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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

creek corner

THE *Lasting Impact of
Chief Calvin McGhee*



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Earn State And
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SHARON DELMAR
Editor, Creek Corner

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“

June has a way of inviting both reflection and renewal. As the days grow longer and the pace of the season shifts, it becomes a natural time to pause and take in the moments that bring people together—gatherings, celebrations, and the everyday connections that strengthen a community. It is also a time to recognize the stories that continue to shape the present while honoring the past.

I am honored—and truly excited—to return as Editor of Creek Corner Magazine. Having served in this role many years ago, this opportunity feels both familiar and new. While much has changed over time, the purpose of this publication remains constant: to share meaningful stories that reflect the people, progress, and culture of the Poarch Creek Indians.

At its core, Creek Corner is about storytelling. The stories featured here speak to resilience, growth, and a culture that continues to thrive across generations. They are found in the voices of elders, the accomplishments of youth, the vision of leadership, and the lived experiences of Tribal Citizens. Together, they create a narrative that is both deeply rooted and forward-looking.

June serves as a reminder that progress and tradition move hand in hand. Across the community, there are continued advancements and achievements worth celebrating. At the same time, there remains a strong commitment to preserving culture, honoring traditions, and maintaining a shared identity that guides the future.

In this issue, readers will find stories that reflect that balance—where the Tribe has been and where it continues to go. It is a privilege to help share these moments and contribute to documenting an ongoing journey of growth and cultural strength.

As I step into this role once again, I do so with gratitude and a renewed sense of purpose. I look forward to continuing to bring forward the voices, perspectives, and stories that make Creek Corner a meaningful connection for its readers.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this work.

WARM REGARDS, SHARON DELMAR

“*At its core, Creek Corner is about storytelling. The stories featured here speak to resilience, growth, and a culture that continues to thrive across generations.*”



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*

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LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

MARTHA GOOKIN, MACO

Honoring Our Elders Through Compassionate Service

By Sharon Delmar

F

or more than twenty years, Martha Gookin has dedicated her career to serving Tribal Citizens and their families. As Division Director of Elder Services, her work reflects a lifelong commitment to compassion, advocacy, and honoring the elders who helped shape the Poarch Creek Indian Tribe into what it is today.

Martha's journey with the Tribe began in Family Services as a Child and Family Welfare worker, where she first discovered her passion for helping others navigate life's challenges. Over the years, that passion evolved into a calling to serve the Tribe's elder community – a role she describes as both meaningful and humbling.

"It is a tremendous honor to be a part of the team serving our Tribal elders and their families," Martha shared. "Our elders are the reason we exist as a Tribe. Without their contribution and joint efforts, we would not have received federal recognition. They paved the road for us to build success for generations to come."

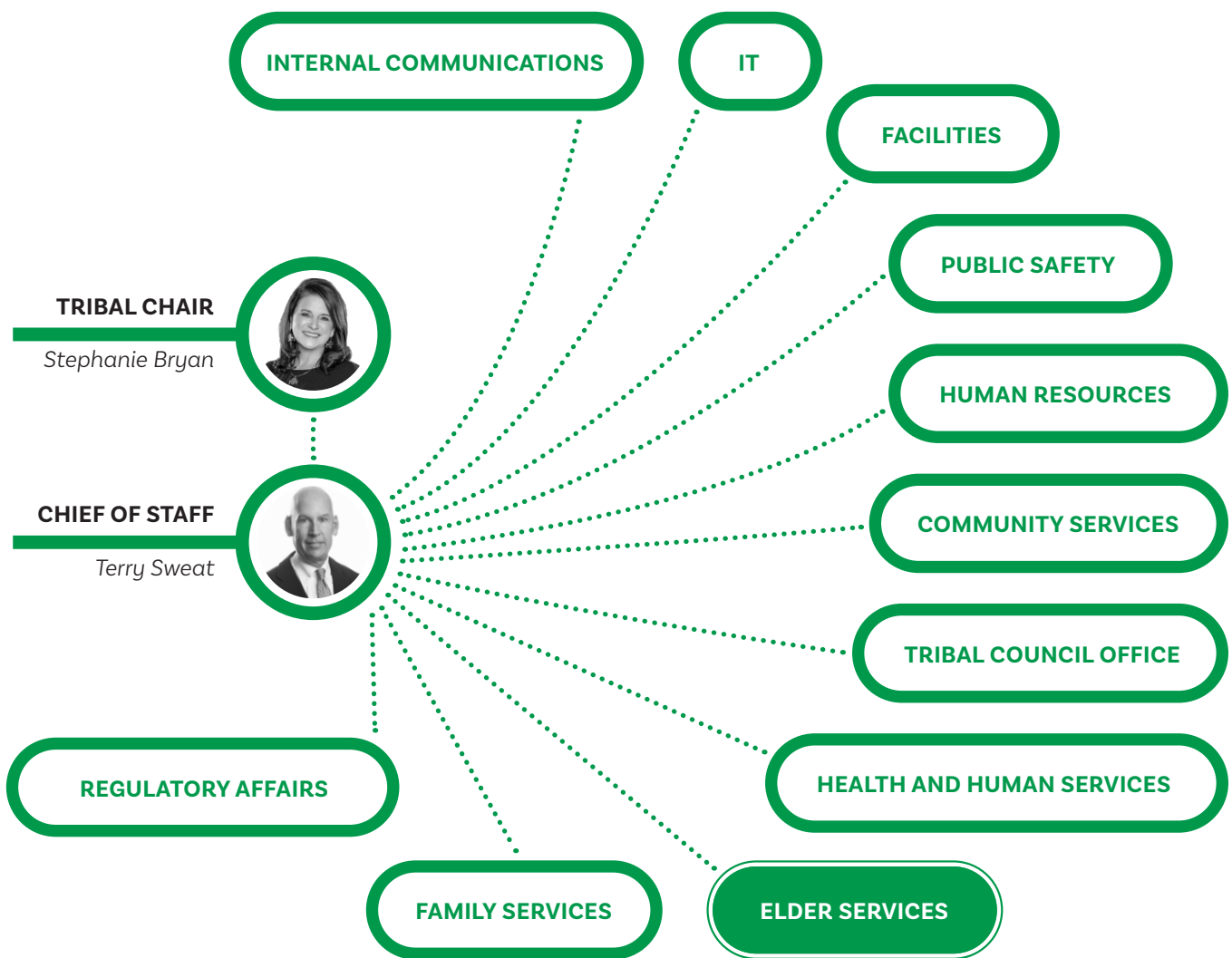
Her perspective on elder care is deeply personal. Martha cared for her own parents as they aged, an experience that gave her firsthand understanding of the emotional, physical, and practical challenges many elders and caregivers face. Through those experiences, she learned the importance of human connection, advocacy, and compassionate care – lessons that continue to guide her leadership today.

Under Martha's direction, the Elder Services Division provides essential support through the Adult Services Program, the Lavan Martin Assisted Living Facility, and the Non-Emergent Medical Transportation Program. These services help elders remain safely in their homes, provide quality assisted living care, and ensure reliable transportation to medical appointments for eligible Tribal Citizens.

One initiative especially close to Martha's heart is the In-Home Services Program, which she helped develop and implement from the very beginning. "This program enables many of our elder Tribal Citizens to remain in their homes safely and assists Tribal households in caring for family members dealing with medical issues," she said. "It fulfills one aspect of the Tribe's mission to provide care for Tribal Citizens from birth through the end of life."

Martha believes the wisdom and perseverance of Tribal elders are foundational to the Tribe's strength and identity. She often reflects on the sacrifices made by previous generations, including her grandmother, Ruby Barnhill, whose generation worked tirelessly toward federal recognition despite significant hardships.

"Their work, in the face of great odds, provided the foundation for all that we have now," Martha said. "We must all work to live in a way that honors their legacy and sees our Tribe continue to grow and prosper."



Throughout her years of service, Martha says the most rewarding moments come from the relationships she has built with elders and their families. Whether hearing residents at the Lavan Martin Assisted Living Facility call it “home,” listening to elders share stories from their lives, or witnessing the impact of services during times of crisis, she treasures the human connections that come with the work.

As she looks toward the future, Martha hopes to continue expanding programs and services to meet the evolving needs of the Tribe’s elder population. One growing concern she sees among elders is loneliness and social isolation. In response, the Elder Services team is developing programs aimed at helping elders stay connected with their community and participate safely in activities and events.

Martha encourages all Tribal Citizens to take time to connect with elders whenever possible.

“Time spent visiting with an elder is never wasted but is an opportunity to learn from them,” she shared. “Our elders are our cultural legacy. They help us maintain our community identity, provide us with stories of the past, and provide sustainable direction for our future.”

Guided by values of honesty, respect, perseverance, trust, diligence, and dignity, Martha and the Elder Services team continue their mission each day: ensuring that Tribal elders are cared for, honored, and never forgotten.



MARTHA GOOKIN, MACO
 Division Director of Elder Services

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DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: ELDER SERVICES

By Sharon Delmar

The Elder Services Division is committed to supporting the health, safety, and independence of Poarch Creek elders through a variety of programs designed to meet their everyday needs. The division is made up of three key areas: the Adult Services Program, the Lavan Martin Assisted Living Facility, and the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program.

Together, these programs provide essential services ranging from in-home support to residential care and transportation for medical appointments.

The **Adult Services Program** offers several services to eligible Tribal Citizens living within the surrounding five-county service area. Through Homemaker Case Aide Services, participants may receive light housekeeping assistance, limited transportation for tasks like paying bills and grocery shopping, and friendly visitation. Eligibility requires verification that household members are unable to perform these tasks independently.

The program also includes the **In-Home Care Services Program**, which provides financial assistance for attendant care services. This support may be used in the home or for those residing in assisted living, nursing home, or memory care facilities. Services include in-home attendant care and limited transportation, with eligibility based on an application process and qualifying medical needs.

For added safety, the **Medical Alert Program** provides fall detection devices and covers the cost of connecting those devices to emergency response services. This program is available to all eligible Tribal Citizens and requires an application and qualifying medical need.

Applications for Adult Services must be completed with all required documentation and can be obtained at the Lavan Martin Assisted Living Facility front desk or requested by email or fax. For more information, Tribal Citizens may contact Michealine Deese, Adult Services Manager, at (251) 368-9136, ext. 2603 or mdeese@pci-nsn.gov.

The **Lavan Martin Assisted Living Facility** provides residential accommodations with limited personal care for eligible individuals, including Tribal Citizens, their spouses, or parents of Tribal Citizen children. Residents must be 55 years or older, meet eligibility requirements, complete a background check, and be able to live with assistance from no more than one person.

Services at the facility include assistance with daily living activities, meals and snacks, social activities and outings, help with medical appointments and medication reminders, wellness tracking, as well as housekeeping and laundry support. While the facility promotes independence, it does not provide skilled nursing services or care for individuals with severe cognitive impairments.

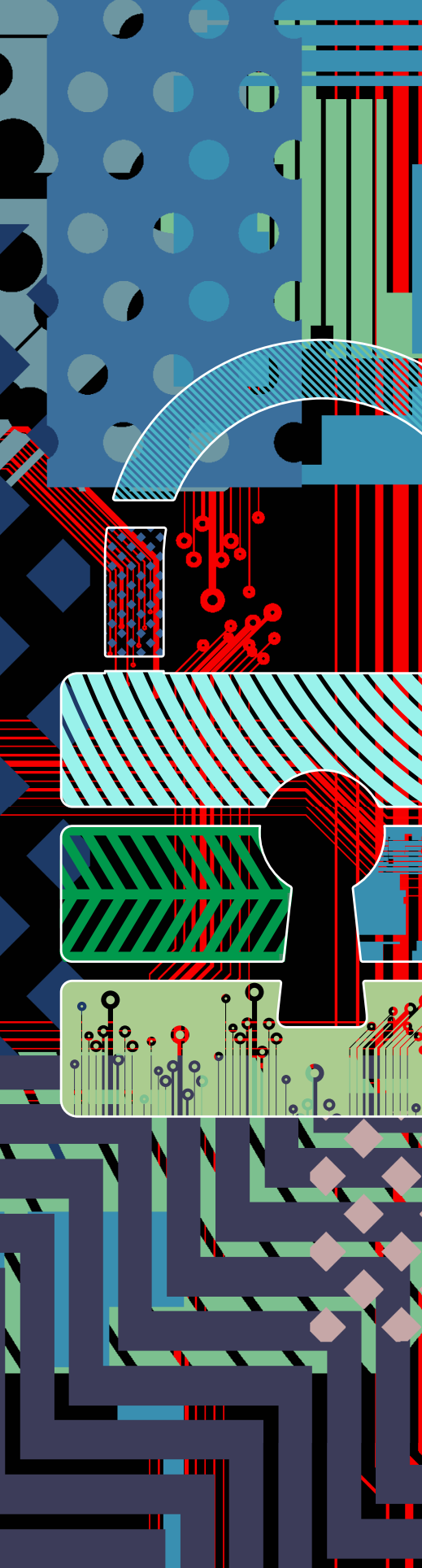
Applications for residency are available at the facility front desk and may also be requested electronically. For additional information, contact Martha Gookin, Division Director of Elder Services, at (251) 368-9136, ext. 2602 or mgookin@pci-nsn.gov.

The **Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program** provides safe and reliable transportation to medical appointments for Tribal Citizens living within a 20-mile radius of the reservation, including elders, individuals with disabilities, and those without dependable transportation. Services may also be extended within the Tribe's five-county service area on a case-by-case basis.

Transportation is available for appointments within a 60-mile radius, with extended travel considered when necessary. While the program ensures access to care, staff are not able to complete medical paperwork, make medical decisions, schedule appointments, accompany clients into treatment rooms, or provide medical advice.

To participate, individuals must complete a Transportation Assessment Form and Emergency Contact List, available at the Assisted Living Facility front desk or by request. For more information, contact Michael McGhee, Transportation Provider, at (251) 368-9136, ext. 2637 or mimghee@pci-nsn.gov.

Through each of these programs, the Elder Services Division continues to provide compassionate, dependable care—ensuring that elders are supported, respected, and connected to the resources they need every day.



Digital and Jurisdictional Sovereignty

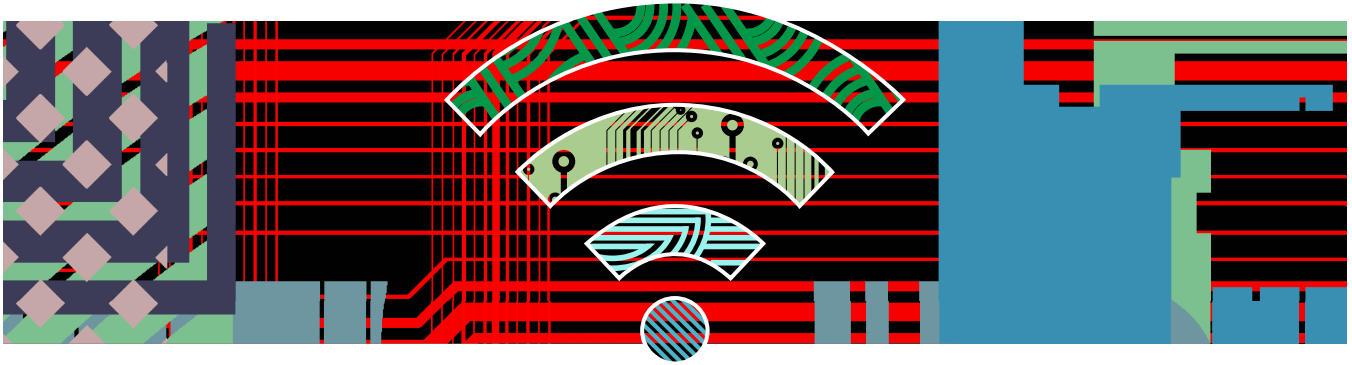
By Sharon Delmar

For Tribal Nations, sovereignty has always meant more than political recognition. It reflects the inherent right to govern lands, economies, resources, and communities according to tribal laws and values. Today, sovereignty increasingly extends into the digital world, where technology, data, cybersecurity, and online commerce are reshaping how governments and businesses operate.

One of the most significant emerging issues is Indigenous Data Sovereignty, the idea that tribes should control the information collected about their citizens, governments, lands, and enterprises. In today's digital economy, data influences everything from healthcare funding and education programs to infrastructure investment and economic development. Tribal leaders increasingly argue that Native Nations must have authority over how their data is collected, used, protected, and shared to ensure tribes are accurately represented and fully included in decisions that affect their communities.

For the Poarch Creek Indians, these conversations are especially relevant as tribal governments and enterprises continue expanding their use of digital infrastructure, technology systems, and data-driven operations. From gaming and hospitality to healthcare and government services, technology now plays a critical role in day-to-day operations and long-term economic strategy. Protecting tribal data, financial systems, customer information, and government infrastructure has become an important extension of modern sovereignty.

The rapid growth of online gaming and digital commerce has also intensified national discussions surrounding tribal jurisdiction. As more states legalize online sports betting and mobile gaming platforms, Tribal Nations are increasingly involved in legal and regulatory debates over who controls digital gaming activity and how tribal sovereignty applies in virtual spaces. These issues carry major economic implications because gaming revenues support essential tribal programs, including education, housing, healthcare, elder services, and cultural preservation.



For tribes with established gaming enterprises, digital sovereignty is closely tied to economic sovereignty. Questions surrounding cybersecurity, mobile wagering, cashless gaming systems, artificial intelligence, and customer data management are no longer simply technology concerns – they are governance concerns. Tribal leaders nationwide are working to ensure that emerging technologies do not weaken tribal authority, but instead strengthen self-determination and long-term economic independence.

Jurisdictional sovereignty is also evolving in other areas, including cannabis regulation, taxation, public safety, and federal-state enforcement authority. Tribal governments

continue navigating complex legal environments where tribal, state, and federal jurisdictions often overlap. These disputes highlight the ongoing importance of protecting tribal authority while adapting to rapidly changing industries and technologies.

For the Poarch Creek Indians and Tribal Nations across the country, sovereignty in the modern era increasingly includes the right to govern digital infrastructure, protect tribal data, regulate emerging technologies, and participate fully in the evolving digital economy. As technology continues reshaping business, communication, and governance, tribes are asserting that Native Nations must not simply adapt to the digital future – they must help define it.



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POARCH 101: Calvin McGhee

Submitted By Billy Bailey, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

PICTURED Calvin McGhee working among his roses



“
By the time
Calvin stepped
into leadership,
Creek people
in Alabama
were facing a
reality shaped
by generations
of displacement,
erasure, and
survival.”

Calvin McGhee's life has often been remembered through the victories he won for his people. It's important to remember it all started from humble beginnings. He was not born into wealth or influence. He came from a large family, one of many siblings raised by parents who worked as poor farmers. Life was hard, and opportunity was limited. He did not inherit a traditional position of authority in the community, which were observed as chiefs by a visiting anthropologist in the 1940s. Everything he became, he built for himself. The recognition he eventually gained, both within his own community and far beyond it, was the result of years of determination, sacrifice, and a willingness to lead the way.

By the time Calvin stepped into leadership, Creek people in Alabama were facing a reality shaped by generations of displacement, erasure, and survival. They were fighting not only for legal recognition, but for the simple acknowledgment that they deserved equal rights as people. There were places they could not go, services they could not receive, and opportunities that were denied to them, even something as simple as sitting down in a store for a cold drink in summer.

Several stories show Calvin McGhee's character and bravery in these hard times. Whether in a courtroom, a council house, or an everyday public space, Calvin did not step back. One time his wife was asked in an interview if Calvin knew about William Weatherford, the Redstick leader, and she said:

“He grew up knowing about him. His people had told him about him and some more of his people had told him, you see, about the government owing them. Taken their land by force and owed them and never paid...I remember Calvin in the courtroom one time... in the Supreme Court. ...He told them... I hate to say such a thing, but said, I told my family and my people many a time, if I could have been here back in Red Eagle's time, I would have joined him, I would have been with him. And said, I believe either of you would have joined in if somebody was coming in to separate you, your wife and children, take what you had. I believe you all would have done something some way defending yourself.”

He'd been willing to fight the good fight since he was young. One time during a tent revival in Monroeville, the Ku Klux Klan arrived, threatening and intimidating folks with tar and feathers. As tension rose, a man stepped forward from the darkness, armed with a gun and unafraid, and warned them plainly that if they harmed anyone, he would act. The Klan left. Years later, a witness recognized that voice again and looked up to see him, realizing that young man had been Calvin McGhee.

Another story took place in 1958 in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Calvin was traveling with local Choctaw friends when they approached a restaurant. One of the men warned that they would not be served because they were Indian. Calvin was used to this treatment back home in Alabama, but he told them to get behind him and walked inside anyway. When the staff tried to turn them away, he stood firm. He told them they were American Indians, and they had a right to be there.

Calvin understood their situation could not improve through legal cases and courtrooms alone. Before anything else, people had to see and recognize that Creek people had dignity and were proud to be Indian. That realization shaped his decision to wear a war bonnet type of headdress and full Plains-Indian style regalia in public, as he had seen other tribal leaders

do. As his wife Joyce explained, he wore the feathers “to show the world who he was.” He was an Indian. He was trying to be a leader for his people. The feathers, in older traditions of Plains tribes, represented power, and the clothing he wore was carefully made by hand at home.

He began wearing the war bonnet in the early 1950s, at the same time that he was becoming deeply involved in court cases and legal efforts that would define his leadership. He traveled more, appearing in courtrooms, meeting attorneys, and representing Creek people in spaces where they had long been ignored. In those spaces, appearance mattered. Officials, judges, and the public had a narrow mindset of what an “Indian” looked like, usually based on Hollywood’s Western movies. Calvin understood that reality and used it to his advantage.

He was not alone in this. Across the country, many Native leaders during this period adopted similar forms of Plains-style dress when dealing with outsiders. Many leaders whose own traditions did not historically center on Plains-style regalia made similar choices, including other Creek leaders. It was a shared strategy of becoming visible as Native people.

At a commemoration event for Horseshoe Bend, Calvin attended as an honored guest among congressmen and state officials, wearing a war bonnet. During the event, a county judge asked if he could have the bonnet as a souvenir. Without hesitation, Calvin removed it and handed it over, explaining that another could be made. Like many Creeks of his generation, Calvin was the kind of man who truly would give the shirt off his back to those who asked.

Wherever he went in his regalia, photographs were taken, sometimes far beyond Alabama. After his passing, more people in the community began wearing regalia themselves, embracing the sense of Native pride he helped make possible. People in the community grew to embrace their uniquely Creek regalia and traditions, leaving the Plains-style war bonnet behind.

At his core, Calvin believed in unity among Creek people separated by time and distance. His work with the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma was central to that vision. At a time when legal battles and outside pressures often created division between Creek people in the East and West, Calvin worked to bring them together.

He traveled to Oklahoma in 1955 to speak at the Creek council house, where he addressed representatives from many towns, reflecting the older structure of the Creek Nation. Because many elders in attendance did not speak English, an interpreter stood beside him to carry his words across clearly. He gave a powerful speech about how they were sovereign, capable of making their own decisions, and that their ideas were worth just as much as those of any American government official.

Calvin urged them to come together, decide what was best for their people, and require government authorities to follow their lead, not the other way around. He also spoke about how federal systems often imposed short terms on tribal leadership, replacing chiefs every two years. Calvin warned against this. He told them that two years was not enough time to understand how government systems worked, or how those systems could be used against them.

...continued on next page



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PICTURED
Above (Left to right) Calvin McGhee, C. Lenoir Thompson, S.E. Garrett, and in the bottom right, Rep. Joe W. Smith
Right Calvin McGhee and W. E. McIntosh at a Pow Wow in Florala, Alabama. Pensacola News photo by E. W. Carswell



PICTURED
Right Calvin with other Poarch Creek representatives sitting with Chief Turner Bear in the Council House of Creeks in Muskogee, Oklahoma



These visits were not just political. They were deeply personal. Calvin and his family were welcomed into homes, treated with warmth and respect, and embraced as part of a larger Creek community. He admired what he saw, across many different tribes that he had the pleasure of visiting. If something was Indian and done in a good way, he loved it.

At the center of these relationships was his close bond with Chief W.E. “Dode” McIntosh of the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma. Their connection went beyond politics. They visited each other’s homes, attended powwows together, and formed a relationship that many described as brotherhood. When they parted after meetings, both men were often moved to tears, understanding the responsibility they shared. McIntosh published this statement in memory of Calvin after he passed:

“Chief Calvin, as he was affectionately called was a leader and all...regardless of class or rank held him in great esteem. Those who knew him best, loved him most. He lived to serve his people with labor and honor.

He never swerved from the right way of thinking and doing things. Thoughtful and fair in his dealings, his nature would not let him be otherwise. If you were once his friend you were always his friend.

His leadership and struggle, against great odds, for the Creek Indians East was successful and was the crowning ambition of a valued and useful life.”

Even near the end of his life, Calvin continued his work. He made one final trip to Oklahoma to assist with questions

of Creek identity tied to federal claims. He spoke on behalf of individuals whose identities were being questioned, offering not just documents, but personal knowledge. He told officials that if there were doubts, he could take them directly to elders and communities who would confirm who these people were.

On the journey home, he reflected on his work. He told his wife that if they never made another trip, he felt his people were in good shape. He believed they would be federally recognized. He spoke openly about conscience, saying that others would have to live with theirs, and he would have to live with his. He wanted to be ready.

Throughout his life, he carried a heavy burden. He often placed the needs of his people above his own, even when it created hardship for his family. Those who knew him described him as a man who lived for his people, someone who would put the tribe ahead of everything else, even when it meant financial strain or personal sacrifice.

He was down-to-earth, but he was also a dreamer. He believed his people could have education, recognition, and a rightful place in society, and he worked to make those things real. He carried a sharp understanding that went far beyond his formal schooling, and more importantly, he had the courage to act on what he believed, even when the way forward was uncertain.

He began life with very little, and what he built did not end with him. Calvin McGhee’s legacy is not only found in court decisions. It lives in the pride he helped restore and the unity he strengthened. His life shows that leadership is not handed down. It is earned through persistence and the willingness to bravely stand up and say: we’re here, we’ve always been here, and we will always be here.



LEADING CHANGE:

THE LASTING IMPACT OF CHIEF CALVIN MCGHEE

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

T

he enduring legacy of Chief Calvin McGhee and the Poarch Creek Indians is featured in the current exhibit at the Vulcan Park & Museum in Birmingham, Alabama.

The exhibit, *Revolutionary Roots: Celebrating Alabama's Unique History and Natural Beauty* in Birmingham, Alabama, recognizes Chief McGhee's story as one of the state's dynamic change-makers for his profound contributions to education, to the Poarch Creek Indians, and to the broader Alabama community.

EXCERPT FROM THE EXHIBIT:

The Poarch Creek Indians are the only federally recognized Indian tribe in Alabama. Although the Tribe's ancestors had been in Alabama for hundreds of years, it wasn't until 1983 that the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs extended government-to-government relations with the Poarch Creek, giving the tribe the same privileges and immunities that other federally recognized tribes received.

(Chief McGhee) was the first to organize the tribe into a government complete with laws and elections...in 1950 he officially established the predecessor to the Poarch Creek Tribe, the Creek Nation East of the Mississippi at Poarch. McGhee continued to lead the Poarch Creek Indians until his death in 1970.

"It became a must to feature him in the exhibit," said Casey Gamble, museum Curator of Collections and Exhibitions.

Samil Baker, Director of Marketing and Public Relations at the museum, noted that the team was searching for people and stories with genuine impact at both the state and national levels.

A central vision for the exhibit was that these stories would not simply read as history lessons, but instead live as ongoing legacies, relatable, relevant, and reflective of each person's influence today and for generations to come.

Chief McGhee's story stood out, Baker said, because of his groundbreaking work, which included helping bring federal recognition to the Tribe. This work touched countless lives and remains a critical achievement with national impact.

"Sharing these remarkable accomplishments with a new audience has given us the chance to tell his story through a different lens," said Baker.

"As the nation marks its 250th anniversary, *Revolutionary Roots* offers an opportunity to reflect on the people who helped shape America through Alabama's lens," said Cynthia Cardona, President & CEO. "This exhibition honors individuals like distinguished Chief McGhee, whose valor, vision, and leadership affirm that Alabama's influence extends far beyond its borders and is deeply woven into the larger American story in powerful and unexpected ways

"Chief Calvin McGhee was deeply committed to ensuring our tribe would persevere as a people and achieve federal recognition. His work paved the way for us to move from poverty to prosperity, and we are honored that his remarkable story will be told in this exhibit. Chief Calvin has had a lasting impact on generations of our Poarch tribal citizens, and we hope that through this exhibit, his legacy will serve to inspire others," said Stephanie A. Bryan, Tribal Chair & CEO.

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ACADEMY OF CANADIAN
CINEMA AND TELEVISION
GENIE AWARDS

BLACK ROBE

By Sharon Delmar

B *Black Robe* is a haunting historical drama directed by Bruce Beresford that explores the clash between French Jesuit missionaries and Indigenous peoples in 17th-century Canada. The film follows Father Laforgue, a young priest traveling through dangerous wilderness to reach a remote mission, while struggling with faith, survival, and cultural misunderstanding.

What makes the film stand out is its realism. Rather than romanticizing colonial history, *Black Robe* presents both Europeans and Indigenous communities with complexity and humanity. The cinematography is stunning, capturing the harsh beauty of the Canadian wilderness, while the performances feel authentic and emotionally grounded.

The film can be slow and emotionally heavy at times, but its thoughtful portrayal of religion, colonialism, and survival makes it a powerful viewing experience.



WHERE TO WATCH

- Prime Video (with subscription)
- Tubi (free with ads)
- Pluto TV (free with ads)
- Apple TV (rental/purchase)
- Kanopy (with library access)

The Tribe is committed to doing its part to further Native arts through books, media, movies, fashion, and similar artistic outlets.

Share your recommendation
with Sharon Delmar
at sdelmar@pci-nsn.gov.

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POARCH CREEK INDIANS EARN STATE AND REGIONAL RECOGNITION WITH FOUR PRESTIGIOUS PUBLIC RELATIONS AWARDS

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

The Poarch Creek Indians have been honored with a total of four prestigious awards from two leading industry organizations, recognizing excellence in communications, storytelling, and strategic impact.

At the regional level, the Tribe received two Lantern Awards of Excellence from the Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF) for the Poarch Creek Indians Website Redesign and the “Celebrating Native American Heritage Month: A Poarch Creek Perspective” blog series. These awards celebrate outstanding achievement in content, communications, creative innovation, and strategic results.

At the state level, the Tribe was also recognized by the Public Relations Council of Alabama (PRCA) during its annual conference last month. The Poarch Creek Indians earned a Medallion Award for the Perdido River Meats 2025 Campaign in the category of Long-Term Programs and Campaigns, as well as an Award of Merit for the *How Poarch Creek Indians Helped Give a 32-Million-Year-Old Fossil a Voice in Muscogee* Campaign in the category of Tactical Materials and Projects in Media Relations.

“We are honored to be recognized with both the Lantern and Medallion awards,” said Robbie McGhee, Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer, “and are grateful for the opportunity to continue sharing Poarch’s heritage, impact, and contributions with wider audiences.”

All four award-winning initiatives were developed by the Poarch Creek Indians’ External Communications Department in partnership with Davis, South, Barnette & Patrick (DSB&P), reflecting a shared commitment to creating impactful, audience-centered communications.

The combined recognition from SPRF and PRCA highlights the Poarch Creek Indians’ continued commitment to excellence in communications and to delivering work that educates, inspires, and strengthens connections with audiences across the region and beyond.

“

... [we] are grateful for the opportunity to continue sharing Poarch’s heritage, impact, and contributions with wider audiences.

**ROBBIE MCGHEE,
CHIEF GOVERNMENT AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER**



POARCH CREEK INDIANS

NEW RESERVATION MURAL CELEBRATES CREEK RESILIENCE

By Sehoj Thrower

If you've driven along Jack Springs Road in the past month, you've likely noticed the new mural on Building 100. A big mvto to Wendy Deschene and her students from Auburn University for painting this vibrant work of art. Every part of this colorful collage tells a powerful story about our community.

Traditional cultural arts are woven throughout the mural, from fish trap baskets and quilt patterns to longleaf pine needle baskets, pottery, and pucker-toe moccasins. These are ancient skills our people have worked hard to preserve and revitalize. Turtle shell shakers, worn by stomp dancing women, and a lively stickball game scene speak to practices that continue to bring our people together.

Our agricultural roots are just as visible, with scenes of cattle and corn standing alongside culturally important species, like woodpeckers, longleaf pine, pitcher plants, and yaupon holly, all uniquely part of our homeland's ecosystems. There are pieces of local history shown too, for those who know where to look. The importance of education to our people are clearly sign, in landmarks like an old Indian schoolhouses/church, along with a powerful reference to the moment Jack Daughtry stood in the road with his twin daughters to stop a school bus. This brave act helped bring an end to segregation in our local school system.

An imagined portrait of Sehoj McGillivray stands strong to the left, grounding the mural in our ancestral roots. Another detail shows a handmade instrument made by Chippy Rolin, crafted from a can of paint thinner and guitar strings. That very instrument can still be seen today at the Poarch Creek Museum, as a reminder of the difficult times our community endured.

Next time you're on the reservation, whether you're visiting the museum or just passing through, take a moment to stop and experience the mural up close. It's more than just a work of art. Everything within it represents what the Tribal Historic Preservation Department wants to encourage with their historic preservation and cultural revitalization initiative. It intentionally did not include the Poarch Creek logo, instead choosing to show some of the many pieces of our life that shows who we are as Creek people. It's a celebration of our history, our resilience, and the many things that make the Poarch Creek community proud.



SEHOJ THROWER

*Poarch Creek Indians
Tribal Historic Preservation Office,
Special Projects Specialist*




PROTECTING OUR WATERS

A LEGACY AND A PROMISE

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

Imagine standing knee-deep in a stream as clear as glass, so clear you can count the pebbles under your feet. But there's a story beyond these waters you can't see. It's a story of conservation, preservation, human health, and the legacy of these waters on Tribal lands.

To tell the story of protecting the watershed and headwaters of Perdido Creek and the Perdido River, meet Chris Head, Manager of Environmental Protection of the Poarch Creek Indians.



...wetlands preservation is a critical part of protecting the watershed because wetlands provide buffer zones to mitigate against sediment runoff from ever-present logging, mining, construction, and agricultural operations.

But first, a few key definitions:

HEADWATERS The uppermost source of a water system.

WETLANDS Nature's filter, absorbing pollutants, and slowing floodwaters.

WATERSHED It encompasses the entire landscape that drains into a common body of water, including headwaters, streams, rivers, and the surrounding land and vegetation.

The environmental protection team has been watching over these waters for nearly a decade. Currently, they are managing the design of the largest stream restoration project in the Southeast for the Tribe, encompassing the headwaters of Perdido Creek. The project was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) via the National Coastal Resilience Fund. for \$708,000.

Through this program, wetlands preservation is a critical part of protecting the watershed because wetlands provide buffer zones to mitigate against sediment runoff from ever-present logging, mining, construction, and agricultural operations.

“We already sample for pathogens and other parameters in both the Perdido and Escambia watersheds. So why not work together on this project and do a little extra collection to get a better and broader picture of the entire watershed and headwaters to the bay,” said Chris.

Through the **Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program (PPBEP)**, the team is doing work that is vital to:

- Restoring and protecting these watersheds and identifying any issues that could impact water quality
- Protecting the important species that inhabit these waters
- Ensuring the Tribe and the community know the health of these waterways is being cared for in a clear and meaningful way

Over the next three years, the project team representing the City of Orange Beach, PPBEP, and Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa Counties, will collect monthly water quality data at approximately 30 sites across the Perdido and Pensacola Bay Watersheds, critical information that will be publicly available and displayed on a dashboard to help visualize water quality information; educating, informing, and connecting communities to the bays they care about. It’s a promise that extends through the comprehensive work of its Environmental and Natural Resources department, including environmental stewardship, sustainable waste management, and habitat protection.

The Poarch Creek Indians’ focus and commitment to conservation ensures the waters on Tribal lands are protected and preserved now, and as a promise for generations to come.

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).

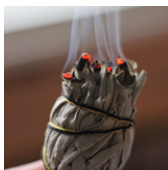
Selections will be made at the end of each month. Compensation will be processed during the following month.

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.

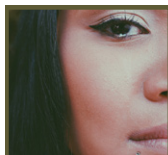


Indigenous (everyday life) means authentic traditional and contemporary Native Americans at home.



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.



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WIND CREEK SERVES UP SUPPORT AT GUMBO GALA

By Amelia Tognoli

Wind Creek Hospitality was proud to take part in this year’s Gumbo Gala, an annual fundraiser hosted by Episcopal Place that brings the community together for a flavorful cause. Held at Cahaba Brewing Company, the event featured local cook teams competing for the title of Birmingham’s Best Gumbo, while attendees enjoyed sampling a variety of unique recipes. Proceeds from the Gumbo Gala directly support Episcopal Place, which provides affordable housing and essential services to low-income seniors and adults with disabilities throughout the Birmingham, AL area.

“We are proud to support events like the Gumbo Gala that bring people together while making a meaningful impact in the community. Partnering with organizations like Episcopal Place allows us to connect our Team Members and

Guests to a greater purpose—supporting those in need while celebrating the spirit and culture of Birmingham,” said Trina Rackard, Wind Creek Hospitality’s Director of Sponsorship & Events.

Wind Creek Team Members were on-site, engaging with Guests and adding to the evening’s excitement. Attendees were invited to visit the Wind Creek booth to spin the prize wheel and enter a raffle for a featured gift basket. Prize wheel offerings included Free Play, spa vouchers, dining experiences, resort credits, and more, creating a fun and memorable experience for all who stopped by.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who visited the Wind Creek booth and supported this meaningful event. We are honored to contribute to organizations like Episcopal Place that make a lasting impact in our communities.





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or Teresa McLaughlin, Assistant CFO, at tmclaughlin@pcicie.com

POARCH CREEK INDIANS

STRENGTHEN HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH INDIAN HEALTH SERVICES PROJECTS

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

The Poarch Creek Indians are proud to showcase the work of PCI Federal, which, through PCI Support Services, has recently completed several innovative building projects for Indian Health Services (IHS). IHS provides federal health services to American Indians, as an operating division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These efforts of IHS and the Poarch Creek Indians demonstrate a strong commitment to providing essential healthcare and infrastructure to Native communities, including those in the most remote and challenging areas.

As a member of the Poarch Creek Indians Tribe, Megan Thompson brought a deeply personal connection and cultural insight to her role as Project Manager for these efforts. Her heritage and lived experiences made her an integral part of the team, helping ensure that these healthcare projects not only met technical standards but also honored and respected the communities they serve.

CROWNPOINT WELLNESS CENTER - NAVAJO NATION SPECIAL DIABETES PROJECT

At Crownpoint Indian Medical Center in New Mexico, PCI Support Services (PCISS) is leading the construction of a 5,300-square-foot modular wellness center designed to combat diabetes and promote community health. The facility includes a full gymnasium, ADA-compliant restrooms, office space for wellness checks, and a demonstration kitchen to teach healthy cooking. Despite challenges such as water access, utility routing, and construction in remote terrain, PCI Support Services has worked hand-in-hand with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority to ensure the project moves forward successfully.

"This project really opened my eyes to the challenges communities face in accessing something as basic as water availability or reliable utility services," said Megan Thompson, Project Manager for PCI Support Services. "It makes the work we do feel that much more meaningful, because you know the end result is a facility that directly improves quality of life. These facilities aren't just buildings, they are support facilities for the community and lifelines to critical needs of patients," said Thompson

“These facilities aren't just buildings, they are support facilities for the community and lifelines to critical needs of patients.

**MEGAN THOMPSON, PROJECT MANAGER
FOR PCI SUPPORT SERVICES**

GALLUP INDIAN MEDICAL CENTER - EMERGENCY CARE MODULAR FACILITY

In Gallup, New Mexico, PCI Support Services designed and delivered a state-of-the-art, 16-bed modular emergency care building. The \$10.1 million facility includes trauma rooms, a CT scan room, pharmacy, exam rooms, and advanced medical support spaces, all built to stringent FGI guidelines. The project required complex utility upgrades, precision installation between hospital structures, and a sophisticated \$1.6 million HVAC system with HEPA filtration and UV systems to meet medical-grade standards. Despite working in a fully operational hospital environment, the PCISS team successfully executed the project with minimal disruption, delivering a modern facility that strengthens emergency care capacity in the region.

PCI Federal is also actively engaged with PCISS and Indian Health Services on the Lawton Indian Hospital Outbuilding project, further demonstrating its ability to meet the evolving needs of Native healthcare facilities. Through these projects, PCI Federal continues to build more than facilities, it builds opportunity, resilience, and healthier futures for Native communities.

"Being a Project Manager has been such a fulfilling journey," Thompson added. "I'm proud that the skills I've developed allow me to give back in a way that supports the health and wellbeing of Native American communities across the country."

Kam Johnson, Megan's director at PCI Support Services, shared that working alongside Megan has been a learning experience in many ways. "Megan has taught me so much about the cultural side of our work," Johnson shared. "I've gained a deeper appreciation for the traditions and history that shape these projects. It's made me a better leader and reminded me why our work matters."

"Megan's story is a perfect example of why we invest in our enterprises and our people," said Josh Hancock, a President of PCI Federal, which oversees PCI Support Services. "She represents the future of the Tribe, which is strong and committed to making a difference. We are proud of her leadership and the positive impact PCI Federal is having through these critical projects."

The work at Crownpoint, Gallup, and Lawton demonstrates how PCI Support Services combines technical expertise with cultural understanding, ensuring projects are delivered with excellence and long-lasting impact.



GET READY TO KICK OFF SUMMER IN STYLE!

June is packed with excitement, sunshine, and unforgettable memories at OWA Parks & Resort!

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

A

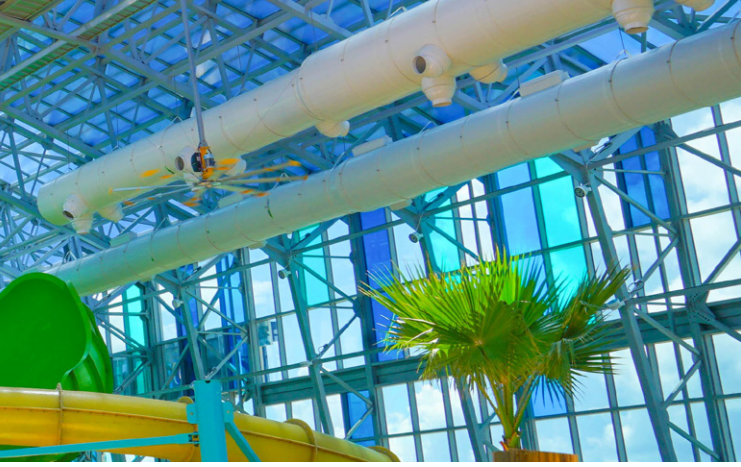
As the days grow longer and the temperatures rise, there's no better place to soak up the season than at OWA. Whether you're planning a family outing, a date night, or a weekend adventure with friends, OWA has something for everyone.

KICK OFF SUMMER WITH A SPLASH AT TROPIC FALLS

Cool off and turn up the excitement at Tropic Falls at OWA! From heart-pounding rides and slides at the theme park and indoor water park, to the relaxing lazy river and outdoor wave pool, Tropic Falls is the ultimate escape from the summer heat. Grab your friends and dive into a full day of fun!

DOWNTOWN OWA

Make Downtown OWA your go-to for summer fun! Catch a show, grab dinner, challenge your crew to games, and explore it all in one walkable entertainment district. There's always something happening!



Downtown OWA is serving up fresh flavors you won't want to miss. Whether you're craving a quick snack, a refreshing drink, a relaxed sit-down meal, or something sweet, there's something here to hit the spot. Come explore the newest additions, including Ben's Pretzels and Voodoo Daiquiris, and make your break a little more delicious.

Shop, stroll and explore as you wander through charming shops, discover unique finds, and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of Downtown OWA. June also brings a lively lineup of music, social events, and live performances to the **OWA Theater** and **Brandon Styles Theater**. Enjoy family-friendly events that keep the good vibes going all month. Be sure to check the schedule so you don't miss your favorites!

June is just the beginning to a summer of fun! Keep an eye out for new events and surprises around every corner. There's always something new happening to make your visit extra special. Make this summer one to remember and check out all the fun waiting for you at OWA Parks & Resort! We can't wait to see you there!

For more information and a complete listing of events, check out visitowa.com

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RECOGNIZING LEADERSHIP

By Aya Prince

Hesci, friends! Finally, summer is here, and we can all enjoy the nice weather it brings. I know I'm looking forward to spending time with family and friends. Additionally, many of our Tribal Youth, like myself, will remain productive by participating in our Tribe's Summer Youth Leadership Program and Summer Internship Program. June 1st marks the start of the Boys and Girls Club Environmental Education and Fishing Rodeo, too, so plenty of events to pay attention to around Poarch.

Next, let's tackle a topic directly related to our Tribal leadership. On June 6, Tribal Council Election Day, members of our Tribe will vote on who our next leaders will be. Be sure to do your research on each candidate; all of them are highly qualified and would bring something unique to the Council. Best of luck to everyone running!

June had many interesting historical events surrounding indigenous people; however, I chose one that still impacts our civil rights today, the Indian Citizenship Act. Prior to the Civil War, citizenship for Native Americans was highly restricted. The days of discrimination against many Tribes finally came to an end, though, on June 2, 1924. President Calvin Coolidge signed the Indian Citizenship Act into law after Congress passed it, granting citizenship to every Tribal member born within the United States. Indigenous people still faced many trials and tribulations on the path ahead—we do today, after all—but it was certainly a step in the right direction. Ten years later, in 1934, John Collier would champion the Indian Reorganization Act, a more controversial bill that furthered the concept of tribal sovereignty and civil rights established in the Indian Citizenship Act. So, June has seen numerous changes in the political status of Tribal members!

The Word of the Month is...

HOMATV : LEADER

In honor of our upcoming elections, **homatv** is the Creek word for leader. We've had many wonderful leaders over the course of our history; they have lifted the Poarch Creek Indians to new heights. One of the most impactful, though, was certainly Chief Calvin McGhee. With the trips he made to Washington, D.C., he secured federal recognition for our Tribe, and therefore enabled us to improve our quality of life dramatically. He fought to collect the documentation required to prove our continued existence as a Tribe, and we will be forever grateful. I mention all of this because he passed away on June 10, 1970. A great **homatv** will be remembered this month, so please, take some time to appreciate his actions and dedication to this Tribe on June 10.

With that, I hope everyone finds some time to rest and reflect this month. When our schedules become stressful and busy, it's important to remember that community and leadership matter. Take care, and remember, appreciate everything your **homatv** does for you. Until next time!



AYA PRINCE

Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Citizen
and Creek Corner Columnist

**SUMMER
SAFETY TIPS**



**HEALTH
SCREENINGS**



BLOODMOBILE

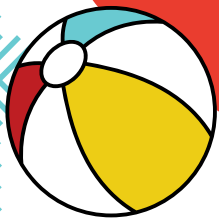


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THE BIG 3

By Bryan Fayard



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

Bryan Fayard
251-368-9136 ext. 2504
bfayard@pci-nsn.gov

Do you remember The Price is Right game show? I'm talking about the 1970's and 80's with Bob Barker as the host. On every episode, right before adjourning, Bob would remind us to have our pets spayed or neutered. That was his saying, something he was passionate about and through repetition he reminded many of us to be responsible with our pets.

Well, I have a saying too—save at least 10% of everything you earn. PYF—pay yourself first, and establish an emergency fund of three to six months of your income. These are the big three rules of personal finance, and I always start and end every one of my classes with these statements. I realize my students might tire of me repeating these statements but it's so gratifying when I'm teaching my third session to a group and they know these by heart. I'll start with these questions; how much should you save? What does PYF stand for? How much should be in your emergency fund? Through repetition, they all know the answers. I hope they carry this advice with them through their lives. When they start that first job, maybe they'll remember when filling out their 401k or 403b forms to contribute at least 10%. Practicing these three habits will keep you financially healthy throughout your life.

Let's look at the first rule—save at least 10% of everything you earn. You can save more, if possible, but I do realize that

10% is a lot. If you can't quite save 10% now, start where you can, 3% or 4% and gradually work your way to 10%. It's the habit of saving that's most important. Consider increasing your savings each year when you get a raise or COLA. Soon, you'll arrive at your goal of 10%.

Let's look at the second rule—PYF or pay yourself first. From this day forward, whenever you get paid, save an amount first, then spend the rest. Treat yourself like you are the most important bill you must pay each month and take care of it immediately. When I used to get paid, I'd make my house payment, car payment, utility bills, buy groceries, go out to eat, etc. and save what was left. Guess how much I had left? I didn't start PYF until I was in my mid-30's. Had I started this in my 20's I could've retired 5 or 10 years ago. This simple psychological shift in thinking will reward you well in the future.

The third rule—establishing your emergency fund of three to six months of your income is vital to your financial well-being. I don't know what will happen in the future but each one of us will have some kind of emergency within the next year and it will involve money. A good strategy is to be proactive and set aside some money before that bad incident occurs.

OK, I'm no Bob Barker but that's my saying—save at least 10% of everything you earn, PYF, and establish your emergency fund. Come on down!

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

ANNUAL RABIES CLINIC

Saturday, August 8, 2026

8am – 11am*

Fire Station #1

Jack Springs Road, Atmore

*or until vaccines run out

Dogs and Cats – up to two animals per Tribal Citizen, First Generation Descendant, 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 Citizen or Tribal Employee must present Tribal ID. First Generation Descendants must show Tribal ID or copy of verification letter.**



ENVIRONMENTAL
DEPARTMENT

WARRIOR OUTREACH PROGRAM



The Warrior Outreach Program serves our relatives who are currently incarcerated or in rehabilitation centers by providing cultural, educational materials, resources and encouragement. We are committed to supporting your journey through connection to your Indigenous identity, healing, and or community reintegration.

If you know someone who meets these qualifications who would like to participate, please contact Rhea DeVilbiss at 251.281.8775.

Ask us about our mentorship and support program.

PROGRAM QUALIFICATIONS

To participate in the Warrior Outreach Program, individuals must meet the following criteria:

TRIBAL AFFILIATION:

- Be a PCI (Poarch Creek Indians) Tribal Citizen.
- Be a first-generation descendant of a PCI Tribal Citizen.

INCARCERATION/TREATMENT STATUS

Currently serving a sentence in an incarceration facility or enrolled in a substance abuse rehabilitation program.

LOCATION

Incarcerated or in treatment anywhere on Turtle Island, provided the facility has the ability to receive mail and correspondence programs.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Participation is completely voluntary. Must complete and return the program application, granting permission for correspondence with the Warrior Outreach Program. The Warrior Outreach Program does not offer legal advice.

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WARRIOR**

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Still Standing Because I Am a Warrior is dedicated to raising awareness about opioid and substance abuse. Understanding what opioids are and the risks they pose is crucial in combating this epidemic.



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 the site listed during the specified start and end times for meals.

Breakfast and lunch will be served beginning May 26, 2026, until August 6, 2026, Monday through Friday. No program on July 4, 2026, 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.

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2. fax:
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3. email:
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Internal Communications

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CREEK CORNER

JUNE 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

6.1	SUBMISSION DEADLINE July Issue	
6.4	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers	4:00 PM
6.5	FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom	9:30 AM - 4:00 PM
6.6	TRIBAL COUNCIL ELECTION DAY Pickrell House	8:00 AM - 7:00 PM
6.8	MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED Inventory	
6.9	TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
6.18	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers	4:00 PM
6.19	FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom	9:30 AM - 4:00 PM
6.23	TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

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.