. The little things have great importance and are always welcomed by the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

The Crenshaw Super 8 reels are digitized and available to be viewed upon



An unidentified woman enjoying herself during an after-church communal meal on Big Cypress

request. Also available, are recordings of a few church services held by native pastors like Wonder Johns and featuring hymns in the Creek and Miccosukee languages, as well as several episodes of Reverend Crenshaw's Indian Baptist Hour radio show

from 1971. Please contact the Museum's Registrar Conor Andrich at conorandrich@seminoletribe.com or 863-902-1113 ext. 12210 for more information.

Seminole artists shine in the 'Spotlight'

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum presented a Seminole Artist Spotlight at Okalee Village on Jan. 29 for a celebration of Seminole artists Erica Deitz, Gordon "Ollie" Wareham and Wilson Bowers.

The artists appeared on a panel moderated by art curator Tara Chadwick. The artists discussed their inspirations and unique artistic styles.

The artist celebration was held in collaboration with Nova Southeastern University, which in turn brought members of the NSU Museum team and 30 dignitaries to attend the event. In December 2024, NSU held its own Art Basel displaying Indigenous artwork and hosted members from the Ahtahthiki Museum.

"I was influenced by my grandmother, and she was a seamstress. She made dolls, sweet grass baskets, and that's what they did to use that as a form of income," Erica Deitz said.

Deitz spoke about the positive impacts of the artist celebration and how it keeps traditions moving forward while also bringing in new artistic ideas for displaying Indigenous artwork.

Wareham, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum director, played his flute during the panel discussion which was well received by the audience. Wareham talked about his origins in photography and artwork. He mentioned working together with other Seminole artists such as Bowers. Their collaborative artwork was on display during the artist spotlight.

♦ See SPOTLIGHT on page 9A



From left to right, Seminole artists Gordon Wareham, Erica Deitz and Wilson Bowers are joined by art curator and moderator Tara Chadwick.

March 2025

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Some think of raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) as cute critters, while others disdain them as pests. Regardless of personal opinion, these creatures are among the most widespread mammals in the U.S. and can be found in a number of environments throughout the country, from cities to wetlands (National Wildlife Federation). Therefore, it is unsurprising that raccoon remains have wound up within our collection. While teeth and jaw bones are the most frequently recovered raccoon bones, we have also found some phalanges, or finger bones.

Being such small bones, phalanges are quite uncommon for us to find. What makes this month's artifact even rarer is its condition, which you can observe by looking at the photos in Column A to the right. Next to these in Column B are photos of another raccoon phalanx from our collection. Looking at the two phalanges side by side, you might notice differences in shape between them.



Skedaddle Humane Wildlife Control



THPO

The phalanx in Column A is warped and curves to the side, rather than pointing straight like it is supposed to. The phalanx in Column B shows what it should look like when it is pointing straight. The phalanx in Column A also has a thicker, more bulbous head. Compare it to the phalanx in Column B, which has a more slender head. The deformities in phalanx A were caused by a fracture that occurred along the shaft of the phalanx when the raccoon was alive, and pressure on this fractured bone resulted in it healing improperly.

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

Works Cited

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SEMINOLE HISTORY STORIES - MARCH 2025

SEMINOLE WAR: INVASION

While there can be debate over what is the start of the Seminole War, when the United States invaded Florida in March of 1818 the war was undeniable. The army was made up of regular military and local civilian militias under the command of Andrew Jackson, as well as American-allied Lower Creek led by William McIntosh. Ostensibly Jackson had been given authority to "pacify" the Seminole threat, but not to enter Spanish-claimed territory.



An illustration of the capture of Hillis Hadjo, artist unknown, also known as The Prophet. He was captured by American forces at San Marco, shortly after he returned from a diplomatic mission to England to try and secure their aid against the USA. He had been tricked onto an American ship falsely flying the British flag. He was hung without trial soon after.

The invaders first targeted prosperous Seminole towns in the Florida panhandle. The towns of Anhaika, also known as Tallahassee, and Miccosukee Town were home to thousands, and the center of large farm and ranching communities. Both were sacked and razed to the ground by the American forces. The army then captured San Marcos de Apalache (Saint Marks), a Spanish Fort, before moving to occupy Pensacola. From there, they proceeded to the Suwanee River, leading to large battles against the residents of Bowleg's Town and Nero's Town, one of the largest free African settlements in Florida.

How much of Jackson's invasion was sanctioned by Washington is unclear. Jackson claimed he had been given the authority, but the attacks on Spanish settlements and his executions of British citizens in Florida surprised Washington D.C. and created multiple international incidents. Jackson was accused of starting a war for his own profit, both in land and recognition, charges that followed him into his presidential campaign.



For the people of Florida, Indigenous, free African, and Spanish, the invasion was the end of an era. The Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819 would give possession of the territory to the United States of America. What had been prosperous Seminole land was claimed by officers in the American army and other connected Americans as the new colonization of Florida began.

Part of an illustration depicting Army Soldiers in combat with Seminoles in the first part of the Seminole War, drawn in 1848. Illustration from John Frost's "Life of Jackson." Courtesy Florida State Library and Archives.

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

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



Health

'Hydrate Your Hustle' campaign promotes healthy hydration among Native American youth

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation, founded by 4-time PGA Tour winner Notah Begay (Navajo), will launch the "Hydrate Your Hustle" campaign.

With the growing awareness of the health risks associated with sugar sweetened beverages, the campaign offers a proactive, youth-centered program designed to empower Native youth to make healthier drink choices. By reaching youth at a time when habits are forming, this initiative can help them make better decisions about what they drink, setting them up for better health in the long run. The campaign will provide online resources, education and exclusive promotional items to help motivate youth to fuel their unique hustles by drinking water.

"Hydrate Your Hustle" builds on years of dedicated work focused on promoting healthy hydration and combating the impact of sugar sweetened beverages within Native communities. Rooted in the cultural value

of water as a life source, the campaign encourages youth to stay hydrated with water, infused waters and traditional natural teas. This initiative extends our commitment to uplifting Native communities, promoting positive health outcomes and ensuring future generations are equipped to stay healthy and strong in their daily hustles.

The foundation invites youth and families to take the "Hydrate Your Hustle Pledge." By committing to choose water as their primary drink, participants can contribute to a healthier community. Native youth are encouraged to share their stories about why they are choosing water, highlighting personal motivations and cultural connections that inspire them.

Go to <https://www.nb3foundation.org/hydrateyourhustle/> to take the pledge, which includes ways to share stories, spread the word and receive incentives.

A livestream event will be held March 22.

Krystle Bowers strives to educate tribal members about climate resiliency

BY TATUM MITCHELL
Staff Reporter

While the Climate Resiliency Department is working on a climate action plan, among other things, there are actions at the community level that can positively contribute to the environment.

"I hope we're able to educate a lot more tribal members on how to be more sustainable and honestly, to break some of those long held beliefs shaped by propaganda and ads honestly, get them to eat healthier, grow your own food like you have full control a little bit. You're deciding what you're growing, and you can grow a lot of foods that aren't in the grocery store," climate resiliency policy coordinator Krystle Bowers said.

Aside from the work the climate resiliency department is doing on the Climate Action Plan, Bowers has some insight on actions people can take to combat climate change.

Bowers explained that there can be some confusion differentiating between climate and weather. She said she uses a graph from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that shows the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere and raises the global temperature, contributing to climate change. According to an article from the NOAA, atmospheric carbon dioxide has increased by 50% since the industrial revolution.

Her position currently includes a lot of research and outreach regarding climate action plans and climate threats, Bowers said.

"Talking to other people, educating and trying to get people to understand the importance of preparing for climate change. And I feel like even in the environmental department, it's kind of hard to talk to people about these huge changes that we have to make as human beings. The scale of what we need to do differently is too big for people to understand, but it's huge. We have to make huge changes on what we do and what we eat and how we live, pretty much," Bowers said.

Bowers said everything, from sea levels to chocolate and coffee beans, is impacted by climate change. Native communities have been systematically put into lands that have poor soil and other factors that cause climate change to disproportionately affect them, she said, especially in South Florida with rising sea levels and saltwater intrusion.

"There's going to be a larger climate impact for most tribes, especially here in South Florida all of us were pushed down here and excluded from our ancestral range, which includes like seven or eight states," she said. "... I think most people want to live with each other, right? ... I don't want to leave Hollywood, but I know that's going to be what is going to happen someday. It may not be in the next 10 years, but I think it's definitely going to be in my lifetime where it's really they have to change the way I expect to live in Florida, or have to leave."

Solutions that climate scientists suggest is not only using renewable energy, but using less energy, Bowers said. This includes building cities differently, transitioning to mixed-use homes, and creating more walkable and bikeable areas.

On an individual level, diet changes, reducing plastic use and growing your own food is helpful for the environment. In addition, voting for elected officials who advocate for and support climate solutions is important, she said.

Reducing meat-based meals to twice a week is more sustainable for the planet and one of the most impactful actions a person can take, Bowers said. Animal agriculture is one of the leading causes of deforestation

and causes greenhouse gas emissions.

"If we do everything else we need to do, and we don't change the way we eat, we'll still be headed towards climate catastrophe. Animal agriculture is a leading cause of deforestation, especially cattle production in the Amazon. It's led to a lot of Native tribes there to losing their land and their lives protecting their land from cattle encroachment and soy farms," Bowers said.

Another helpful action is growing food at home and planting more trees, Bowers said. Trees are a source of shade to cool down areas since temperatures are rising. To get started with a garden at home, Bowers suggests going to Tree Amigos in Davie, a company that practices organic gardening.

"And they only sell plants that can be grown in Florida at the time that you're trying to buy it, and they'll help you figure out how much you need for beds," she said. "And they have beds there if you need some. And I would suggest growing in a bed, because, especially if you live in Hollywood, you're not sure about the soil. BC and Brighton, you should be able to grow in ground and be a little bit safer. But I would suggest getting your soil tested before growing in the ground, because you don't know what's in the soil."

Bowers said gardening at home organically is a lot better for the environment and helps give gardeners an appreciation for plants and nature. She hopes the community can start growing more of their traditional food.

"You're building up the soil, so it'll be healthier for future plants that you're going to grow. And while it may never be cheaper than just going to the store and buying it, you'll know exactly what's in your fruits and veggies. And, honestly, you're helping the environment just by having foods in your garden and in your yard and area to provide for the bees and the pollinators," Bowers said.

Constructing actual bike lanes – not just a painted section on the road – promotes safety of pedestrians and bikers and could encourage more people to use those modes of transportation, Bowers said.

With creating more walkable and bikeable cities, it not only is better for the environment, Bowers said, but it gives more freedom to people who may not be able to drive.

"A lot of these solutions are for climate solutions, but they also touch upon diversity solutions and equity in a community."

Bowers said it can be challenging to get people to understand what aspects of life need to change to combat climate change.

"All these changes are going to be huge. It's a huge lifestyle shift from what we are used to, and sometimes it can be overwhelming knowing how much we need to change. But I mean progress happens every year, every day, and hopefully we can go from a city or a tribe that's less dependent on fossil fuels and carbon dioxide."

Though being in the climate and environmental line of work can be disheartening, "you gotta keep trying," Bowers said.

"Each of our generations have lived through times of great change, and now climate science is telling us what our grandparents and great grandparents told us: we must go back to traditional ways of eating, living, and caring for the environment," Bowers said via email. "Our traditional corn was the foundation of our diets. We lived in walkable communities that valued people over cars. And above all, our people were part of the environment and ensured our native plants and animals had room near our camps. While we can't get back to that exactly, we can make progress toward that goal."

relationships.

The main things the department wants to work on with the climate action plan includes food sovereignty, building codes, safe communities, solar energy and building codes. A strategy of building to conserve energy is to ensure they are well insulated to preserve air conditioning, Bowers said.

Seminole Brighton Bay announces trio of hires

FROM PRESS RELEASE

BRIGHTON —The new Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino announced three personnel moves in February.

Aaron Mollura has been named director of Marketing and Promotions. Mollura started his casino career in 2004 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa in the Players Club. After a stint as Player Development manager, he transferred to the former Hard Rock Rocksino in Northfield, Ohio, where he was the director of Marketing. He helped make it the number one property in Ohio.

Andrew Poliquin has been named director of Food and Beverage. Poliquin will oversee the resort's diverse dining experiences, including the EE-TO-LEET-KE GRILL, Josiah Steakhouse, Constant Grind and Slice.

His career includes roles as Chef de Cuisine at the Renaissance Vinoy and as part of the early growth team for Bonefish Grill.

Poliquin continued to refine his craft in leadership roles, including executive chef and Beverage manager at the Westin Tampa Harbor and executive sous chef at Loews Don CeSar. He later joined the Marriott Crabtree Valley in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he enhanced the property's contemporary Southern restaurant, Braise, by incorporating fresh, local, and seasonal flavors.

Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino also named Eduardo Rodrigues as executive chef. Rodrigues will be involved with the resort's dining venues, including EE-TO-LEET-KE GRILL, Josiah Steakhouse, Constant Grind and Slice.

Rodrigues, who moved at an early age from North Carolina to Florida, has an extensive background leading upscale resorts, iconic hotels, and private clubs in South Florida. He has mastered various cuisines including Portuguese, Italian, French, Spanish, American Southern, Caribbean, and Latin American.

With 18 years of experience, Rodrigues was most recently at the Sheraton Miami Airport Hotel & Meeting Center. Additionally, he worked at the Islamorada Resort Collection in the Keys, where he led Islamorada's famous Tiki Bar and the Ciao Hound Italian Bistro. He also worked with the raw bar restaurant and catering department within the resort.

Native conferences to be held at California resort

FROM PRESS RELEASE

Four Native conferences will be held June 10-11 at Pecharanga Resort Casino in Temecula, California. The purchase of a ticket for one conference allows the attendee access to all four conferences.

- The conferences are:
- 18th annual Native American Economic Development Conference
 - 15th annual Native American Healthcare Conference
 - 10th annual Native American Cannabis and Hemp Conference
 - Tribal Emergency Management Conference

For more information go to nativenevents.org.



Aaron Mollura



Andrew Poliquin



Eduardo Rodrigues

NIHB testifies on tribal health priorities before Senate committee

FROM NATIONAL INDIAN HEALTH BOARD

On Feb. 12, William "Chief Bill" Smith (Valdez Native Tribe), Board Chairman of the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs during the "Native Communities' Priorities for the 119th Congress" oversight hearing. The hearing provided a critical platform to advocate for the health needs of American Indian and Alaska Native communities and reinforce the federal government's trust responsibility for Indian health.

In his testimony, Smith emphasized urgent needs for:

- Mandatory, Full Funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS): Predictable, long-term funding is essential to address chronic underfunding and ensure reliable access to care.

- Investments in Healthcare Infrastructure: Many Tribal health facilities are outdated or insufficient to meet growing community needs. Increased infrastructure

investments will improve access and quality of care.

- Behavioral Health Resources: The demand for mental health and substance use services continues to grow. Expanding culturally appropriate behavioral health programs is critical to supporting Tribal communities.

- Workforce Development Initiatives: Tribes need resources to recruit, train, and retain healthcare professionals to serve in Tribal health systems.

Public Health Infrastructure: Strengthening public health capacity ensures Tribal communities are prepared to respond to health crises.

Smith also underscored the importance of upholding tribal sovereignty and engaging tribes as equal partners in health policy development.

"Indian health is not a discretionary program," he said. "It is a trust obligation. We need Congress to act with urgency to close the persistent health disparities that have long affected our people."

Panthers fatally struck by vehicles near BC, Immokalee reservations

STAFF REPORT

Since the first of the year, two endangered Florida panthers have been killed by vehicles on roads near the Immokalee and Big Cypress reservations.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation's Panther Pulse database, a male panther, who FWC believes was less than two years old, was killed by a vehicle on Immokalee Road about two miles east of Oil Well Grade Road in Immokalee on Jan. 10.

The database also lists a 10-year-old female that was fatally hit by a vehicle on Josie Billie Highway (County Road 833) near McDaniels Ranch Road, just a few

miles north of the Big Cypress Reservation, on Feb. 24.

Florida panthers have been listed on the Endangered Species Act since 1967. There are estimated to be only 120 to 230 of the animals left in the state. Panthers normally live in remote, undeveloped areas but with the number of panthers and people in Florida growing, the chance of an encounter becomes more common.

Vehicle strikes are the leading cause of panther deaths at 59% of all fatalities. The number of panthers killed on rural roads have increased since 2000, when the numbers went from fewer than four per year to between six and 34 annually.

CONFERENCE From page 1A

Their presentation made points of the importance of integrating Indigenous values into climate strategies and actions and viewing ecological resources as

SPOTLIGHT From page 8A

Bowers also spoke about his beginnings

in art and what drew his inspiration into his artistic creativity. Some of Bowers' artwork consists of a graffiti style while embodying Seminole colors and themes.



Calvin Tiger (2)

Above, Wilson Bowers stands in front of his art. At right, Gordon Wareham plays the traditional flute.



Vendors Wanted

Earth Day

April 17, 2025

10am - 4pm

Space is limited!

Call or text JoJo at (954) 802-4143, for vendor applications or on our website.

deadline March 31, 2025.

Scan the code to sign up to get our vendor event updates

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SEMINOLE SCENES



SMILES AND WAVES: Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, above, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola, below, wave to the audience during princess introductions that were part of the grand opening ceremony at Seminole Brighton Bay Hotel & Casino on Feb. 6.



CONCERT NIGHT ON THE REZ: A view from a drone shows spectators watching a concert at the Brighton Field Day on Feb. 15. Country music's Brantley Gilbert was the evening's headline performer.



GROOVY GALS: These modern day "hippies" are actually members of the Immokalee Education Department who turned out for the tribalwide Fun Day on Jan. 31 in their finest 1960s-style garb and granny glasses. Together they enjoyed lunch, without the 60s-style brownies for dessert. From left to right are Taylor Boone, Bianca Serpas, Dolores Lopez, Magdalie Dumorne, Kathy Meany and Charlene Marsh.



STUDENT EXCELLENCE: Moore Haven High School student Tim Urbina was recognized by the school in a Facebook post on Feb. 6. The post explained Urbina earned a positive office referral for demonstrating responsibility. The post included a quote from Ms. Aragus: "Timothy has been doing an excellent job in class. His effort to take notes, pay close attention, and actively participate is impressive. These habits showcase his dedication to learning and set a positive example for his peers. Keep up the great work, Tim!"



ANTHEM ATTENTION: The Okeechobee High School softball team, which includes eight Seminoles, lines up for the playing of the National Anthem before its game against Centennial High School on Feb. 19 in Port St. Lucie.



ELGIN AT WORK: Artist Elgin Jumper holds his latest completed artwork titled "Rogue Leader," a painting which is inspired by "The Battle of Hoth" from "The Empire Strikes Back" series.



ARTS AND CRAFTS: Stickball sticks were among the award winners in the arts and crafts portion of the Seminole Tribal Fair & Pow Wow in Hollywood.



CHARITY AUCTION: This authentic handmade shirt was among several items available in a charity auction at the sixth annual Chairman of the Greens Charity Golf Tournament on Jan. 31 at Jacaranda Golf Club in Plantation. The shirt was donated by Jimmy Wayne Holdiness.

SOUTH FLORIDA'S ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION



MAR 1 & 2
ROD STEWART



MAR 6
GLADYS KNIGHT



MAR 7
BRETT YOUNG



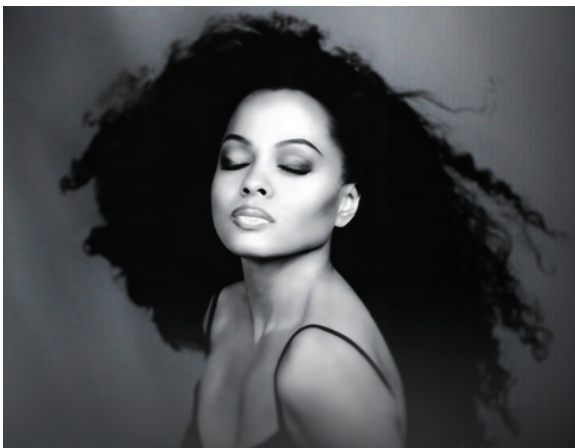
MAR 8
IL VOLO



MAR 9
MAGIC CITY BLUES FESTIVAL



MAR 13
FOREIGNER



MAR 21
DIANA ROSS



MAR 27
BARE KNUCKLE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP



MAR 28
ILIZA SHLESINGER



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Education



PECS 4th graders visit Battle of Okeechobee reenactment

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

OKEECHOBEE — Pemaaytv Emahavk Charter School fourth grade students attended a reenactment of the Battle of Okeechobee at the Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park on Feb. 21, as part of the state's fourth grade curriculum about Florida's history.

A few students were participants as they made fry bread and shared their culture with fourth graders from other area schools. The event included a reenactment of the Battle of Okeechobee between the U.S. Army and the

Seminole on Dec. 25, 1837, and exhibits about Florida and Seminole history.

Next to the fry bread making station under the boughs of a large tree, students from grades 1-6 displayed the traditional crafts they made in the PECS Culture Department. A large tent hosted groups of fourth graders who were interested in seeing the beadwork, patchwork and baskets made by the students.

Culture teacher Taylor Johns held up each item and explained that each grade level focuses on a single skill during the year. First through fourth graders learn different types of beadwork including loom

beading and daisy chains. Fifth graders learn to make the more complex medallions. Sixth graders make sweetgrass baskets, seventh graders make dolls and eighth graders make patchwork.

"The school has been coming here every year since I've been here, maybe even more," said Culture teacher Marilee Johns, who has been at PECS for 12 years.

During a break, the students who displayed their work in the tent talked about what it was like to show other students who they are and what they do.

"Some kids were disrespectful, but most of them were cool," said fifth grader Kalani

Billie. "We want them to learn our ways," added sixth grader Amiliana Osceola. "We get to do things that most kids don't do."

Students toured the exhibits on the site which included a blacksmith who demonstrated making a delicate leaf out of hot iron.

At the U.S. Army soldier's camp, a surgeon reenactor described what he did on the battlefield and the dangers of not having modern antibiotics to fight germs and infection. A soldier at another tent showed the students all the items they carried on them as they fought the Seminoles in the

swampy terrain. Another soldier showed them how they loaded the muskets they used in the woods.

At the Seminole campsite, reenactors told students how they ambushed the soldiers by cutting pathways through the hammocks, which the soldiers followed.

After several hours of the Christmas Day battle of 1837, in which many soldiers were killed, the Seminoles retreated down the Loxahatchee River to Lake Okeechobee and home.



Beverly Bidney

PECS students learn about the 1837 Christmas Day Battle of Okeechobee at a reenactment campsite.



Beverly Bidney

PECS fourth graders watch as a blacksmith heats a piece of iron to make a delicate decorative leaf at the Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park on Feb. 21.



Beverly Bidney

Culture teacher Taylor Johns holds a sweetgrass basket made by PECS sixth graders so students from area schools could feel its texture.



Beverly Bidney

PECS eighth grader Ciani Smith displays a beadwork medallion made by PECS fifth graders during Culture classes.



Beverly Bidney

As students watch, U.S. Army reenactors fire their muskets toward a hammock where Seminole reenactors stealthily fired back.

Guest speakers engage Ahfachkee students

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — A high powered attorney, the tribe's water resources director and a noted Native American motivational speaker gave Ahfachkee School middle and high school students a perspective on life not always learned in text books.

Michelle Diffenderfer, Alfonso Tigertail and Chance Rush spent a good part of the day teaching and engaging with the students about what they do for the tribe.

Diffenderfer, an attorney and the president of Lewis Longman Walker law firm, represents the Seminole Tribe of Florida as a lawyer for land development, water rights and cultural resource issues.

She was introduced by Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie, who asked the students if any of them know the tribe has water rights. Diffenderfer was ready to enlighten the students about the tribe's water rights. She started at the beginning.

"You are located where the water runs from the sawgrass to the forested cypress domes, Diffenderfer said. "These Everglades have been protected for your people. This is your land. If it doesn't have water, it will die and so will your people."

In the 1970s and 1980s, the government wanted to redirect water from the Everglades to the east, which would leave the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations with no water flow. Tribal leaders fought so the tribe would be able to flourish. They sued the federal government and the state's South Florida Water Management District to stop those projects and protect the tribe's right to the water.

The result was the Water Rights Compact with the state and the SFWMD, which was signed in 1987. The compact gives the tribe the same rights to the water as anyone else and they can fight for more water if they need it.

"The tribe has always had a seat at the table," Diffenderfer said. "The compact enables the tribe's laws to speak to the state's laws as equals. We are constantly vigilant to make sure the tribe's rights are being

recognized and understood. If neighbors are doing something that would affect the reservations, the law protects [the tribe]. That's the reason for solar panels outside of Big Cypress instead of the large power plant FPL wanted to build."

As the tribe's water resources director, Tigertail explained how the tribe's water that flows through miles of canals in Big Cypress and Brighton is managed.

"Water can be good or bad, either there is too much or not enough," he said. "If we didn't have the Compact, we wouldn't have water in our homes."

One of the challenges of Tigertail's job is reducing the time water is on the ground during flooding. Last year, Lakeland had a storm that left 16 inches of water on the ground. It took 10 days for the water to recede. He is working to try to reduce that

for the next time it floods.

"The challenge is being able to manage the water but ensure there is enough water on the reservations," Tigertail said. "We need to be resourceful about our water use. With all the growth on the reservations, we have to learn to manage to make sure we have the water we need."

"Water is very important. This tribe has done a great job and we are the recipients of it," Councilwoman Billie said. "We have these sessions to get you engaged. We all come from warriors. Our ancestors fought for us and we do what we can to protect that."

◆ See GUEST SPEAKERS on page 3B



Beverly Bidney

Chance Rush and Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie address Ahfachkee students Feb. 5.

PECS principal, teacher named district's best

STAFF REPORT

The Glades County School District announced its principal, teacher and employee of the year at a banquet held at Moore Haven Middle High School on Jan. 9. Pemaaytv Emahavk Charter School was honored twice.

PECS principal Tracy Downing was the district's first Principal of the Year and first grade teacher Tracy Phillips was its Teacher of the Year.

Downing has been a teacher, reading coach, assistant principal and principal for more than two decades in Okeechobee schools. She has been principal at PECS for six years. Downing is also in the running for the Florida Department of Education 2025 Principal of the Year. The winner will be named by the end of April.

Phillips, who teaches first grade, has been teaching in Okeechobee schools for 24 years. She is in her third year at PECS.



Courtesy photo

From left to right are PECS staff Michele Thomas, Brande Cobb, Drema Carter, Joy Prescott, Tracy Downing, Tracy Phillips, Cindy Pearce, Cindy Ringstaff and Denise Stratton at the Glades County School District banquet Jan. 9.

Pemayetv Emahakv participates in Field Day parade



Filled with students, teachers and principal Tracy Downing, the PECS parade float makes its way through the amphitheater during the Brighton Field Day parade Feb. 15.

Beverly Bidney



Miss PECS Ciani Smith and Mr. PECS Kowi-Chito Osceola introduce themselves to the audience during the Field Day parade.



PECS principal Tracy Downing speaks to the audience from the school's float.

Beverly Bidney

Education Department meets parents on reservations

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The Education Department recently held a series of informational meetings for parents to acquaint them with what the department offers. The meetings were held in Immokalee (Feb. 18), Brighton (Feb. 19), Big Cypress (Feb. 20) and Hollywood (Feb. 21).

"We do information sessions a few times each year with the same goals for each meeting," said Education director Russ Brown. "We want to find your children's passions so we can help find a path for them. We want them to be successful from year to year."

To help tribal members interact with the department, it has tribal community member liaisons. They are Gary McInturff in Big Cypress and Immokalee, Dana Osceola in Brighton and Jason Billie in Hollywood.

The department handed out flyers and informational pamphlets during the meeting. They included an overview of its programs, which are K-12, exceptional student education [ESE], higher education including GED, college degrees, trade and technical certificates, Tribal Professional Development [TPD], Work Experience Program [WEP], Emerging Leaders Program [ELP], Student Work Experience Program [SWEP] during spring and summer breaks, tutoring program and the tribal library program.

Program managers described what their programs offer to students.

"There are three and a half months left in the school year," said tribalwide K-12 program manager Reginald Belizaire. "It's time to start thinking about next year."

Immokalee K-12 advisor Magdalie Dumorne outlined the qualifications for private school scholarships, which are only for tribal members, but Ahfachkee is open to descendants. Testing assistance and preparation for all state, ACT and SAT exams is provided for tribal students. High school graduation requirements are a 2.0 GPA, community service hours and a foreign language, which includes Elaponke.

"I speak to the high school students as if I am speaking to my own son," Dumorne

said. "Do what you love to do. There is always something for you in college that relates to your passion...I love to encourage them to find their passion."

Tribalwide higher education program manager Jeri Joiner said the scholarships are not available to descendants but she can provide them with resources to find grants and other scholarships available outside of the tribe. The program also provides academic coaching and counseling. Adults who are interested in going back to school may also partake of post-secondary opportunities through the program.

"You're never too old to come back to school," said higher education academic and career advisor Charlene Marsh. "We have had people in their 70s."

If McInturff could go back in time, he said he would consider going into the hospitality industry.

"We have so many properties around the world," he said.

McInturff praised FSU's hospitality management program, which he said is also generous with scholarships.

McInturff mentioned gaming's Tribal Career Development program [TCD], which allows tribal members and descendants to learn as they work in the tribe's casino and hospitality businesses.

"There are so many opportunities to work either on the government side of the tribe or in gaming," added tribalwide Tribal Professional Development program supervisor Kerlande Christostome. Christostome promoted SWEP, for students age 14-18, during which they get paid to work and learn about tribal departments and what they do.

"If they take advantage of SWEP, by the time students are out of high school, they will have experience and know more about what suits them," she said. "They can do different things every summer for four years."

The ESE program begins screening children in preschool to identify any issues or deficits early, as well as strengths, weaknesses and different learning styles. There is a state mandate for ESE students to get accommodations in public schools, but there is no mandate for private schools.

"We find ways to help your child,"



Education Department employees explain what the department has to offer to students and parents. At far right is Immokalee K-12 advisor Magdalie Dumorne.

Beverly Bidney

said tribalwide ESE program manager Luis Viveros. "We make sure they get the accommodations they need in school. It's important that families are involved in the ESE process."

Tribalwide tutoring program supervisor Jen Bishop explained the program offers homework help, tutoring, GED assistance for tribal members. Homework help is available for descendants.

Tribalwide library program supervisor Padmini Dukharan gave an overview of the tribe's four libraries, which have more than 50,000 books. The libraries have computer labs and the library stocks reading bins at the clinics so kids can read while they wait. She encourages parents to use the library with their children.

"If your kids see you reading, hopefully they will want to read," Dukharan said.

Parents asked questions during the presentation and huddled with staff afterward. Sarah Carrillo has seven children including

one descendant and one community member. Her daughter received a softball scholarship to Miami Dade College's north campus and she didn't know where she should live.

Some members of the education staff were familiar with the school and the surrounding areas. They suggested the coach might have some specific information on where other team members are living. Carrillo said she plans to take that advice.

Another question arose about financial support for home schooling or descendants. The state's Step Up for Students program offers scholarships for expenses such as laptops, tutoring, transportation and more.

Makayla Gonzalez has a child in preschool and said she learned a lot about the department during the meeting and plans to meet with Dumorne soon.

"The best thing about today is I know I can get support and information for my kids to go to private school," Gonzalez said. "I work with Magdalie and I get a lot of support

from the Education Department. They are really fast."

Araceli Lucas has two children, ages 4 and 5, who are descendants. She said the information she received during the meeting was very helpful.

"You don't usually hear much about descendants, but I spoke to Luis and he's on top of things," Lucas said. "I want my kids to get the help, I'm open to it. I want them to succeed."

Mella Billie has four children ages 5 to 13, including one who is autistic. She has been working with Viveros, who helped her with an Individual Education Plan [IEP] meeting for her son.

"It makes me feel a lot better knowing there are options and help available for my three descendant kids," Billie said. "I've had to advocate for my son since he was in diapers."

Video series addresses Native teacher shortage

FROM PRESS RELEASE

In February, the United Tribes Technical College (UTC) Teacher Education Program released a series of recruitment videos for a program.

Through the program, partner tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) received

\$200,000-\$275,000 over a two-year grant term to share promising practices that would serve as the basis for exploring solutions to the Native teacher shortage.

The videos include insight from students, tribal elders and education administrators, according to a press release.

The program is funded by the American

Indian College Fund (College Fund), through the Wounspekiya Unspewicakiyapi Native Teacher Education pilot program.

"Wounspekiya Unspewicakiyapi can be translated from Dakota to describe the purpose of the project as 'teaching teachers,'" the release said.

Okeechobee Fair runs March 11-16

FROM PRESS RELEASE

OKEECHOBEE — The Okeechobee Fair will be held March 11-16 at the Okeechobee County Fairgrounds in Okeechobee. The fair will feature full carnival midway, food and entertainment, which includes the Amazing Pompeyo

Family Dog Show, the Pirate Man Dan, the Flying Cortes Thrill Show, motorcycles riding on walls at the Wall of Death, and a petting zoo. Shows are free with paid gate admission. On March 15, a demolition derby will take place in the grandstand for an additional \$10.

Festival in BC highlights Indigenous art, music

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS – The Indigenous Arts & Music Festival opened Feb. 6 and ran

through Feb. 8. The festival included musical performances, clothing contests, vendors, food, carnival games and rides, and more.



The Bearhead Sisters from Canada perform songs and share stories with the audience Feb. 6 at the Indigenous Arts & Music Festival.



Hymn singers from Oklahoma churches sing together at the festival.



Fellow students enjoy a performance by the Ahfachkee School band.



The clothing contest at the festival includes various men's and women's categories.



John Anderson, left, performs his song "Seminole Wind" alongside Glenn Rieuf.



Justine Osceola poses with her booth as a vendor at the festival.

◆ GUEST SPEAKERS

From page B1

Motivational speaker Chance Rush (Hidatsa) grew up in Standing Rock, a small reservation in North Dakota, which was one of the poorest at that time.

For 20 years Rush has traveled throughout North America to work with reservations, communities and organizations as a consultant. He aims to inspire, heal, motivate and energize tribal communities. Much of what he says comes from his life

experience.

Rush, who told the students the last time he visited the tribe was about 18 years ago, said he admires the tribe's commitment to its sovereignty.

"You are the ones who said you aren't going anywhere," Rush said. "Your ancestors said they are staying here, this is our house. I hope you embrace that; who you are and where you come from."

Rush said one reason he went to school was so he could eat something, like many other tribes with few resources. He told the

students that "life isn't about what we have, it's about who we are."

"The best advice I can give you is to accept, know and be one of a kind," Rush said. "Be that one who stands out."

He said choosing who to spend time with is important since those people can influence who you will become.

"We all have people in our circles who are haters, negative, lazy and don't want you to be successful," Rush said. "Why do we let them at our table? If we keep listening to them, after a while we hear what they

are saying. You will become who they tell you that you are. A lot of people are bullied, overlooked, judged and left out. Life is about finding out who you are and what you want to become."

Rush outlined four steps to having a positive outcome in life. They are spirituality or a some kind of connection; put yourself second, think of others; make a plan for what kind of person you want to become; and find your team, the right people to be in your circle.

"It's all about who you are on the

inside," Rush said. "Get rid of those negative forces. Change your environment and stick with your team which is positive. Be that one of a kind, the one who stands out."

Rush told the students to get their hands on their greatness and love being great and to try a little harder, get up a little earlier, build your own team. He told them about his very structured days.

"I built the lifestyle I wanted," he said. "You build it the way you want it by loving being great. Be patient, persistent, powerful and push through."

UNITY midyear conference focuses on digital storytelling, culture connections

FROM UNITY

PHOENIX — The United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) Midyear Conference brought together a record number of Native youth, advisors, and tribal leaders for a transformative four-day event centered on leadership development, advocacy, and cultural sharing.

Held Feb. 7-9 at the Sheraton Downtown Phoenix, this sold-out gathering provided a platform for Native youth to develop their storytelling skills, connect with Indigenous leaders from across the globe, and celebrate their cultures through meaningful engagement and learning opportunities.

UNITY introduced a new hands-on digital storytelling curriculum, equipping participants with the skills to produce public service announcements (PSAs) and digital awareness campaigns addressing critical issues in their communities. Participants were supported by Peer trainers, and the Gila River Broadcasting Corporation assisted them with any editing needs that arose. Youth collaborated on multimedia projects, using digital media as a tool for storytelling, advocacy, and cultural preservation.

"Our youth are already leading change in their communities, and this conference provided them with the tools to amplify their voices through digital storytelling," said Mary Kim Titla, UNITY Executive Director. "From creating PSAs to engaging in cross-cultural dialogues with Indigenous leaders from across the globe, this event empowered our youth to become storytellers and changemakers."

The conference featured several engaging keynote speakers and panel discussions that inspired youth to take ownership of their narratives. Actor Kusem Goodwin (Coeur d'Alene/Nez Perce), known for his role as "Nataanii Jackson" in the movie "Rez Ball," participated in a live Q&A session, providing insight into Indigenous representation in the media and the challenges of breaking into the entertainment industry. UNITY Drum Alumni Dr. Corey Still (United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee) delivered a keynote address emphasizing the power of Indigenous storytelling and language revitalization, encouraging youth to embrace their voices and experiences to drive change. Additionally, legendary journalists Mary Kim Titla (San Carlos Apache) and Colton Shone (Navajo) shared their journeys in broadcast media, offering guidance to those interested in pursuing journalism and digital storytelling careers.

Throughout the conference, participants collaborated with highly skilled trainers known for their work in Indian Country, including Lovina Louie (Coeur d'Alene/Colville/Nez Perce), Tommie Ghost Dog (Burns Paiute/Oglala Lakota), Rachel Mosley (Paiute-Shoshone), and J'Shon Lee (White Mountain Apache). Youth also engaged with Indigenous media professionals, including Marcus Guinn (Osage/Potawatomi), "Emcee One," official DJ for the Oklahoma City Thunder, and Shawn Martinez (Navajo), "DJ Tribal Touch" official DJ for the Phoenix Suns, who shared how they integrate Native representation into mainstream entertainment and sports industries.

For the first time, UNITY welcomed an international cohort of Indigenous youth,

fostering global dialogue on leadership, governance, cultural preservation, climate resilience, and health equity. The international representatives included:

- Daisy Lahache – Canada
- Edna Marly Figueroa Cuc – Guatemala
- Josefina Bautista Peña – México
- Maricelma Francelino Fialho Cândido – Brazil
- Noamby Lucas-Castillo – Colombia
- Silvia Alejandra Miranda Loredo – Honduras

This panel provided a space for international and domestic Indigenous youth to exchange strategies on advocacy, creating dialogue on issues impacting Indigenous communities worldwide. The global cohort was joined by U.S. Indigenous youth leaders who brought diverse perspectives from their communities. Bronson (Kainoa) Azama (Kānaka Maoli, Hawaii) shared insights on Indigenous governance, while Derek Capitan (Laguna Pueblo/Navajo, New Mexico) spoke on youth advocacy. Mazie Countryman (Northern Arapaho/Eastern Shoshone/Shoshone-Bannock/Navajo, Idaho) emphasized intertribal collaboration, and Watson Whitford (Chippewa Cree/Navajo, Montana) highlighted the power of storytelling in strengthening Native identity.

The Native Youth Digital Storytelling Panel featured UNITY's 25 Under 25 awardees, showcasing how digital media is a powerful tool for advocacy. Evelyn Enos (Akimel O'otham/Tohono O'odham) highlighted zine-making as a grassroots method for amplifying Indigenous voices. At the same time, Mariah Hernandez-Fitch (United Houma Nation) shared her work

in filmmaking as a way to document and preserve Native stories. Ian Teller (Navajo) demonstrated how he uses social media engagement to increase voter awareness and civic participation with his When Natives Vote initiative. Their insights emphasized the role of digital storytelling in strengthening cultural representation and driving social change.

Beyond leadership training and storytelling workshops, the conference was a celebration of Indigenous culture. UNITY hosted two nights of social round dances open to the public, highlighting Indigenous storytelling through song and dance. The first night's Round Dance was filled with energy as dozens of local hand-drummers performed and respected Stickmen, Nathan Littlechild, shared teachings on the significance of the dance. The second night showcased the cultural traditions of the Four Sister Tribes of O'odham, featuring youth-led O'odham Cu:dk social dancing and an energetic Chicken Scratch dance with music from the "Group Passion" youth band. Over 40 singers and 37 dancers from the Tohono O'odham Nation, the Gila River Indian Community, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community participated, creating a powerful celebration of cultural identity and unity.

The National UNITY Council passed two Resolutions at their biannual business meeting to encourage youth to collaborate with international Indigenous youth and host community events to address substance abuse, mental health, and suicide prevention. In recognition of Christopher Porcaro's inspiring completion of the Mountain Lakes

100-mile ultramarathon, HOKA donated 100 pairs of trail running shoes. These shoes were given away at the Midyear Conference to encourage Native youth participation in physical activity and promote wellness. The donation was part of a broader effort to support the health and well-being of Native communities, aligning with the mission of UNITY and organizations like Indigenous Earth.

The conference concluded with a showcase of digital storytelling projects created by the youth throughout the weekend. These presentations demonstrated the creativity, passion, and advocacy of Native youth as they used media to amplify their voices and address issues impacting their communities.

Throughout the weekend, several colleges, Native artists, and Native-focused organizations participated as exhibitors. The Gila River Indian Community was the presenting sponsor for the conference. Other sponsors included Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Arizona State University, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, HOKA, Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation, Oneida Nation, Pechanga Band of Indians, the Quintero Family, REDW Financial Advisors & CPAs, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, San Carlos Apache Tribe, and Tribal Ready.

The next major event is the National UNITY Conference, with an anticipated 2,500 Native youth and advisors to attend in San Diego, California, June 27 to July 1. For more information go to unityinc.org.

Brighton celebrates 86th annual Field Day Festival

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The Seminole Tribe of Florida opened a window into its history and culture at the 86th annual Brighton Field Day Festival from Feb. 13-16.

The festival offered something for everyone and attracted more than 3,800 people who enjoyed the entertainment, shopping, food, a PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association) rodeo and concert by country music star Brantley Gilbert.

Seminole vendors sold plenty of patchwork, beadwork, baskets, carvings and other traditional items. In the culture camp, visitors were encouraged to watch as tribal women cooked traditional Seminole fare over the open fire in the cooking chickee and enjoy a taste of fry bread and pumpkin fry bread.

"I love seeing people I don't usually see," said Allison Osceola, of Hollywood, who has been coming to field day since she was a little girl. "I just sit in the culture area all day and visit."

Nearby, tribal members demonstrated sewing and beadwork as Billy Walker wrestled an alligator and told the history of Seminole alligator wrestling. In the amphitheater, Osceola's Warrior Legacy group demonstrated tactics of how Seminoles fought back attacks by U.S. Army soldiers during the Seminole Wars.

Feb. 15 began with a parade which included the Florida State University marching band, Osceola on Renegade, Grand Marshall Mitchell Cypress, Tribal Council and Board members, Seminole honor guard, Lakota Women Warriors, Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola.

Pemayety Emahaky Charter School was a big part of the parade with its safety patrol, Mr. and Miss PECS, student council,

volleyball team and a float loaded with students, District Teacher of the Year Tracy Phillips, Employees of the Year Taylor Johns and Cindy Pearce, and District Principal of the Year Tracy Downing.

The parade continued with tribal members on floats, swamp buggies, ATVs of all shapes and sizes and horseback in colorful patchwork. After the grand entry, the action in the amphitheater took off with a performance by the White Mountain Apache dancers and Osceola's Warrior Legacy traditional weapons demonstration.

Spectators filled the stands and the open areas surrounding the amphitheater for the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling competition. The wrestlers wowed the crowd with their antics and, ultimately, their control of the animals.

There were plenty of places for visitors to get a bite to eat on the festival grounds, including Seminole food vendors.

Jennie-ology Seminole Bread is a fixture at field day and is run by Diane Smith and her daughters Trisha Osceola, Brittany Macias and Amanda Julian. It is named for Smith's mother Jennie, who started the food booth. Field Day has always been a big part of Smith's life. She skipped one year when her mother had surgery, but she missed being there.

"My mother did this for about as long as Field Day has existed," Smith said. "I think it's the most popular booth here, but they are all really good at what they do."

Smith's grandchildren also help run the booth that sells Indian tacos, burgers, hot dogs, chicken wings, fry bread and pumpkin fry bread. Brisket on fry bread is the most requested item, which is made by Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Trisha's husband.

This year Chairman Osceola made 32 15-pound briskets over the course of the four day-festival to feed the hungry crowds. He cooks them "low and slow" in a smoker for 12 hours.

"Everyone cooks them their own way," Chairman Osceola said. "I use a mixture of woods."

In her booth, Seminole tribal member Sierra Briggs sold toy flutes, drums, knives and hammers as well as a variety of patchwork and beadwork she made.

"I'm doing well today," said Briggs, from Tampa. "I'm going to have to get to sewing and beading when I get home. I like being a vendor, I can carry on my culture."

Briggs took over the booth after her grandmother, Maggie Osceola Garcia, died three years ago. She has been coming to Field Day for most of her life and enjoys the shows and seeing other vendors' items.

In addition to Seminoles, Native American vendors from around the country set up booths and sold their traditional items and art.

Alex Jalapa (Mayan) created original artwork for visitors at his booth. It was his first time at Field Day, but he and Tiffany Quiles (Taino) travel around the country to sell their art at pow wows. Jalapa creates the spray painted artwork in just four minutes as visitors watch. He uses fire to quickly dry the paint so he can add more layers of color without disturbing the integrity of the base layer.

"Every year it gets bigger, with more people and kids," said Beulah Gopher, of Brighton. "I look forward to seeing old friends. You just never know who's going to be around."

"It's always good to see different faces at Field Day," said Brighton's Martha Tommie, who walked in the parade. "I feel obligated to walk and think about the MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women). I honor the women and represent them. We all know what's going on. I thank God we can keep searching for them."

◆ See FIELD DAY on page 5B



Andrew Wallin, left, portraying a U.S. Army soldier, battles Parker Osceola during a demonstration of how the Seminoles fought the soldiers during the Seminole Wars.



Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola address the crowd during the Field Day parade Feb. 15.



During the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling competition, a wrestler shows his brave skills as he examines the inside of an alligator's mouth.



The audience pays close attention as they watch the Freestyle Alligator competition.



Seminole Honor Guard member Sallie Josh holds the MIA flag during the grand entry.



Florida State University's Marching Chiefs perform during the Field Day parade.



At the Jennie-ology Seminole Bread food booth, Diane Smith, second from left, and her daughters Brittany Macias, Amanda Julian and Trisha Osceola take a moment away from cooking to pose in the booth named for Smith's mother.



Ronnie Billie and Martha Tommie enjoy Field Day.



Miss Florida Seminole CeCe Thomas, left, and Jr. Miss Florida Seminole Violet Osceola.



The Indigenous Enterprises Dance Group dances for a packed crowd of students and spectators.

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Sports



From left to right, Thaddeus Johns, Shakur Williams and Greg James proudly clutch the championship trophy.



Greg James (23) celebrates with his Moore Haven teammates and coaches after the Terriers won a district championship Feb. 7 in Moore Haven.

Moore Haven rallies to win district title

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

MOORE HAVEN — For three quarters it looked like the Moore Haven High School boys basketball team's season would end. But after trailing most of the night, the Terriers clicked when it counted most and surged past visiting Fort Meade High School to win the Rural Class District 8 championship, 51-47, on Feb. 7.

Clifford Love (23 points) and the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Shakur Williams (10 points) helped ignite the comeback for the Terriers, who erased an 11-point deficit in the fourth quarter. Moore Haven coach Ravin Lee said his team played the fourth quarter just like it practices.

"That was epic, but that's the way we practice. We practice 24/7 to be able to finish the game," he said.

In addition to Williams, the tribe is represented by Greg James and descendent Thaddeus Johns. James did not see any playing time against Fort Meade; Johns played a few minutes at guard. Both players lent vocal support from the bench as their teammates mounted a comeback.

Lee won district titles as a player at Clewiston High School. He said he wanted his players to know that same feeling of being a champion.

"These kids work so hard," he said. "I want them to experience what I experienced in high school. They got a memory tonight. I talk about my memory 12 years ago; they're going to talk about this memory for a lifetime. You can't take it away from these kids; they earned it."

For Williams, winning the district title with Lee as his coach brought extra special meaning.

"It means a lot," said Williams, a 6-foot guard who is among the team's strong core of juniors. "I've been with the coach since sixth grade, so for me, it means everything... It's real special to [win the championship] with him because he's been with me for my whole basketball career."

Fort Meade used a balanced shooting attack to dominate the first half, which included a 14-2 lead six minutes into the game. Fort Meade led 27-18 at halftime.

A strong start in the third quarter — led by Williams — showed that Moore Haven was determined to keep its season alive. Williams and Kendavion Holligan hit 3-pointers early that helped trim the deficit to five, but Fort Meade generated a surge of its own and built a 13-point cushion before Williams made a jump shot late in the quarter. Fort Meade led 40-29 heading into the fourth.

Moore Haven played like a different team in the fourth with a ferocious defense that caused turnovers and prevented good looks, and an offense that found its rhythm low and high. Williams and Love ignited the rally. Love was unstoppable with 13 points in the quarter. Williams had a steal and layup, and threw a perfect court-length bomb to Clarence Hunter, who made a layup that gave Moore Haven a 45-41 lead.

Trailing 48-47, Fort Meade had a chance to go ahead but was called for a charge with 20 seconds left. A layup by Holligan and a last second free throw by Hunter sealed the victory for the Terriers.

Williams said playing tougher defense helped fuel the rally.

"We just had to play defense. They were knocking down everything. For us, it was, one stop, a bucket; one stop, a bucket. That's what we needed to do. We perfected it; we executed it; and we won the game off of that," he said.

Five days after the championship victory, the Terriers season ended with a 54-32 regional semifinal loss at home to Hawthorne (Alachua County), which went on to win the Rural Class state championship. Moore Haven finished with a 13-8 record.

All three players from the tribe played different key roles throughout the season with Williams being an all-around smooth player who starred at both ends; James using his 6-foot-3 lineman-size and toughness in the paint to grab rebounds and draw attention that helped free up space for teammates; and the long-range, sharp-shooting Johns injecting a ton of energy with and without the ball whenever he stepped on the court. The good news for the Terriers is that all three players — in addition to most of the roster — will be back next season as the team should have an excellent chance to defend its title.



Moore Haven celebrates after winning the district championship.



Shakur Williams eyes two points in the district championship game against Fort Meade.



Thaddeus Johns launches a 3-point shot in the district championship game.

Tribal tandem helps NSU University School to vastly improved season

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

FORT LAUDERDALE — When the NAYO basketball tournament comes to Hollywood from April 17-19, Tatum Billie and Kenna Osceola will have to get used to seeing each other on different teams.

Billie, who is from the Big Cypress Reservation, will play for a Choctaw team; Osceola, from the Hollywood Reservation, will play for a Seminole team from Brighton.

This winter, however, they thrived as teammates who both enjoyed solid seasons on the NSU University School girls team.

Both are young players — Billie is a sophomore; Osceola is a 7th grader — on a team that is filled with youth.

“Most of the time this year I started two 6th graders, one 7th grader, a 9th grader and a 10th grader,” NSU coach Nicole Riscica said after her team’s season ended with a 60-45 loss to host Pine Crest in a Class 3A regional quarterfinal on Feb. 13.

Ever since Billie joined the team as a seventh-grader, Riscica has watched her grow and improve. Billie has been a starter and a captain for three years.

“This year she stepped into that leadership role,” Riscica said.

Examples of that leadership came in the regular season as Billie led the team in just about every category, including scoring. She scored in double digits nearly every game — including a season-high 32 against West Boca Raton — and averaged about 17 points per game. She also hit a major milestone, scoring her 1,000th career point with two more years of high school ball still remaining. She played a key role helping lead the team to a 16-7 record, far better than last year’s 10-14 mark.

Another example of Billie’s leadership came in the playoff game against Pine Crest. A couple weeks earlier, Billie hurt her knee against Archbishop McCarthy, but she still provided a determined effort from start to finish while wearing a leg brace in the playoff loss at Pine Crest.

“She played through the pain today,” Riscica said.

Billie scored seven points. NSU faced an uphill battle against Pine Crest, which had a huge size advantage with 6-foot-4 Isabella Sangha and 6-foot-3 Franky Garfi.



Kevin Johnson (2)

At left, Kenna Osceola attempts a reverse layup against Pine Crest’s Franky Garfi. At right, Tatum Billie takes a 3-point shot.



Kevin Johnson

Tatum Billie, dribbling the ball, and Kenna Osceola head up court during NSU University School’s Class 3A regional quarterfinal at Pine Crest School in Fort Lauderdale on Feb. 13.

Osceola spent much of the game with the difficult task of facing Sangha, who is about nine inches taller, four years older and very athletic for her size. Still, Osceola was up for the challenge.

“I was kind of scared to go up [against her], but I still went up,” said Osceola, whose strong seventh grade season included scoring in double digits five times.

Sangha, a junior, scored 31 points, which was just about her average during the season.

NSU University School will look to build from its successful season. The Sharks could return nearly their entire team next season.

“We’re a young team, so there was [some] difficulty, but at the end of the day we’re individually better,” Billie said.

“Our middle school team won districts. We have a lot of young kids, so if they keep working hard and play together, I think we’ll be a force to be reckoned with,” Riscica said.



Kevin Johnson

With Pine Crest’s 6-foot-4 Isabella Sangha guarding the inbound pass, Tatum Billie tries to find an open teammate.

NSU University School standout Xavier Osceola wraps up high school career

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

DAVIE — NSU University School boys basketball coach Ron Oliver knows the future is bright for Xavier Osceola, who spent his senior season racking up impressive numbers for the Sharks.

Osceola, a 6-foot-2 guard and the only Seminole on the squad, displayed his offensive skills to the tune of averaging 15 points per game, which was second highest on the team. He led the team in several other categories, including assists and 3-pointers.

He scored a season-high 30 points against Naples and scored at least 20 points six other times.

“He did great,” said Oliver, who guided the squad to a 16-9 record. “He carried us all year. He’s a great scorer. I think he’s

definitely a college basketball player. He’s talented enough to go as far as he wants to go. He can really shoot the ball.”

The Sharks peaked at the right time, winning 10 of 11 games before losing to Cardinal Gibbons in a district final.

The Sharks regrouped with a win against Somerset Academy in a Class 3A regional quarterfinal. Osceola scored 13 points.

But the final game wasn’t indicative of how the Sharks played nearly all season. In a regional semifinal Feb. 17 at home, NSU University didn’t match Gulliver Prep’s intensity at the start and never caught up, losing 85-69.

Osceola scored 15 points in his final high school game. His final basket came on a running jumper with :29 left in the game. He also dished out a team-high seven assists.



Kevin Johnson

NSU University School senior guard Xavier Osceola takes a 3-point shot in a Class 3A regional semifinal against Gulliver Prep on Feb. 17 in Davie.

Kevin Johnson
Xavier Osceola makes a steal in front of the Gulliver bench.

Kevin Johnson
Xavier Osceola leads a fastbreak against Gulliver Prep.





Kevin Johnson
Western's Betty-Lynn Osceola looks for an open teammate in Class 7A regional semifinal Feb. 18 at Doral Academy.

Betty-Lynn Osceola makes strong impression in first season with Western

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

DORAL — When Betty-Lynn Osceola joined the Western High School girls basketball team this season, coach Brandie Taylor didn't know what to expect. "We didn't know much about her," Taylor said. Western knows all about Osceola now after she made a strong impression in season one. "Betty was phenomenal. She's a knock-down shooter, a 3-point shooter, comes in and works hard. Very coachable; a great young lady. I love having her on the team," Taylor said. One of the highlights in Osceola's season came Jan. 16 when she hit a buzzer-beater to force overtime against Cypress Bay. Western ended up losing in overtime, however, Taylor said getting to that overtime helped her team

a few weeks later when Western and Cypress Bay hooked up for another nail-biter. This time the stakes were higher — a district championship game — and this time Western emerged victorious, 47-45. Osceola, a junior, averaged five points and three rebounds per game, coming off the bench most nights. She scored in double digits a couple times, including 14 points in a Class 7A regional quarterfinal win against Ferguson. "When Betty gets hot, she's definitely hot," Taylor said. After the team's final game — a 76-30 loss on Feb. 18 to powerful Doral Academy in the 7A regional semifinals — Osceola said she enjoyed her first season with the team. "They gave me a good chance," she said. "I think we did pretty good. We had a good season." The district champs finished with a 14-10 record.



Kevin Johnson
Betty-Lynn Osceola battles for position in the paint against Doral Academy.



Kevin Johnson
The 2025 Okeechobee High School softball team includes Seminoles, from left to right, Daliyah Nunez, Adeline Garcia, Alyssa Madrigal, Dyani Kayda, Tehya Nunez, Melaine Bonilla, Kiera Snell, Joleyne Nunez and head coach Mary Huff.

Season starts for OHS softball loaded with Seminoles

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

PORT ST. LUCIE — With a roster that includes eight players from the Seminole Tribe of Florida, a young Okeechobee High School softball team played its second game of the season Feb. 19 against Centennial High School in Port St. Lucie. Seminoles on the team include head coach Mary Huff and players Melaine Bonilla, Adeline Garcia, Dyani Kayda, Alyssa Madrigal, Daliyah Nunez, Joleyne Nunez, Tehya Nunez and Kiera Snell. The Brahman encountered a tough task in a loss against Centennial, having to go up against hard-throwing pitcher Hailey Brereton, who has committed to NCAA Division I Murray State University. Some highlights for the Brahman included a single by Bonilla, a walk and run scored by Snell, and an RBI sacrifice bunt by Tehya Nunez. After opening the season with four losses, the Brahman notched their first win in impressive fashion, a 2-1 victory against Jensen Beach on Feb. 28. Pitcher Lily Larson delivered a complete game two-hitter and



Kevin Johnson
Daliyah Nunez is cheered by her teammates during player introductions.

helped her own cause with two hits and one RBI. Tehya Nunez also starred in the victory. She scored both runs and notched one of the

team's five hits. Through five games, Bonilla leads the club with a .385 batting average.



Kevin Johnson
Tehya Nunez lays down a perfect bunt.



Kevin Johnson
Alyssa Madrigal delivers a strike against Centennial.



Kevin Johnson
Kiera Snell smiles after she scores a run against Centennial.



Kevin Johnson
Dyani Koenes makes solid contact.



Kevin Johnson
Melaine Bonilla cleanly fields a groundball for an out.



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Seminole teams win Tribal Fair basketball titles

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Senior Editor

The Seminole Tribal Fair Basketball Tournament crowned its champions Feb. 1, 2025, at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center in Hollywood.

In the men's 18 and over division championship, the Seminoles team was in control throughout and cruised to a 93-67 win against the Plainmen. Freddy Brown had the hot hand for the Seminoles with 31 points, including seven from beyond the arc. The Seminole Tribe's Hunter Osceola and Duelle Gore were also standouts on the Seminoles. Osceola scored 13 points, which included four 3's, and Gore scored nine points.

In the 35 and over men's title game, the Young Bucks edged the EBCL Braves, 48-47. Ronnie Battle led the Bucks with 15 points.

On the women's side, the Lady Ballers — led by the Seminole Tribe's Skyla Osceola — jumped out to a 14-0 lead, scored 73 points

in the first half and cruised to a win against XFactor in the 18 and over championship. Osceola scored 16 points and she had plenty of company in double digits with teammates Ni'Asia McIntosh (36 points), Jenna Plumley (32 points, including 24 in the first half) and Kyannah Grant (25 points).

The Lady Ballers' 35 and over team also claimed a championship by defeating ReZilient, 41-36. Mystee Dale led the way with 16 points and Plumley had 14 points. The Seminole Tribe's Mercedes Osceola scored 5 points for ReZilient and Tasha Osceola had 3 points.

Women named tournament all-stars were Valiyah Yazzie, Miracle Spotted Bear, Tiana Guillory, Kyannah Grant and Ni'Asia McIntosh. Jenna Plumley was named Tournament MVP.

The men's all-stars consisted of Rance Harrison, Tevin Foster, Micah Lena, Falcon Albers and Jesse Callan. Freddy Brown was named the men's MVP.

Tribal Fair Committee director Virginia Osceola congratulated each team.



Seminoles: 18 and over men's champions.

Kevin Johnson



Young Bucks: 35 and over men's champions.

Kevin Johnson



The Lady Ballers: 18 and over women's champions.

Kevin Johnson



Lady Ballers: 35 and over women's champions.

Kevin Johnson



Tribal Fair Tournament men and women all-stars.

Kevin Johnson

Brighton Field Day Festival hosts pro rodeo

STAFF REPORT

BRIGHTON — The PRCA brought three days of action to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena during the Brighton Field Day Festival.

Here are the results:

Brighton Field Day Festival Xtreme Bulls

Feb. 16

Bull riding: 1. Trey Benton III, 88 points on JC Kitaf ProRodeos' Rockstar, \$12,972; 2. Cody Jesus, 87.5, \$9,945; 3. Brandon Ballard, 85, \$7,351; 4. T Parker, 84.5, \$4,756; 5. Stefan Tonita, 81.5, \$3,027; 6. Cutter Kaylor, 81, \$2,162; 7. Clayton Sellars, 80, \$1,730; 8. Riffin Shippy, 79.5, \$1,297.

Total payoff: \$43,240.

Brighton Field Day Festival & Rodeo Feb. 13-15

All-around cowboy: Cross Fulford, \$2,115, tie-down roping and steer wrestling.

Bareback riding: 1. Andy Gingerich, 84 points on Painted Pony Championship Rodeo's No. F18, \$2,456; 2. Taylor Broussard, 83.5, \$1,883; 3. Collin Roland, 81, \$1,392; 4. Colton Clemens, 79, \$901; 5. Steven DeWolfe, 78, \$573; 6. Anthony Thomas, 77, \$409; 7. Squirm Osceola, 75, \$327; 8. Chett Deitz, 74, \$246.

Steer wrestling: 1. Mose Fleming, 4.2 seconds, \$2,140; 2. Kamry Dymmek, 4.3, \$1,861; 3. Kyle Irwin, 4.5, \$1,582; 4. Clayton Culligan, 4.6, \$1,303; 5. Juan Alcazar Jr, 4.7, \$1,024; 6. Eli Troyer, 4.9, \$744; 7. Joshua Moore, 5.5, \$465; 8. Joshua Hefner, 5.7, \$186.

Team roping: 1. Bradley Massey/Zack Mabry, 4.4 seconds, \$2,233 each; 2. Keven Daniel/Parker Carbajal, 4.5, \$1,970; 3. Jobe Johns/Rylan Lipe Lipe, 4.6, \$1,708; 4. Quinton Parchman/Gus Mosley, 5.2, \$1,445; 5. Ryan Pope/Zak Dobbins, 5.3, \$1,314; 6. Joe Beaver/Levi Pettigrew, 6.3, \$1,182; 7. Clint Keller/Morgan Jones, 6.8, \$1,051; 8.

Wyatt Muggli/Latham Dickson, 7.8, \$920; 9. Dillon Green/Trent Davis, 10.1, \$788; no other qualified runs.

Saddle bronc riding: 1. Kole Ashbacher, 86 points on C5 Rodeo's North Country, \$2,913; 2. Ryder Sanford, 81, \$2,233; 3. Caleb Miller, 80.5, \$1,651; 4. Kody Rinehart, 80, \$1,068; 5. Keene Justesen, 79.5, \$680; 6. Lachlan Miller, 77.5, \$486; 7. Rudy Troyer, 77, \$388; 8. (tie) Parker Kempfer and Jake Watson, 76.5, \$146 each.

Tie-down roping: 1. Ben Mayworth, 8.0 seconds, \$2,397; 2. Cross Fulford, 8.5, \$2,115; 3. Spur Valdez, 8.9, \$1,833; 4. Bart Brunson, 9.2, \$1,551; 5. Dontre

Goff Craven-Goff, 9.4, \$1,410; 6. Jake McKendree, 9.7, \$1,269; 7. Colt Papy, 9.9, \$1,128; 8. (tie) Randall Carlisle and Zeke Norfleet, 10.0, \$917 each; 10. (tie) Collin Arnould and Chris McCuiston, 10.1, \$282 each.

Barrel racing: 1. (tie) Katie Chism and Margo Crowther, 15.02 seconds, \$3,046 each; 3. Lindsey Muggli, 15.04, \$2,200; 4. Ruby Lightfoot, 15.08, \$1,692; 5. (tie) Cindy Patrick and Tara Seaton, 15.15, \$1,184 each; 7. Kati Jett, 15.17, \$846; 8. Abbie Crews, 15.18, \$761; 9. Katie Halbert, 15.19, \$677; 10. Taylor Carver, 15.20, \$592; 11. Karrie Hudson, 15.21, \$508; 12. Ryleigh Adams, 15.33, \$423; 13. Jo Fisher, 15.36, \$338;

14. Randa Irwin, 15.38, \$254; 15. Kelley Carrington, 15.40, \$169.

Bull riding: 1. Braden Richardson, 85 points on Big Rafter Rodeo's Sasquatch, \$3,610; 2. JR Stratford, 83.5, \$2,767; 3. Andres Guzman, 83, \$2,045; 4. Cody McElroy, 82.5, \$1,324; 5. (tie) Jace Troclair and Travoris Zeno, 81.5, \$722 each; 7. Patterson Starcher, 80.5, \$481; 8. Scottie Knapp, 78.5, \$361.

Total payoff: \$102,328. Stock contractor: Five Star Rodeo. Sub-contractors: JC Kitaf ProRodeos, C5 Rodeo, Painted Pony Championship Rodeo, Big Water Pro Rodeo, Marty Johns, Jason Hanchey, Marcus Theriot, Brookman Rodeo and Big Rafter

Rodeo. Rodeo secretary: Jody Cox. Officials: Chuck Hoss, Kent Crouch and J.R. Clark. Timers: Emilie White and Morgan Sellars. Announcer: Roger Mooney. Specialty acts: Haley Procto Proctor and David Whitmoyer. Bullfighters: Jake Geiger, Mike Driver and Dalton Burnell. Clown/barrelman: David Whitmoyer. Flankmen: Shawn Graham, Jack Simmons, Seth Louthan, Paul Bowers Jr and Tyson Wade Cardinal. Chute boss: Marty Johns. Pickup men: Hunter Holley, Reed Durrance and Spook Whidden. Music director: Ashley Mooney. Photographer: Darlena Roberts.



Lachlan Miller competes in the PRCA rodeo.

Tatum Mitchell



Braden Richardson rides a bull in the PRCA rodeo.

Tatum Mitchell

Chanon Frye putting up numbers at both ends

STAFF REPORT

Chanon Frye, from the Big Cypress Reservation, finished February in solid form as he scored in double digits in the final two games of the month for Murray State College men's basketball.

Frye, a 6-foot-6 freshman, scored 12 points in a 79-70 loss against Redlands Community College. He also had nine rebounds, three blocks and two steals.

Three days later he scored 11 points

in an 83-62 loss against Northeast Oklahoma A&M. He also dished out a season-high five assists and grabbed seven rebounds.

In 26 games, Frye is averaging six points and five rebounds per game. He leads the team in blocks with 22 and is fourth with 129 rebounds.

Murray State, located in southern Oklahoma, entered March with a 19-8 record.



Murray State
The 2024-25 Murray State College men's basketball team includes Chanon Frye (32).

BC to host annual Herman Osceola Memorial Tournament

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — The 36th annual Herman Osceola Memorial Basketball Tournament will be held March 20-22 at the Herman Osceola Gymnasium on the Big Cypress Reservation.

The divisions scheduled to be held include Legends (men and women 35 and up), Adults, and Youth Co-Ed. Last year's tournament was the first time the Youth Co-Ed division was offered.

The tournament is held in memory of U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Herman L. Osceola, who grew up on the BC Reservation. He died aboard a military helicopter that crashed during a training exercise March 24, 1984, in South Korea.

Hot bat for Ava Nunez

STAFF REPORT

Thomas University softball third baseman Ava Nunez picked up momentum at the plate heading into March.

Nunez, from the Immokalee Reservation, finished February by hitting safely in six of the team's final nine games before the end of the month.

She had three hits, two runs scored and one RBI in the team's Florida swing against Warner, Southeastern and Webber.

Nunez notched her first multiple hit game of the season with a 2-for-2 day in a loss Feb. 21 at Coastal Georgia. She ended the month with one hit, one run, one RBI and one walk in a 7-4 win against Middle Georgia State.

She entered March with a .250 batting average that included eight hits and three RBIs.

Nunez is in her third season at the Thomas, Georgia, school. She is majoring in psychology.

Thomas had a 7-8 record as of Feb. 28.

Pro golf tour coming to South Florida

FROM PRESS RELEASE

DORAL — Trump National Doral golf course will host LIV Golf Miami from April 4 to April 6 in Doral. The field is expected to include some of the top names in golf, including Jon Rahm, Brooks Koepka, Bryson DeChambeau, Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Cameron Smith and Sergio Garcia.

The band Sublime will perform a concert April 5.

LIV Golf features individual and team competitions. For ticket information go to livgolf.com.

Miami Open runs March 16-30 at Hard Rock Stadium

FROM PRESS RELEASE

MIAMI GARDENS — The Miami Open presented by Itaú, featuring some of the top tennis players in the world, will be held March 16-30 at Hard Rock Stadium.

Four past men's winners are in the field, led by No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz (2022), who is joined by No. 6 Daniil Medvedev (2023), No. 20 Hubert Hurkacz (2021) and six-time Miami Open champion Novak Djokovic, who is looking to make his first Miami Open appearance since 2019. Four previous finalists are also in the field, including current Top 10 members Alexander Zverev (No. 2) and Casper Ruud (No. 5) as well as Grigor Dimitrov and Kei Nishikori.

Defending champion Danielle Collins is one of a trio of former women's winners in the field, joined by Iga Swiatek (2022) and three-time winner Victoria Azarenka. The entire WTA Top 10, led by No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and No. 2 Swiatek, is entered along with No. 7 Elena Rybakina, who has been runner-up in each of the past two years. She's joined by other past finalists Naomi Osaka and Jelena Ostapenko in the field.

The Open features more than 40 restaurants and bars. New this year are popular eateries such as Fabel and Miami Slice along with returning favorites like Kiki on the River and OMAKAI.

For more information go to miamiopen.

Bare knuckle fights to be held at Hard Rock Live

FROM PRESS RELEASE

HOLLYWOOD — Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship returns to Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood March 27 at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$60. For ticket information go to myHRL.com.

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Big Cypress employees enjoy appreciation day luau

BIG CYPRESS —Employees on the Big Cypress Reservation were treated to a festive employee appreciation day luau at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena on Jan. 31. The event was sponsored and organized by the office of Councilwoman Mariann Billie.



Beverly Bidney

From left to right, Building and Grounds employees Adriana Dos Santos, Michael Dolado Romero and Dina Castro take part in the festive atmosphere of the luau.



Beverly Bidney

About 70 Ahfachkee School staff members gather together on the stage at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena during Big Cypress's employee appreciation day luau luncheon on Jan. 31.



Beverly Bidney

Health Clinic employees smile for a group selfie.



Beverly Bidney

Human Resources employee Laurell Battiste, center, poses with luau dancers as they hand out coconuts filled with coconut water to employees entering the luau.



March schedule

FROM NATIVE LEARNING CENTER

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

Webinar: How Money Works for Women: Take Control or Lose It
 Instructor: Chantay Moore, MBA (Navajo / African American)
 Certified Financial Educator
 Native American Financial Literacy Services
 Date: March 4
 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:

Money is a very emotional subject. Whether you are struggling financially or simply are not sure what to do with the money you have, this workshop will provide you the information and guidance you need to improve your financial position, create generational wealth, and truly take control of your life!

Course Objectives:
 -Understand the emotional factors that influence financial decision-making
 -Assess your current financial position and identify areas for improvement
 -Develop personalized strategies for managing money effectively, including budgeting and debt reduction
 -Explore avenues for investing and saving to build generational wealth
 -Create a long-term financial plan tailored to your individual goals and values
 -Gain confidence in making informed financial decisions to secure your future financial well-being

Webinar: Strategy & Metrics for a Successful Annual Grant Plan
 Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST
 Grant Professionals Association
 Approved Trainer
 Owner, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC
 Date: March 6
 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:
 This session will provide you with a strong understanding of your current baseline of metrics and success. You will learn how to set goals for the year ahead in a way that will help expand your grant seeking strategy and revenue.

Course Objectives:
 -How to define your success in the current year beyond the dollars awarded
 -How to set goals for your success in the upcoming year to include measurements beyond dollars awarded
 -How to engage your colleagues in being ready for the upcoming year

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: March 6-7
 Time: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Training Description:
 Instructor Jeff Ackley, Jr. is a Sokaogon Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe Tribal Member and the Executive Director of the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa Housing Authority. Through his leadership, the Housing Authority secured diverse funding through Low Income Housing Tax Credits, the American Rescue Plan Act, and other sources to develop the Tree Haven subdivision, a community center, and other housing-related projects in Lac du Flambeau. Jeff is also the Chairman of the Great Lakes Indian Housing Association and sits on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Native Loan Fund, Inc. This comprehensive two-day in-person tuition-free training provides both entry-level and seasoned Tribal Housing Professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively manage and execute maintenance operations within their communities. Participants will gain a thorough understanding of preventative

maintenance, troubleshooting common issues, and coordinating repairs while adhering to relevant regulations and industry best practices.

Webinar: Understanding the Emergency Operation Center and Navigating Through Crisis 4-Day Webinar Series
 Instructor: Dr. William Latchford, DCJ
 President,
 Native Peacekeeper Consulting Group, LLC.
 Date: March 11-14
 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:
 "Understanding the Emergency Operation Center and Navigating Through the Crisis Series" offers an in-depth look at the heart of emergency response: the Emergency Operation Center (EOC). These webinars are crafted to help participants comprehend the structure, functions, and management of an EOC, including the integration with Incident Command Systems (ICS). Attendees will navigate through the processes of activation, operation, and deactivation of an EOC, along with the progression of response and recovery to various hazards. The webinar series will delve into the role of coordination and communication among different agencies and jurisdictions during an emergency. It will provide a sequential understanding that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in managing disasters and emergencies from the onset of the hazard to the end back to normalcy.

Course Objectives:
 -Define the purpose and functions of an Emergency Operation Center (EOC)
 -Understand the relationship between EOCs and Incident Command Systems (ICS)
 -Identify key components of EOC structure and layout.
 -Recognize different models of EOC organization and their applications
 -Comprehend the role of technology in modern EOC operations

Webinar: Grant Professionals ARE Superheroes
 Instructor: Diane Leonard, GPC, RST
 Grant Professionals Association
 Approved Trainer
 Owner, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC
 Date: March 20
 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:
 This session will highlight the many

hats and specialties we wear/have as grant professionals. While we may tell our clients/employers that we can't do it alone, and we *shouldn't* do it alone, we are each, in fact, our own unique superhero creating impact and change through our work.

Course Objectives:
 -YOU are a Super Hero
 -Measuring Your Value
 -Setting Goals for the Upcoming Year
 -Discussion and Questions

Webinar: NAHASDA Procurement & Contract Administration 5-Day Webinar Series
 Instructor: Cheryl A. Causley, (Bay Mills Tribe of Chippewa Indians)
 Principal,
 Cheryl A. Causley and Associates
 Date: March 24-28
 Time: 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Course Description:
 This course will cover the administrative requirements that pertain to procurement using Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) funds distributed to Tribes and Tribal Housing Programs in accordance with the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA). During this course, students will learn how to conduct procurement effectively and efficiently and to comply with requirements imposed by HUD and other funding sources. We will discuss the skills required to perform the responsibilities related to sound procurement management and the methods for complying with 2 CFR 200. We will provide various procurement documents to help your organization with procurement compliance areas.

Course Objectives:
 -An understanding of the IHA management and operations in relation to procurement
 -An increased knowledge of the concepts and basics of procurement
 -Improved capabilities and proficiency of job skills in the performance of procurement functions of the local housing entity

Follow the Native Learning Center on social media or visit www.nativelearningcenter.com to keep up-to-date. For technical assistance, feedback, or more information, please contact us through our website or call 954-985-2331. The Native Learning Center values your input and welcomes your questions. Let us know what courses you and your community would like to see offered or if there are insights and lessons you and your community would like to share with others through the Native Learning Center.

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