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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

# creek corner

THE MODERN IMPACT  
OF NATIVE AMERICAN

*art and  
creativity*



**INDIAN COUNTRY RESPONDS TO  
PRESIDENT BIDEN'S HISTORIC APOLOGY**

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Media Fusion  
Awarded Small  
Business Contractor  
of the Year by NASA  
Marshall Space  
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## FROM THE EDITOR: EACH ONE, TEACH ONE



**MEGAN ZAMORA**  
Editor, Creek Corner

***“Some of my most valuable lessons have been learned through the trials and challenges that someone else has endured, and through those, imparted that knowledge and wisdom to me.”***

“

A

s I edge closer to the end of another decade of my life, I find myself reflecting back on the paths I've taken, where I'm heading, and what I'm leaving behind. There's so much life I've lived, many things I've learned, wisdom acquired, mistakes made, love given and received...and many who have invested time, effort, energy, and knowledge into me.

There's something about the way in which the seasons cycle that makes the winter season a time of winding down, reflecting on the year that is quickly coming to a close, and evaluating those things we want to bring into the year ahead. Though winter brings the hustle and bustle of the holidays, it's also a time when I feel I can catch my breath for a bit before launching into all that January and a new year inevitably brings.

In this month's Poarch 101 article, you'll find that our Creek ancestors used the winter months as a time of teaching, and it got me thinking about the ones who have taught me. And, perhaps as equally important, the ones I am teaching.

I've always been an avid learner, interested and fascinated by all sorts of things from the similarities between African and Native American cultures to communications theories and research methodologies, and most recently, parenting tips and tricks for raising toddlers. Of course, all the knowledge acquired from reading and learning within a classroom is critical for one's development, but, somehow, it in no way compares to the lessons earned through living life and working at a job.

While some knowledge is meant to be learned through one's own experiences, there is much we can share with those who are willing to learn and be mentored. Some of my most valuable lessons have been learned through the trials and challenges that someone else has endured, and through those, imparted that knowledge and wisdom to me.

Denzel Washington gave a commencement speech in 2015 to Louisiana's Dillard University. In it, he says, "And anything you want good you can have, so claim it, work hard to get it. When you get it, reach back, pull someone else up, each one, teach one. Don't just aspire to make a living. Aspire to make a difference."

I've listened to the entirety of his speech many times and always feel inspired and motivated. In the world of academia, research is particularly important because it contributes to the "body of knowledge" and allows others to build upon the work that has already been done.

Our lives, if we choose, are similar in that way. What are you learning and who are you teaching your lessons to? The phrase, "each one, teach one" reverberates in my mind quite often these days. And so, I leave you with those words to reflect upon during these winter months. As valuable as your learning has been to you, our lessons aren't merely our own, but are also meant for the enriching of those with whom we are able to share them.



# 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.

## TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

Stephanie Bryan, *Tribal Chair & CEO*  
Robert McGhee, *Vice Chair*  
Charlotte Meckel, *Secretary*  
Amy Gantt, *Treasurer*

## BOTTOM ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

*At-Large Council Members:*  
Dewitt Carter  
Sandy Hollinger  
Keith Martin  
Arthur Mothershed  
Justin Stabler





## FROM OUR LEADERS: A MESSAGE FROM KEITH MARTIN

By Keith Martin



### *Hello fellow Tribal Members:*

I appreciate you all for placing your trust in me and reelecting me to sit on the Tribal Council for another term. I'm truly humbled by this and take my duties as a PCI Council Member very seriously.

First, I would like to update you all on some of the projects we have been working on. We now have a Tribally-owned internet system that is serving the reservation and surrounding community, covering approximately 36 square miles and is a high-speed broadband wireless system. We were able to place 13 90-foot mono poles throughout the community to cover this footprint. Amazingly, all these poles landed on Tribal land that we have been able to purchase through the years. It's owned and operated by our PCI Utilities Department. If you are interested in participating in this program, I urge you to contact Utilities at 251.446.1617.

The next project we have been working on is the meat processing plant. We've been working on this project for over four years now and hope to be up and processing beef by mid-January 2025; we will be selling USDA certified commercial beef, and have designed a retail shop in front of this building, where the public will be able to buy on site. We hope to have a grand opening/ribbon cutting in February 2025. Our plan is to also process swine as well but that will be later. We also hope to market our beef to restaurants in Mobile, Pensacola, and all surrounding area restaurants. Now on to the supply side, we are in the planning stages of building two 900 head confined space barns. This keeps the cattle cleaner

and healthier, so that they gain weight faster. We also have plans to increase mama cow operations. As we've purchased land throughout the years, we've been able to clear and fence in another 1,000 acres. Currently, the farm's footprint is 3,400 acres; we've installed a new water well, cross fences, and shade structures. In my opinion happy cows just taste better. With this new meat plant and new feed barns, we've expanded the footprint of the farm. We hope to be able to capture as much of a consumer dollar as we can regarding the beef industry.

The broadband project and the Meat Processing Facility have been totally funded with Federal dollars received from the Covid Pandemic. The regulations governing these dollars came with restrictions that you could only use proceeds for the betterment of your community.

On to the third project, we have been trying to upgrade Jack Springs Road and Poarch Road which serve as the main arteries to our Reservation for several years now. We have spent approximately \$4.5 million Tribal dollars on engineering fees for the upgrades to this road. Now I'm very happy that we were awarded a \$24 million dollar grant for this project. A lot of work went into getting this project off the ground. We will improve from the North side of I65 to McCullough Crossroads and will also include upgrades to Poarch Road. These upgrades will widen the road and fix a lot of drainage issues and be a lot safer for everyone who travels in our community.

Again, all these projects are the result of a lot of effort on parts of many of our staff and the Tribal Council.

**THANK Y'ALL,**  
Keith Martin

**“**  
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all for placing  
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Tribal Council for  
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Council member  
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**”**



## DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: THE ROBERTA MCGHEE SELLS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

**T**he Roberta McGhee Sells Education Department serves as a vital component of Tribal Government, dedicated to overseeing essential education, employment, and training programs intended to empower Tribal Citizens through lifelong learning and professional development. The department's mission encompasses fostering essential skills, addressing educational disparities, and supporting the personal growth of community members of all ages.

The department prioritizes the academic success of Tribal Citizens, striving to enhance academic performance in early and secondary education through initiatives such as the After School Enrichment and Incentive Programs. To encourage leadership and teamwork beyond the classroom, the Extracurricular Reimbursement Program is carefully crafted to allow our younger Tribal Citizens to participate in various programs such as dance, sports, and theater. This initiative enables them to engage in activities that cultivate essential life skills and foster a sense of social belonging within their community. The department understands how important it is for every child to feel included and to grow in an environment that values their unique contributions and experiences.

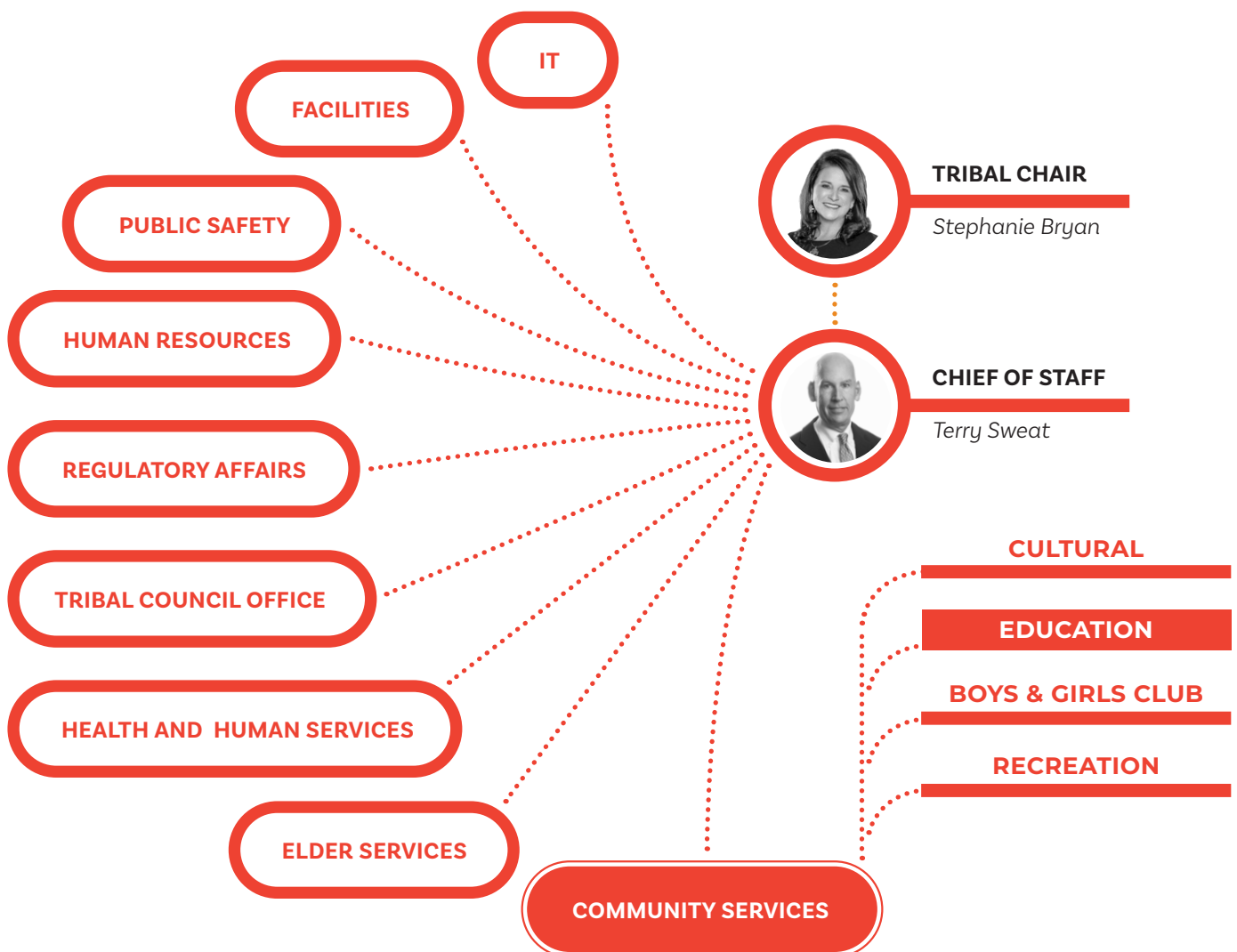
A central aspect of the department's efforts involves supporting basic educational skills for adult Tribal Citizens. Programs like Adult Basic Education and GED are available to strengthen literacy, numeracy, and other foundational competencies. By providing these resources, the department plays a significant role in assisting individuals in achieving their personal and professional aspirations, ultimately contributing to a more capable community workforce.



In addition to classroom-oriented initiatives, the Roberta McGhee Sells Education Department also offers Workforce Development Programs that provide valuable on-site work experiences within various Tribal operations. This practical engagement helps participants acquire essential job skills, effectively bridging the divide between education and employment while preparing them for various career pathways and enhancing overall job readiness. The department is also deeply committed to advancing educational opportunities through academic and technical training, ensuring eligible individuals have access to specialized skills and industry knowledge that are highly relevant in today's job market. This includes support for students pursuing higher education, trade certifications, or seeking to upgrade their skills for career advancement utilizing the Tuition Assistance Programs.

Moreover, federal grants are crucial in supporting the department's initiatives. These include the Johnson O'Malley grant, which provides educational resources for eligible Tribal children; the Adult Education grant, which focuses on adult foundational skills; and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Grant, designed to provide workplace training and career readiness programs. Each of these programs operates under specific guidelines to ensure resources are allocated effectively to those in greatest need, thereby upholding the integrity and efficacy of the department's offerings.

*Through a comprehensive array of programs, the Roberta McGhee Sells Education Department not only facilitates access to educational and employment opportunities but also strengthens the communal fabric of the Tribal community, ensuring that all Tribal Citizens are afforded the opportunity to thrive both academically and professionally.*





## POARCH CREEK INDIANS ANNOUNCE STEVEN STEWART AS NEW CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

By Megan Zamora

**T**he Poarch Creek Indians are excited to welcome Steven Stewart in the position of Chief Information Officer (CIO) with the Tribal Government. Stewart brings a wealth of experience in IT leadership along with a deep commitment to public service, making him uniquely qualified to lead the Tribe's technology initiatives and build upon the department's success.

A U.S. Navy veteran, Stewart served with distinction for 15 years and holds both a bachelor's degree and an MBA from Western Governors University. For the past ten years, he served as CIO for the Muckleshoot Tribe in Seattle, Washington. Prior to that, he served as Director of IT at Yakama Legends Casino in Washington and as IT Manager at Spirit Mountain Casino in Oregon.

"Steven's extensive experience in Tribal Government IT and his commitment to excellence make him an invaluable addition to our leadership team," said Tribal Chair and CEO Stephanie A. Bryan. "We are thrilled to have him on board and are confident that he will strengthen our IT infrastructure for the Poarch Creek Indians."

Alongside his professional expertise, Stewart brings a unique personal background and wide range of interests. He is a third-generation lapidary, learning the art of gemstone cutting and jewelry crafting from his father and grandfather. He is also an avid traveler, having explored 26 countries and 49 U.S. states, and has a passion for motorsports, collecting and driving sports and vintage cars, and sim racing competitions. He is also an enthusiastic guitar player and enjoys outdoor activities like fishing.

With Steven Stewart at the helm, the Poarch Creek Indians' IT department is ready to embrace new advancements and foster a more connected, innovative future. "I look forward to working with the Poarch Creek Indians to create systems and strategies that not only serve the Tribe today but also lay a strong foundation for the future," said Stewart.

“

*Steven's extensive experience in Tribal Government IT and his commitment to excellence make him an invaluable addition to our leadership team.*

**STEPHANIE A. BRYAN,  
PCI TRIBAL CHAIR & CEO**





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**PICTURED** Judge Brogden finalizes the appointment of Police Chief Chris Rutherford with an official signature, as Chief Rutherford proudly looks on.

# CHRIS RUTHERFORD APPOINTED FIRST POARCH CREEK TRIBAL CITIZEN TO SERVE AS POLICE CHIEF

*By Kristin Hellmich*



**CHRIS RUTHERFORD**

*Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Police Chief*

**C**hris Rutherford recently made history as he took oath as the first Poarch Creek Tribal Citizen to serve as the Police Chief for the Poarch Creek Tribal Police Department. The event was held on October 28 in the Executive Tribal Chamber as Chief Rutherford was surrounded by co-workers, friends, and family.

Rutherford, a longtime member of the department, steps into his role with years of dedicated service to the community. He began his career 32 years ago with the Tribe as a mechanic and eventually joined the Tribal Police in 1998. Most recently, he has served as Interim Chief.

He has a history of public service in his family, with his father serving in the U.S. Army and his grandfather serving as a fire chief. Rutherford's journey has also been marked by a strong commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of his community. Rutherford served in the Alabama National Guard and is also a certified firefighter. He says the role is a tremendous honor and one that he will not take lightly.

His supervisor, Bruce Lee, Director of Public Safety, witnessed Chris's growth over the years. "Chris has worked very hard to prepare himself for this role, and his close connection to the Tribe and community makes him the perfect fit."

Tribal Chair Stephanie A. Bryan also spoke about the significance of the moment. "Chris represents the strength and dedication of our people. His achievement is a significant milestone for our Tribe and a testament to the potential we have within our community. We look forward to his leadership and the positive impact he will continue to make."

Rutherford's appointment as Police Chief marks a new chapter for the Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Police Department, as well as a moment of pride for the entire Poarch community. His leadership is expected to bring an innovative and community-centered approach to law enforcement while honoring the rich traditions of the Tribe.





## POARCH CREEK INDIANS JUSTIN STABLER ATTENDS TRIBAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY INAUGURAL COHORT

By Kristin Hellmich

**P**oarch Creek Indians Tribal Council Member Justin Stabler, was recently chosen to attend the inaugural session of the Tribal Leadership Academy at Dartmouth College, a private Ivy League research university in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Stabler was one of 18 leaders from 16 Tribes selected to attend the prestigious inaugural event held as an educational and networking opportunity for Tribal leaders. According to Stabler, it provided a unique opportunity to represent the Tribe while also gaining valuable knowledge on key initiatives such as economic development, education, and healthcare that he could bring back home. The academy provided a platform to learn from some of the best minds while allowing Stabler to share some of Poarch's successes.

For Stabler, being selected to attend the Tribal Leadership Academy Inaugural Cohort at Dartmouth was a tremendous honor. He said, "As a representative and leader

of the Poarch Creek Indians, I saw this as a chance to hear fresh perspectives and unique experiences that allow us to better serve our communities and ensure a strong future for the next generation."

Held at Dartmouth, a university that rededicated itself more than 50 years ago to its original mission of educating Native American and Indigenous students, now has more than 1,300 Native and Indigenous alumni. Stabler enjoyed a dinner with some of the Native American students and used it as a bonding opportunity with both the students and faculty.

Stabler said he is deeply humbled to be part of the first cohort and looks forward to the journey ahead, where he can help shape the future of the Tribe through collaboration, education, and leadership. He is also proud of the Tribe's progress and the many accomplishments that he was able to share with other leaders from other tribes.





# INDIAN COUNTRY RESPONDS TO PRESIDENT BIDEN'S HISTORIC APOLOGY

By Neely Bardwell for Native News Online



**NEELY BARDWELL**

Staff Reporter for Native News Online

Neely Bardwell (descendant of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indian) is a staff reporter for Native News Online. Bardwell is also a student at Michigan State University where she is majoring in policy and minoring in Native American studies.

**L**ast Friday, President Joe Biden issued a historic apology for federal Indian boarding school policy that forcibly stripped Native children of their languages and culture over 150 years in a systematic campaign of assimilation. He gave the apology during a visit Friday to the Gila River Indian Reservation near Phoenix.

Reactions across Indian Country vary, Native News Online compiled a few of the responses to Biden's apology.

## **U.S. SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ (D-HAWAII), CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

"For more than a century, the federal government's Indian Boarding School policies and practices stole hundreds of thousands of Native children from their homes in an effort to destroy Native languages, cultures, and identities. It's an unconscionable chapter in our nation's history, with a lasting legacy that continues to affect communities today. President Biden's formal apology is a significant step toward confronting the dark history of these policies. Now Congress must act – the federal government also has a solemn responsibility to chart a path toward healing.

Earlier this year, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs advanced legislation to establish a federal commission to investigate, document, and acknowledge the historical injustices of the federal boarding school policies. Equally as important, the bill would provide crucial supports for survivors and their descendants. Passing this bill is a moral imperative, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to move quickly so we can begin to deliver the justice, closure, and support Native communities deserve," said Chairman Schatz.

## **U.S. SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI (R-ALASKA), VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE**

"I commend the President for his apology to all the survivors and Native communities which continue to be impacted by the tragic legacy of the Indian boarding school era. This acknowledgement of the pain and injustices inflicted upon Indigenous communities— while long overdue— is an extremely important step toward healing," said Vice Chairman Murkowski. "These actions reinforce the importance of confronting this egregious chapter in history and strengthens my resolve to get my legislation to create a Truth and Healing Commission signed into law."



**CRYSTAL ECHO HAWK,  
FOUNDER AND CEO OF ILLUMINATIVE**

"This apology is a significant step toward justice for Indian Country, but it must not be the end of the government's efforts...We must continue to demand further accountability of the harms done to Native peoples, especially the Native children who experienced neglect, inhumane conditions, physical and sexual abuse, and death under the guise of education. The federal government must commit to supporting Native-led healing initiatives, language revitalization programs, and cultural preservation efforts to effectively begin repairing the damage of the past."

**NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT BUU NYGREN**

"This dark chapter caused untold suffering, trauma, and loss, and its impact still reverberates in our communities today," he said. "Many of them would have been grandmas and grandpas that never came home. President Biden's apology sends a message that healing and truth are central to building a just future."

**PRAIRIE BAND POTAWATOMI NATION**

"We cannot deny, however, that it's impossible to forgive the government for these houses of horror-masked-as-schools that affected generations before us and still affect us to this day as we work through the trauma of it all — but we appreciate today's historic message and the accountability President Biden carried out on behalf of the United States government."

**INDIGENOUS ACTIVIST EDGAR VILLANUEVA (LUMBEE TRIBE),  
FOUNDER OF DECOLONIZING WEALTH PROJECT**

"When I heard the words, 'I formally apologize,' something shifted in my soul. And while we know so much more needs to be done, today was a reminder that this is how our country can heal. We must face our past, apologize, and take action to repair the harms in a materially significant way."

**CHASE IRON EYES, DIRECTOR AND LEAD COUNSEL FOR  
LAKOTA PEOPLE'S LAW PROJECT, SACRED DEFENSE FUND**

"Let's be clear: an apology is an acknowledgment of wrongdoing, but it is not any form of redress. An apology is just the beginning of a necessary truth-telling. It is a nice start, but it is not a true reckoning, nor is it a sufficient remedy for the long history of colonial violence. The president's apology calls for a deeper examination."

**CHAIRMAN MARSHALL PIERITE  
OF THE TUNICA-BILOXI TRIBE OF LOUISIANA**

"Today's apology by President Biden on behalf of the United States government is both welcomed and long overdue...With today's apology, my hope is that all tribal nations will look forward and work together toward the shared goal of improving the lives of our tribal citizens and the communities around us. Indian country is one built upon the principles of strength, perseverance, and the belief in a brighter future for all tribal citizens."

**U.S. REPRESENTATIVE MELANIE STANSBURY (NM-01)**

"Indigenous history is American history. Today, the U.S. government took a necessary and long overdue step in acknowledging an often dark and painful past with our Indigenous nations. I commend and am grateful for President Biden and Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland's ongoing work to right the wrongs of the past and apologize for the suffering caused by American Indian boarding schools."

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Elizabeth Pickett, Au.D., CCC-A

Nicole Riis, Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA





# NATIVE AMERICAN art and creativity:

## A Celebration of Identity and Voice

### INTRODUCTION

Native American art, music, and literature stand as testaments to the resilience, creativity, and cultural depth of Indigenous communities across North America. With roots stretching back thousands of years, Native art has long been a powerful expression of identity, spirituality, and community values. Today, Indigenous artists are redefining these traditional forms, using their work to honor heritage while addressing pressing social and political issues that impact Native communities.

### ART AS AN EXPRESSION OF HISTORY AND IDENTITY

Native American visual arts, from intricate beadwork to powerful contemporary paintings, reflect the diversity of Indigenous tribes and the rich symbolism of their cultures. Many Indigenous artists draw from their ancestry, blending traditional techniques with modern styles to create pieces that are uniquely contemporary yet deeply rooted in tradition. Art forms like pottery and weaving have evolved to include contemporary themes, making them symbols of resilience and cultural continuity.

Artists like Cannupa Hanska Luger (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota) and Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke) challenge mainstream narratives by creating works that highlight Indigenous perspectives. Luger's thought-provoking installations, such as his use of clay, mirrors, and video, explore themes of environmental justice, identity,

and collective responsibility, blending traditional motifs with contemporary materials to spark reflection and dialogue. Red Star uses photography and mixed media to reclaim Indigenous identity and counter stereotypes, often incorporating humor and historical analysis to educate audiences on Native culture. Through their art, both artists engage viewers in a critical conversation on the intersection of Native history, present-day issues, and resilience.

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*Today, Indigenous artists are redefining these traditional forms, using their work to honor heritage while addressing pressing social and political issues that impact Native communities.*

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### MUSIC: ANCESTRAL RHYTHMS AND MODERN BEATS

Music has always been central to Native American culture, with songs and rhythms handed down across generations. Today, Indigenous musicians are innovating within genres as diverse as hip-hop, electronic, folk, and rock, blending traditional sounds like drum beats and flutes with modern instruments and techniques. This evolution of Native music creates a powerful bridge between past and present, allowing Indigenous artists to reclaim their stories and reach new audiences.

Artists like A Tribe Called Red (now The Halluci Nation) fuse electronic dance music with powwow vocals and drum beats to create a genre they call "powwow step." Their music isn't just entertaining—it's deeply political, addressing themes of cultural pride, environmentalism, and the ongoing fight for Indigenous rights. Similarly, Raye Zaragoza, known for her folk-inspired





anthems, addresses Native issues like the Dakota Access Pipeline and environmental justice in her songs, reminding listeners of the need for solidarity with Indigenous communities.

#### **LITERATURE: TELLING OUR OWN STORIES**

Native American writers continue to use literature as a vehicle for preserving culture, challenging stereotypes, and giving voice to their communities. Indigenous literature, from poetry and novels to essays and memoirs, allows readers to see the world from a distinctly Native perspective, often addressing themes like colonization, identity, and healing. Writers like Joy Harjo (Muscogee), the first Native American U.S. Poet Laureate, use their work to reflect on Native experiences with profound emotion and insight.

Contemporary authors like Tommy Orange (Cheyenne and Arapaho) and Natalie Diaz (Mojave) write stories and poems that capture both the beauty and the complexity of Native life. In his acclaimed novel *There There*, Orange explores the urban Native experience, illustrating the complex layers of identity, displacement, and resilience faced by modern Indigenous people. Diaz, through her powerful poetry, confronts issues like language loss, environmental destruction, and the legacy of colonization, infusing her work with the sensuality of the Mojave landscape and the urgency of cultural survival.

#### **ART AS ADVOCACY AND HEALING**

For many Native artists, creativity is more than self-expression—it's a form of advocacy and healing. Through art,

Indigenous creators confront the impacts of colonization, honor cultural legacies, and advocate for justice on issues like land sovereignty, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), and environmental degradation. The rise of social media has amplified these voices, connecting Native artists with a global audience and creating a platform for Indigenous-led movements.

Public art installations, murals, and exhibitions have become sites of activism, educating the public on Indigenous issues while celebrating Native resilience. Murals like those by the Indigenous Mural Collective feature messages of resistance and solidarity, covering urban spaces with powerful images of Native identity. Additionally, art exhibitions like the Land Back show bring attention to the fight for Indigenous land rights, helping to educate broader audiences on the importance of Indigenous sovereignty and environmental stewardship.

#### **A LEGACY OF CREATIVITY, A FUTURE OF EXPRESSION**

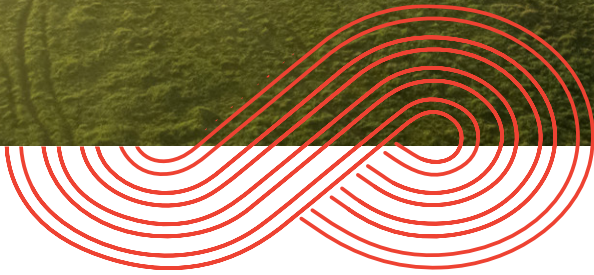
Native American artists, musicians, and writers are carving out new spaces for Indigenous expression, reminding the world that Indigenous culture is not only alive but thriving. They carry forward traditions while speaking boldly on contemporary issues, crafting a vibrant future for Native creativity that continues to challenge stereotypes, inspire change, and celebrate the strength of Indigenous identity. In the face of historical trauma and ongoing struggles, Native American art remains a beacon of hope, resilience, and unbreakable spirit.



# POARCH 101: *Winter*

## A Season for Learning, Rest, and Rejuvenation

By Megan Zamora with advisement from Justin “Bobo” Rolin



**I**n Creek culture, the year is shaped by the natural rhythms of the seasons. Spring, summer, and fall are alive with activity—hunting, planting, and harvesting are central to daily life. Yet as the land grows quieter in winter, it becomes a season of learning, storytelling, and reflection. This is a time when Creek people gather in stillness, respecting the slower pace of nature and honoring the cycle of rest that winter brings.

The quiet of winter is ideal for learning. With the songbirds gone and insects dormant beneath the earth, the land itself seems to hush, creating an atmosphere perfect for listening and absorbing knowledge. For young boys coming of age, this was a critical time to learn the songs, stories, and teachings that have been passed down through generations. Songs are deeply woven into Creek culture; they hold meaning and purpose, and were given to us from Creator, even said to come from animals. Our Creek stories share that at one time, we could converse with animals, learning from them just as they did from the land.

The natural world and Creek people share a deep connection; just as animals slow down in winter, so do the Creek people. This season is a time for rejuvenation, allowing individuals to rest and prepare for the activity of the coming months. Creek people have long lived by this natural calendar, honoring the cycles of nature and finding harmony within them.

In more recent history, Creek hymns have become an important part of preserving and learning the language. Songs provide a way to carry the language forward, helping younger generations absorb words and meanings more easily than through simple repetition alone. Heleluyvn is a Creek hymn that is simple to learn and serves as a reminder of our culture and language’s enduring beauty.

As we enter winter, may we all take this time to slow down, listen to the quiet, and reconnect with ourselves and our heritage. Just as our ancestors did, may we embrace this season as a time for learning, rejuvenation, and honoring the wisdom carried through generations.

### HELELUYVN

*Heleluyvn Yvhikares  
Hele-Heleluyvn  
Heleluyvn Yvhikares  
Hele-Heleluyvn*

*Mekusapvlket Mimvn Vpokes  
Hele-Heleluyvn  
Mekusapvlket Mimvn Vpokes  
Hele-Heleluyvn*

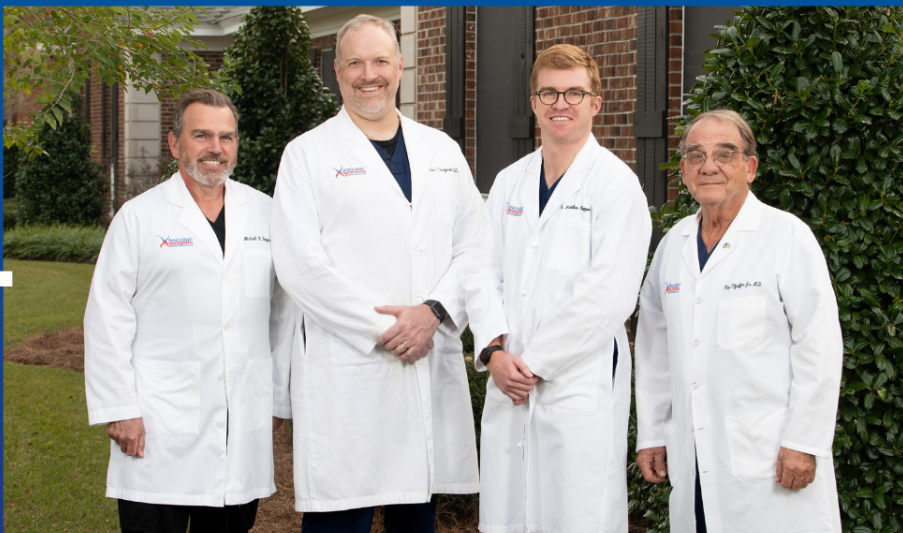
*Mekusapvlket Mimvn Vpokes  
Hele-Heleluyvn  
Mekusapvlket Mimvn Vpokes  
Hele-Heleluyvn*

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# THE THREE LEADING GLOBAL INDIGENOUS TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS FORMALLY LAUNCH DESTINATION ORIGINAL INDIGENOUS TOURISM

By Native News Online Staff

**D**estination Original Indigenous Tourism (DO-IT) formalized its partnership this week during the 26th Annual American Indigenous Tourism Conference, hosted by the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe in Marksville, Louisiana. The collaboration includes the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA), the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), and New Zealand Māori Tourism.

After a year of development, DO-IT is the first of its kind, aiming to unify the voices of Indigenous tourism globally. Its mission is to lead the creation and promotion of authentic Indigenous tourism experiences through innovative partnerships, fostering a sustainable international network that supports a thriving Indigenous tourism economy.

The conference featured a significant signing ceremony for DO-IT's partnership, with insightful discussions led by Sherry L. Rupert (AIANTA), Keith Henry (ITAC), and Dale Stephens (New Zealand Māori Tourism). They explored Indigenous tourism standards in their respective countries and the necessity for guidelines that ensure travelers recognize and trust the authenticity of Destination Original-branded experiences. The discussions also focused on the goals of the new organization and the future of Indigenous travel worldwide.

"Destination Original Indigenous Tourism mission aligns with AIANTA's mission to define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism that honors traditions and values, so it's a natural fit for us to join our colleagues in establishment of this vital organization," said AIANTA CEO Sherry L. Rupert

(Paiute/Washoe). "As the leader in Indigenous tourism in the U.S., AIANTA is thrilled to join this global community of Indigenous leaders to amplify our commitment to sharing authentic cultural heritage experiences as a united front."

ITAC President & CEO Keith Henry emphasized that this partnership elevates Indigenous-led tourism globally, building on ITAC's efforts to create sustainable experiences celebrating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures. "This collaboration is a pivotal step in advancing global Indigenous tourism, creating opportunities for communities and showcasing Indigenous histories through tourism," he said.

NZ Māori Tourism Chair Dale Stephens (Te Rarawa) remarked, "We are proud to support DO-IT and its goals for Indigenous peoples worldwide. This partnership empowers Indigenous communities, fostering connections that lead to unity. By celebrating our authenticity, we pave the way for a tourism model that prioritizes cultural respect over commercialization, drawing visitors who seek genuine connections with our people and places."

In addition to the partnership announcement, DO-IT introduced its founding board, comprising six visionary Indigenous leaders, and appointed its first President and CEO, Sebastien Desnoyers-Picard of the Huron-Wendat Nation in Canada. With nearly 18 years of experience in the Indigenous tourism sector and currently serving as ITAC's vice president, Sebastien is well-equipped to guide DO-IT under the strategic direction of the board. The organization looks forward to his leadership as it embarks on this new journey.

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*After a year of development, DO-IT is the first of its kind, aiming to unify the voices of Indigenous tourism globally.*

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# TRIBAL CITIZEN PROFILE: INTERVIEW *with* WILL MARTIN, M.D.

By Sharon Delmar



**WILL MARTIN, M.D.**

Anesthesiologist at Indian Health Service  
in Phoenix, AZ

## INTRODUCTION

**Creek Corner Magazine:** Can you tell us a little about your background and what makes you proud to be a citizen of our Tribe?

**Will Martin, M.D.:** I was born in the local hospital in Atmore, AL, to my parents, James Timothy Martin and Christine Martin. Growing up, I spent weekends and free time on the Reservation, experiencing firsthand how our community supports one another and witnessing the Tribe's growth from its beginnings to what it is today. My grandparents, Willie Lee and A.D. Martin, were longtime residents of Poarch. Although I didn't have the opportunity to know them personally—my grandfather A.D. passed away the week I was born—their love for our Tribe was passed down to me through stories my family shared. My mother often recalls the many visitors who came to the hospital when I was born to check on both her and my grandfather, exemplifying the strong bonds that define our Tribe.

My understanding of the Tribe and what it means to be a Tribal Citizen deepened as I watched my father serve as Tribal Administrator and later work with the United South and Eastern Tribes before returning to support our Tribal community in business. My mother, one of Poarch's first licensed social workers, also taught me about the importance of service and commitment to our people. Many family members I grew up closely with now hold key roles in the Tribe or have been supported by our Tribal community to get into their role, including my brothers. Brice Agerton works as a firefighter, and James Agerton in land development, while my youngest brother, Max Martin, utilized Tribal education funds to pursue a career in healthcare and now serves as a hospital administrator in Charleston, SC.

Through these family experiences, I learned the true meaning of community and what it means to be proud of our heritage. Being a doctor

“

*My mother, one of Poarch's first licensed social workers, also taught me about the importance of service and commitment to our people.*



for a Native American community is an honor and a responsibility I hold deeply. It allows me to provide care for a community that has historically faced many health disparities, going beyond physical treatment to respect and integrate our cultural practices and values. For me, this role is about more than medicine; it's about being part of our Tribe's journey, understanding its past, and helping shape its future.

## PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

**CCM:** What was your initial profession, and how did you transition into your current field?

**WM:** I am currently working at the largest Indian Health Service (IHS) hospital in the nation, located in Phoenix, AZ, where I began full-time after completing my residency in Anesthesiology at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston Salem, NC. My path in medicine has been a dedicated journey—twelve years of schooling from start to finish. After graduating from Spanish Fort High School in Baldwin County, AL, I earned my undergraduate degree in Biology from the University of Alabama and went on to attend medical school at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine (USACOM). I'm committed to serving at IHS for a designated period, as I was fortunate to receive IHS scholarships that supported my biology and medical education at USACOM.

**CCM:** Can you share specific achievements or awards you've received that you're particularly proud of?

**WM:** One of my greatest achievements has been gaining acceptance into medical school—a major accomplishment, and one of the proudest moments in my academic journey. I believe I am among the first Poarch Creek Indian (PCI) Citizens to become a medical doctor. During medical school, I was honored to be inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Medical Honor Society, an achievement awarded to the top 10-12% of medical students as voted by faculty. Another meaningful milestone, both for me and my family, was becoming a graduate advisor for the Native American Student Association at the University of South Alabama. At the time, the association was less active, and I took pride in revitalizing it, helping Native American students re-engage and build a supportive community.

In my final year at Wake Forest Medical, I served as Chief Resident, my first administrative role in medicine. This position, chosen by peers and approved by attending physicians in the department, was an honor and an excellent introduction to leadership within anesthesia—a step that has greatly shaped my path in this field.

**CCM:** What values or principles guide you in your professional work?

**WM:** Whatever field you choose, it's essential to know and continually reaffirm your 'why.' For me, my purpose is to deliver quality care and help people regain control over their lives. As an anesthesiologist, I meet patients at their most vulnerable, often just minutes before surgery, where they must trust that my team and I will guide them safely through this critical experience. With every patient, my goals are simple yet profound: to ensure they wake up, to keep them free from pain or additional injury, and to safeguard their well-being throughout the procedure. I've learned that life requires balance. Whether it's in family, professional, or academic commitments, spreading oneself too thin can dilute effectiveness in all areas. It's about giving each part of life the time and focus it deserves. At the core of it all is my faith in the Lord and His plan. I strive each day to act in a way that glorifies Him, often praying, 'Please let me glorify You through my hands and fulfill Your will. If this isn't Your will, guide me to where I need to be.' In our fast-paced world, a strong faith brings peace, grounding me to serve more effectively and, ultimately, to become a better person.



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*One of my greatest achievements has been gaining acceptance into medical school—a major accomplishment... I believe I am among the first Poarch Creek Indians Citizens to become a medical doctor.*

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*Spending time on the  
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 community service...  
 My brother and I often  
 discuss our shared  
 desire to one day use  
 our education and skills  
 to give back to our  
 own Tribe.*



## PERSONAL PASSIONS

**CCM:** What hobbies or activities do you enjoy in your free time?

**WM:** I like to say I'm passionately mediocre at golf—fitting for a place like Phoenix, a hub for golfers. I also spend as much time as I can with my family. My wife, Madisyn, and I have been married for three years, and our daughter, who just turned two on October 21, brings us so much joy. Madison, originally from Huntsville, AL, is a nurse, and our daughter is a true blessing; born at just 25 weeks and spending 108 days in the NICU, she's now completely healthy and thriving.

We love spending time outdoors as a family, even if it's just for a walk to enjoy the fresh air. I also find balance and recharge by being with friends and engaging in our community, whether it's cooking out, watching football, or taking part in local activities.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

**CCM:** What volunteer activities or initiatives are you involved in?

**WM:** Since recently moving to Phoenix, I'm exploring ways to volunteer in my community, particularly in faith-based and underserved areas. Volunteering has always been a calling for me. During medical school, I conducted health screenings in underserved urban communities and participated in month-long mission trips to Senegal in 2017 and Rwanda in 2020, both sponsored by the Tribe. These missions allowed me to provide care to people in third-world settings, bringing both medical support and the message of Christ to those in need.

**CCM:** How do you believe your work has impacted specific groups or communities?

**WM:** Working at the IHS hospital allows me to serve Native communities directly, where many patients travel two to three hours one way to receive medical care. Every day, I see firsthand how our work here profoundly impacts the quality of their lives, reminding me of the importance and reach of our efforts.

**CCM:** Why is community service important to you?

**WM:** Spending time on the Reservation with my immediate family instilled in me a deep commitment to community service. Many of my family members have been affected by chronic illness, and witnessing how medicine could improve their quality of life left a lasting impression on me. My brother and I often discuss our shared desire to one day use our education and skills to give back to our own Tribe.

**CCM:** Are there any special interests you'd like to share?

**WM:** Thanks to my training and experience, I'm able to meet my patients where they are, providing them with a sense of relief and building trust quickly, even with those I've just met. Outside of work, I've always had a natural ability to connect with people, finding common ground and meeting them where they are. This gift has been invaluable in both my professional and personal life.

## CONCLUSION

**CCM:** What message would you like to convey to our community through your story?

**WM:** As I said before, find your passion. Once you do, grow from it. With resources available through college or trade school, the Tribal Education Department is great at finding what you need, but it requires your participation. I was fortunate to have a supportive community, especially my mother and extended family, who helped find these resources. There are plenty of funds and opportunities.

**CCM:** How can others in the Tribe be inspired to lead lives of purpose and passion like yours?

**WM:** I must emphasize the importance of having strong faith in the Lord and His plan. This peace of mind can significantly impact your overall well-being. I truly enjoy my job and plan to continue for several more years with my four-year service commitment to IHS. Trust in the Lord can help you navigate even the toughest challenges.



ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENT

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**ENVIRONMENTAL  
DEPARTMENT**



# CREEKS CELEBRATE FORTY YEARS OF SOVEREIGNTY

By Deidra Suwanee Dees, Ed. D.



**PICTURED** Tribal Chair, Stephanie A. Bryan.  
Photograph by Ethan Bowen

“**W**e had a strong, strong community. We had a community based on faith. There were a lot of prayers that took place in order to get us this Federal Recognition,” said Tribal Chair Stephanie A. Bryan on October 5, 2024 in the Wind Creek Coosawada Ballroom. She gave the welcome to an audience of over two-hundred at Our Story of Federal Recognition: Commemorating Forty Years of Sovereignty from 1984-2024, put on by the Regulatory Affairs Division.

“I would like for all those who helped put on this event to come to the center of the room,” she said. Then she called current and past Tribal Council members to come forward. She called all of those who served on a board or a committee for the Tribe to come forward. She then called forward all of those who helped research the Tribe’s Federal Recognition Petition. Next, she called forward the Pow Wow Club, Cultural Department, and Tribal Princesses. Just when the audience thought she was finished, she called forward all Tribal Members and those who are part of a Tribal household. There were only a few left sitting.

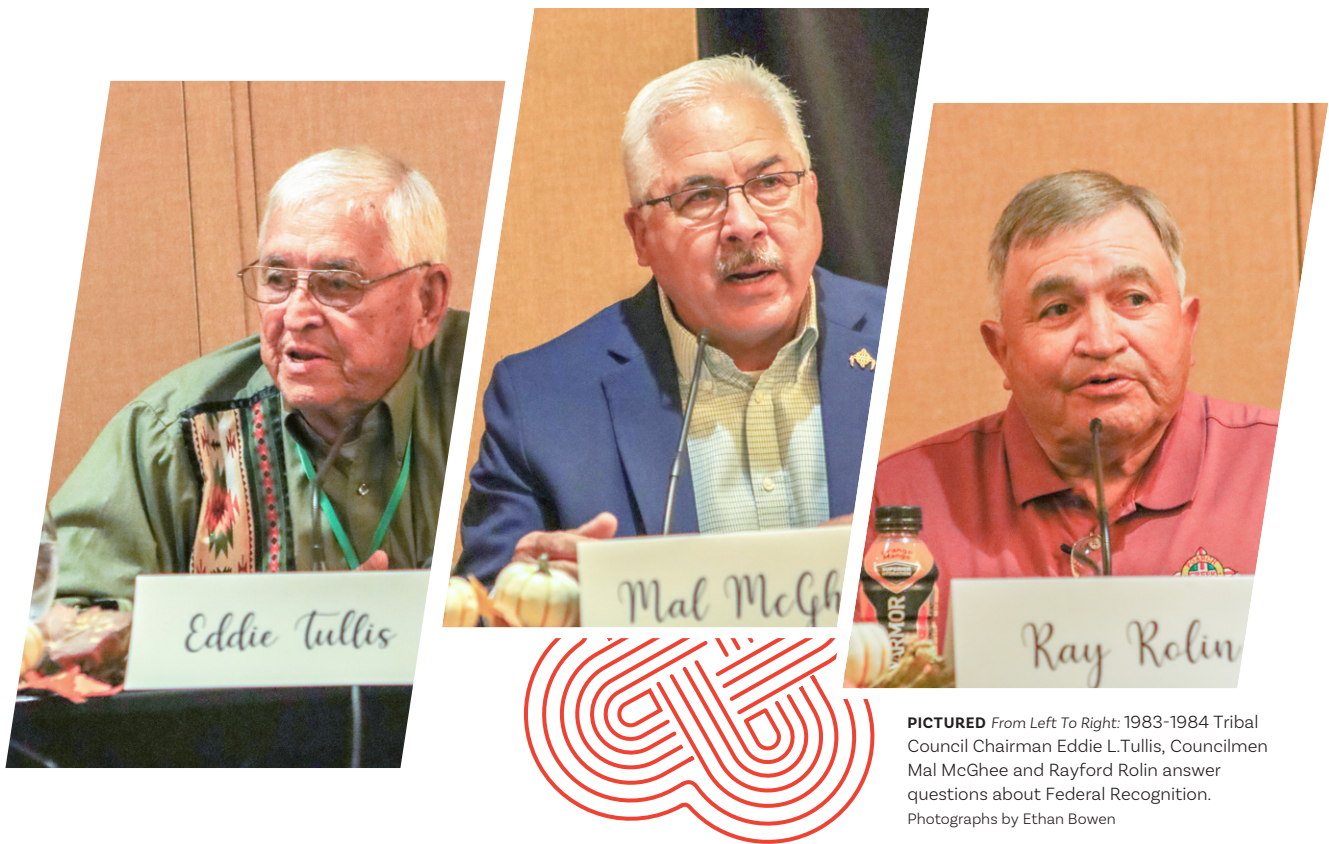
“These individuals here have made some type of sacrifice to get us where we are today,” she said with fervor. “Our sovereignty is being attacked every day. It is because of each of you standing here that we are the Tribe that we are.”

“Let’s take a moment to appreciate truly how far we’ve come,” she said, “but yet, we’re still very humble people because we know what it’s like not to have much, and the importance of giving back. I want to take this moment of silence to reflect on the toughest thing that ever happened to the Poarch Creek Indians and that was the road to Federal Recognition. We ask God to guide us, lead us, protect us, and be with us on the next vision for this journey.”

“I assure you,” she said, “you have a lot of warriors standing up for the future of the Poarch Creek Indians.”

After the silent prayer, she led everyone in a round of applause for those that stood with her. “This is a family—the Poarch Creek Indian family,” she said as gratitude and cheers filled up the ballroom.

The Chair’s unconventional welcome set the tone for this exciting day-long conference that shone the light on forty years of Federal Recognition. Keynote speaker Dr. Kelly Fayard spoke about the Federal Recognition process that she researched for her dissertation, a copy of which was given out at the distinguished sovereignty exhibit in the ballroom. Keynote speaker Tom Tureen spoke about the case that established tribes’ right to Federal Recognition which was documented in Paul Brodeur’s book, *Restitution*.



**PICTURED** From Left To Right: 1983-1984 Tribal Council Chairman Eddie L. Tullis, Councilmen Mal McGhee and Rayford Rolin answer questions about Federal Recognition. Photographs by Ethan Bowen

Micco Paul Bell, Jr. led stomp dancers from Hvsossv Tvllahasse Ceremonial Grounds in the celebration. He called audience members to join the circle of dance in the center of the room where Madam Chair had called out individuals to stand earlier. Sounds of ancient Mvskoke songs and turtle shell shakers filled the air and reverberated across the rafters. It seemed all the world was ablaze in celebrating forty years of sovereignty.

The panel of speakers comprising 1983-1984 Tribal Council Chairman Eddie L. Tullis and Councilmen Mal McGhee and Rayford Rolin took the audience on the journey to Federal Recognition. Tullis said Council members made many sacrifices for the Tribe. He recalled the days when Council members, including Roberta McGhee Sells, worked with Dr. J. Anthony Paredes on the enormous endeavor of putting together the Federal Recognition Petition. McGhee and Rolin agreed that it was an impressive accomplishment for the Tribe to acquire the distinguished status of Federal Recognition.

After the panel, Justin “Bo Bo” Rolin explained the meaning of culture and its significance to the Poarch Band

of Creek Indians. He works on cultural programs with the Tribal Youth Council.

Guests enjoyed a delicious southern style breakfast and a build-your-own Indian taco bar for lunch while viewing a slideshow of over 500 archival images. They were assisted by helpful students in the Torch and Keystone Clubs, situated under the Boys and Girls Club. Guests shopped at Tribal artisan booths that showcased hand-crafted river cane baskets, handmade stomp dance skirts, copper crafted Tribal images, and hand-beaded jewelry. Guests viewed grade school children’s cultural artwork displayed with pottery and Tribal designs that demonstrated they were keeping the culture alive through culturally-connected artwork.

Guests told staff they enjoyed the full day of activities. If you missed the conference, it was video recorded by Barnes and Company and can be accessed on our Online Archives at [pbciarchives.org](http://pbciarchives.org).

In a staff meeting after the conference, Regulatory Affairs Division Director, Russell Martin, thanked staff for their hard work.

“This was the best event I have attended since I’ve been here,” he said proudly. **MVTO.**

— “ —

*I want to take this moment of silence to reflect on the toughest thing that ever happened to the Poarch Creek Indians and that was the road to Federal Recognition.*

**STEPHANIE A. BRYAN,  
PCI TRIBAL CHAIR & CEO**

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Image from LaurenGoodDay.com

## LAUREN GOOD DAY

From [LaurenGoodDay.com](http://LaurenGoodDay.com)

**L**auren Good Day “Good Day Woman” is an Multi- award winning Arikara, Hidatsa, Blackfeet and Plains Cree artist & sought after fashion designer. She is an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation) of the Ft. Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, USA and also a registered Treaty Indian with the Sweet Grass Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada. She has shown her artwork at the world’s most prestigious Native American juried art shows such as the Santa Fe Indian Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Heard Guild Museum Market in Phoenix, Arizona, Autry American Indian Arts Marketplace Los Angeles, California, Eiteljorg Museum Indian Market Indianapolis, Indiana, Cherokee Indian Market in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Red Earth Fine Arts Festival in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and the Northern Plains Indian Art Show in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Her Awards include many First Places in Tribal Arts, Traditional Arts, Cultural Arts, Diverse Arts, Beadwork, Drawings, Textiles and the prestigious Best of Tribal Arts award. Lauren’s artwork has been part of numerous solo and group exhibitions at galleries and museums across the Country.

Being a sought after artist and designer her work is in numerous public and private collections throughout the United States, Canada and the World, including the The National Museum of American Indian Washington DC and New York City, The Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Plains Indian Museum Cody Wyoming,



and Red Cloud Heritage Center Pine Ridge South Dakota. You can find her work and mentions in publications such as Vogue, InStyle Magazine, New York Times, Fashion Magazine, Cowboys & Indians Magazine, Cosmopolitan and numerous national and international publications.

Lauren has passion for promoting and revitalizing the arts of her people while developing new methods and incorporating new trendsetting ideas in both the art and designs communities. She has been creating Native American art since age 6. Starting out with beadwork and Tribal regalia, she then expanded her work into mediums such as quillwork, ledger drawings, rawhide parfleche, and fashion design.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Indigenous Studies from the Institute of American Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Lauren lives on the rolling hills of North Dakota, her traditional homelands. She continues to be steeped within the cultural life ways of her people and actively helps with language and culture revitalization efforts, participates in cultural celebrations, powwows and her tribal ceremonial doings. Her role as a mother and woman of her tribe guide her to continue on the arts of her people for the generations to come.

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.

**Share your recommendation**  
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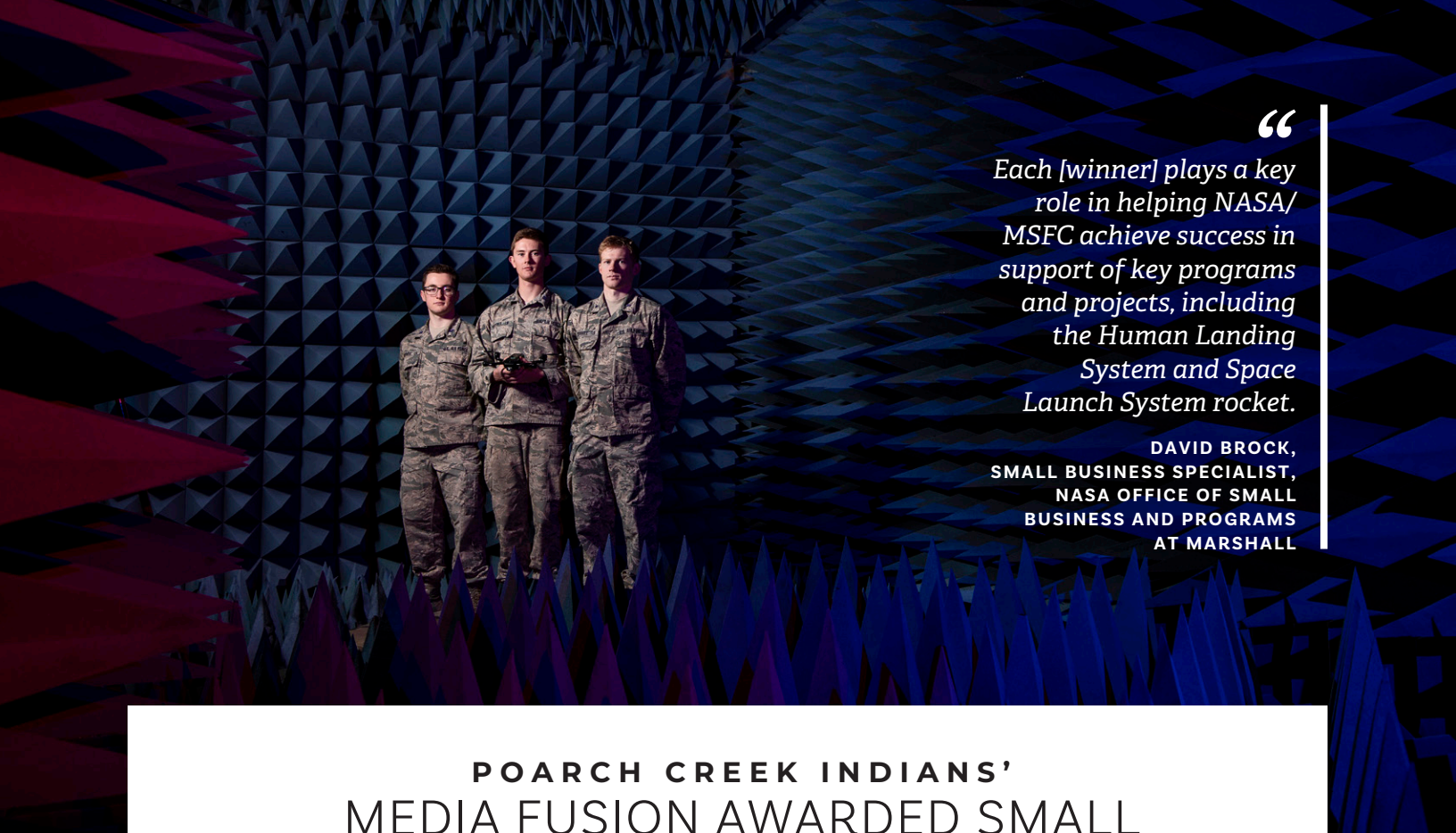
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## POARCH CREEK INDIANS’ MEDIA FUSION AWARDED SMALL BUSINESS CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR BY NASA MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER

*By Kristin Hellmich*

**T**he Poarch Creek Indians are proud to announce that Media Fusion, a tribally-owned business, has been awarded the prestigious Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year award by NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center. The award was presented during the 38th meeting of the Marshall Small Business Alliance.

This event, held at the Davidson Center for Space Exploration in Huntsville, was established to recognize companies and leaders for their support of the center’s small business programs and NASA’s mission of exploration. This recognition bestowed on Media Fusion highlights the company’s outstanding contributions in providing creative services, multimedia support, and technology solutions to NASA.

“We are excited about this year’s winners,” said David Brock, small business specialist, NASA Office of Small Business Programs at Marshall. “Each plays a key role in helping NASA/MSFC achieve successes in support of key programs and projects, including the Human Landing System and Space Launch System rocket. Maintaining and sustaining an experienced and competitive industry base

is what makes America strong, and small businesses are at the core of those successes.”

Richard Williams, CEO of Media Fusion, expressed his gratitude, stating, “It is an incredible honor to be recognized by NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center as the Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year. This award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team and the partnership we have with NASA. We are proud to play a role in communicating their ambitious goals.”

Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Chair and CEO, Stephanie A. Bryan, commended the achievement, saying, “We are proud of Media Fusion and our employees for earning this well-deserved recognition. This honor reflects the values of excellence, innovation, and integrity that guide our Tribe’s enterprises. We look forward to seeing Media Fusion continue to flourish and inspire other businesses through its commitment to delivering exceptional service.”

This award signifies the Poarch Creek Indians’ commitment to fostering successful ventures that contribute to the economic advancement of both the Tribe and the nation. For more information on the Poarch Creek Indians, visit [poarchcreekindians.org](http://poarchcreekindians.org).





# WIND CREEK SPONSORS WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

By Amelia Tognoli

**W**ind Creek Hospitality recently served as the Start Line sponsor at the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Pensacola, FL. Wind Creek Team Members and event participants of all ages attended a ceremony and completed a two-mile walk.

Walk to End Alzheimer's is an annual fundraiser that raises funds and awareness about Alzheimer's and dementia care. It is also the largest fundraiser for Alzheimer's and is held annually in more than 600 communities nationwide.

Laneka Tolbert, Wind Creek Hospitality Sponsorship and Events Coordinator says the Walk to End Alzheimer's was very touching for her this year.

"My great-grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in the late 1990s. She won her battle and gained eternal

healing in October 2003. Someone was nice enough to give me a purple flower and later during the ceremony I learned that purple represented a loved one who has passed with Alzheimer's," Tolbert said. "I pray for the day the white flower can be held which will represent those in the future who will be cured of this dreadful disease."

Cynthia Broughton, Lead Wardrobe Attendant at Wind Creek Atmore, also attended the Walk to End Alzheimer's and says her team is motivated to walk for the cause again.

"The wardrobe team had an amazing time and cannot wait to do it again next year," Broughton said.

The Alzheimer's Association is a voluntary organization that provides resources for families, such as support groups, research, and education for those who suffer from this disease and their families.

**LANEKA TOLBERT, WIND CREEK HOSPITALITY SPONSORSHIP AND EVENTS COORDINATOR SAYS THE WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S WAS VERY TOUCHING FOR HER THIS YEAR.**

*"My great-grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in the late 1990s.*







## POARCH CREEK INDIANS, WIND CREEK TEAM MEMBERS EXPAND EFFORTS TO SUPPORT HURRICANE RECOVERY

By Amelia Tognoli

*“This has been a humbling experience witnessing the outpouring of support from our surrounding communities.”*

**TRIANA RACKARD,  
WIND CREEK HOSPITALITY DIRECTOR  
OF SPONSORSHIP AND EVENTS**



Due to the recent hurricanes that took the lives of more than 200 people, Wind Creek and the Poarch Creek Indians have teamed up to help those affected. After delivering loads of essential supplies to the Eastern Band of Cherokee and nearby communities in North Carolina, Wind Creek Hospitality and PCI invited the public to help extend further support to those affected by the storms. On October 3rd, those efforts began by collecting much-needed relief supplies for the communities impacted by Hurricane Helene and soon after Hurricane Milton. Since then, hurricane relief efforts have expanded to include Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina.

“This has been a humbling experience witnessing the outpouring of support from our surrounding communities. We are incredibly blessed to be able to travel and deliver supplies to a much-needed community in desperate need after such devastation,” said Trina Rackard, Wind Creek Hospitality’s Director of Sponsorship and Events.

On 10/10/24, ten Wind Creek and PCI Team Members traveled, unloaded, and worked alongside the command center volunteers at Pilgrim’s Way Baptist Church in Asheville, NC. Pastor Wayne Stafford, his congregation, and the many volunteers greeted our Team Members and helped unload a 35-foot closed-in trailer, box truck, and semi-truck loaded with water, food, and supplies. Items were delivered to areas near Lake Lure and Chimney Rock.

“Pastor Stafford and his team have been working tirelessly since the storm hit; they are doing a fantastic job getting these supplies into the hands of the community members who need them! The night before we arrived, a family of seven needed food and supplies; the Pastor and his volunteers quickly provided them with a hot meal and the necessities they needed,” Rackard said.

Donations are being accepted at the Relief Drop-off site at Wind Creek Atmore’s east parking lot or via Venmo (@WindCreek). For more information on what items to donate or to ask additional questions, Team Members can view flyers posted at their property or call/text (251) 359-4054 or (251) 359-0297.

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# CHRISTMAS AT OWA

*By Catherine Hasty*

**W**elcome to the holiday season at OWA Parks & Resort! This year, we're bringing you a festive lineup filled with events, seasonal cheer, and special activities to make your celebrations unforgettable. From exciting performances to family-friendly fun, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Let's make this holiday season one to remember—see all that's happening at OWA and get ready for a magical experience!

Kicking off on December 1, join us for a North Pole Experience in Downtown OWA and step into Santa's workshop! Savor Santa's favorite hot chocolate and cookies, craft festive creations with his elves, and snap a photo with the jolly man himself! This delightful experience is available on select dates through December 23. For a list of those dates check out [visitowa.com](http://visitowa.com).

Join us for a cherished Christmas tradition—an exclusive breakfast with Santa himself! On select dates in December, Storybook Manor located by OWA Theater in Downtown OWA, invites you to enjoy a delicious breakfast spread alongside Santa, featuring all your morning favorites. With Santa's busy holiday schedule, seating is limited for this special event. Don't miss out! Reserve your spot and purchase tickets at [VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com) to create unforgettable memories at Breakfast with Santa!

Calling all future elves! Come join us for Elf Academy in Downtown OWA! Do you have what it takes to be one of Santa's helpers? On December 14th and 15th, kids of all ages can immerse themselves in this interactive experience, where they'll receive an honorary elf hat and certificate. Discover all the fun activities planned for Elf Academy at [visitowa.com](http://visitowa.com)!





The holiday fun doesn't stop there! Join us for the Sugarplum Festival in Downtown OWA on December 21 and 22. Enjoy mesmerizing performances by the Luminary Entertainment Company, live music, cookie decorating, local vendors, and much more! Plus, test your creativity in our Gingerbread House competition.

OWA Theater is thrilled to announce a fantastic lineup of shows this December, perfect for getting into the holiday spirit! First up is White Tie Rock on December 6th and 7th, offering an electrifying evening of classic rock hits that will have audiences dancing in their seats. Then, on December 14th, the Rat Pack Holiday Revue from Las Vegas hits the stage, capturing the charm and glamour of the legendary Rat Pack with a festive spin, complete with timeless holiday classics. Finally, join us for our Christmas Show, The Making of Scrooge - A Christmas Carol Prequel. This captivating Seward Studios production, showing December 20th, 21st, and 22nd, invites families to step back in time to 1802 England and witness the early years of Ebenezer Scrooge. Don't miss out on these memorable events at OWA Theater! Grab your tickets now and celebrate the magic of the holidays with us!

But that's not all this holiday season! Come celebrate the arrival of 2025 at our New Year's Eve Celebrations on December 28, 29 and 31 in Downtown OWA! Say farewell to 2024 with an unforgettable party featuring live music, thrilling activities, and a dazzling fireworks display.

Wrap up a day of holiday cheer with our enchanting Christmas light show in Downtown OWA, where admission is always free! Each night, our 36-foot Christmas tree dazzles with a spectacular light display synchronized to holiday music.

*Stay updated on the latest events, entertainment, and activities by visiting [VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com) or by following us on social media @VisitOWA.*





# CHRISTMAS AT OWA

## DECEMBER

**1, 7, 8, 14,  
15, 19-23**

**North Pole  
Activities**

**6 & 7**

**WTRE  
Christmas**  
at OWA Theater

**7**

**Santa  
Paws**

**14**

**Rat Pack  
Holiday  
Revue**  
at OWA Theater

**14 & 15**

**Elf  
Academy**

**19-23**

**Breakfast  
with Santa**

**20-22**

**The Making  
of Scrooge -  
A Christmas  
Carol Prequel**  
at OWA Theater

**21 & 22**

**Sugarplum  
Festival**

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## CONGRATULATIONS BAILEY SIBLINGS PLACE AT MOWA-CHOCTAW POW WOW OCTOBER 2024

The Baileys' have been attending and competing at pow wows for a few generations. Kadence and Elijah Bailey's dad, the late tribal member Jake Bailey, and uncle tribal member Billy Bailey; have competed in Men's (jrs, teens) — Traditional dance, Southern Traditional dance, and Grass dance for well over 35 years. Much of the regalia that Jake, Billy, Kadence and Elijah have worn over the years has been hand made. Many of these pieces hand made by tribal artisan and PBCI member William Bailey, Sr and his wife Cheryl Bailey. The time and effort placed into making these pieces is priceless. Each one is a work of art!

Our family is proud to announce that at this year's October 2024 Mowa-Choctaw Pow Wow in Mt Vernon, Alabama, Kadence and Elijah Bailey placed in their respective categories. Kadence has won in various positions for jingle dress at the Mowa-Choctaw pow wow over the past 10 years. This was Kadence's first year competing in the Jr Women's Jingle age bracket and she won 3rd Place! Elijah has competed in both grass dance and traditional dance at this pow wow previously and placed. This year Elijah Bailey placed 1st in the Junior Boys Traditional! Our family is very proud of these young pow wow dancers and their accomplishments representing the Poarch Band of Creek Indians! Mvto!

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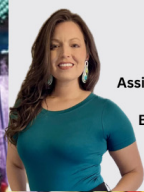
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# CREEK CORNER

## DECEMBER 2024 IMPORTANT DATES

|             |                             |   |              |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------|
| 12.2        | SUBMISSION DEADLINE         | January Issue   |              |
| 12.2-12.3   | MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED     | Inventory   |              |
| 12.5        | TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING      | TC Chambers   | 4:00 PM      |
| 12.5        | RECREATION GYM FLOOR CLOSED |   |              |
| 12.12       | BGC FAMILY FUN NIGHT        | BGC Members & Family Only   Poarch Creek Community Center | 6:00-8:00 PM |
| 12.13       | PCI CHRISTMAS PARADE        |   | 5:30 PM      |
| 12.19       | TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING      | TC Chambers   | 4:00 PM      |
| 12.23-12.27 | GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED   | Christmas   |              |