



JUNE
2025

No. 42

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE *of the* POARCH CREEK INDIANS

creek corner

Culture in Motion

REVITALIZING TRADITION AT POARCH



**NAVIGATING DUAL IDENTITIES
AS NATIVE AMERICANS IN MODERN AMERICA**

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**Wind Creek Chicago
Southland Opens
New Hotel & Spa**
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CREDITS

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MEGAN ZAMORA
Editor, Creek Corner

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“

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his month, as I reflect on the many celebrations of life, achievement, and growth taking place across our community—graduations, family milestones, even the simple shift into summer—I’m reminded of another kind of growth that’s happening quietly and powerfully at Poarch: the growth of cultural revitalization.

I recently attended an event that brought this into full view. It was a single day, yet it held so much: Tribal artisans sharing their handmade work at the Matriarch Market, a spirited stickball game, and a stomp dance that brought our community together in a meaningful way. Each part of the day reminded me that our culture isn’t something we’ve left behind—it’s something we’re actively living.

As a Tribal Citizen and communicator, I often think about what it means to “preserve culture.” That phrase can sometimes sound like putting something in a glass case. But what I saw—and what I continue to see in our language classes, sewing circles, and community nights—is something much more dynamic. I see culture being taught, practiced, and shared with purpose. I see it in motion, passed from one set of hands to the next.

Our culture is not frozen in time. It grows through effort, through learning, through participation. Whether you’re picking up a needle for the first time, joining a stomp dance, or listening to an elder share a story—you’re helping it continue.

Revitalization doesn’t require perfection. It requires willingness. It asks us to show up—for our community, our ancestors, and those who will come after us. Every small action adds to the collective work of keeping our culture strong.

I hope you’ll take part in that work. Learn something new. Share what you know. Stay connected to the many opportunities available through The Roundhouse. Our culture lives through us—and when we take time to learn it, live it, and pass it on, we help ensure it remains strong for generations to come.

***“Our culture is not frozen in time.
It grows through effort, through
learning, through participation.”***



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)

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Keith Martin
Arthur Mothershed
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DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

By Ashlee “Katie” Mothershed

The **BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS DEPARTMENT** plays a vital role in maintaining the beauty, functionality, and cleanliness of the Poarch Creek Indians' properties. Through their hard work and dedication, they ensure that tribal spaces remain welcoming, well-kept, and prepared for all types of events and daily operations.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND BEAUTIFICATION

The **Grounds Division** is tasked with the ongoing care and beautification of all tribal grounds, including:

- The main PCI campus
- All tribal subdivisions
- Judson Cemetery and New Home Cemetery

Their work ensures that green spaces, walkways, and ceremonial grounds are always pristine and presentable, contributing to the overall aesthetic and respect of our community spaces.

In addition to maintenance, the grounds crew plays an essential role in **event support**. Whether it's a tribal ceremony, a funeral, or a community celebration, the team is responsible for setting up tents, tables, and chairs to help ensure every event runs smoothly.

CUSTODIAL SERVICES: CLEANLINESS AND SUPPORT

The **Custodial Team** is responsible for keeping all tribal buildings clean, safe, and ready for daily operations. Their duties include:

- Daily cleaning and upkeep of administrative and public-use buildings
- Post-construction deep cleans after remodeling projects completed by Facilities
- Event preparation and post-event cleanup, in collaboration with the Grounds crew

The custodial staff also extend their support to other departments as needed, demonstrating a strong spirit of teamwork and service. One notable collaboration is with the **Housing Department**, where custodians ensure houses are thoroughly cleaned and ready for new tenants after move-outs.

Together, the **Grounds and Custodial teams** form the backbone of PCI's physical infrastructure support. Their dedication to excellence not only enhances the visual appeal of tribal properties but also ensures a clean and respectful environment for all who live, work, and visit.



TRIBAL CHAIR

Stephanie Bryan



CHIEF OF STAFF

Terry Sweat

IT

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A WORLD CLASS
DESTINATION BY



"These classes offer more than just skills... participants are engaging with ancestral knowledge in a living, breathing way."



POARCH 101:

Culture In Motion

REVITALIZING TRADITION AT POARCH

By Megan Zamora

Culture is not a relic—it's a rhythm. It breathes in the songs we sing, the stroke of a needle, the language we speak, and the games we play. For the Poarch Creek Indian community, cultural revitalization is not about nostalgia—it's about continuation. It's the ongoing work of remembering who we are while ensuring that future generations carry that knowledge forward with pride and purpose.

Through community-based efforts like language classes, Culture Night, and hands-on workshops, Poarch is making intentional investments in sustaining our traditions. These classes offer more than just skills—they provide connection. Whether learning sewing, basketry, beading, language, or other expressions of our heritage, participants are engaging with ancestral knowledge in a living, breathing way. Many artisans who share their work with the community today first learned their craft in one of these very classes.

A recent highlight of these efforts was the Matriarch Market, a community gathering that showcased a vibrant array of handmade items created by Tribal Citizen artisans. While the market honored the influential role of women within our culture, the event was inclusive—featuring artists of all genders who are keeping tradition alive through their creative talents. The market wasn't just a chance to shop; it was a celebration of the talent, dedication, and cultural pride flowing through our community.

That same day, community members also gathered for a stickball game and stomp dance—further deepening the connection to our cultural roots. These aren't just activities from the past; they are powerful expressions of who we are today. Stickball teaches values like teamwork, strength, and resilience, while stomp dance grounds us in spirituality, unity, and tradition.

Each of these efforts—from classes to cultural celebrations—represents a thread in the fabric of our shared identity. Together, they form a tapestry of revitalization, one woven not in isolation, but through collective effort, intergenerational teaching, and shared experience.

At Poarch, we understand that culture lives when it is practiced, not just preserved. Through these revitalization efforts, we are not only honoring our ancestors—we are empowering our children. We are not only holding on to what we have—we are growing something stronger. And most importantly, we are making sure our culture doesn't just survive, but thrives.

Make sure you are staying up-to-date on all the events, classes, and offerings that are available to you by logging-in to The Roundhouse, our dedicated digital social space for Tribal Citizens and PCI Tribal Government Employees.





NAVIGATING DUAL IDENTITIES AS NATIVE AMERICANS IN MODERN AMERICA

By Ashlee “Katie” Mothershed

For Native Americans, the experience of living in modern America often requires navigating the complex terrain between honoring ancestral traditions and adapting to contemporary society. This dual identity is not merely a personal challenge—it is woven into the collective fabric of Native communities, influencing cultural preservation, political activism, education, and self-expression. Balancing these worlds demands resilience, pride, and an ongoing negotiation of identity that reflects both legacy and change.

LIVING BETWEEN WORLDS

Many Native Americans grow up in environments where traditional values—such as respect for elders, connection to the land, and community solidarity—are emphasized alongside the expectations of mainstream American culture. Whether on reservations or in urban centers, individuals often find themselves straddling two different sets of norms, languages, and worldviews.

In schools and workplaces, Native Americans may face stereotypes, microaggressions, or an absence of cultural understanding. Meanwhile, within their own communities, there can be pressure to maintain traditional ways of life, speak Indigenous languages, and participate in ceremonies. This balancing act can be emotionally taxing, but it also cultivates a unique strength: the ability to exist authentically in multiple cultural realities.

CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND ADAPTATION

Cultural survival remains a paramount concern. Efforts to revive and maintain Indigenous languages, arts, and spiritual practices are often undertaken alongside full engagement with modern technologies and institutions. Today, it is common to see young Native leaders leveraging social media to promote traditional knowledge, advocate for Indigenous rights, and build bridges between communities.

At the same time, many Native Americans are finding ways to adapt their traditions to fit contemporary life. Pow wows might feature dancers wearing regalia adorned with

neon colors; ceremonies might coexist with professional careers in law, medicine, education, and technology. This blending does not represent a loss of culture, but rather its evolution—a testament to Native resilience and creativity.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Activism has long been a vital way for Native Americans to assert their identities and rights. Movements like Standing Rock’s protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline brought Indigenous voices to the forefront of national and international conversations about land rights, environmental stewardship, and sovereignty.

Modern Native activism often highlights the dual reality Native Americans live: they are both citizens of sovereign nations and citizens of the United States. This unique political status shapes battles over voting rights, healthcare, education, and land access, forcing continual navigation between tribal governance and federal/state systems.

CHALLENGES AND HOPE

The tension between assimilation and preservation can lead to internal conflicts about authenticity, belonging, and representation. Some Native Americans who live in cities may feel disconnected from their roots, while others who remain close to tribal lands may struggle with economic opportunities.



“

Native American youth are increasingly embracing their complex identities, reclaiming narratives, and forging new paths that honor both tradition and modernity.

Yet, there is tremendous hope. Native American youth are increasingly embracing their complex identities, reclaiming narratives, and forging new paths that honor both tradition and modernity. From literature and filmmaking to politics and entrepreneurship, they are redefining what it means to be Native in the 21st century.

Navigating dual identities as Native Americans in modern America is not about choosing one world over another. It is about weaving together multiple threads of history, culture, and aspiration into a vibrant and enduring tapestry. It is a journey of honoring ancestors while shaping the future—a journey that embodies the spirit of survival, adaptation, and pride.

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).

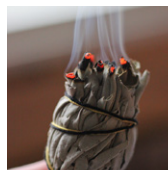
Selections will be made at the end of each month. Compensation will be processed during the following month.

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

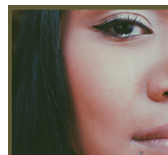
Indigenous Story Telling Themes: Native-centered, Trauma Informed and Empowerment Based Advocacy.



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

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.

HONORING THE PAST, PROTECTING OUR FUTURE

THE ROLE OF THE TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT

Submitted By Billy Bailey, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

M

any of our people may not realize exactly what we do in the Tribal Historic Preservation Department (THPO) or how deeply our work ties into who we are as Poarch Creek people. Our mission is more than preserving artifacts or historic places, it's about protecting our identity and reinforcing our sovereignty.

As a department under the Regulatory Division, the THPO serves a vital role in upholding and enforcing the Tribe's preservation laws, most notably Title 39 of the Tribal Code, ensuring the continued protection of our history and cultural legacy.

The *Poarch Creek Indians of Alabama* is a sovereign nation with a deep history rooted in resilience, identity, and cultural richness. Every piece of that story, our sacred places, oral traditions, historical artifacts, and ancestral lands deserve protection.

That's where the Tribal Historic Preservation Department comes in. We are responsible for safeguarding the Tribe's historical, cultural, and archaeological resources, not just as caretakers of the past, but as protectors of our sovereignty and our future.

WHY HISTORIC PRESERVATION MATTERS

Historic preservation isn't just about old buildings or artifacts. It's about protecting our identity. Title 39 underscores the importance of preserving the Tribe's culture, language, and traditional values—principles vital to our survival and sovereignty.

By identifying and protecting important sites, we are telling the world: Our history matters. Our story matters. And we are the ones who will tell it.

WHAT WE DO

Established under Tribal law, the Tribal Historic Preservation Department protects the physical and cultural landscape of our people. This includes:

Identifying and Protecting Historic Sites

Surveying, documenting, and preserving significant cultural places, sacred sites, burial grounds, and historic towns.

Regulating Projects on Tribal Lands

Managing permits for archaeological research and development to ensure compliance with Tribal and federal laws like NHPA (National Historic Preservation Act) and NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act).

Caring for Ancestral Remains and Sacred Objects

Overseeing the respectful handling, repatriation, and reinterment of ancestors and cultural items.

Researching Our History

Studying maps, documents, oral traditions, and archaeological evidence to better understand and document our story.

Preserving Oral History

Collecting and archiving the voices and experiences of our elders through the Oral History Project.

Engaging and Educating

Hosting events, creating educational materials, and working with schools and cultural partners to share Poarch Creek history.

Collaborating Across Communities

Partnering with Tribal departments, other Native nations, agencies, and universities to share knowledge and strengthen preservation efforts.

“

*By identifying
and protecting
important sites,
we are telling
the world:*

**OUR HISTORY
MATTERS.**

**OUR STORY
MATTERS.**

**AND WE ARE
THE ONES
WHO WILL
TELL IT.**

MEET OUR TEAM

Together, we form a team dedicated to protecting, researching, and honoring the cultural and historical resources of our Tribe.



BILLY BAILEY

THPO (Tribal Historic Preservation Officer)



BRANDY CHUNN

Tribal Historic Preservation Specialist



CLAYTON COON

NAGPRA Technician (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act)



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...continued on next page

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SOVEREIGNTY IN ACTION

The THPO exercises legal authority under Title 39 to lead consultations, review projects, and enforce preservation laws. By managing our own resources and sacred sites, we actively demonstrate our sovereignty and self-determination.

PROTECTING WHAT'S OURS

The Department monitors permitted activities, conducts inspections, and acts when violations occur. Unauthorized excavation or damage to sacred sites can lead to legal consequences. We uphold these protections with high importance and accountability.

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Our culture is alive, in our stories, language, songs, and traditions. While THPO safeguards tangible sites and artifacts, the Cultural Department preserves the intangible elements of our identity.

Together, and under the guidance of the Regulatory Division, we ensure that our past remains present and future generations inherit the pride of their heritage. But we can't do it alone. Every Tribal Citizen plays a role. If you know of a place, item, or story that needs to be protected, please reach out. Your knowledge and voice make a difference.

THE PATH FORWARD

Through law, research, education, and community involvement, the Tribal Historic Preservation Department works to protect what makes us who we are. From the smallest artifact to our most sacred lands, each part of our history deserves to be preserved with care and pride.

Our mission is clear—to preserve, protect, and promote our history and heritage for generations to come. This work is not just about the past, it's about our future. We are writing our story, honoring our ancestors, and standing strong as caretakers of our culture. We are Poarch Creek and our story will always be ours to tell.

"OUR MISSION IS CLEAR—
*To preserve, protect, and promote
our history and heritage for
generations to come.*

WE ARE POARCH CREEK
*and our story will always
be ours to tell."*



PICTURED Sehoy Thrower during the Poarch Creek Indian native plant giveaway.

PICTURED Clayton Coon with pottery.



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THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS ATTEND POARCH CREEK INDIANS IMMERSIVE CULTURAL EVENT

THE ANNUAL SOUTHEASTERN INDIAN FESTIVAL

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

The Poarch Creek Indians recently welcomed more than 3,055 students from across the region to the annual Southeastern Indian Festival, a free educational event for students held on the Poarch Creek Reservation in Atmore. This year's festival proved to yet again be another unforgettable celebration of Native American culture, history, and tradition.

Students from 32 schools and educational groups attended the event, where they had the opportunity to engage in hands-on experiences and live demonstrations that brought the rich heritage of Southeastern tribes to life. From students hearing stories passed down for generations and participating in traditional stickball games to stomp dancing and Creek pottery-making, each activity offered a unique look into the past and present of Native American life.

Cultural ambassadors and demonstrators from various Tribal nations shared their knowledge and traditions with the students, sparking curiosity and appreciation for Native history, arts, and values. The interactive format allowed students to ask questions, participate in cultural activities, and take home a deeper understanding of the importance of preserving and celebrating indigenous heritage.

"We were proud to share our culture with so many young people and educators," said Chris "Ding Ding" Blackburn, Tribal Events Planner. "The Southeastern Indian Festival is about more than performances and displays—it's about creating connections and keeping traditions alive for future generations."

The event also welcomed the public on the last day of the event during designated hours, giving families and community members a chance to enjoy the festival's educational exhibits, tribal cuisine, and artisan market.

The Poarch Creek Indians are already looking ahead to next year's celebration. The 2026 Southeastern Indian Festival will take place on April 8-10, 2026, and promises to be even more impactful as the Tribe continues its mission to educate, inspire, and connect.

To book your school group for this free educational experience in 2026, contact eventsstaff@pci-nsn.gov.

*Cultural ambassadors
and demonstrators...
shared their knowledge
and traditions
with the students,
sparking curiosity and
appreciation for Native
history, arts, and values.*

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Seniors Can Attend Both Trips



SAIL CENTER

TRIP 1



JUNE 9-14, 2025

Wind Creek Chicago | Chicago, IL

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TRIP COST:

- Tribal Members 55+: \$200
- Non-Tribal Spouse: \$300
- Caregiver (licensed agency): \$500

REGISTRATION DATES: April 7th-May 2nd

TRIP 2



SEPT 26-OCT 5, 2025

NICOA Conference | Durant, OK

National Indian Counseling on Aging Conference. Elders will be expected to attend the full conference. Conference dates are September 29–October 3.

TRIP COST:

- Tribal Members 55+: \$200
- Non-Tribal Spouse: \$300
- Caregiver (licensed agency): \$500

REGISTRATION DATES: April 7th-June 7th

Things to Know:

- Both trips will be transported via bus.
Trips will be on a first come, first serve bases.
Once our room block capacity is full, we will then begin a waiting list.
- Trips are NON-REFUNDABLE! Unless you have a true medical related emergency.
- Payment is due in FULL upon registration.
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QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, please contact
Jeremy DeWise, Charity Haveard, or Cyndi Wright.

Jeremy DeWise **ext** 2289
Charity Haveard **ext** 2518
Cyndi Wright **ext** 2617

Registration Begins April 7th

IN-PERSON REGISTRATION

The SAIL Dining Area
Monday-Friday
8 am–10 am and 1 pm–4 pm

Forms of payment:

Debit/Credit Card or Check

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Link available on Roundhouse.

Forms of payment:

Debit/Credit Card Only



MATRIARCH MARKET

A CELEBRATION OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND CRAFT

By Megan Zamora



When I walked through the doors of the Poarch Creek Indians Museum for the Matriarch Market, I was immediately enveloped in a flurry of excitement and warm, welcoming energy. Friendly faces filled the room, and the event radiated joy, pride, and a deep sense of community.

Thoughtfully designed and deeply heartfelt, the Matriarch Market showcased the creativity and resilience of our own Tribal artisans. Each table represented more than just art for sale—it was a celebration of identity, heritage, and tradition. The artisans proudly displayed handmade items ranging from beadwork and baskets to paintings and textiles, each piece a tangible expression of cultural knowledge that has been regained and passed down through generations.

As I visited with several artisans, a common theme emerged: many had learned their craft through the cultural classes offered by our Tribe's Cultural Department. This event, in many ways, represented a full-circle moment. It was a testament to what is possible when we invest in cultural education and provide space for our people to learn, grow, and share their gifts with the community. But the day didn't stop there.

What began as a vibrant artisan market gradually transformed into something even more meaningful. Outside, a stickball game brought together youth, adults, and elders in friendly play—a living expression of our traditions in motion. As the sun began to dip, the sound of stomp dance songs filled the air, inviting us to come together once more. The Matriarch Market was more than an event—it was a celebration of cultural revitalization. I walked away feeling uplifted and hopeful, proud to be part of a community that honors its past while building a strong future.

Mvto to the Museum, Cultural Department, and Tribal Historic Preservation Office for their collaboration in creating this culturally rich, community-based experience. Events like this remind us of who we are—and just how powerful it is when we come together to celebrate it.

Keep up to date with events at the Poarch Creek Indians Museum & Welcome Center by following them on facebook.



HONORING THE LEGACY AND PRESERVING CULTURE

REFLECTIONS ON THE PAREDES MEMORIAL PANEL

By Kelly Fayard, Ph.D.



KELLY FAYARD, PH.D.

Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Curator of Global Cultures,
DU Museum of Anthropology
University of Denver

The last week of March marked an unforgettable experience that left a lasting imprint on my heart and mind. As a member of the Poarch Creek Indians, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride as I traveled with Poarch anthropologists Billy Bailey, Brandy Chunn, and community elder Vicky Burns from our homelands in Poarch, Alabama, to Portland, Oregon. We attended the annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) to present at a very special event—the J. Anthony Paredes Memorial Panel.

The importance of this panel is difficult to express fully. After the sad loss of our dear friend and longtime ally, J. Anthony Paredes—whom we affectionately called Tony—the Poarch Creek Indians created this memorial panel to celebrate his memory and remarkable contributions. Tony wasn't just an anthropologist; he was a trusted friend who collaborated with our community throughout his career. He played a key role in helping us gain federal recognition. At this year's SfAA conference, we centered our event on the true purpose of the endowment by inviting Poarch Creek tribal members, who knew Tony personally, to share their stories and experiences. I had the privilege of facilitating the panel.

This interactive session not only honored Tony but also highlighted the continuous efforts of our Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). The THPO's work is crucial in protecting the tribe's cultural heritage and collective memory. People from various backgrounds—including cultural resource managers, anthropologists, educators, students, and Indigenous rights advocates—came together to learn about the initiatives, challenges, and successes that shape the work of the Poarch Creek THPO office.

This session stood out because it felt so personal. We weren't just discussing our programs and projects; we were sharing the vibrant story of the Poarch Creek people. Our presentations gave the audience a glimpse into how our heritage is not just a part of history, but is actively lived every day through storytelling, community engagement, and our shared commitment to honoring our ancestors. Additionally, some of Tony's long-time friends attended the panel, including two former graduate students.

Our goals for the session were ambitious but necessary. First, we wanted to shine a light on the critical role of the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) in maintaining our culture and governing our tribe. It's easy to forget the hard work that goes on behind the scenes to protect our tribal heritage. Without these efforts, many of our traditions and histories could disappear. Second, we were eager to give Vicky Burns, a beloved elder in our community—and my mom—the chance to share her memories and insights, especially her experiences with Tony Paredes in the 1970s. Lastly, we aimed to look into how the THPO team engages with our community and gathers oral histories, which are vital for preserving our identity as the world around us changes.

Standing in that room, surrounded by familiar faces and eager strangers wanting to learn about our journey, I felt a pride that is difficult to express.

After a brief introduction where I set the stage for the panel and shared my thoughts on Tony's influence in our community, Brandy Chunn stepped up to speak. It was a pleasure to watch her. She spoke beautifully about Tony's crucial role in helping Poarch attain federal recognition—an accomplishment that significantly altered our tribe's future. Brandy also expressed her admiration for the strong connections Tony built within our community and the remarkable legacy he left behind.

One incredibly moving moment unfolded when Brandy shared some cherished recordings that Tony had made in Poarch during the 1970s. Among these precious treasures was a recording of my mother, Vicky Burns, just seventeen years old, shortly after she was crowned Senior Princess at the Poarch Creek Powwow. Hearing my mother's youthful voice transported me back in time, filling me with profound emotion. It brought to life the dreams and excitement of a young woman who would blossom into a respected leader within our community. This experience transformed history into something real—this was not merely recounting events; it was a genuine tapestry of our family, our lives, and our community, beautifully captured and lovingly cherished.

As my mama addressed the audience, she radiated warmth that only someone who has lived the experiences can convey. She shared her memories of working alongside Tony, portraying him not as an outsider but as a beloved friend of the Poarch Creek people. She lovingly emphasized the importance of trust, respect, and the invaluable bonds that

nurture long-lasting relationships essential for preserving our culture. My mother acknowledged Tony's enduring impact, which resonates not just in academic discussions but right here in Poarch, among us. Recently, our tribe honored him by naming a street—Paredes Way—next to our new tribal government building. It's a sweet yet meaningful gesture, ensuring that his name and contributions remain woven into our daily lives.

Next, Billy Bailey took the stage, sharing heartfelt insights as the head of the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). His role is crucial in protecting our rich history and cherished traditions. He spoke passionately about various initiatives from the THPO, including an oral history project aimed at capturing and preserving the invaluable stories of

our elders. Billy's dedication was evident, and his commitment to community-driven preservation resonated deeply with everyone in attendance. His talk shed light on the practical aspects of cultural preservation while beautifully illustrating the passion that drives it—the profound love for our people and our heritage.

After the presentations wrapped up, we opened the floor for audience questions. Billy, Brandy, and Ms. Vicky responded with grace, professionalism, and care. Each contributor added unique perspectives to the discussion, creating an enriching dialogue about what it means to protect and celebrate Indigenous heritage today.

Reflecting on the experience, I can confidently say that Mr. Bailey, Mrs. Chunn, and Mrs. Burns did an outstanding job. They exemplified preparedness and professionalism, embodying the pride and strength of the Poarch Creek people. Watching them represent our community on a national stage filled me with a deep sense of hope and gratitude.

Above all, this experience reaffirmed that cultural preservation is deeply personal. It transcends documents, artifacts, or policies—it's about people, honoring the lives and dreams of those who came before us, and forging a path for those who will follow. It's about ensuring future generations of Poarch Creeks know their history, speak their language, and celebrate their traditions with the same pride and passion we carry today.

There is still much work ahead, but we are not alone. We draw strength from the legacy of people like Tony Paredes and the unwavering spirit of our community. Together, we will continue to honor our past, celebrate our present, and secure our future.



“ We weren't just discussing our programs and projects... Our presentations gave the audience a glimpse into how our heritage is not just a part of history, but is actively lived every day through storytelling, community engagement, and our shared commitment to honoring our ancestors. ”



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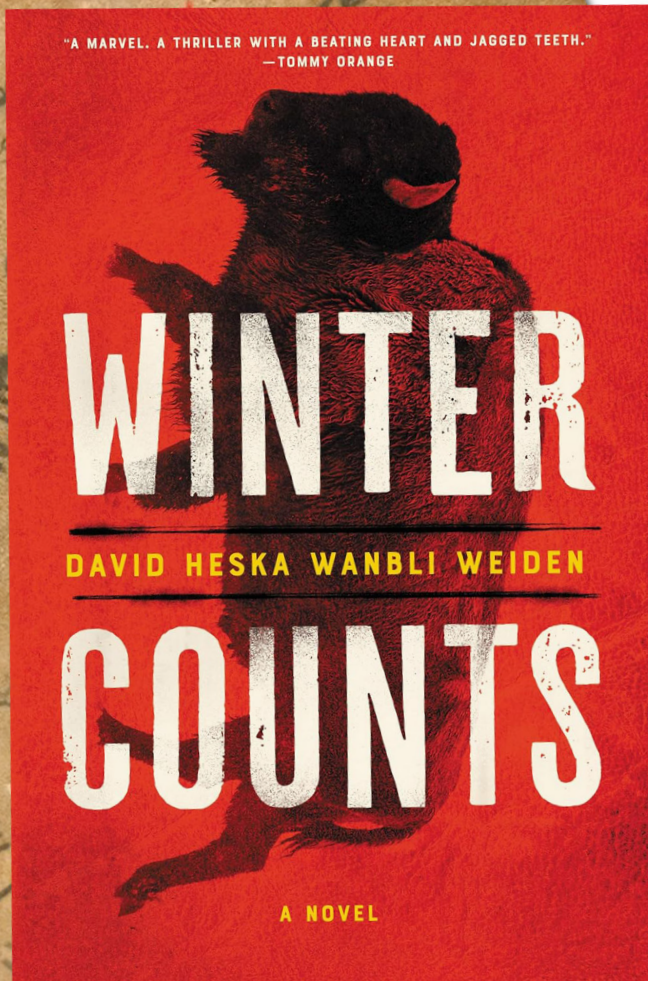
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WINTER COUNTS

BY DAVID HESKA WANBLI WEIDEN

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

Winter Counts is a riveting crime novel set on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, where Virgil Wounded Horse, a vigilante enforcer, delivers justice when the legal system fails. David Heska Wanbli Weiden (Lakota) crafts a story rich with cultural depth, moral complexity, and relentless suspense. As Virgil confronts a growing drug epidemic and deep-rooted corruption, he grapples with questions of identity, loyalty, and redemption. Weiden's sharp prose and unflinching portrayal of reservation life make this a standout thriller. Winter Counts is both a gripping page-turner and a powerful exploration of contemporary Native American struggles.

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

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

For more information,
contact Bernie White at
bwhite@pci-nsn.gov or
(251) 368-9136 ext. 2316.

ANNUAL RABIES CLINIC

Saturday, August 2, 2025

8am – 11am*

Fire Station #1

Jack Springs Road, Atmore

*or until vaccines run out

Dogs and Cats—up to two animals per Tribal Member or Tribal Employee. Animal must be at least 16 weeks old to receive vaccination. Animal must be secured in a kennel, cage, and/or leash. **Tribal Member or Tribal Employee must present Tribal ID.**



**ENVIRONMENTAL
DEPARTMENT**





WIND CREEK CHICAGO SOUTHLAND OPENS NEW HOTEL & SPA

Reservations Now Open for the Luxury Hotel & Spa

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

Wind Creek Chicago Southland Casino & Resort proudly announced that its full resort experience—including its luxury hotel and spa—officially opened to the public on April 11. Reservations for both the 255+ room and 43+ luxury suite state-of-the-art hotel, along with the onsite spa, can now be made at windcreek.com/chicagosouthland.

Wind Creek Chicago Southland is a resort destination offering an expansive 70,000-square-foot casino with 1,400+ slot machines, 56 table games, a poker room, sportsbook (coming soon), and high-limit salons. The resort's full-service spa, Spa at Wind Creek, is located on the 16th floor overlooking the Chicago skyline—offering a range of services including facials, massages, manicures/pedicures and body wraps, eight treatment rooms, a mud room, plus a thermal suite complete with a whirlpool tub, sauna, swinging chairs, and a multisensory experiential shower experience.

Beyond the spa, the resort offers over 12,000 square feet of flexible meeting space in addition to Hidden Gems—unique and customizable private gaming/event microenvironments—and a diverse array of dining options in partnership with Fabio Viviani Hospitality. Additional amenities include the Center Bar and ample on-site parking with EV charging stations, plus a pool and fitness center.

This grand opening marks the next chapter for the fully immersive property, which first debuted its state-of-the-art casino experience to enthusiastic crowds in November 2024. Since then, Wind Creek Chicago Southland has quickly become a destination of choice for gamers and entertainment seekers across the region. To date, the property has created over 1,100 jobs.

“With the opening of our hotel and spa, Wind Creek Chicago Southland is bringing a truly all-encompassing resort experience to the Southland region—one that blends luxury with accessibility,” said Roger Kuehn, Executive Vice President and General Manager of Wind Creek Chicago Southland. “We’re proud to see this project come to life and to continue contributing to the vibrancy and economic growth of the surrounding community.”

“With every new opening, our goal is to raise the bar in hospitality and guest experiences,” said Jay Dorris, President and CEO of Wind Creek Hospitality. “Wind Creek Chicago Southland has already proven to be a powerhouse addition to our portfolio, and this next phase reinforces our commitment to providing premium destinations for our guests and our communities.”

Guests can now reserve their stay or spa appointments at windcreek.com/chicagosouthland.



BAND TOGETHER FOR OPPORTUNITY:

HOW THE POARCH CREEK INDIANS ARE DRIVING JOB CREATION IN ALABAMA

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

For generations, the Poarch Creek Indians have been committed to fostering opportunity—not just for Tribal Citizens, but for communities across Alabama and beyond. Through strategic investments, business ventures, and a deep-rooted dedication to economic growth, the Tribe has emerged as a powerful force in job creation. With thousands of jobs created in Alabama supported by their enterprises, the Tribe is proving that prosperity is strongest when shared.

This mission is at the heart of Band Together, a social campaign launched by the Poarch Creek Indians to spotlight the people and businesses that benefit from the Tribe's commitment to economic development. The campaign highlights real stories of individuals whose lives have been transformed through Tribal employment, whether at one of the Tribe's many businesses or through indirect opportunities created by their investments.

STRENGTHENING ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE

The Tribe's enterprises span multiple industries, from hospitality and gaming to manufacturing, agriculture, and aerospace. Through these businesses, the Poarch Creek Indians have made a significant impact on Alabama's economy, generating thousands of jobs that provide stability and growth for families.

Employees across the state, from hotel staff to engineers, from small business suppliers to healthcare professionals, have all been touched by the Tribe's commitment to reinvesting in people. Perdido River Farms, for example, not only provides fresh, high-quality beef, but also supports Alabama's agricultural industry with jobs in farming,

processing, and distribution. Meanwhile, enterprises like Media Fusion in Huntsville bring innovation and employment opportunities in the technology sector.

Beyond direct employment, the Tribe's impact extends to small businesses, contractors, and service providers who thrive because of the economic ecosystem the Tribe has helped build.

REAL STORIES, REAL IMPACT

The Band Together campaign gives a voice to the individuals behind these numbers. Through a series of videos and testimonials, it shares the experiences of people whose careers and livelihoods have been positively shaped by the Tribe's enterprises. These stories illustrate how economic success is not just about revenue—it's about people, families, and communities growing stronger together.

As Alabama continues to evolve, the Poarch Creek Indians remain committed to fostering economic opportunity through responsible business practices, job creation, and community reinvestment. The Band Together campaign is a testament to their belief that true prosperity comes when we all succeed—together.

*To learn more
about the Tribe's
economic impact
and to watch the
stories of those
who have
benefitted, scan
the QR code below.*



POARCH CREEK INDIANS HOSTED USET TRIBAL UTILITY SUMMIT, SHOWCASING COLLABORATION AND CULTURE

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez



The Poarch Creek Indians recently welcomed Tribal leaders and utility professionals from across Indian Country for the 15th United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) Tribal Utility Summit, an event focused on strengthening infrastructure, sustainability, and collaboration among Native communities.

As the host Tribe, Poarch Creek provided a unique blend of professional development and cultural immersion during the multi-day conference. Attendees toured Wind Creek Casino & Hotel, experienced the vibrant Southeastern Indian Festival, and explored the Poarch Creek Reservation, gaining firsthand insight into the Tribe's commitment to progress and preservation of not only its utilities, but overall governmental operations.

The summit brought together representatives from multiple Tribes, reinforcing the importance of partnership in advancing essential services like water, energy, and environmental stewardship. Through shared knowledge and networking during the conference sessions, participants worked toward innovative solutions that will benefit Tribal nations for generations to come.

The Poarch Creek Indians were honored to host this year's summit, further strengthening bonds within USET (United South and Eastern Tribes) and reaffirming their dedication to supporting Native communities.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Poarch Creek Indians for their warm hospitality and dedication in hosting this year's USET conference," said Jane Wilson, Program Manager, USET. "Their commitment to preserving culture, fostering collaboration, and strengthening Tribal Nations has created an inspiring and welcoming environment for all attendees. We appreciate their generosity and the opportunity to gather on their land to share knowledge, build connections, and work toward a stronger future together."



INDIAN TRUST SETTLEMENT

Are you an Heir of an Individual Indian Money Account Holder?

**\$38 MILLION IS AVAILABLE TO PAY HEIRS.
THE DEADLINE TO FILE A CLAIM IS JUNE 30, 2025.**

A \$3.4 billion dollar settlement was approved in a class action lawsuit, called *Cobell v. Salazar*, that claimed individual Indian land, funds and other assets were mismanaged by the federal government. \$38 million is available to pay heirs and awards could be significant.



Who is eligible?

You are eligible for a money award if you are an heir of one or more of the over 17,000 Individual Indian Money (IIM) account holders whose *Cobell* settlement awards were not distributed. You must submit a claim form with proof that you are an heir. Claim forms can be submitted online or can be downloaded and mailed to the administrator by **June 30, 2025**. More details are available on the website.

Here's what you need.

Heir eligibility proof includes any of the following:

- A state or tribal probate order identifying estate heirs; or
- A last will and testament approved by a probate order; or
- A small estate document from an approved state in accordance with small estate procedures; or

- Documentation showing the appointment of an estate Executor, Administrator, or Personal Representative; or
- A federal probate order that directs distribution of trust funds or trust lands.

A copy of a tribal, or state, or federal probate order is needed to establish whether the Settlement Administrator can pay the heir(s) directly for the estate's Settlement award.

If you do not have a tribal or state probate order but a personal representative or executor has been named for the estate, funds may be released to the representative or executor and they will be responsible for distributing the funds according to the wishes of the deceased Class Member.

You must act quickly.

The deadline to file is June 30, 2025.

After the deadline, all remaining funds will be distributed to the Cobell Scholarship Fund, which is managed by Indigenous Education, Inc.

LEARN MORE

CobellSettlement.com

800-961-6109

Indian Trust Settlement
c/o Kroll Settlement Administration
P.O. Box 5324
New York, NY 10150-5324



OWA PARKS & RESORT KICKS OFF “TROPIC FALLS’ READ AND RIDE ADVENTURE” IN BALDWIN COUNTY

Reading program rewards literacy achievement in schools.

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

OWA Parks & Resort is excited to launch Tropic Falls’ Read and Ride Adventure, a new literacy achievement program designed to encourage reading growth among elementary and middle school students. The program began this spring in Baldwin County, serving as a pilot initiative to reward students who demonstrate significant improvement in their reading skills.

Through Read and Ride Adventure, participating Baldwin County elementary and middle schools received complimentary Tropic Falls tickets to distribute to students who achieve measurable literacy progress. The program reflects OWA’s commitment to education and community enrichment by fostering a love for reading while offering a thrilling incentive.

“We believe education is the foundation for success, and we want to celebrate students who are working hard to improve their reading skills,” said Mike Neace, Tropic Falls General Manager, Theme and Water Park. “By launching Tropic Falls’ Read and Ride Adventure in Baldwin County, we hope to inspire young readers and create unforgettable experiences for local families.”

HOW IT WORKS

- **School Partnerships:** OWA collaborates with public elementary and middle schools to identify students who show measurable literacy improvement based on standardized test scores.
- **Student Recognition:** Eligible students receive a complimentary one-day Tropic Falls ticket, rewarding their academic progress.
- **Family Engagement:** While the student’s ticket is free, families are encouraged to join in the experience, making it a special celebration of learning.

EXPANDING THE IMPACT

Following its successful launch in Baldwin County, Tropic Falls’ Read and Ride Adventure hopes to expand to additional counties in Fall 2025. Schools will receive marketing materials, including posters and flyers, to help spread awareness.

GET INVOLVED!

For more information on how to partner, participate, or register for future program years, visit www.VisitOWA.com or contact 251.923.2111.

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WIND CREEK ATMORE DONATES GOODS TO AMERICA'S THRIFT STORES

By Amelia Tognoli

Wind Creek Atmore Team Members collected and donated 2,423 pounds of goods and more than 25 pieces of furniture to America's Thrift Store to support the Alabama Make-A-Wish Foundation. This significant amount sets a strong foundation for future endeavors and stands as a beacon of hope, encouraging others to join us in this noble cause.

"Together, we are making strides toward granting more wishes and bringing joy to many children who need hope, happiness, and comfort," said Tim Ramer, Wind Creek Atmore's EVP General Manager. "It's our pleasure to give back and be good stewards of the communities we call home, and we look forward to seeing how our contributions will transform the lives of Alabama's Make-A-Wish Kids."

Make-A-Wish Alabama helps grant wishes to children who are fighting critical illnesses. By granting wishes, kids can receive exciting moments of joy, hope, confidence, and peace where they do not have to think about their illness.

"Partnering with America's Thrift Store and Make-A-Wish Alabama to give back to the community is not just about donating. It is about making a difference in someone's life, a value we share, and a privilege we embrace," said Trina Rackard, Wind Creek Hospitality's Director of Sponsorship and Events.


Employees and Guests at our Alabama locations can also participate by donating clothing, shoes, kitchenware, games, and other items this summer during Wind Creek's 2nd Annual Donation Drive! Stay tuned for more information and announcements on dates.

America's Thrift Store and Make-A-Wish Alabama happily partner to raise funds and donate items, resulting in in-store purchases that make wishes come true for Alabama children. American's Thrift Store pays Make-A-Wish Alabama \$0.035/LB for donations collected, with a minimum annual guarantee of \$650,000 and no yearly cap.

“





Together, we are making strides toward granting more wishes and bringing more joy to many children who need hope, happiness, and comfort.

**TIM RAMER,
WIND CREEK ATMORE
EVP GENERAL MANAGER**





Beach-bound?

Recharge and Refuel With Us

Atmore - Poarch - Wetumpka^{EV}

THE ETHICS CODE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

By Carrie Martin

If someone asked you to explain what ethics were, what would you say? We as individuals have our own definition of what ethics is according to the society/community in which we live, the cultural beliefs which are projected within the society/community. For those who are presently employed or will be employed in the future, the employer's ethical beliefs may differ from that of what a person believes. So the question is how do you respond to an ethical issue at work?

The Poarch Creek Indians created a Tribal Code which is known as "Ethics". It was approved on May 2, 2006 with the enactment of Title 28: Ethics. Why does the Poarch Creek Indians need an Ethics Code, you may ask? Let's look at the reason why it is necessary to have an ethics code.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Ethics Code is to set forth and ensure that all Tribal Officials and employees of Tribal government and Tribal enterprises maintain the **highest standards of ethical conduct**. The code provides a way where by the Poarch Creek Indians can hold Tribal Officials and employees accountable for their conduct while performing their duties and responsibilities of Tribal Office or employment.

INTENT

The intent is to **protect funds and property** Tribal government and Tribal enterprises from:

1. Undue influences
2. Conflicts of Interest
3. Ethical improprieties
4. Place the social and economic welfare of the Poarch Creek Indians **above** the personal and economic interest of Tribal Officials and employees whose duties and responsibilities are to protect the Poarch Creek Indians.

WHO ARE TRIBAL OFFICIALS?

Tribal Officials are individuals who have been elected or appointed to the Tribal Council, committee, commission, authority, board or any organization of the Poarch Creek Indians.

EMPLOYEES

Employees can be divided into two categories:

1. Employees of Tribal Government or Tribal Enterprises
2. Employees of Tribal Government or Tribal Enterprises who have been identified upon hiring as a **key** employee.

Beginning next month Ethics Corner will begin discussing key points within the Ethics Code, ethics code conduct for Tribal Officials, Key employees and standard of ethical conduct for employees as stated in the HR policy manual.



SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

The Poarch Creek Indians is participating in the Summer Food Service Program. Meals will be provided to all children without charge. Acceptance and participation requirements for the program and all SFSP activities are the same for all regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability, and there will be no discrimination during the meal service. Meals will be provided at all sites listed on the attached form showing the specified start and end times for meals.

Breakfast and lunch will be served beginning May 27, 2025, until August 5, 2025, Monday through Friday. No program on July 4, 2025, due to national holiday.

**Breakfast will be served
from 7:30-9:00 am.**

**Lunch will be served
from 11:00-1:30 pm.**

**Location of service is
517 Martin Road, Atmore. AL.**

Contact Genia Boutwell at 251-368-9136 ext. 2242 for additional information.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:
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1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax:
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email:
program.intake@usda.gov

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CREEK CORNER

JUNE 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

6.2	SUBMISSION DEADLINE	July Issue	
6.2-3	MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED	Inventory	
6.5	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING	TC Chambers	4:00 PM
6.6	FAMILY COURT	Tribal Courtroom	
6.6	GRADUATION BANQUET	PCCC	6:00-8:00 PM
6.7	TRIBAL COUNCIL ELECTION DAY	Pickrell House	8:00AM-7:00PM
6.7	CALVIN MCGHEE MEMORIAL DAY	Tribal Citizens Only / Pow Wow Grounds	
6.10	TRIBAL COURT	Tribal Courtroom	
6.19	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING	TC Chambers	4:00 PM
6.20	FAMILY COURT	Tribal Courtroom	
6.24	TRIBAL COURT	Tribal Courtroom	