



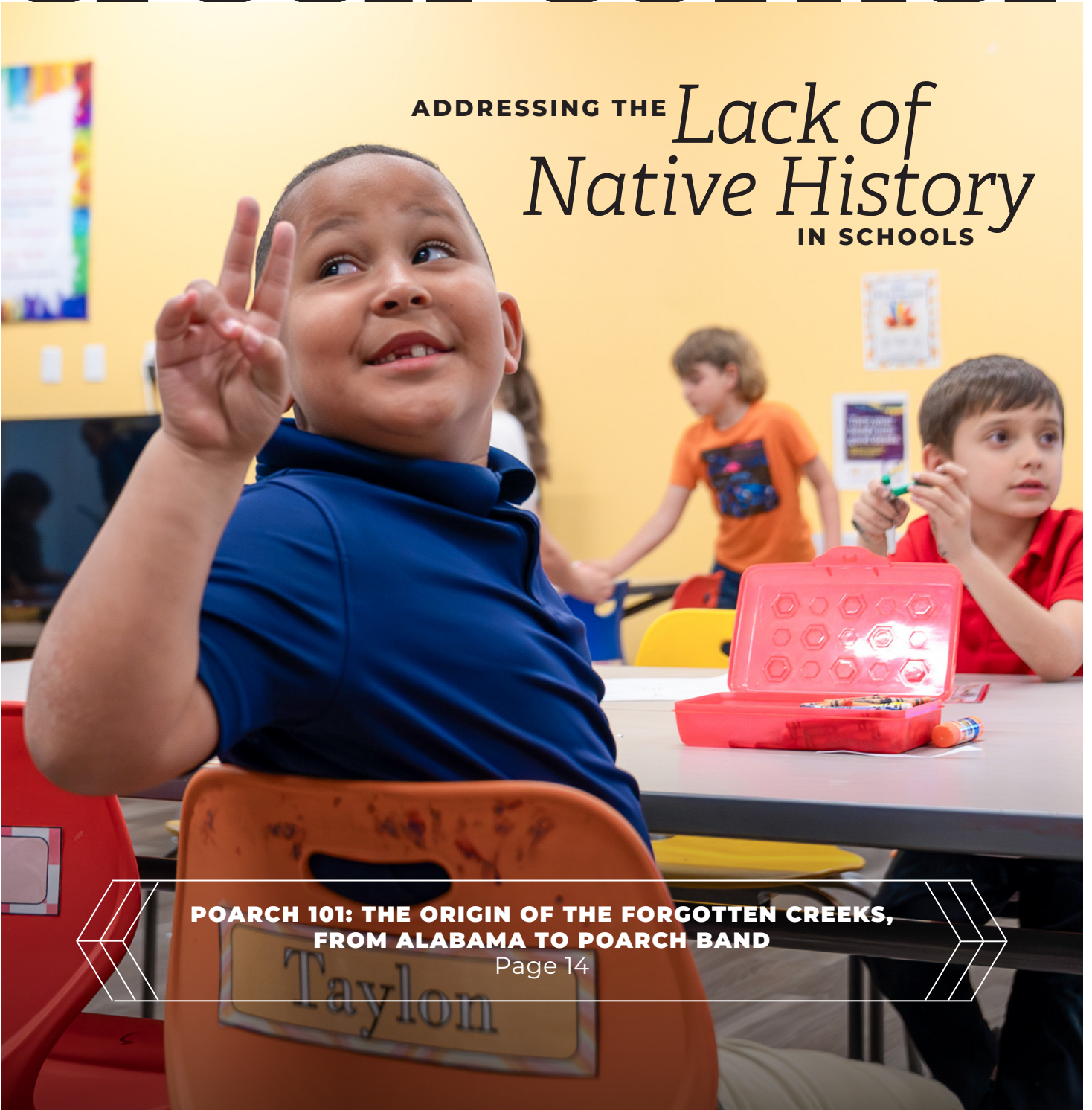
DECEMBER  
2025

No. 48

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

# creek corner

ADDRESSING THE *Lack of*  
*Native History*  
IN SCHOOLS

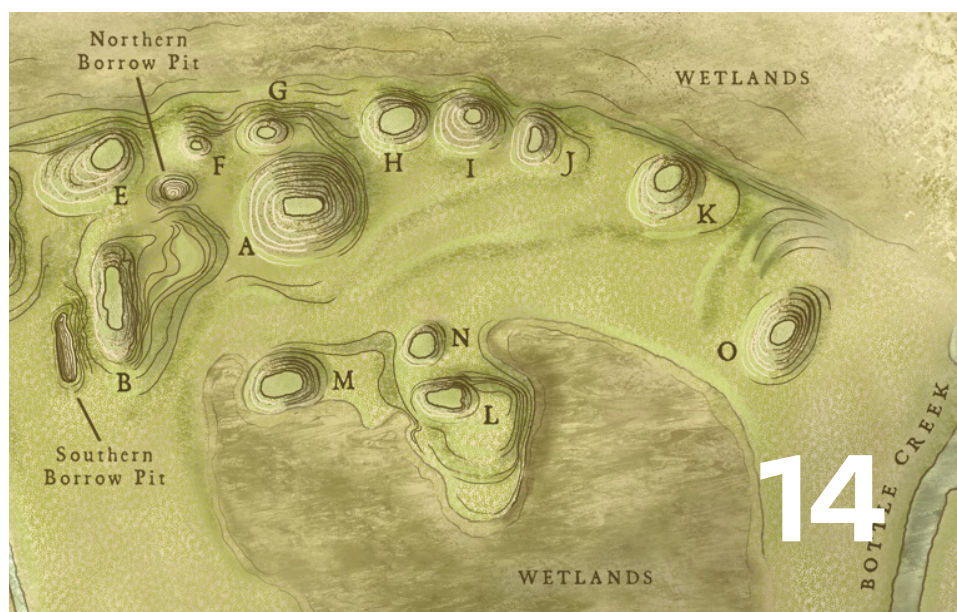


**POARCH 101: THE ORIGIN OF THE FORGOTTEN CREEKS,  
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Sharon Delmar  
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**MEGAN ZAMORA**  
Editor, Creek Corner

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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A

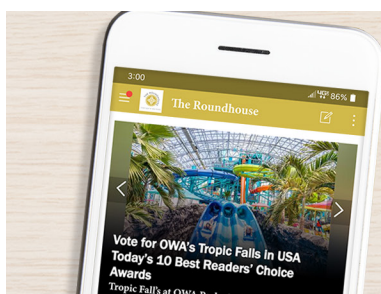
s the year draws to a close, many of us have just finished going through the budget process—a season that naturally invites reflection. It’s a time to look back on what we’ve accomplished, take stock of where we’ve grown, and set our sights on what’s next. For me and my Internal Communications team, it’s also a chance to celebrate the wins of the year—the projects completed, the goals met, and the stories shared.

I’m so thankful to be part of the Poarch community and count myself blessed to work in a place where every day has purpose. Every challenge we face is an opportunity to learn, grow, and serve. I’m continually inspired by the passion, dedication, and creativity I see across our departments and entities. None of what we accomplish would be possible without strong leadership, collaboration, and the genuine care our team members bring to their work each day. It’s not an understatement to say that I love what I do—and I know how rare that is.

Looking ahead, we have several exciting long-term projects on the horizon. One, in particular, will take a couple of years to complete and will make it easier for visitors to find their way around and experience the best of what our Tribe has to offer. Our team is also developing new ways to bring greater awareness to the many programs and services available to Tribal Citizens and the communities we serve.

As we close out 2025, I hope you take time to celebrate your own accomplishments—large or small—and to rest, recharge, and reconnect with those who matter most. May we step into 2026 with gratitude for what’s behind us, pride in what we’ve built, and optimism for all that’s still to come.

“As we close out 2025, I hope you take time to celebrate your own accomplishments... and to rest, recharge, and reconnect to those who matter most.”



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# 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)

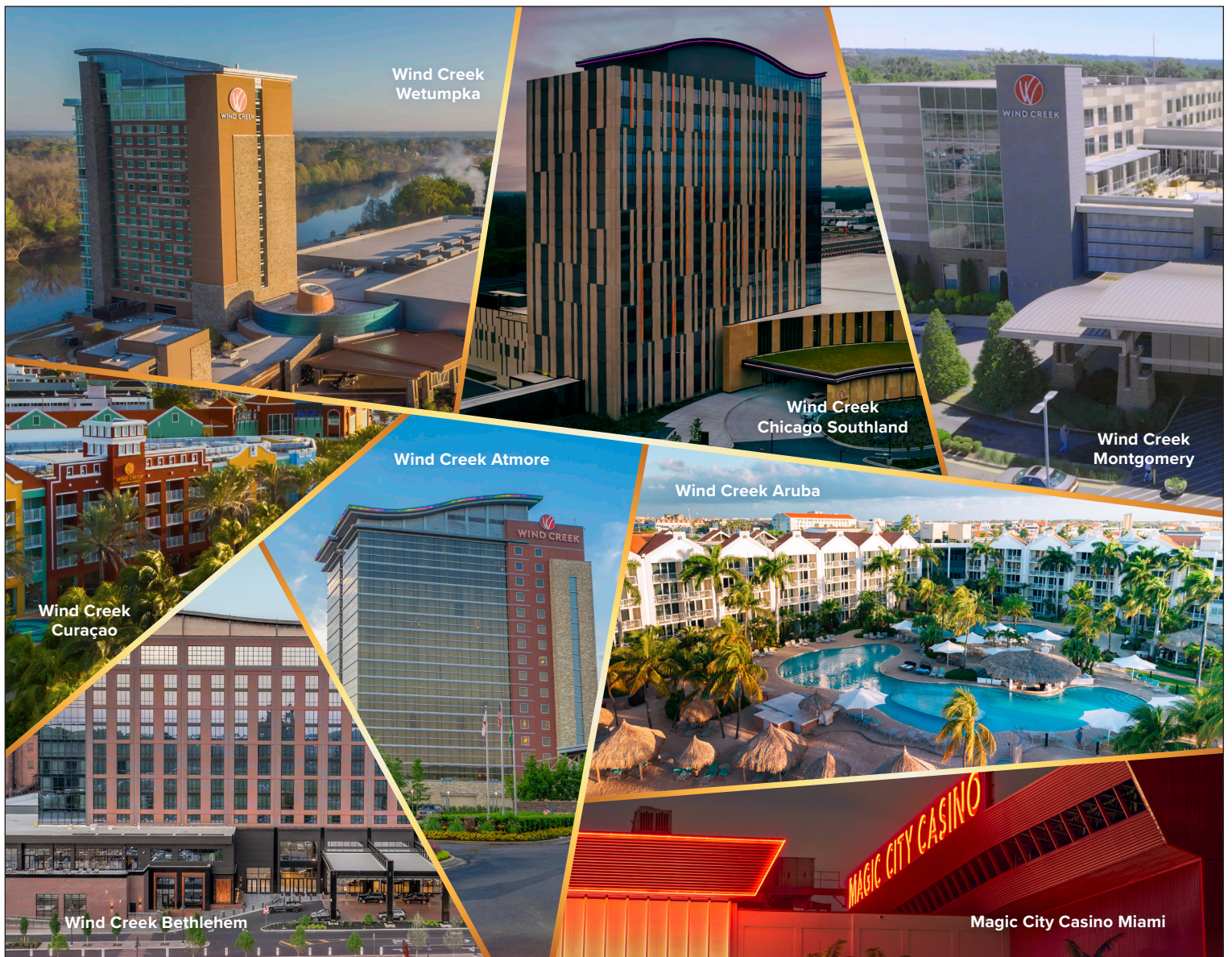
Stephanie Bryan, *Tribal Chair*  
Robert McGhee, *Vice Chair*  
Charlotte Meckel, *Secretary*  
Amy Gantt, *Treasurer*

## BOTTOM ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

*At-Large Council Members:*  
Christina Flint-Lowe  
Sandy Hollinger  
Keith Martin  
Arthur Mothershed  
Justin Stabler







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“ It has been a challenging couple of years, yet we have faced every obstacle head-on with resilience and unity. As CEO, I had the privilege of testifying before both the House and Senate in Washington, D.C., regarding our Carcieri land legislation. We narrowly avoided a critical vote in Alabama that could have negatively impacted our Tribe’s gaming opportunities. During the hearing regarding the case filed against us by the Muskogee before the 11th Circuit, we came together in prayer for a favorable outcome, as the matter raises important questions surrounding our sovereignty.

Despite these hurdles, we have made tremendous progress. We successfully acquired the Birmingham Race Course, expanded benefits for Tribal Members, and extended healthcare coverage to first-generation members. Our education assistance program has also grown, now providing greater support to both Tribal Members and first-generation individuals. Additionally, we opened a meat processing plant; a vital step toward strengthening our food sovereignty. While the plant has had a slow start, its long-term value for our community remains significant.

Looking ahead, the potential for the property we purchased in Miami is both vast and promising. The opening of Wind Creek Chicago Southland has been gradual, but with a strong marketing strategy and continued collaboration with the gaming control board, we are confident it will thrive. We also established a federal contracting office in Reston, Virginia, and now have nearly 20 federal contracting companies under our umbrella, positioning us for even greater opportunities in the future.

This year, we also launched a day treatment center as part of our behavioral health program, a major step forward in caring for our community’s well-being. Our elder care programs have expanded as well, with respite and facility care services to better meet the needs of our elders.

I am also proud to share that we received a clean financial audit, reaffirming our dedication to transparency and sound financial management. Within our community services division, we have continued to broaden our offerings; adding new classes, programs, and services designed to uplift and empower our members.

As we move forward together, let us continue to draw strength from our shared values, honor the vision of those who came before us, and work with unity and purpose toward an even brighter future. Our collective perseverance, faith, and dedication will ensure that the next chapter of our Tribe’s story is one of lasting success and continued sovereignty.

From my family to yours, I wish you a joyful and blessed holiday season. May 2026 be filled with continued growth, good health, and prosperity for us all.

*Mvto (thank you),*

*Stephanie A. Bryan*

**STEPHANIE A. BRYAN**  
Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Chair & CEO

“ As the holiday season approaches, I would like to extend my heartfelt wishes to each of you. May this holiday season bring joy, peace, and cherished time spent with family, and loved ones. I am grateful for the strength, unity, and traditions that make our community so special. As we celebrate this season, take time and reflect on our shared values, respect and honor our elders, and look forward to a New Year filled with hope, health, and continued growth.

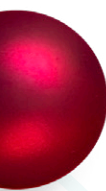
**ROBBIE MCGHEE**  
Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Vice-Chair

# HOLIDAY MESSAGES *from the* PCI TRIBAL COUNCIL

“ From my house to all our Tribal Citizens. As I reflect on 2025, I give thanks for all the blessings that have been stowed on our Tribal Citizens. May the spirit of the holiday season strengthen our community with traditions, warmth, unity and happiness as we look forward to a prosperous New Year in 2026

**CHARLOTTE M. MECKEL**  
Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Council Secretary





“ As we embrace this beautiful holiday season, I find my heart overflowing with gratitude for each of you. This time of year invites us to pause and reflect on the blessings that surround us, blessings that shine brightly in our community. I am deeply honored to serve as your Treasurer and to be entrusted with the stewardship of our shared resources.

In the spirit of Philippians 1:3, “I thank my God every time I remember you,” I am reminded of the strength and unity we possess as a tribe. Together, we have built a solid financial foundation, allowing us to uplift our elders, empower our youth, and nurture our families. Each of you plays a vital role in this journey, and your support is the heartbeat of our community.

Let us also remember the words of Psalm 133:1, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity.” This holiday season, may we continue to foster love and cooperation among us, celebrating our shared heritage and the bonds that tie us together.

Wishing you and your loved ones peace, joy, and good health throughout this holiday season and into the new year. May the coming days be filled with warmth, love, and cherished moments with family and friends.

*With heartfelt blessings,*  
**AMY GANTT**  
Tribal Council Treasurer

“ *Greetings,*

Hope you and your family are doing well. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**ARTHUR MOTHERSHED**  
Poarch Creek Indians At-Large Tribal Council Member

“ As 2025 comes to a close, I have many thoughts that come to mind regarding what to be proud of. We finally got the Perdido river meats plant open thanks to the hard work of many employees and consultants. Namely, I’d like to thank John English and everyone involved with that project. We also had a major victory by finally getting part of the Jack Springs-Poarch road project funded by the federal highways commission. I’d like to thank Amber Alvarez and Lawrence Wilson for putting up with me on that one. And I’d like to thank everyone employed with our tribe. We’ve accomplished a lot in 2025. I hope to help facilitate the funding of the bridge at brushy creek. We’ve spent a lot of time in Washington along side our government relations people and lobbyists and also working with our state officials. As this year comes to a close, I am thankful for my wife of 40 years, and that the Lord is still blessing the Poarch Creek Indians. I look forward to 2026 with hope for continued growth and unity for our Tribe. Wishing everyone a joyful holiday season and a blessed new year. Thank you all!

**KEITH MARTIN**  
Poarch Creek Indians At-Large Tribal Council Member

“ As a Tribal Council Member, I’m extremely proud that we made progress on several different initiatives. In particular, I’m really excited that the Down Payment Assistance Program was approved and Tribal Citizens have started taking advantage of the program. The Tribal Council has made a concerted effort to continue looking at how we can offer more housing options for our Tribal Citizens. Establishing the Down Payment Assistance Program and the TAHO Refinance option for existing homes are two great initiatives that continue to drive that goal forward. For 2026, I’m looking forward to another great year of continuing to see how the Tribal Council can continue to expand upon the services that are available to our Tribal Citizens and their families. One major objective of the Tribal Council is to engage in a strategic plan that will enable to set the vision for where we want the Tribe to be in ten years. This will be an invaluable exercise for the leadership team as it will be the catalyst that will lay the roadmap of how we reach the goals we are hoping to obtain. It is our wish that the General Council will be pleased with our efforts in working towards setting the vision for the Tribe and how that directly impacts the people we serve.

I also want to wish all of our Tribal Citizens and families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. No matter where your travels may take you, I hope you feel the love of Jesus for you and your family. I look forward to seeing you all in 2026!

*Mvto,*  
**JUSTIN STABLER**  
Poarch Creek Indians At-Large Tribal Council Member

“ Wishing you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season, filled with peace, love and happiness. May the new year bring prosperity, good health, and blessings to your family.

God bless you all abundantly as we celebrate this season of hope and togetherness. May 2026 be a year of renewed vision – where our hearts remember the wisdom of our ancestors, our hands build for the next generations, and our spirits walk in harmony with all creation.

*Kind regards,*  
**SANDY HOLLINGER**  
Poarch Creek Indians At-Large Tribal Council Member

“ As a newly elected Tribal Official, I am proud to serve and see first-hand the progress our community made in 2025—especially the ways we came together to celebrate our culture, support our youth, and strengthen our future. In 2026, I look forward to serving our people with dedication and working alongside all of you to build on this positive momentum. Wishing all our Tribal Citizens a joyful and peaceful holiday season filled with love, wellness, and the spirit of togetherness.

*Mvto,*  
**CHRISTINA FLINT-LOWE**  
Poarch Creek Indians At-Large Tribal Council Member

A photograph of three students in a classroom. On the left, a boy in a grey hoodie looks towards the center. In the middle, a boy with glasses and a colorful patterned shirt looks at a screen. On the right, a boy in a black hoodie also looks at the screen. A computer monitor is visible in the background.

# ADDRESSING THE LACK OF NATIVE HISTORY IN SCHOOLS

By Sharon Delmar

*For generations, Native American history has been treated as a brief prologue in school textbooks — a few pages that precede colonization and fade into obscurity. For the Poarch Creek Indians, this erasure has real consequences: young people growing up without a full understanding of who they are and where they come from. Three Tribal representatives William “Billy” Bailey, Jr., Megan Zamora, and Dr. Karla Martin Dawson are working to change that narrative by bringing truth, representation, and pride back into education.*

---

William “Billy” Bailey, Jr., the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), oversees the Tribe’s efforts to protect and promote its history and culture. His work focuses not only on preservation but also on education, ensuring that accurate and authentic stories are taught both within and beyond the Tribe. “We realized our young people didn’t know enough about their own history,” Bailey shared. “We shifted our focus inward to our own community, to make sure we’re building pride and understanding from within.”

Bailey’s department is developing a comprehensive historical curriculum in partnership with the University of South Alabama. Initially designed for high school seniors, the curriculum will be a living document that evolves as new research emerges. Its purpose is to ensure Poarch Creek history is presented accurately and respectfully, correcting decades of misinformation and omission. He emphasized that misinformation about Native peoples, and particularly about the Poarch Creek Indians, has long been perpetuated in schools. Stereotypes and oversimplified lessons distort Native identities, leaving both Native and non-Native students with an incomplete view of American history. “When you only hear one side of history, you lose a sense of who you are,” Bailey said. “We want our students to understand that our ancestors were resilient and that their story continues.”



“Our department focuses on the preservation of our history, and we share it through presentations, articles, and community events that help our people feel proud and connected to who we are. These events teach parts of our history that aren’t usually taught in schools.” Bailey believes lasting change must begin at the top. “We have passionate teachers who want to do the right thing,” he said. “But they need support. The real change starts with state education boards making Native history a requirement not an option. When that happens, both Native and non-Native students will finally learn the full truth of our shared history.”

---

For Megan Zamora, Director of Internal Communications, the movement to correct and enrich Native history in education is both professional and deeply personal. Education has long been a cornerstone of her family’s legacy, a journey that began with her great-grandmother, Ernestine Daughtry, who went to a boarding school in Tennessee and had to return home before finishing her education. “Each generation in my family has gone a little further in education,” Zamora said. “But even as a student, I didn’t see people like me represented in our textbooks. That absence shapes how you see yourself.”

In November 2024, Zamora helped the Tribe achieve a major milestone — the inclusion of the Poarch Creek Indians in Alabama’s social studies curriculum. Working with the State Board of Education, they helped ensure that students across the State would finally learn about the only federally recognized Tribe in Alabama. “Representation matters,” she said. “It tells our children that their story belongs in the classroom, that they belong.”

Zamora has also worked on projects such as the Tribe’s book *Woven Together* and the documentary *The Forgotten Creeks*, produced in partnership with Jacksonville State University. Both serve as resources that educate the public about the Tribe’s history and resilience while emphasizing that Native people are not historical footnotes but are a very real part of living, thriving communities today.

She is passionate about the impact accurate education can have — and the harm caused when it’s incomplete. “When Native students open a textbook and don’t see themselves, it sends a message that their history doesn’t matter,” she said. “That kind of erasure hurts confidence and disconnects young people from who they are. But, when they do see themselves represented — truthfully and respectfully — it builds pride, belonging, and understanding.” She added, “Accurate history benefits every student. It’s not just about celebrating achievements — it’s about confronting the mistakes of the past so they aren’t repeated in our future.”

As a mother, Zamora hopes that her children will grow up in classrooms that reflect their identity and celebrate their heritage. “I want my children to feel confident in who they are and where they come from,” she said. “They should be able to walk into any classroom and see themselves reflected in the lessons — not just as part of the past, but as part of the present and future.”

---

Dr. Karla Martin Dawson, Division Director of the Community Services Division, leads initiatives that keep the culture, language, and traditions of the Poarch Creek Indians alive through education. Her departments focus on weaving cultural learning into everyday life for Tribal Citizens and the surrounding community, offering programs in art, language, and history. When she first became Division Director, there were only a handful of cultural and language classes. As the Tribe has grown, so has the Tribe’s focus on cultural revitalization. Now, she oversees a growing network of educators and students engaged in weekly lessons that bring Creek identity to life. Each week, ninety-six students at Fred L. McGhee participate in cultural education and language classes. The Creek language is heard daily among the children, something Dr. Dawson says represents the success of a community-wide effort to revitalize their heritage. The cultural and language programs have grown substantially, with three



**WILLIAM “BILLY” BAILEY, JR.**

*Poarch Creek Indians Tribal  
Historic Preservation Officer*



**MEGAN ZAMORA**

*Poarch Creek Indians Director  
of Internal Communications*



**DR. KARLA MARTIN DAWSON**

*Poarch Creek Indians Community  
Services Division Director*

...continued on next page

cultural educators, multiple language instructors, traditional art instructors, and opportunities like the Elder Hymn Class and Pow Wow Club that connect generations.

When I asked her what her elders thought about the revitalization of Creek culture, specifically her father Nathan Martin who was part of the original Poarch Creek dance troupe, Dr. Dawson smiled before answering. “He’s amazed,” she said. “He looks at everything we have now and says he never imagined it would be like this. He’s proud to see our children speaking Creek, dancing, and carrying on the traditions of our people. Watching the younger generation teach the older generation our language fills him with hope — that’s when you know the culture is not only going to survive but thrive.”

Despite the progress, Dr. Dawson acknowledges that challenges remain when it comes to integrating Native history into public education. She points to the state’s rigid curriculum and the focus on standardized testing as major barriers for teachers who want to include Native perspectives. “There’s a lack of flexibility,” she explained. “But educators need to question and update their teaching methods — to ensure accuracy and respect.”

For many Native students, the absence of representation in classrooms can lead to feelings of isolation. Dr. Dawson believes cultural education plays a vital role in building confidence and a sense of identity among Native youth. “When students see their culture reflected in what they learn, they understand that they belong,” she said. “That understanding strengthens both their spirit and their community.”

Her division continues to expand partnerships and programs that promote cultural understanding, not just within the Tribe but across the broader community. Initiatives through the Pow Wow Club, the Cultural Education Department, the Fred L McGhee Early Learning

Center, Education Department, Recreation Department, and the Boys & Girls Club give young people opportunities to showcase their heritage and learn from one another. Looking ahead, she envisions the creation of a Tribal K-12 school that blends academics and cultural education in a unified setting. “We want a school that helps build our future community — one where our children learn math and reading, but also Creek language, culture, and history,” she said.

Dr. Dawson’s lifelong passion for education is deeply personal. She often reflects on the resilience of her ancestors who fought for the right to learn, even in times of hardship. Their legacy drives her to ensure that future generations have access not only to education but to their cultural roots. “My ancestors fought for education when it wasn’t easy,” she said. “Now, it’s our turn to fight for cultural preservation so that every child knows who they are and where they come from.”

Each of these Tribal representatives — Bailey, Zamora, and Dawson — share their voice and vision for ensuring that Native history is not forgotten but fully woven into the story of America. Their work bridges preservation and progress, tradition and innovation, community, and classroom. Bailey focuses on correcting misinformation and developing formal curriculum; Zamora works to make representation visible in schools and state standards; and Dawson builds the programs that bring those lessons to life through community education. Together, they embody the Tribe’s enduring commitment to truth, pride, and the education of future generations.

As Dr. Dawson said, “When our children see themselves reflected in what they learn, they know they belong.” And that, more than anything, is how the Poarch Creek Indians are ensuring that their story continues to grow and flourish.

*“When our children see themselves reflected in what they learn, they know they belong.”*

DR. KARLA MARTIN DAWSON





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Pit

Southern  
Borrow Pit

WETLANDS

By Billy Bailey, Clayton Coon, Brandy Chunn, and Sehoj Barnett

POARCH 101

# Origin of the Forgotten Creeks

FROM ALABAMA TO POARCH BAND



Over 1,000 years ago, corn became widespread among our people. This allowed the great mound-building Mississippian cultures to eventually flourish across the Southeast through large-scale corn farming. But which Mississippian sites do Poarch Creek people descend from? Through the combined insight of oral tradition, archaeology, and common sense, we can follow the footprints of our ancestors back to a few enduring places of origin.

BOTTLE CREEK







**L**ong before European contact, the Mississippian mound-building culture thrived across what is now Alabama. One of their greatest cities, Moundville, grew along the black warrior River by 1050 AD, reaching to its height around 1300. When Moundville declined a century later, archaeological evidence suggests that many of its people migrated south to the Upper Alabama River region. This movement is traced through pottery's distinctive styles and the forms closely shared between late-phase Moundville ceramics and a newer ceramic style that scholars call the Big Eddy Phase.

The most prominent community with Big Eddy pottery styles developed at the mound site within present-day Fort Toulouse Park, located at the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers where the Alabama River begins, near modern-day Parker Island. Moundville-derived ceramic styles also extended into the lower Tallapoosa River region, including the Kulumi site, where a gradual transition occurs upstream into a different style altogether called the Shine II complex, derived from the Lamar culture of Georgia, which has a limited connection to Poarch Creek heritage.

At the same time that Moundville was declining, another great Mississippian city, now called Bottle Creek was rising in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Built atop a cluster of islands 14 miles south of Boatyard and Holly Creek, Bottle Creek flourished between A.D. 1250 and 1500 as a major political and epicenter of life. Archaeological evidence reveals a strong connection between Bottle Creek and Moundville, reflected in the striking similarities of pottery, stone tools, architecture, and even plant and animal remains. Researchers found at Bottle Creek remains of gladiator elimia snails, which are native only to the Black Warrior River basin (Moundville), indicating that people and materials moved regularly between these two Mississippian centers.

The Moundville-derived cultural and artistic traditions that took root at Bottle Creek gradually developed into a distinct regional expression known to archaeologists as the Pensacola Culture, with traces identified as far north as the Upper Alabama River. Likewise, the Moundville-derived Big Eddy styles appear to have merged with Pensacola influences downstream along the Lower Alabama River. By the 1500s, both of the great Mississippian centers of Moundville and Bottle Creek were in decline, and their descendants increasingly lived in smaller, more dispersed communities. Archaeologists refer to this transitional era, spanning roughly A.D. 1550 to 1650, as the Protohistoric period, a time bridging the height of the mound-building civilizations and the first encounters with Europeans.

As Bottle Creek's influence declined, a new cultural tradition known as the Burial Urn Culture emerged along the Alabama River. In this practice, families placed the remains of their loved ones within large clay vessels for burial, a distinctive custom. These communities wove together coastal and inland lifeways on the Alabama River, forming a deeply interconnected network of relationships that defined the region for generations. Many scholars identify these interconnected people from the Mobile Delta to the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers as the Province of Tuskaloosa, recorded in 1540 by the Spanish expedition led by Hernando De Soto.

After Spanish contact, waves of epidemic disease and warfare transformed the entire Southeast. By the 1600s, the old Tuskaloosa chiefdom had fragmented: some of its descendants moved north and became part of the people later known as the Alabama (Alibamu), who were eventually absorbed into the Upper Creeks. In contrast, others moved south toward the Gulf Coast and became known to the French as the Mobilians. In the following century, the chaos of the Indian slave trade forced many displaced groups, such as the Koasati and Tuskegee, to migrate from Tennessee and settle among the Alibamu towns at the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers, where intermarriage and new alliances began.

By the early 1700s, the Alibamu had become part of a shared political identity within the Creek Nation, adopting the Mvskoke language as a common tongue while preserving their own distinct traditions. James Adair, an 18th century trader who lived among the Native Communities, describes this diversity near the Alabama River:

...continued on next page

---

*"I am assured by a gentleman of character, who traded a long time near the late Alebahma garrison, that within six miles of it live the remains of seven Indian nations, who usually conversed with each other in their own different dialects, though they understood the Muskohge language."*

---

Native historian George Stiggins, who grew up within the Creek Confederacy, described the Alibamu settlements along this same river:

---

*"The first settlement we find in tracing the Alabama... is at the confluence of the Alabama river and Tensaw lake near the Town of Stockton in Baldwin County... part of the tribe removed up the river and made the Settlements and Towns Autauga and Towassee... on the Cosa river above we, tum ka Called oche, a, bou, faw, or Hickory ground. They call their tribe Alabamo ... I make no hesitation in saying that the Alabamas were found here by the other tribes when they located themselves here, and they named the river Alabama after them in acknowledgement of their antiquity."*

---

Stiggins's account tells the story of our ancestral homelands once extending along the entire Alabama River, from the Mobile Delta to north of the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. One well-known residence of the Sehoy family was near the Alabama River's headwaters at the Coosa-Tallapoosa confluence, known as Hvcce Fvske ("River Point"), located near present-day Parker Island north of Montgomery. From this area, Little Tallassee grew into a prominent town under the leadership of Sehoy McGillivray and her children. From Little Tallassee, Hickory Ground later emerged as an even more influential Upper Creek center. Below is an oral history account of a Sehoy descendant recorded in the late 1800s.

---

*"Old Alabama men used to say that the Alabama came out of the ground near the Alabama River a little up stream from its junction with the Tombigbee, close to Holsifa (Choctaw Bluff). After they had come out an owl hooted. They were scared and most of them went back into the ground. That is why the Alabama are few in number. The Alabama towns are Tawasa, Pawokti, Oktcaiyutci, Atauga, Hatcafa'ski (River Point, at the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa), and Wetumka."*

---

These are the words of Mr. Ward Coachman, recorded by Albert Gatschet. Modern scholars have suggested that the Sehoys were Koasati, but Ward's own words, family records, and the geographic records all point clearly to an Alibamu origin. The Sehoys were from the lands between the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers, near Choctaw Bluff, the same homeland to which their descendants continued to return to bury their loved ones near the location referenced in Mr. Coachman's oral history.

Ward's mother, Polly Durant, was the daughter of Sophia McGillivray Durant and the granddaughter of Sehoy

McGillivray of the Wind Clan. Through this maternal line, Ward was a direct descendant of the Sehoys, from which almost all Poarch Creek families still trace their lineage today, among the many other Creek lineages. Fittingly, Ward named one of his daughters Sehoy.

Following the 1793 death of Alexander McGillivray, Sophia denied her father, Lachlan's, wish to have Alexander's exhumed remains sent to Scotland to be buried with their father's Scottish clan. She rather reburied her brother Alexander's body in their maternal lands by Holsifa (Choctaw Bluff). There was once an actual monument there that William Panton erected in 1794, this was directly opposite of the mouth of where Little River comes into Alabama River, very near Choctaw Bluff.

Alibamu chiefs and Creek Nation headmen worked together to make clear to encroaching settlers that the ancestral homelands of the Sehoy lineage would remain in the care of the eldest and most respected daughter. To formalize this, they drafted a legal land indenture in her name:

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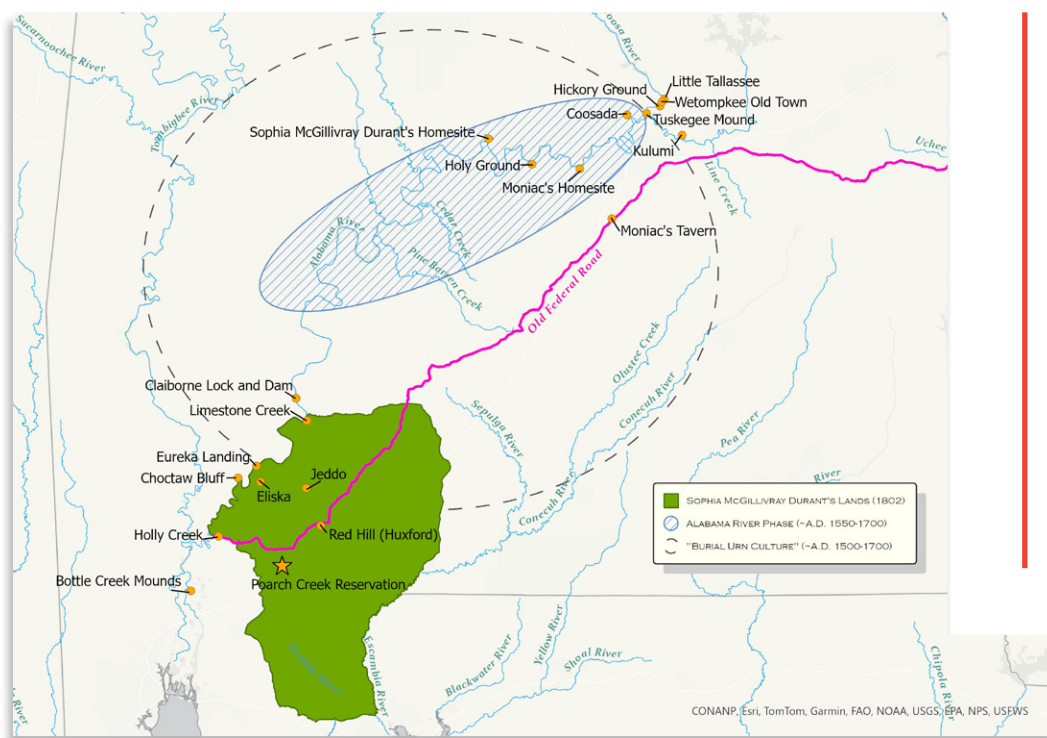
*"Their well beloved cousin and countrywoman...Sophia McGilvery...her heirs and assigns, all that tract of land lying and being in the Creek Nation aforesaid and bounded as follows to wit...From the mouth of Hollow Creek to the mouth of Limestone on the River Alabama extending back from the said river Scambay (Escambia) and from there down the said river Scambay (Escambia) to the Saw Mill Creek."*

---

The Creek War of 1813–1814 deeply divided the family of Sophia and other relations. Her husband, Benjamin Durant, was killed at Fort Mims by Red Stick warriors. Several of her children joined the Red Stick movement under the leadership of her nephew, William Weatherford (Oponkv-fvccv-hayv, "Truth Teller"). Around this same time, Sophia's sister, William's mother, Sehoy Weatherford III, passed. She was buried in the Little River Community, near the grave of her brother Alexander, a place where William Weatherford himself would later be laid to rest.

To our knowledge, none of the Poarch Creek ancestors signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson (1814) or agreed to the land cessions imposed by Jackson's Treaty after the war. However, the treaty did allow a few "friendly Creeks" to retain land within the ceded territory. A few of our ancestors used this cause to secure legal claims to their ancestral lands, though many waited decades for their deed, and some never received it. Even when valuable lands along our rivers were granted to us, squatters and small land speculators soon forced us out, pushing our people further into the interior where the cattle were ranged in the longleaf pine savannah. Some of our Red Stick survivors who had once strongly opposed the U.S. government intermarried with these relatives who held land claims in the interior, binding together families once divided by war. A lesser-known tragedy of the Creek War is the fate of many Creek children who were orphaned by the conflict. After the fighting ended, American militias frequently captured these children and





*The descendants of the Sehoys, Durants, Weatherfords, and countless others who refused to abandon their ancestral lands would one day form the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, the living continuation of the ancient Alabama River peoples who never forgot who they were, nor where they came from.*

enslaved them on plantations instead of returning them to their people. In contrast, some Poarch Creek ancestors are believed to have rescued and taken in their young relatives during this time, providing them refuge and kinship. This may explain why certain children suddenly appear in later census records within other Creek households—evidence of families reuniting and caring for their own amid widespread loss.

Ward Coachman returned to Alabama in 1848 as a young man, determined to help move family and friends westward. In one of his letters, he expressed both sorrow and resolve at the troubles of those who remained behind:

---

*"I think there yet remains in Alabama not less than 100 Creeks—and most of them in a deplorable condition.... I tried to get these but was prevented from doing so by threats of their would-be masters—I shall yet get them—but not this season—as the waters are in good boating order next season you will hear from me again."*

---

At Sizemore Landing (also known as Eureka Landing), Levitia "Vickey" Moniac—daughter of Sam Moniac and Elizabeth Weatherford—operated a ferry service with her husband, William Sizemore of Atasi. The site lay near Holsifa (Choctaw Bluff), close to the grave of Vicky's grandmother, Seho Weatherford, sister to Ward's grandmother.

When Ward reached this point to assist his relatives and friends boarding a steamboat bound west, he was not only departing his homeland but saying farewell to loved ones

and close relatives who chose to remain. This moment took place at the very heart of his Alibamu origin story, very near Holsifa (Choctaw Bluff), where his family's lineage began.

Elizabeth Weatherford and her daughter, Vicky, chose to stay on their ancestral land, near the resting place of Seho Weatherford and their relations. Elizabeth remains buried there among her Poarch Creek descendants, one of many ancestors who gathered around the Tensaw community, finding strength in solidarity to remain rooted in their homeland. Others, despite mounting pressures, also stayed. Some who went west later returned home, rejoining kin who filed successful land claims and continued to preserve Creek heritage within a small stretch of their homeland east of the Little River headwaters.

The story of the Poarch Creek people is one of endurance and return. From the mound builders of Moundville and Bottle Creek to the Alibamu communities along the rivers in Central and Southwest Alabama, our ancestors carried forward a heritage that shaped the land and its people for more than a thousand years. Despite wars, removals, and the forced divisions that sought to erase them, they continued to preserve their kinship and their homelands. The descendants of the Sehoys, Durants, Weatherfords, and countless others who refused to abandon their ancestral lands would one day form the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, the living continuation of the ancient Alabama River peoples who never forgot who they were, nor where they came from.



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| 4D – Oceanview Balcony              | \$1,649 | \$3,145    |
| 2D – Oceanview Balcony (midship)    | \$1,859 | \$3,565    |
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# TRUDELL

BY HEATHER RAE



By Sharon Delmar

In the 2005 documentary *Trudell*, Cherokee filmmaker **Heather Rae** delivers a moving portrait of **John Trudell**, the Santee Sioux activist, poet, and musician whose life embodied both resistance and renewal.

The film begins in the 1960s, during a period of Native political awakening. Rae takes us into the American Indian Movement (AIM), where Trudell emerged as a powerful spokesperson and voice for Indigenous rights. Through striking archival footage and interviews, we witness his leadership during pivotal moments like the Alcatraz occupation, which helped ignite a new era of Native activism.

Yet *Trudell* is not only a political story — it's a personal journey through loss and transformation. In 1979, tragedy claimed Trudell's wife, children, and mother-in-law. From that grief, he turned to poetry and music, using his art as a path toward healing and truth. His words became a lifeline, expressing the pain, pride, and resilience of his people. Rae's direction treats her subject with deep respect and grace. She lets Trudell's voice guide the film, blending his poetry and music into a rhythm that feels both cinematic and spiritual. The result is a documentary that is as heartfelt as it is historical — a reminder of the strength and beauty within Indigenous expression.

*Trudell* is not just a biography; it's a call to listen, remember, and act. Whether you come to it for its activism, artistry, or humanity, it leaves a lasting impression of a man who spoke truth to power and turned his pain into poetry.

## WHERE TO WATCH

### Streaming

Amazon Prime Video: available to rent or buy  
Apple TV: available to stream with subscription  
Kanopy: free through participating libraries and universities

### Physical Media

Available via Native film distributors and online retailers

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**  
with Sharon Delmar at  
[sdelmar@pci-nsn.gov](mailto:sdelmar@pci-nsn.gov).



**ATTENTION PCI TRIBAL CITIZENS:**

# Need help with rising Marketplace Premiums?

Many Marketplace (ACA) participants are seeing higher premiums. If you have questions about your health care options, contact:

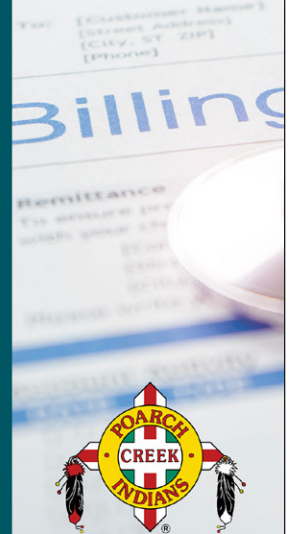
**MARKETPLACE:**

Candice Dawe at (251) 368-9136 ext. 2324

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## POARCH CREEK INDIANS HELP GIVE A 32-MILLION-YEAR-OLD FOSSIL A VOICE IN MUSCOGEE

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

**W**hen a team of paleontologists uncovered the remains of a 2-million-year-old turtle on ancestral Creek land, they had no idea the fossil would lead to something even more significant than the discovery itself: a bridge between ancient science and the Muscogee (spelled in traditional Creek as “Mvskoke”) language. Through Samantha Martin’s efforts, this amazing discovery now carries not just a new scientific name, but a voice from the past.

Samantha Martin, Creek Language Coordinator with the Poarch Creek Indians Cultural Department, was called upon for a task that would turn out to be both professionally and personally monumental. As a passionate language preservationist, she was tasked with helping to name the fossil in Muscogee, the traditional language of her people.

“At first, it was just another request for translation,” Samantha admits. “We get those all the time in the Language Department. But once I started to understand the weight of the fossil’s uniqueness, and that it could be the first and only fossil ever to carry a Muscogee name, it became something much more.”

The project began when Dr. Andrew Gentry, paleontologist with the Learning Campus in Gulf Shores, reached out for linguistic assistance. What followed was weeks of emails, Zoom calls, and brainstorming sessions between Samantha and Dr. Gentry, as well as her friend and Muscogee speaker, Marcus Briggs-Cloud. Together, they worked to find a name that honored the cultural roots of the land where the fossil was found, while also complying with the strict Latin-based naming confines of the scientific community.

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**PICTURED** Above Members of the extraction team preparing to transport the Ueloca fossil by boat. Left to right: Josh Goff, Miller Nama, Jun Ebersole, Corey Harper, Charles Nichols, Andrew Gentry  
Credit: Erik Lizee



**SAMANTHA MARTIN**

Creek Language Coordinator  
with the Poarch Creek Indians  
Cultural Department





## HELP KEEP ESCAMBIA COUNTY CLEAN TAKE PART IN THE POARCH CREEK INDIANS RECYCLING PROGRAM

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

“  
These new bins  
and services  
show the Tribe’s  
commitment to  
protecting our  
land, water,  
and air.”

KRISTI WEATHERFORD,  
POARCH CREEK  
INDIANS DIRECTOR  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROGRAMS

**T**he Poarch Creek Indians are proud to offer expanded recycling opportunities to help protect our community, now and for future generations. Through the efforts of the Tribe’s Environmental Department, the Recycling Center and convenient community recycling drop-off bins are available to all Escambia County residents.

“These new bins and services show the Tribe’s commitment to protecting our land, water, and air,” said Kristi Weatherford. “By working together, we can reduce waste going to landfills and make Escambia County a cleaner place for everyone.”

This is more than just a recycling program, it’s a community-wide effort to reduce waste, and prevent contamination. We invite every resident to learn what materials are accepted, what cannot be recycled, and how to properly prepare your recyclables. By working together and recycling correctly, we can reduce landfill waste and protect our natural resources.

Every can, bottle, and box you recycle matters, but only when done correctly. Contaminated recycling (e.g., food in containers, plastic mixed with cardboard, or liquid-filled bottles) can spoil entire loads and send them straight to the landfill.

Communities, organizations, or local businesses interested in exploring recycling partnerships are encouraged to reach out to the PCI Environmental Department to start a conversation. Together, we can build a stronger, more sustainable future and ensure Escambia County stays clean for generations to come.

For questions or more information, contact the PCI Environmental Department at 251-368-9136 ext. 2367. The Recycling Center is located at 4449 Hwy 21 South, Atmore, AL. Hours: Monday – Friday, 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (Closed on major holidays)



#### WHAT YOU CAN RECYCLE AT THE RECYCLING CENTER

- Cardboard and Paper Packing Material (remove all Styrofoam, plastic wrap, and air packaging)
- Paper and Magazines
- Aluminum and Scrap Metal
- Plastic Bottles (PET #1 only) (Make sure all liquids are emptied before recycling)
- Printer Ink/Toner Cartridges
- Fluorescent Light Bulbs

#### WHAT YOU CANNOT RECYCLE

- Food waste
- Hazardous waste (chemicals, batteries, etc.)
- Any liquids

#### COMMUNITY BINS

In addition to the Recycling Center, community drop-off bins are open 24/7 and offer a quick and convenient way to recycle select items. Locations include:

- Poarch Creek Community Center
- Poarch Creek Recreation Parking Lot
- PCI Willow Creek Senior Housing Subdivision
- We Care, Flomaton, AL

## Attention Indigenous Creators!

# Call For Digital Photo Submissions

StrongHearts Native Helpline is seeking submissions of digital photos representing American Indian and Alaska Native people and culture.



**STRONGHEARTS**  
Native Helpline

We invite Indigenous Creators to delve into Indigenous storytelling through photos!

These photos will be used to develop media materials including advertising, PowerPoint presentations, brochures, and posters to promote StrongHearts Native Helpline and the relatives we serve.

## Submission Criteria

Compensation is based on content and quality as described below.

- Photos must honor Native American and Alaska Native people and culture.
- Quality should include a resolution of 300 dots per inch (DPI) or 300 pixels per inch (PPI).

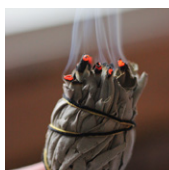
Selections will be made at the end of each month. Compensation will be processed during the following month.

Note: Payees must provide a social security number or tax identification number issued in the United States.

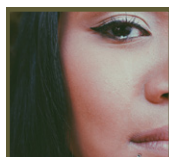
## Indigenous Story Telling Themes: Native-centered, Trauma Informed and Empowerment Based Advocacy.



**Indigenous** (everyday life) means authentic traditional and contemporary Native Americans at home.



**Indigenous Places** (scenic) means places where Indigenous people live or visit whether it's a traditional home or Pipe Stone National Monument. Photos can include animals significant to indigenous culture.



**Indigenous Healing** (cultural practices) represents a cultural event that is a known healing practice such as burning of tobacco or sage, or activities harvesting natural food sources.

**Domestic, Dating and Sexual violence** such as emotional, physical, sexual, financial, digital and cultural abuse; activism and/or protest against social or racial injustice.

**Earn up to \$250 for each digital photo selected! Submit your photos via email to [submissions@strongheartshelpline.org](mailto:submissions@strongheartshelpline.org)**

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-23-GG-02829-CSSP awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.





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## WIND CREEK HOSPITALITY

# JOINS TOURISM LEADERS AT ALABAMA WELCOME CENTER RETREAT

By Amelia Tognoli

**W**ind Creek Hospitality was honored to participate in this year's Alabama Welcome Center Retreat, a meaningful event that brought together hospitality professionals and Welcome Center staff from across the state. This annual gathering celebrates the spirit of Alabama tourism and the dedicated individuals who help make it flourish.

The Wind Creek team had the opportunity to highlight the unique experiences available across its Alabama properties, from exciting gaming and relaxing spa getaways to live entertainment, fine dining, and family-friendly fun. The retreat provided a valuable platform to connect with tourism colleagues, exchange ideas, and showcase the diverse attractions that make Alabama a truly memorable destination for visitors of all ages.

At the heart of the event was the celebration of Alabama's Welcome Center staff, whose dedication is vital to the success of the state's tourism industry. These professionals are often the first friendly faces travelers encounter, offering warm greetings, expert guidance, and personalized recommendations that elevate each visitor's journey. Their deep local knowledge of attractions, events, and history helps guests discover the very best of Alabama, often turning a simple stop into the highlight of a trip. They also play an essential role in promoting regional tourism, supporting community events, and strengthening partnerships statewide.

In addition to the retreat, the Wind Creek team enjoyed exploring the historic streets of downtown Mobile, experiencing firsthand the charm, culture, and Southern hospitality that define the state of Alabama.

"It's always inspiring to come together with others who are passionate about promoting what we have to offer in our state," said Trina Rackard, Director of Sponsorship & Events for Wind Creek Hospitality. "Tourism thrives on connection, and Alabama's Welcome Center professionals embody that spirit every single day."

Wind Creek Hospitality extends sincere thanks to the Alabama Tourism Department and all those who helped organize this impactful event. Wind Creek properties look forward to continuing their shared mission of welcoming guests with excellence, pride, and the true spirit of Alabama hospitality.

***"It's always inspiring to come together with others who are passionate about promoting what we have to offer in our state."***

**TRINA RACKARD, DIRECTOR OF SPONSORSHIP & EVENTS FOR WIND CREEK HOSPITALITY**



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## T.R.I.B.E.

# TRAINING, RETAINING, INVESTING, BUILDING, AND EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS

By Sharon Delmar

**L**eadership doesn't just happen it's built, nurtured, and guided by opportunity. For the Poarch Creek Indians, that opportunity comes through the T.R.I.B.E. Leadership Development Program, a homegrown initiative that is shaping the next generation of leaders by investing in the Tribe's most valuable resource, its people.

When John Rivera, Chief Human Resources Officer, first met with the executive team, Tribal Council, and division directors, one question rose to the surface: how could the organization continue to grow its leadership from within? Many employees have already demonstrated strong potential but lacked the formal supervisory experience often required to take the next step. Rivera saw that as both a challenge and an opportunity.

"We wanted to give our people every opportunity to succeed," Rivera said. "If leadership experience was the barrier, we would create a program that gives them that experience right here within our organization."

For Rivera, the vision behind T.R.I.B.E. was to create something that would not only build leaders but prepare them for what's next. He compared it to visiting a restaurant and ordering off the menu. "When you go to a restaurant, you can only order what's on the menu," he explained. "But if you've taken the time to develop your skills to grow yourself, you're expanding your menu. You have more to choose from when opportunity comes along. That's what leadership development is all about, making sure our people have more choices, more readiness, and more confidence when it's their time to step up."

That idea became the foundation of T.R.I.B.E. which stands for Training, Retaining, Investing, Building, and Empowering. Developed in collaboration with Poarch Creek's Human Resources team, the first pilot group of the program, and the instructional designers at ILX Studios, the program was designed to cultivate leadership at every level while keeping Poarch Creek's values of perseverance, opportunity, and family at its core.

From the beginning, Rivera and his team envisioned a program that would do more than teach, it would transform. T.R.I.B.E. was structured around three tiers, each tailored to meet employees where they are on their leadership journey.

Tribe 1 focuses on emerging leaders ready for their first supervisory role, emphasizing communication, motivation, and team building. Tribe 2 develops evolving leaders—those already supervising others—helping them grow into leaders of other leaders. Tribe 3 supports senior leaders and directors, aligning strategy, vision, and mentorship. Each tier unfolds over time, blending classroom learning, deep dives, and collaborative projects that put leadership theory into action. Our Division Directors have committed to recognizing program graduates as having two years of leadership experience, a significant pledge that reinforces confidence in internal talent and opens the door to future opportunities.

As the program gained momentum, Renee Crider, Corporate Trainer for PCI, took on a dual role: facilitator, mentor, and champion for every participant. For Crider, T.R.I.B.E. isn't just a leadership initiative it's a mission to help others find their potential and step into it.

"It's a program of the people, by the people, and for the people," she explained. "We're not just teaching leadership; we're helping people discover what kind of leader they can be."

Crider described the experience as personal and purpose-driven. She sees her work not only as developing skills but as cultivating confidence. "Our mission is to grow and protect our people," she said. "T.R.I.B.E. gives us the chance to do that in a very real, hands-on way. It's about preparing employees for the opportunities ahead."

The program's success, she believes, lies in its proactive approach. Rather than waiting for leadership roles to open and scrambling to fill them, T.R.I.B.E. ensures that qualified, confident candidates are already prepared to step up when the time comes.

This year's graduating class represents that mission in action. The 2025 cohorts of TRIBE I and II showcased exceptional teamwork, creativity, and growth throughout their six-month journey. Participants worked closely with one another across departments, completing projects that demonstrated leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. Several graduates have already earned promotions or taken on new responsibilities, proving that the program's investment in internal talent is paying off.

Participants for the T.R.I.B.E. program are carefully selected to ensure both readiness and commitment.

Division Directors nominate individuals who have shown initiative, leadership potential, and a willingness to grow. Selected employees are invited to participate in an orientation session, where expectations and schedules are outlined to ensure that every participant understands the time and effort required. Future classes will follow a similar process, with an added application component designed to encourage employees to take ownership of their professional development.

“Going forward, we want to make sure every participant is fully invested,” Crider said. “The application process will give employees a chance to express their goals and make sure they’re ready to commit to the program. It’s a big responsibility, but it’s also a big opportunity.”

For Dakota Sheets, Farm Ag Technician II at Perdido River Farms, the T.R.I.B.E. program offered more than he ever expected. When he first joined, Dakota thought it would be a simple leadership class—a few lessons, maybe a presentation or two. But he quickly realized the program was something much bigger.

“At first, I thought it was just a leadership class,” Dakota said with a smile. “But it turned out to be so much more, it taught me how to be a supervisor and how to work with people.”

For Dakota, the experience was both enjoyable and eye-opening. He appreciated the opportunity to step away from his daily routine, learn new skills, and connect with employees from other departments. Through the program, he developed stronger communication skills, learned to manage people effectively, and gained a deeper understanding of what leadership really means.

“T.R.I.B.E. helped me understand people management and how to take initiative,” he explained. “I’ve already started using those skills in my job every day.” Now, Dakota has the training to step confidently into a supervisory role at Perdido River Farms, bringing with him not only the skills he learned but the confidence to lead by example. His career goals are coming into focus, and he credits the T.R.I.B.E. program for helping him see what’s possible.

When asked what advice he’d give to others considering the program, Dakota didn’t hesitate. “Do it,” he said. “Step out of your comfort zone. You’ll learn so much, not just from the instructors but from everyone you meet. It’s a great way to grow personally and professionally.”

The T.R.I.B.E. program continues to evolve each year. What began as a pilot has expanded into a multi-tiered initiative with growing participation and visible results. In 2025, the program achieved high engagement and several participant promotions. Looking ahead, 2026 will bring a renewed focus on refining presentation skills, enhancing communication, and strengthening the participant selection process to ensure that every cohort represents the Tribe’s most committed and promising leaders.

Rivera said that seeing graduates of the program take on leadership roles across the organization has been one of the most rewarding outcomes. “The goal isn’t just to fill positions,” he said. “It’s to build a culture where our people see a future here, where they know we’ll invest in them if they’re willing to invest in themselves. That’s what T.R.I.B.E. is all about.”

At its core, T.R.I.B.E. embodies the Tribe’s enduring values. It’s about perseverance in growth, opportunity through learning, and family in support and collaboration. It’s leadership that’s not only taught but lived.

When asked to describe the program in one word, Crider didn’t have to think long: “Opportunity.”

That single word captures what John Rivera envisioned from the beginning, what Renee Crider helps cultivate every day, and what participants like Dakota Sheets now carry into their careers. Through T.R.I.B.E., the Poarch Creek Indians are doing more than developing leaders they’re creating a culture of confidence, integrity, and unity that will carry the organization forward for generations to come.

Because at Poarch Creek, leadership isn’t something you’re given.

It’s something you grow into together.

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***Congratulations to the 2025 T.R.I.B.E. graduating class for their dedication, perseverance, and leadership. Your achievements reflect the spirit of the program and the values of the Poarch Creek Indians. As new cohorts begin their journey, your success stands as a powerful example of how growth, opportunity, and teamwork can build the leaders of tomorrow.***



## **2026 T.R.I.B.E. 1 GRADUATES**

Trista Hill  
Casey Jackson  
Haley Hornady  
Chance Jackson  
Jennifer Reynolds  
Cheyanne Timothy  
Shelly Chavira  
Renee Crider  
Travis Smith  
David Rolin  
Dakota Sheets  
Stephanie Brown  
Patrick Craft

## **2026 T.R.I.B.E. 2 GRADUATES**

Mallory Peebles  
Ross Parham  
Wendy Davis  
Barnie White  
Chris Head  
Emily Fayard  
Chad Parker  
Gia Langham  
Kaci Slate  
John Stephens  
Logan Boatwright  
Kyrstal Marshall  
Josh Burkett  
Jason Griffey  
Lawrence “Bunk” Peebles



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## OWA PARKS & RESORT WELCOMES KEN LEONE AS NEW PROPERTY MANAGER

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez



WA Parks & Resort is proud to announce the arrival of Ken Leone as its new Property Manager, bringing with him decades of industry-leading experience in hospitality management, property development, and revenue optimization.

A Senior Global Hospitality Executive and United States Marine Corps Veteran, Leone has built a reputation as a transformational leader with a proven track record of designing, developing, and managing award-winning hospitality destinations. His arrival at OWA signals a new chapter of growth and innovation for the growing resort.

"We are thrilled to welcome Ken to the OWA family," said Cody Williamson, President/CEO of Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority and a Poarch Creek Tribal Citizen. "His deep industry expertise and visionary leadership will play a key role in elevating our guest experiences at the property and driving the next phase of strategic growth for OWA."

As an experienced hospitality professional, Leone is a value creator and change agent known for identifying unique market opportunities that drive operational excellence. He most recently served as Managing Director of OKANA Resort & Indoor Waterpark, an entertainment destination owned and operated by the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma City, OK, where he oversaw the property from the construction phase through to its opening in 2025. This multi-million dollar development project included a 100,000 square-foot water park, 15 restaurants and 30,000 sq. feet of meeting space. Throughout his career, he has also been instrumental in:

- 
- **Designing and managing three Margaritaville properties**, one of which was named #1 Best New Hotel in the U.S. by USA Today in 2018.
  - **Developing the Westin in Buffalo, NY**, which received Best Full-Service Hotel from Marriott in 2019.
  - **Leading Larkspur Hotels & Restaurants** as EVP/COO, where the brand was named #1 Best Place to Work in the San Francisco Bay Area for two consecutive years.
  - **Driving a 650% ROI** through boutique hotel development at Larkspur and spearheading hotel acquisitions and management contracts for Delaware North.
- 

Leone's strengths lie in creating service excellence environments, while his innovative approach will help support OWA's continued mission to deliver memorable experiences for all its guests across its entertainment, lodging, and dining offerings.

**“OWA represents a rare opportunity to blend innovation and guest-focused service into something truly extraordinary,” said Ken Leone. “My goal is to build on the strong foundation already in place, by empowering our teams, enhancing the guest experience, and driving long-term value through strategic growth and operational excellence.”**





# PERSONAL *and* PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

By Carrie Martin

*While pursuing a masters' degree from the University of Phoenix, one of my classes was Ethics. This article is related to Healthcare. Ethics encompasses everything we do from our own personal lives to our jobs. This article addresses how our own ethical beliefs directly correlates with our decision making at our jobs.*

In today's healthcare there are multiple issues which administrators must face each and every day. From federal and state regulations, community and patient expectations, employee issues and concerns, strategic ethical decision making is becoming more visible within healthcare organization. As healthcare organizations face ethical dilemmas everyday, the four major ethical principles: autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice are being put to the test from the board room to the staff employee. Therefore, it is important that individuals who work in the healthcare industry have a clear understanding of their own ethical beliefs and understand how those beliefs will affect decision making for issues which will arise within the organization.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

Healthcare is an environment where one area affects the other. Answer to problems may not be found in a textbook or financial sheet. It will involve such things as organizational mission, values, trust, human dignity, and service to community (Morrison, 2011 ). Individuals must evaluate their own code of ethics first. The American College of Healthcare Executive (ACHE) Code of Ethics is a good place to start. There is a self assessment which helps individuals with thinking about ethic-related leadership and action. I took this test and found out some interesting things about myself. First of all I found after taking the self assessment test that I could be considered a lukewarm person, I am neither hot, nor cold. The majority of my answers were "usually". According to the test, "usually is considered satisfactory, but in some cases "usually could potentially raise a red flag. I found that as I am not as consistent with my ethical behavior at work as I should be. In reflecting back upon the self assessment test, I find that

"usually" should be "always". I now know that I have some soul searching and asking myself, why do I "usually when I should "always".

## ACHE STANDARDS

When it comes to my own personal ethical decision making, the ACHE standards are ones which I feel I can practice without feeling that I am being made to compromise my own belief system. I was raised in an environment which taught the morals, values and integrity. The community, in which I live now, nourishes those same thought processes. According to ACHE, their Code of Ethics incorporates standards of ethical behavior governing individual behavior, particularly when that conduct directly relates to the role and identity of the healthcare executive (ACHE, 2012). According to ACHE, "healthcare executives have an obligation to act in ways that will merit the trust, confidence, and respect of healthcare professionals and the general public". I have tried my entire adult life to live this statement and will continue to work to make sure that I am always being true to myself and to the professionals with whom I work with, the institution where I am employed and the community to which I serve.

## DECISION-MAKING

When healthcare managers have to make decisions, first and foremost they should be informed decisions which have involved thorough research of the situation with the best possible options for the organization made available to the manager (Liebler & McConnell, 2008). Once the information has been provided the manager must then look into what is the ethical thing to do. Values form an important basis for ethical behavior. Individuals values and the values of an organization can be called "person-organizational fit" or "congruence". Value congruence is referred to as the internal

consistency of values within the organization and the internal consistency of values held by an individual (Elango, Paul, Kundu, & Paudel, 2010). The greater the degree of value congruence within an organization the more influential the organizations values were in helping to shape the decisions of individuals to ethical dilemmas (Elango, et.al., 2010). Personally, I feel that a person should have a strong sense of integrity and this will guide them to always make the right ethical decision, whether it may or may not be the correct decision for the organization.

### STRATEGIES FOR DECISION MAKING

To be effective in making ethical decisions there are some strategies which can be useful (1) maintain integrity which is learned through reflective practice in an environment that requires a person to resolve complex problems with deliberate attention to their moral and ethical implications (Saunders & Butts, 2011) (2) having a clear understanding of the organization's code of ethics. This will enable the manager to know how his or her decision may affect the organization. (3) ensure that all information provided to the manager is credible, reliable, researched information with the best workable options for the organization provided (Liebler & McConnell, 2008)

### CONCLUSION

Having the skills of a self assessment, knowledge of ACHE standards, strategies for decision making will allow an healthcare manager to make sound ethical decisions. Being aware of one's own ethical belief and those of the organization are an effective tool for one to have in today's healthcare field. To maintain integrity in all that a healthcare manager does will demonstrate to the organization, employees and community an individual who can be trusted and relied on to always do what is ethically right.

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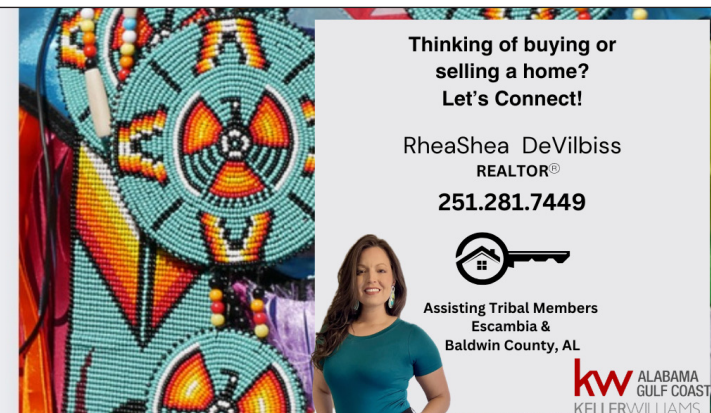







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# ESTABLISH YOUR EMERGENCY FUND

By Bryan Fayard

2025 is nearly over and it certainly went by fast. As we approach 2026, let's take a few moments to focus on the coming year. I can't predict the future but, chances are that each one of us will have some kind of emergency in 2026. You'll have an issue with your vehicle which will most likely occur about 2 or 3 months after the warranty expires, or you'll have a medical issue or pet issue that needs immediate attention. Something will happen to you, me, and likely each tribal citizen in 2026 and it will cost money. As we journey into 2026, tribal citizens will fortunately receive Per Cap distributions and GWA. Consider using a portion of this money to set up an emergency fund to be better prepared for the inevitable emergency.

Most financial experts recommend having 3 to 6 months of your income set aside in an emergency fund. For example, if you bring home \$5,000 each month, ideally you should have between \$15,000 - \$30,000 in your emergency fund. Make sure to have a separate account for your emergency fund. Don't maintain an excessive balance in your checking account and call that your emergency fund - your emergency fund is for emergencies only. Consider putting your emergency fund in a high-yield savings account (HYSA). There are online banks, which are safe, and FDIC insured up to \$250,000. Some currently offer between 3.5% - 4.0% or higher returns. There are many HYSA's to choose from, but the following have received great reviews: SoFi, Barclays, CIT, & Western Alliance. Research these online HYSA and consider opening one to maintain your emergency fund. This way, your money won't sit idle but will grow and outpace inflation. Remember, financial emergencies are best managed by financial preparation.

Establishing your emergency fund is your number one financial priority. Another crucial element of any sound financial plan is a budget. I know, that 'B' word that most everyone despises. Let's call it your spending plan because that sounds better. Here, the most important thing is to PYF or Pay Yourself First. From now on, treat yourself as though you are the most important bill to pay each month, i.e., save first, then spend the rest. If you pay for your house, car, cellular, groceries, go out to eat, etc. and save what's left, there won't be anything left. Guess how I know that? I started to PYF when I was in my mid-thirties; had I started this in my twenties, I'd have retired years ago. This simple psychological shift in your spending behavior will yield much benefit in your future.

Let's delve into how to build your spending plan. The cycle is: Budget, Spend, Compare, & Learn. Right now, go ahead and budget for the upcoming month. Now proceed to buy stuff and pay bills throughout the month (remember to PYF). At the end of the month, compare what you spent to your budget. This is where you'll learn where your money goes. Repeat this cycle each month and you'll finally answer that question, "Where does my money go?" Most people spend much more on groceries and eating out than they think. Don't get discouraged by this process. You'll likely miss your budget for the first 3 or 4 months but with consistent, monthly planning, you'll soon become a pro.

**COME BY TO SEE ME, CALL OR EMAIL ME AND LET'S BUILD YOUR CUSTOM SPENDING PLAN FOR 2026.**

Bryan Fayard  
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POARCH CREEK INDIANS

# COWBOY *Christmas Parade*

## Dec 12 • 5:30 pm

The **VIP Area for Tribal Elders** will be in the outdoor living area at the assisted living facility. An **after-party** will be held at the Poarch Creek Community Center and will begin at the conclusion of the parade. Light refreshments will be served, and there will be a chance for **photos with Santa!**



2025 PARADE ROUTE





## TAHO APPLICATION

### ATTENTION TRIBAL CITIZENS

If you are 19 or older and interested in a new home, now is the time to act! The **PCI Housing Department** will be accepting applications for the TAHO Program.

**Visit the PCI Housing Department today to begin your TAHO application!**

**Application Deadline is Friday, December 12, 2025.**

### To Apply, You Will Need to Provide:

- **2024 Tax Returns**
- **Social Security Card(s)** of all people listed on the application.
- **Tribal ID Card(s)**
- **Marriage certificate** (if applicable)
- **Driver's License** of all people listed on the application.
- **Letter of First-Generation Indian Descendant** (if applicable)
- **Copy of divorce papers** (if applicable)
- **Custody Verification** (if applicable)
- **Credit Score of 550 or Higher**
- **Must meet medium income limits.**
- **Current lease or mortgage**
- **Other required documents** (as applicable)



### DECEMBER 5

## TRIBAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS & EARLY RELEASE

The Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Government will celebrate the holiday season on Friday, December 5, with departmental Christmas parties.

To allow employees time to participate, Tribal Government offices will close at noon. During the morning hours, services will be limited, with each Division and Department maintaining phone coverage to handle emergency or critical needs.

We appreciate your understanding and patience as our team enjoys this time of fellowship and celebration. Normal operations will resume on the next business day.

From all of us at Tribal Government — we wish you a joyful and blessed Christmas season!





Internal Communications

5811 Jack Springs Road  
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# CREEK CORNER

## DECEMBER 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

|                 |  |                           |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------|
| <b>12.1</b>     | <b>SUBMISSION DEADLINE</b> January Issue                         |                           |
| <b>12.1-2</b>   | <b>MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED</b> Inventory                         |                           |
| <b>12.2</b>     | <b>TRIBAL COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom                             | <b>9:00 AM - 4:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>12.4</b>     | <b>TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING</b> TC Chambers                        | <b>4:00 PM</b>            |
| <b>12.5</b>     | <b>FAMILY COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom                             | <b>9:30 AM - 4:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>12.5</b>     | <b>GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED</b><br>Department Christmas Parties | <b>12:00 PM - 5:00 PM</b> |
| <b>12.16</b>    | <b>TRIBAL COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom                             | <b>9:00 AM - 4:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>12.18</b>    | <b>TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING</b> TC Chambers                        | <b>4:00 PM</b>            |
| <b>12.18</b>    | <b>BOYS &amp; GIRLS CLUB FAMILY FUN NIGHT</b> PCCC               | <b>6:00 - 8:00 PM</b>     |
| <b>12.19</b>    | <b>FAMILY COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom                             | <b>9:30 AM - 4:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>12.22-26</b> | <b>GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED</b> Christmas                       |                           |

### OUR MISSION

Creek Corner is a monthly magazine produced by the Internal Communications Team of the Poarch Creek Indians. Our mission is to celebrate our community by sharing stories of culture, people, and achievements, while also providing meaningful updates for Tribal Citizens.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions for Creek Corner may be edited or declined at the discretion of the editorial team. Content is finalized one month prior to publication. The deadline for submissions is the first Monday of the month before the issue date.