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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

creek corner

UNCOVERING ALABAMA'S

Hidden NATURAL Treasures

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE AND
LAND MANAGEMENT IN TRIBAL ECONOMIES

Page 12

A Vision For
Facilities: Eddie
“Dinky” Jackson
Steps In

More info on page 29



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MEGAN ZAMORA
Editor, Creek Corner

“In our society, there is an increasing push towards extremes, a demand that we either fully embrace or completely reject individuals based on singular issues. But life is far more intricate than that.”

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“



Life has a way of reminding us that rarely do things fit neatly into the categories of “always” or “never.” Recently, I had an experience that reinforced this lesson in a profound way.

I attended an event featuring a renowned artist whose work is breathtaking, filled with deep cultural wisdom and artistic brilliance. Yet, this individual has also expressed viewpoints that I respect her for holding, even if I feel they lack room for a fuller perspective or a pathway to reconciliation. Given this history, some might have expected me to avoid the event altogether. But I went. And I’m glad I did.

Had I allowed a difference in perspective to prevent me from attending, I would have missed an inspiring, artistically stimulating evening. Not only did I enjoy the performance immensely, but I also had the opportunity to meet the artist and get several books signed for myself and my family. It was a powerful reminder that people are complex—capable of both disagreement and brilliance, of holding different viewpoints while still offering something of great value to the world.

In our society, there is an increasing push toward extremes, a demand that we either fully embrace or completely reject individuals or ideas based on singular issues. But life is far more intricate than that. I recall reading about test-taking strategies that caution against choosing answers containing absolute terms like “always” or “never.” Life follows the same principle—few things are ever truly all-or-nothing. If we refuse to engage with those we don’t completely agree with, we risk missing out on experiences that could broaden our understanding and enrich our lives.

This doesn’t mean we compromise our values. It simply means we recognize that human beings, like the world itself, exist in shades of complexity. We can disagree with aspects of someone’s perspective while still appreciating their gifts, their insights, and their contributions. We can hold space for nuance while treating others with respect and kindness.

As we move through this season of renewal and growth, I encourage us all to embrace complexity, to seek understanding beyond division, and to find value in the richness of perspectives that life offers. Doing so will only deepen our experiences, strengthen our connections, and make us more well-rounded individuals.

After all, sometimes the best moments in life come when we step beyond the boundaries of “always” and “never.”

CORRECTION

In the March issue of Creek Corner, a historical image was published on page 26 without a caption, which may have led readers to believe the figure depicted was Alexander McGillivray. We have since learned, thanks to clarification provided by the Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), that the image is actually of Hopothle Mico or the Talassee King of the Creeks.. We sincerely appreciate THPO bringing this to our attention and helping us maintain historical accuracy. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused and remain committed to transparent and precise communication with our readers.



TRIBAL LEADERS

The mission of the Poarch Creek Indians is to protect our inherent rights as a sovereign American Indian Tribe, promote our culture and beliefs, to help our Tribal Citizens achieve their highest potential, maintain good relations with other Indian tribes and units of government, acquire, develop and conserve resources to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency, and ensure that our people live in peace and harmony among themselves and with others.

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DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: PUBLIC WORKS

By Ashlee “Katie” Mothershed

The **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT** plays a vital role in maintaining and enhancing the Tribe’s infrastructure, ensuring safe and efficient transportation, construction, and mechanical services. This department is composed of three essential divisions: **Transportation, Construction, and the Mechanic Shop**. Each of these divisions contributes significantly to the community by managing critical projects and services that impact daily life.

TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation division oversees the Tribe’s **BIA Tribal Transportation Program**, managing an annual \$1 million in BIA Tribal Transportation shares. The team is responsible for the **repair, maintenance, safety, and drainage improvements of over 100 miles of roads and bridges** spanning BIA, Tribal, and County-owned infrastructure within and around the reservation.

Key Responsibilities Include:

- Conducting **annual inspections** of roads, bridges, and parking facilities.
- Providing **recommendations to the Tribal Council** for road improvement priorities.
- Managing **On-Call Consultant contracts** for architectural, engineering, environmental, surveying, geotechnical, and planning services.
- Serving as the **liaison with local, county, state, and federal officials** on transportation matters.

CONSTRUCTION

The Construction division plays an essential role in Tribal development by providing direct support to various projects. This team specializes in **dirt work, roadwork, demolition, and building pad preparation**, ensuring that projects are completed efficiently and safely.

Key Responsibilities Include:

- **Roadway and drainage improvements** to enhance infrastructure resilience.
- Assisting other departments with dirt work, **bush hogging, weed eating, grass cutting, and road grading**.
- Managing the **Dirt Program**, which provides essential resources for land development.
- Administering the **Elder Assistance Program**, ensuring that elders receive the necessary support for property upkeep and access improvements.

MECHANIC SHOP

The Mechanic Shop is responsible for maintaining the Tribe’s fleet and heavy equipment, ensuring all assets are in optimal working condition. Their work is crucial in keeping operations running smoothly across all departments.

Key Responsibilities Include:

- Performing **preventative maintenance and repairs on all Tribally owned vehicles and equipment**.
- Servicing **fleet vehicles, small equipment, and heavy machinery** to ensure reliability and safety.

A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Public Works Department is dedicated to maintaining the Tribe’s infrastructure, ensuring safety, and enhancing the overall quality of life for all community members. Through strategic planning, efficient project execution, and collaborative efforts with local and federal agencies, Public Works continues to be a cornerstone of Tribal development.

Stay tuned for more updates on upcoming projects and initiatives from the Public Works Department!



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Stephanie Bryan



CHIEF OF STAFF

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IT

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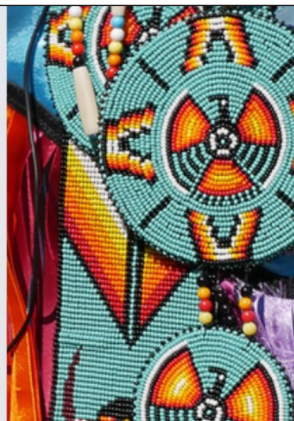
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BEN RAINES: SHINING A LIGHT ON ALABAMA'S *Hidden Natural Treasures*

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

Ben Raines, Environmental Fellow at the University of South Alabama and writer and filmmaker in residence, has spent his career uncovering Alabama's best-kept secret—its unparalleled biodiversity. As an environmental journalist, filmmaker, and conservationist, Raines has dedicated himself to revealing the state's ecological richness, from its winding rivers to its fragile pitcher plant bogs. His work, particularly the acclaimed documentary *The Carnivorous Kingdom*, has played a critical role in reshaping how people view Alabama's environment.

For Raines, the journey began when he became the environmental reporter for *The Press-Register* in Mobile. For over 15 years, he exposed environmental threats while also celebrating Alabama's unique ecosystems. "The biggest problem facing the environment was that people, both in the state and in the nation at large, had no idea how special Alabama's environment is," Raines explains. His research revealed a striking paradox—Alabama has more species per square mile than any other state, yet it also leads the nation in extinctions. This realization fueled his passion to educate the public through films like *America's Amazon*, *The Underwater Forest*, and *The Carnivorous Kingdom*.

THE IMPACT OF THE CARNIVOROUS KINGDOM

Born from Raines' lifelong fascination with carnivorous plants, *The Carnivorous Kingdom* is a breathtaking exploration of Alabama's pitcher plant bogs—one of the rarest ecosystems in North America. These wetlands serve as home to nearly every species of pitcher plant found on the continent, yet they are vanishing at an alarming rate due to habitat destruction.

With the support of the Poarch Creek Indians, Alabama Coastal Foundation, and the Sierra Club, Raines was able to bring this story to life. The documentary has been widely praised for its stunning cinematography and compelling storytelling, drawing attention to the urgent need for conservation. "The film has been a great ambassador for Alabama's environment," Raines notes. "I've had kids as young as five tell me it's their favorite movie. People have even placed conservation easements on their land after seeing it."

The impact extends beyond individual viewers. Conservation groups, inspired by the film, have prioritized pitcher plant bogs in their preservation efforts. *The Carnivorous Kingdom* has also reached policymakers, earning Raines a meeting with Alabama Governor Kay Ivey to discuss protective measures for these fragile landscapes.

MARK BERTÉ AND THE ALABAMA COASTAL FOUNDATION: A DRIVING FORCE

Mark Berté, Executive Director of the Alabama Coastal Foundation, has been instrumental in bringing environmental stories like *The Carnivorous Kingdom* to the forefront. The Foundation's mission aligns with Raines' work—educating the public about Alabama's natural wonders and advocating for their protection.

"Ben's films allow the viewer to have an up-close experience of the state's vast and unique natural resources," says Berté. "Being an education organization, we are thrilled to partner on these efforts to help people understand why conservation matters. These amazing ecosystems sustain our way of life, and our local economies depend on protecting them today and for generations to come."

The Alabama Coastal Foundation's support allowed *The Carnivorous Kingdom* to reach a national audience through PBS, ensuring that viewers across the country could see Alabama in a new light. "Every time it airs on Alabama Public Television, I get a flood of messages from people stunned that all these plants and animals exist in their home state," Raines shares.

A CALL TO ACTION

Through his documentaries, books, and advocacy, Ben Raines continues to push for a new narrative—one where Alabama is recognized not just for its industrial history or civil rights struggles, but for its extraordinary natural heritage.

"The only hope is to make the citizens care enough about these places that they force elected officials to protect them," Raines asserts. His work serves as both a wake-up call and an invitation—to see Alabama through new eyes and to take part in preserving its wild beauty for generations to come.

For those who have yet to experience *The Carnivorous Kingdom*, the documentary remains available online and airs regularly on public television. It is a testament to what can be accomplished when passionate individuals and committed organizations come together for a common cause—protecting Alabama's most precious landscapes before they are lost forever.

Scan the QR code below to watch *The Carnivorous Kingdom*.



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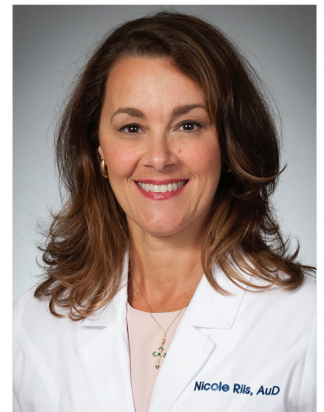
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Elizabeth Pickett, Au.D., CCC-A

Nicole Riis, Au.D., CCC-A

THE ROLE OF *Agriculture* AND *Land Management* IN TRIBAL ECONOMIES

By Ashlee “Katie” Mothershed

Agriculture and land management have always been important to the economic and cultural survival of Native American tribes. Indigenous communities thrived by utilizing sustainable agricultural techniques that kept their lands healthy and provided for their people. However, colonial disruptions, forced displacement, and restrictive federal policies have greatly impacted tribal economies, which makes it necessary to reassert tribal sovereignty over land management and agricultural production.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

For centuries, Native American tribes cultivated the “Three Sisters” (corn, beans, and squash). These formed the backbone of many Indigenous diets. Land was a sacred entity that connected us to our ancestors and future generations, not just a resource. Sustainable farming techniques, such as crop rotation, intercropping, and controlled burns, helped maintain soil fertility and ecosystem balance.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is still a significant economic driver for many tribal nations. Farming, ranching, and food production provide job opportunities, contribute to food sovereignty, and generate revenue through trade and tourism. Tribal-run farms and coops produce a variety of crops and livestock sold in local and national markets. However, many tribes face challenges accessing credit, infrastructure, and markets due to historical land policies and bureaucratic hurdles.

LAND MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Land management involves more than just agricultural. It includes forestry, water conservation, and environmental stewardship. Many tribes are leading efforts in regenerative agriculture and climate-resilient practices. Sustainable land management protects tribal lands but also ensures long-term economic viability.



Many tribes are leading efforts in regenerative agriculture and climate-resilient practices. Sustainable land management protects tribal lands but also ensures long-term economic viability.

CHALLENGES AND POLICY BARRIERS

Federal policies such as the Dawes Act, have made it difficult for tribes to fully control and utilize their lands for economic benefit. Restricted access to capital and infrastructure limits agricultural development. Climate change poses new threats, such as unpredictable weather patterns, soil degradation, and water scarcity.

PATHWAYS TO ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY

To strengthen tribal economies through agriculture and land management, several key initiatives are necessary:

Investment in Infrastructure

Improved irrigation, storage, and transportation networks can help tribes expand agricultural production and reach broader markets.

Policy Reforms

Federal policies must support rather than hinder tribal land management and economic development efforts.

Education and Workforce Development

Training the next generation of Indigenous farmers, scientists, and land managers ensures continuity in sustainable practices.

Food Sovereignty Initiatives

Encouraging tribes to produce their own food helps reduce dependency on external food sources and strengthens community health.

Agriculture and land management are more than economic tools for tribal nations; they are essential components of cultural preservation and self-determination. By reclaiming control over their lands and investing in sustainable practices, tribes can build resilient economies while honoring their ancestral traditions. Strengthening agricultural enterprises and land management strategies will not only benefit tribal communities but also contribute to broader environmental and economic sustainability for future generations.

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POARCH 101: *Welcoming Tasahce* /spring, dah·sah·chee

By Megan Zamora from interview with Justin “Bobo” Rolin

As April arrives, we welcome the renewal of life that comes with spring. This season is a time of growth, both in nature and in the ways we continue to connect with our traditions. With National Wildlife Week, National Environmental Education Week, Earth Day, and National Gardening Day all falling within this month, it’s a great opportunity to reflect on the relationship between our people and the land that has sustained us for generations.

For the Poarch Creek people, the land isn’t just where we live—it’s a part of who we are. Our ancestors knew how to read the seasons, understanding when to plant, when to harvest, and when to prepare for what was to come. The blooming of dogwood trees, for example, was a natural sign to start planting gardens and fishing to prepare for the warmer months ahead. River cane, another important native plant, was used to make baskets, mats, and even structures, showcasing the resourcefulness of those who came before us. And medicine plants like rabbit tobacco were used to treat common ailments, proving that our knowledge of the land extended far beyond just food and shelter.

Spring was also a time of careful preparation. The tradition of the Three Sisters garden—planting corn, beans, and squash together—is one example of how our ancestors worked with the land to ensure sustainable and nutritious harvests. They also knew the value of returning nutrients to the soil, using fish remains as fertilizer to keep the land healthy and productive.

Fishing wasn’t just about food, though. Every part of the fish was used, from the skin of the alligator gar, which was turned into tough and durable items such as quivers, to fish teeth and bones, which were repurposed into tools and weapons. This way of living, where nothing went to waste, was a reflection of a deep respect for the natural world.

Today, we continue to find ways to maintain these connections. Whether it’s growing a garden using traditional planting methods, learning about native plants and their uses, or simply recognizing the importance of sustainability in our everyday lives, there are many ways to honor the knowledge passed down through generations. As we move through April and celebrate the renewal that spring brings, it’s a reminder that our relationship with the land is not just history—it’s a living, evolving part of who we are.

*The blooming
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HELPING TRIBAL NATIONS

Step Into THEIR Power

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez



EDITOR'S NOTE: This article previously appeared in the March 2025 issue of Creek Corner. Content information pertaining to Magnolia Branch has been updated.

H

igh school civics classes rarely teach that 574 sovereign Tribal Nations co-exist within the borders of the United States—nations whose governments predate the establishment of states or the U.S. itself. Among them, 33 Tribal Nations—from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf Coast—are united through the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET), which serves as a United Nations of sorts by providing program support as a 501(c)(3) organization. Its sister organization, USET Sovereignty Protection Fund, a 501(c)(4), focuses on policy, legislation, and litigation to protect Tribal sovereignty. However, when you talk with the Executive Director of USET, Kitcki Carroll, you'll quickly learn that he believes the nations he fights for deserve an equal seat at the table of the United Nations. After all, they are all inherently sovereign nations.

This perspective frames up the understanding of USET and how it supports and advocates for the Poarch Creek Indians and 32 other nations. Like any other group of nations, the members of USET/USET SPF have varying levels of economic output. At a basic level, USET/USET SPF was established to improve the conditions for all member nations by sharing best practices and helping rebuilding nations improve their quality

**TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS, SOCIETIES,
AND ECONOMIES HAVE
DEMONSTRATED MODELS OF SUCCESS
THAT SHOULD BE SHARED...**

***When truly sovereign,
with self-determination,
Tribal Nations create success,
provide for their people,
govern responsibly and
demonstrate stewardship.***



of life. After Poarch Creek became federally recognized in 1984, USET was an invaluable resource to the Tribe. It provided support for developing governmental infrastructure and, more importantly, a network of Tribal leaders who had walked in their shoes.

Whether it was learning how to provide public health services to their citizens, establishing a public safety agency, or an economic development authority, USET helped Poarch Creek navigate regulatory hurdles, find success, and firmly grasp self-determination. The Poarch Creek Indians now pride themselves on the model of government they have established. Today, Vice Chair Robbie McGhee serves as the organization's Vice President. As the Poarch Creek Indians have become more successful and sustainable, they have become a resource for other member nations. They have also become a model for other governments outside Indian Country.

This is a point that Kitcki wants to make clear. Tribal governments, societies, and economies have demonstrated models of success that should be shared with municipalities, states and nations that coexist with Indian nations. When truly sovereign, with self-determination, Tribal Nations create success, provide for their people, govern

responsibly and demonstrate stewardship. Poarch Creek has a long history of sharing resources and best practices with surrounding municipalities and the state of Alabama. The Tribe regularly partners with city, county, and state governments on safety, transportation, health, and education, fostering mutual respect and understanding. These government-to-government relationships strengthen local communities and contribute to a stronger America as a whole.

This brings us to the land on which these nations live. Every nation is continually reaffirming and defending its sovereignty. One reason for this is that the title to their nations' lands is actually held by the U.S. Government in Trust. Certainly, there are benefits and protections derived from this arrangement. Yet, as Liz Malerba, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, explains, the process of restoring and reclaiming the land on which your nation resides is not designed to be easy. In order to expand Tribal lands, Tribal Nations are frequently placed in the awkward position of purchasing land that once belonged to them and then applying to have it held in trust. The wheels of government seem to turn particularly slow in this regard.

When you consider that Creek Nation once occupied millions of acres across the southeast, the Poarch Creeks hold a tiny fraction of their original homeland. Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve is a prime example of this land reclamation process. In 2004, Billy Smith, a well-known Tribal Elder, recommended to the Tribal Council that the Tribe reacquire the land that would eventually become Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve for the Tribe from a private owner. You have to imagine that this land along the banks of a river bend with natural beaches and incredible biodiversity was once a gathering place for Creeks. The Tribe has since worked to create a public haven for relaxation to this day. While this is a small example of the land that is reclaimed each year, it demonstrates the dynamics at the center of the Land Back movement.

Ironically, the same government that drove Indians from their native lands later created programs aimed at addressing the hardships those policies created. One of those laws allowed Tribal nations to generate revenue from gaming on Tribal lands. Another 8(a) designation gave Tribal nations favorable status when bidding on federal contracts. Rebecca Naragon, Director of Economic Development for USET, explained how some Tribal nations

...continued on next page

have leveraged the two laws to generate significant revenue and reinvest it in a more diversified, sustainable economy that benefits all Tribal citizens and the counties and states where they share geography.

The Poarch Creek Indians have done a tremendous job of growing gaming revenue and diversifying through federal services and other investments. Mal McGhee pioneered using the 8(a) designation to develop homegrown businesses that have evolved into a network of companies, both acquired and bootstrapped, that provide diversified job opportunities and sustainable growth for the Tribe. Rebecca says to this day, as she talks with USET Tribal Nations, you still hear stories of a tall Poarch Creek Indian with a thick accent, a passion for aviation, and a thirst for knowledge, who knows a thing or two about federal contracting.

There are two things that Kitcki wanted to get across about USET and the role it plays. There's an exciting new generation of leaders emerging in these Tribal nations. Because many Tribal Nations, like the Poarch Creek Indians, provide for their citizens' higher education, the next generation is more educated and brings a new perspective to the conversation. To Kitcki, education is critical for his member nations to achieve their potential. He demonstrates that with a simple yet powerful point - understanding the difference in mentality between a member and a citizen.

Too often, Tribes have been programmed to refer to their people as members. This undermines the governmental and political status of Tribal Nations and frames the relationship between the person and the Tribe in a way that doesn't nearly encompass this reality. Instead, Tribal nations should refer to their people as citizens. This more accurately defines the two-way relationship of responsibility and more fully recognizes the sovereignty of the nation. Helping 33 sovereign nations to understand, appreciate, and embody these types of distinctions is just one step in the journey that USET envisions for the people it supports.

“There are two things that Kitcki wanted to get across about USET and the role it plays. There's an exciting new generation of leaders emerging in these Tribal nations. Because many Tribal Nations, like the Poarch Creek Indians, provide for their citizens' higher education, the next generation is more educated and brings a new perspective to the conversation.”



PICTURED Kitcki Carroll, Executive Director, United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund
(Photo: RNZ / Emma Andrews)



PICTURED Liz Malerba, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund

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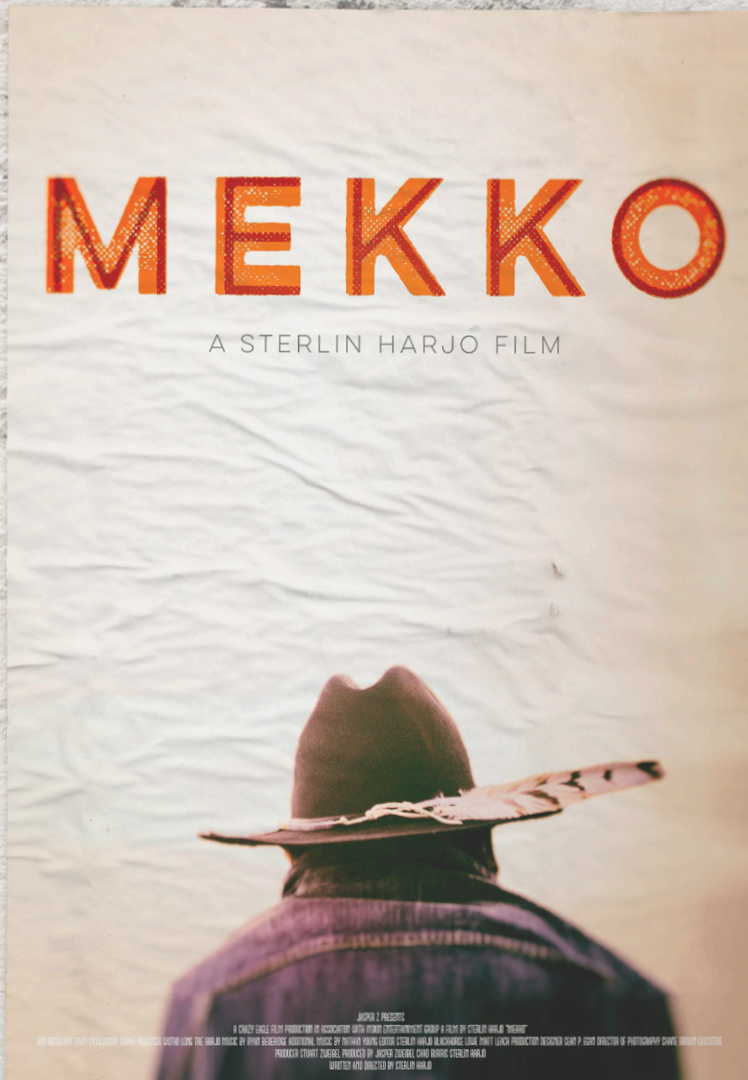
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MEKKO

**A POETIC TALE
OF REDEMPTION**

By Ashlee “Katie” Mothershed

Sterlin Harjo’s *Mekko* is a haunting and powerful drama that explores redemption, survival, and the unseen struggles of Indigenous communities. After serving a long prison sentence, Mekko, a Muscogee man, finds himself homeless in Tulsa, where he encounters a tight-knit Native community—and a sinister figure threatening their survival. Blending gritty realism with spiritual symbolism, Harjo crafts a deeply moving story of resilience and the search for belonging. With stunning cinematography and a gripping lead performance by Rod Rondeaux, *Mekko* is an essential watch for those interested in Indigenous storytelling and socially conscious cinema.

The Tribe is committed to doing its part to further Native arts through books, media, movies, fashion, and similar artistic outlets. We’d love to include your recommendation in one of our future issues. Please feel free to share those with me. Mvto!

Share your recommendation
with Katie Mothershed at
kmothershed@pci-nsn.gov.



CELEBRATE SPRING THIS APRIL WITH OWA'S SPRING FLING

By Catherine Hasty

S

pring is here! Celebrate the season with family-friendly fun including a 5K run, Bunnies and Baskets, and the annual Mustang and Mega Car Show. OWA's Spring Fling is bringing all the fun with something new around every corner!

STEPS FOR INCLUSION 5K

April 5 | 8:00 a.m.

Walk, jog, roll or run, but don't miss the Arc of Gulf Coast's 5K! Join us and experience the thrill of community spirit as we come together to raise funds for vital programs to assist the special needs community in our area. Funds raised will be used to support activities such as Community Engagement, Summer Camps, Employment Services, Residential Housing and more. Don't miss this great opportunity to make a difference while enjoying a fun-filled day. The race begins at 8:00 a.m., followed by free lawn games throughout the morning. Day of registration begins at 7:00 a.m., or you can register online at runsignup.com/Race/AL/Foley/TheArcOfGulfCoastALStepsForInclusion. Sign up now and be a part of something amazing!

BUNNIES & BASKETS

April 12, 13, and 19 | 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Celebrate the magic of Easter with a week of hopping fun at OWA's annual Bunnies & Baskets! This family-friendly event is filled with activities for all ages. From egg hunts and DIY crafts to photo ops with the Easter Bunny, this springtime celebration is the perfect way to make unforgettable memories. The fun begins at 10:00 a.m. with arts and crafts projects including flower crowns, egg decorating and designing your own Easter basket. Use your Easter basket to join in the fun of the Easter Egg Hunt on April 19th (separated by age groups), then try your skill at spring games like sack racing, egg & spoon race and the downhill egg race. And don't forget to grab a photo with the Easter Bunny*! All events are free for guests to attend. *There is a fee for photos with the Easter Bunny.

OWA REVELRY WEEK

April 14–18

Get in on the fun all week long at this year's Revelry Week! OWA is the place to be for a week full of fun, themed activities, and something new happening every day. We will have everything from movie nights and musical entertainment to kids' arts and crafts and of course, family fun at Tropic Falls! Be sure and visit our website for event details, dates and times.



GULF COAST REGIONAL MUSTANG & MEGA CAR SHOW

April 26 | 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Join us for a full day of fun at the annual Gulf Coast Regional Mustang & Mega Car Show. This family-friendly event is put on by the Gulf Coast Regional Mustang Club and will be held in Downtown OWA. Join us for a day-long adventure as we journey through different types of vehicles from different decades—from classic mustangs to MEGA cars! The fun kicks off at 10:00 a.m. with carnival and lawn games, as well as RC car racing all afternoon on OWA Island. The awards ceremony and trophy presentation will begin at 3:00 p.m. with a variety of categories. This event is free to attend.



Also this month, be sure to check out all the great live performances scheduled at the **OWA THEATER** offering musical acts from rock to country.

April 12 | 7:30 p.m.

The Ultimate Doors: The Premier Doors Tribute

April 26 | 7:30 p.m.

Ultimate Garth: The Premiere Garth Tribute



New at OWA, **GULF COAST REP** has opened its new playhouse in Downtown OWA. This vibrant new destination for live theater is taking center stage on the Alabama Gulf Coast with its brand-new location in Downtown OWA. The curtain rises on this exciting new chapter as OWA Parks & Resort welcomes the talented team led by Alabama native and artistic director Darren Butler.

In April, be sure to check out *Runaway Home*. This new production by Gulf Coast Rep is a cross-generational pop musical where broken souls collide to create a found family. For more information on their inaugural season and to purchase tickets, visit their website at gulfcoastrep.com/the-season.

Keep up with the latest news on events, entertainment, and activities via our website at VisitOWA.com or by following us on social media @VisitOWA.

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POARCH CREEK INDIANS HOSTS FIRST ANNUAL BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB MARDI GRAS BALL

By Donna Koehrsen

The Poarch Creek Indians' Boys and Girls Club (BGC) held their first annual Mardi Gras Ball on Thursday, February 20. Staff wanted to host a special event for the BGC kids to celebrate the Mardi Gras holiday. There are many balls and dance events for adults during this time, and staff wanted to facilitate an event specifically for kids where they can dress up and have a similar experience. They even held a surprise "king and queen" contest for the three different age groups: K-2nd grade, 3rd-6th grade, and teens.

The BGC staff did a wonderful job decorating and catering this event. They hired Powell Entertainment to DJ and set up drapes and lights. BGC staff are excited to make this an annual event.

A special thanks goes to all of the staff that helped make this event such a great experience for the BGC kids.





WIND CREEK BETHLEHEM SPONSORS VICTORY HOUSE COOKIE DECORATING EVENT

By Amelia Tognoli



“...Wind Creek Bethlehem’s Pastry Team prepared and delivered 150 heart-shaped cookies to Victory House of Lehigh Valley, a local nonprofit...”

Last month, Wind Creek Bethlehem’s Pastry Team prepared and delivered 150 heart-shaped cookies to Victory House of Lehigh Valley, a local nonprofit, for their Cookie Decorating event.

Located less than five minutes from Wind Creek Bethlehem’s property, Victory House is a recognized leader in the community that provides local homeless veterans and homeless men with opportunities to transition to independent affordable houses and to begin new lives.

“Christmas was our first trial run, and we loved it—Victory House loved it and invited us back,” said Susan Stachowski, Community Relations Coordinator Wind Creek Bethlehem. “We did this again in February for Valentine’s Day and now look forward to April for Easter cookies.”

The Pastry Team enjoyed volunteering at Victory House and attending the December and February Cookie Decorating events brought much joy to the team. The ministry of caring for men who have lost their spirit and their way, compels Victory House to continually create new possibilities, and bring hope and victory as they provide a new way of life.

Victory House has been a recipient of Wind Creek Bethlehem’s Sponsorships for more than 15 years.

“We appreciate everything Victory House does for the community,” said Susan. “They really are making a difference and we are grateful to support.”



PICTURED Left to Right | Dylan McGhee, Tribal Member; Charlotte Meckel, PCI Tribal Council Secretary; Stephanie Bryan, PCI Tribal Chair & CEO; Justin Stabler, PCI Tribal Council; Wes Nall, Interim CEO Atmore Community Hospital

POARCH CREEK INDIANS DONATE \$750,000 TO ATMORE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Tribe's Financial Support Has Positive Impact on Facility and Surrounding Community

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

The Atmore Community Hospital is happy to announce that the Poarch Creek Indians have donated \$750,000 to this critically important rural healthcare facility close to its reservation in Atmore, Alabama. The Tribe's donation is part of an ongoing commitment to ensuring that the larger community in and around Atmore continues to have access to high-quality healthcare.

Previously, the Tribe donated \$1 million to the hospital during the Covid-19 pandemic. This latest contribution will help the hospital continue its mission of providing patients and the community with safe, quality healthcare close to home and that it is delivered to the highest standards.

"On behalf of our entire hospital community, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Poarch Creek Indians for their incredibly generous \$750,000 donation," stated Interim Administrator Wes Nall. "This contribution will have a profound impact on our ability to provide exceptional care and essential services to our patients. Their commitment to the health and well-being of our community is truly inspiring, and we are honored to have their support."

"Rural healthcare is a necessity, not a luxury," noted Tribal Chair and CEO Stephanie A. Bryan. She continued, "We need to have access to a good hospital that is close to home and that is truly part of our community. Proximity can mean all the difference in situations where minutes matter. We are blessed to be able to support Atmore Community Hospital and the wonderful people who work there and care for us."

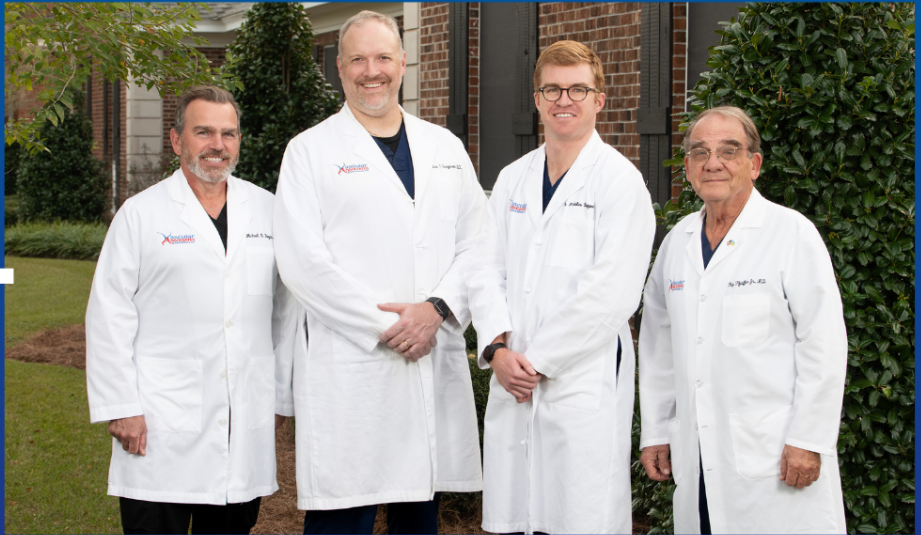
The Poarch Creek Indians are committed to improving the quality of life in Atmore and throughout the State. Among the Tribe's beneficiaries are schools, numerous education initiatives, healthcare, charities, and non-profits across the state. This latest donation underscores the Tribe's dedication to fostering a healthier, stronger Atmore.

“

[Poarch Creek Indians'] commitment to the health and well-being of our community is truly inspiring, and we are honored to have their support.

**WES NALL,
INTERIM CEO ATMORE
COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

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A VISION FOR FACILITIES: EDDIE “DINKY” JACKSON STEPS IN

By Sharon Delmar

The Facilities Division plays a crucial role in keeping our community running smoothly, from public works to custodial operations. With the appointment of Eddie “Dinky” Jackson as the new Facilities Division Director, big changes and improvements are on the horizon.

With a background that spans 17 years at Monsanto, been a private business owner and various leadership positions at Wind Creek and Porch Creek, Dinky brings extensive experience and a strong commitment to the community. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Organizational Management from Ashford University and has completed chemical courses to strengthen his technical knowledge. Additionally, he is a certified personal trainer through NASM, which showcases his dedication to discipline and leadership development.

His leadership philosophy centers on listening, learning, and effective communication, which he believes are key to fostering a positive and productive work environment.

One of his primary goals is enhancing collaboration and accountability within the division. “We have a great team, but improving communication and leadership will help us operate more efficiently and make a bigger impact,” he said. Regular meetings, structured feedback, and a focus on sustainability will be pillars of his approach.

Dinky also emphasizes the importance of safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness. Drawing from his experience in corporate and tribal settings, he plans to implement strategies that ensure high-quality services while managing resources responsibly.

As he steps into his new role, Dinky asks for support from both his team and the broader tribal community. “I want to earn the respect of my colleagues by showing my dedication and commitment to our shared goals,” he said.

With a clear vision and a strong drive for excellence, Eddie “Dinky” Jackson is ready to lead the Facilities Division into a new era—one that prioritizes teamwork, accountability, and the well-being of the community.

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CREEK
Travel Stores

PICTURED Keystone and Torch Club PCI History Conference 2024



PICTURED Keystone and Torch Club Liter Clean-Up, November 6, 2024



WHAT ARE THE TORCH AND KEYSTONE CLUBS?

By Kaitlen Henderson

PICTURED BGC Participates in the PCI Christmas Parade



PICTURED BGC Participates in the 2024 Alabama Coastal Cleanup

Torch and Keystone Clubs are both leadership development programs within the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA). They are designed to foster character and community service, but cater to different age groups; **TORCH CLUB** focuses on younger members aged 11-13, while **KEYSTONE CLUB** targets older teens between 14 and 18 years old, providing them with more advanced leadership opportunities and a greater emphasis on career preparation and academic success.

Our Poarch Creek Indians Torch and Keystone Club is being offered every year through the Poarch Creek Boys and Girls Club. To join the clubs, the child must be a member of the Boys and Girls Club. Starting In September of every year, both clubs recruit new members. Each club is limited to only 15 members a year. The recruitment process is carried out by the Club advisors. The current club advisor for Torch Club is Mrs. Connie Crews. The current advisor for the Keystone Club is Ms. Kaitlen Henderson. Once the recruitment process is finished and club members are picked, there will be a vote for Club officers which include the Club Presidents, Vice Presidents, Secretaries, Recorders, and Treasurers. After the officers are chosen, the clubs will be chartered through the BGCA.

The 2025 Torch Club consists of President Mykenzie Sage, Vice President Maggie Gordon, and Mylynn Smedley as Secretary and treasurer. The general Members consist of Zaelyn Smith, Sidney Brown, Cali Bethea, Olivia Grimes, Callie Murphy, Carlie Murphy, Brylynn Smedley, Aric Rolin, and Rhionna Slate. The 2025 Keystone Club consists of President Layleigh Presley, Vice President Lynn Crews, Secretary Abbi Stephens, and Recorder Sophia Murphy. The general members consist of Trinity Bethea, Bella Crews, Bly Maxwell, Jackson Rackard, and Adrian Zepahua.

The 2025 Keystone and Torch Club consists of new and old members from years before. This year the members have been involved in community service events and leadership trips.

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PICTURED Keystone and Torch Club Elders Outreach Program

The Keystone and Torch Club have developed a program that serves the elders at the Assisted Living Facility. The Keystone and Torch Club use one day a month to go to the ALF to spend time with elders and do activities. One activity they love to do together is to eat and play Bingo together. The club has done this activity with the elders several times. The most current was January 27th, 2025. The kids served red beans and rice and played a couple of rounds of bingo with the participating elders. Many laughs and memories were made at this event. Also, one day a month the clubs participate in a cultural education class held by Justin (Bobo) Rolin.

Throughout the year, the Keystone and Torch club is asked to be involved in many community service events. Events include, but are not limited to, The History Conference, Poarch Suppers and Stories, Campus Clean-up Day, and Coastal Cleanup. This year, the advisors planned a leadership trip for the kids at the Learning Campus at Gulf State Park. The trip focused on building leadership skills, working as a team, and learning about important topics in our community. Future events and trips include going to the Mardi Gras parade to collect broken beads to send to the Arc Gateway and a trip to the Birmingham Zoo.





Government Relations
and Public Affairs Office

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CREEK CORNER

APRIL 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

- | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| 4.1 | SUBMISSION DEADLINE May Issue | |
| 4.3 | TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers | 4:00 PM |
| 4.7-8 | MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED Inventory | |
| 4.8 | TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom | |
| 4.11 | FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom | |
| 4.14 | PCI CAMPUS LITTER CLEANUP | |
| 4.17 | TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers | 4:00 PM |
| 4.17 | FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom | |
| 4.22 | TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom | |