



MARCH  
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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

# creek corner

HELPING TRIBAL NATIONS

*Step Into*  
THEIR *Power*

**HELPING TRIBAL NATIONS  
STEP INTO THEIR POWER**

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## CREDITS

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**MEGAN ZAMORA**  
Editor, Creek Corner

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

***“The snow reminded me of how our ancestors viewed the changing seasons—not as interruptions, but as natural rhythms meant to be honored. For the Creeks, winter was a time of storytelling, a season when families gathered, reflected, and passed down traditions.”***

“**I**n late January, something incredible happened—snow! And not just a light dusting, but nearly nine inches at my house. For those of us in Alabama and Florida, that’s practically unheard of. The world outside transformed overnight, familiar landscapes hidden under a thick, pristine blanket of white. Roads were impassable, schedules were thrown off, and for the first time in a long time, there was nothing to do but pause.

At first, I worried about the disruptions—meetings that had to be rescheduled, tasks that would have to wait. But as I stepped outside, I was struck by the beauty of it all. The snow softened everything, making even the most ordinary places look unfamiliar and almost magical.

Instead of staying inside, we bundled up and ventured out as a family. I made a snow angel—something I hadn’t done in years. We pulled the kids around in a wagon, their wide eyes taking in the world around them. At under two years old, they weren’t laughing or squealing with delight like older kids might. Instead, they were completely in awe, just as I was. Seeing the world through their eyes made the experience even more special.

The snow reminded me of how our ancestors viewed the changing seasons—not as interruptions, but as natural rhythms meant to be honored. For the Creeks, winter was a time of storytelling, a season when families gathered, reflected, and passed down traditions. While we don’t often associate winter with snow in our homelands, this rare event gave me the same gift—a reason to slow down, be present, and appreciate the moment.

As we step into spring—a season full of movement and change—I hope we all take a moment to pause, appreciate the beauty around us, and cherish the unexpected moments that make life special.



# TRIBAL LEADERS

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

## TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

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

## BOTTOM ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

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







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**PICTURED** Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara (MHA) Nation Chairman Mark Fox, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, and State Tax Commissioner Brian Kroshus in March 2024 signed a historic alcohol tax revenue sharing agreement. (Photo/Facebook)



# DOUG BURGUM CONFIRMED BY U.S. SENATE TO BE INTERIOR SECRETARY

By Neely Bardwell via Native News Online

T

he U.S. Senate on Thursday confirmed former North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum as the 55th secretary of the Department of the Interior by a 78-18 vote.

As Interior secretary, Burgum will oversee the federal department that houses the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Office of the Special Trustee, and the Bureau of Land Management. The Interior secretary also manages 500 million acres of public lands—much of it ancestral tribal territory—along with federal wildlife programs, national parks, and monuments.

The former North Dakota Governor has received support from over 185 Tribal Nations. Many Tribal leaders have expressed that the new Secretary demonstrates a commitment to a government-to-government dialog that honors the cultural values of Indian Country while upholding tribal sovereignty.

During his confirmation hearing, he pledged to support tribal consultation.

“We’d look forward to those discussions with you and, I think, again, as you’ve described, the key to this is the local consultation,” Burgum said during the hearing. “My experience as governor and working with the tribes and working with local communities in North Dakota, whether it’s grazing associations, county commissioners, mayors, rural residents, I think the consultation is key.”

After Burgum’s Senate confirmation, the Center for Western Priorities released the following statement from Executive Director Jennifer Rokala:

“Doug Burgum has a choice to make on day one: will he follow the law or follow President Trump’s illegal orders? The Interior secretary has no authority to freeze payments to Tribes, farmers, or water districts across the West — but Trump’s clumsy and chaotic executive orders try to do just that. As a former governor, Doug Burgum knows that thousands of jobs and millions of people depend on funding from the Interior department to keep our water clean, protect communities from wildfires, and help endangered

wildlife. The minute Doug Burgum walks in the door at Interior, he needs to make it clear to Westerners that he will keep those funds moving, even if the White House tries to cut them off again.

Burgum was nominated on December 15, 2025, by then-President-elect Donald Trump. He was reportedly chosen due to North Dakota’s oil-rich resources. He is expected to fulfill Trump’s “drill, baby, drill” goal, as the Interior Department oversees energy production on public lands and in federal waters.

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) employs around 70,000 people who work in over 2,400 locations across the United States, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories.

Burgum took office as the 33rd governor of North Dakota on December 15, 2016. Prior to that, he was the CEO of Great Plains. In 2006, he founded Kilbourne Group, a real estate development firm committed to creating smart, healthy cities through vibrant downtowns.

In 2008, he co-founded Arthur Ventures, a venture capital firm that invests in ambitious, mission-driven software companies. In 2009, then-Gov. John Hoeven awarded Burgum the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award—North Dakota’s highest civilian honor—for his business leadership and numerous philanthropic efforts, including the Doug Burgum Family Fund, which focuses its charitable giving on youth and education.

Burgum graduated with a bachelor’s degree in university studies from North Dakota State University in 1978 and later earned a Master of Business Administration from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business in 1980.

As North Dakota’s governor, Burgum developed relationships with the state’s five tribes. Though tensions arose over his handling of the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, he established regular dialogue with tribal leaders, including the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

Burgum succeeds Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), the first Native American to ever serve in a secretarial role in a presidential administration.





## DIVISION SPOTLIGHT

# FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION TEAM

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

The **FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION TEAM** plays a vital role in supporting the infrastructure and development of our Tribal community. This dedicated team works diligently on construction projects that have been approved by the Tribal Council as part of the **Capital Expenditures (Capex) budget**. Their expertise ensures that facilities meet the highest standards of functionality, safety, and accessibility for the community. Currently, the team is actively engaged in several important projects, including:

---

### ONGOING PROJECTS

#### ***Upgrades to the Old Martin Building in Atmore***

Enhancements are underway to better accommodate the Behavioral Health Department, including:

- Replacing damaged exterior wood
- Painting the exterior of the building
- Installing an ADA-compliant ramp
- Establishing an ADA-compliant parking area
- Installing new door hardware inside the building

### New Horticultural Department Building

Construction of a **40' x 60' metal building** to support horticultural operations.

### New Shade Structures at Perdido River Farms

Building **eight shade structures** to improve outdoor spaces at the Perdido River Farms facility.

### Legal Department Enhancements

Installing a new wall with an **access control door** to enhance security and functionality for the Legal Department.

### Pump House Installation at Perdido River Farms

Successfully installed **11 new pump houses** with spray foam insulation for the wells at Perdido River Farms, ensuring long-term operational efficiency.

## UPCOMING PROJECTS FOR 2025

Looking ahead, the Facilities Construction Team has an exciting lineup of projects scheduled for the upcoming year. These improvements will further enhance infrastructure, accessibility, and usability across multiple departments. The approved projects for 2025 include:

### Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve Campground Utility Upgrades

Upgrading utilities for **10 campsites** to enhance visitor experiences.

### Observation Deck Enhancements at Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve

Improvements to the **observation deck** to ensure safety and longevity.

### Old School House Bathroom Remodel

A full renovation of the **bathroom facilities** to meet modern accessibility and usability standards.

### Public Works Facility Expansion

Construction of a **new 46' x 76' metal building** to support Public Works operations.

The Facilities Construction Team remains committed to delivering high-quality projects that align with the community's evolving needs. Their hard work ensures that our infrastructure continues to serve the Tribal community effectively and efficiently. Stay tuned for more updates on these and future projects!



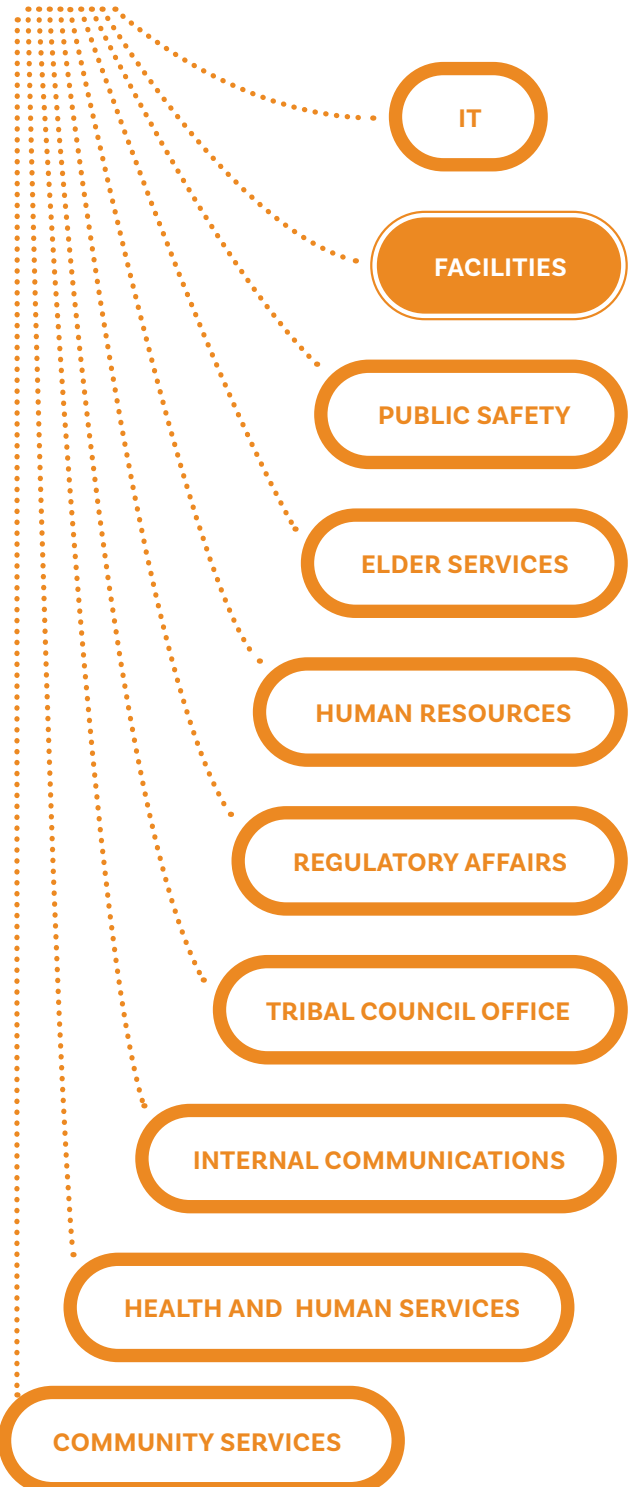
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*Stephanie Bryan*



**CHIEF OF STAFF**

*Terry Sweat*





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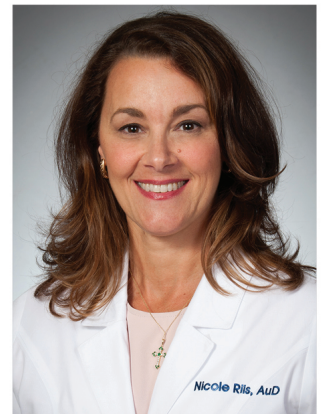
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Elizabeth Pickett, Au.D., CCC-A

Nicole Riis, Au.D., CCC-A

## CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES IN TRIBAL

# Museums AND Cultural Centers

By Ashlee “Katie” Mothershed

**T**ribal museums and cultural centers play a pivotal role in preserving and promoting Indigenous heritage, offering platforms for education, cultural expression, and community engagement. Over the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in the establishment of these institutions. In the 1970s alone, 45 tribal museums opened, more than doubling the existing number at that time. Today, over 200 tribal and community museums and cultural centers exist across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, with more emerging in South America.

Scan the QR code to learn more at  
[americanindianmagazine.org](http://americanindianmagazine.org)



### CHALLENGES

#### *Sustainability and Funding*

Many tribal museums are relatively young institutions striving to bring cultural and archival treasures under their control. Despite various revenue sources, including gaming, these museums often face sustainability challenges. Securing consistent funding for operations, exhibitions, and programs remains a significant hurdle.

Scan the QR code to learn more at  
[aam-us.org](http://aam-us.org)



#### *Balancing Western and Indigenous Practices*

Historically, tribal museums have adopted Western collections management and curatorial practices. However, these often contrast with Indigenous worldviews. Finding a balance between established museum models and Indigenous perspectives on knowledge sharing and representation is an ongoing challenge.

Scan the QR code to learn more at  
[washington.edu](http://washington.edu)



#### *Repatriation and Cultural Sensitivity*

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) has transformed the relationship between museums and tribal communities, leading to the return of thousands of human remains and cultural items. However, differing ideologies of care and collaboration between museum institutions and tribal communities remain a source of tension.

Scan the QR code to learn more at  
[news.uchicago.edu](http://news.uchicago.edu)



*Tribal Museums  
serve as centers  
for cultural  
preservation  
and education,  
fostering a deeper  
understanding  
and appreciation  
of Indigenous  
heritage.*





## SUCCESSSES

### Community Engagement and Education

Tribal museums have become vital platforms for teaching both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences about Native histories, cultures, and contemporary issues. They serve as centers for cultural preservation and education, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous heritage.

### Digital Repatriation and Archiving:

Innovative projects like the Sîpnuuk Digital Library, Archives, and Museum have enabled tribes to manage their digital materials, preserving language, culture, and traditional knowledge. These initiatives empower communities to control access to sensitive materials and promote Indigenous data sovereignty.

### Establishment of New Cultural Centers

Recent developments, such as the opening of the Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza in Palm Springs, highlight the ongoing efforts to honor and showcase Indigenous history and traditions. These centers provide spaces for cultural expression, education, and community gatherings, reflecting the enduring presence and resilience of Indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, while tribal museums and cultural centers face challenges related to sustainability, cultural representation, and repatriation, they continue to achieve significant successes in preserving and promoting Indigenous heritage. Through community engagement, innovative practices, and the establishment of new institutions, they play a crucial role in fostering understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures.

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HELPING TRIBAL NATIONS

# Step Into THEIR Power

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez



H

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

---

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

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

---

This perspective frames up the understanding of USET and how it supports and advocates for the Poarch Creek Indians and 32 other nations. Like any other group of nations, the members of USET/USET SPF have varying levels of economic output. At a basic level, USET/USET SPF was established to improve the conditions for all member nations by sharing best practices and helping rebuilding nations improve their quality of life. After Poarch Creek became federally recognized in 1984, USET was an invaluable resource to the Tribe. It provided support for developing governmental infrastructure and, more importantly, a network of Tribal leaders who had walked in their shoes.

Whether it was learning how to provide public health services to their citizens, establishing a public safety agency, or an economic development authority, USET helped Poarch Creek navigate regulatory hurdles, find success, and firmly grasp self-

determination. The Poarch Creek Indians now pride themselves on the model of government they have established. Today, Vice Chair Robbie McGhee serves as the organization's Vice President. As the Poarch Creek Indians have become more successful and sustainable, they have become a resource for other member nations. They have also become a model for other governments outside Indian Country.

This is a point that Kitcki wants to make clear. Tribal governments, societies, and economies have demonstrated models of success that should be shared with municipalities, states and nations that coexist with Indian nations. When truly sovereign, with self-determination, Tribal Nations create success, provide for their people, govern responsibly and demonstrate stewardship. Poarch Creek has a long history of sharing resources and best practices with surrounding municipalities and the state of Alabama. The Tribe regularly partners with city, county, and state governments on safety, transportation, health, and education, fostering mutual respect and understanding. These government-to-government relationships strengthen local communities and contribute to a stronger America as a whole.

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

When you consider that Creek Nation once occupied millions of acres across the southeast, the Poarch Creeks hold a tiny fraction of their original homeland. Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve is a prime example of this land reclamation process. Billy Smith, a well-known Tribal Leader, personally purchased this land from a family who had owned it for the better part of a century. You have to imagine that this land along the banks

...continued on next page

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of a river bend with natural beaches and incredible biodiversity was once a gathering place for Creeks. Billy left the land to the Tribe to return the land to its natural state and preserve it. While this is a small example of the land that is reclaimed each year, it demonstrates the dynamics at the center of the Land Back movement.

Ironically, the same government that drove Indians from their native lands later created programs aimed at addressing the hardships those policies created. One of those laws allowed Tribal nations to generate revenue from gaming on Tribal lands. Another 8(a) designation gave Tribal nations favorable status when bidding on federal contracts. Rebecca Naragon, Director of Economic Development for USET, explained how some Tribal nations have leveraged the two laws to generate significant revenue and reinvest it in a more diversified, sustainable economy that benefits all Tribal citizens and the counties and states where they share geography.

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

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

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

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



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



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



# Throw your beads our way.

**Recycle your Mardi Gras beads at one of our bead bins to support The Arc Gateway!**

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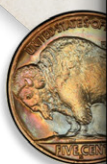
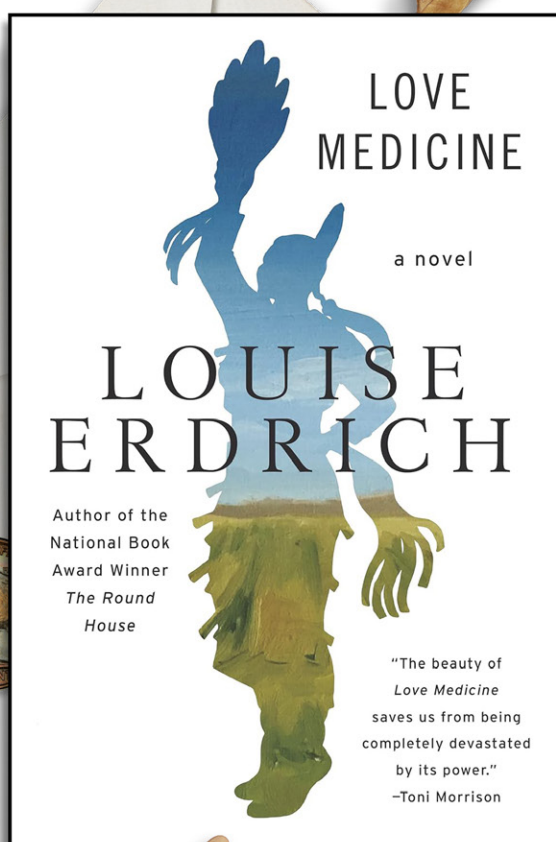


# LOVE MEDICINE

BY LOUISE ERDRICH

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

**L**ouise Erdrich's (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa) *Love Medicine* is a powerful, multi-generational novel that explores the interconnected lives of two Ojibwe families. Spanning decades, the book weaves together love, loss, and resilience through shifting perspectives, offering a deeply intimate yet sweeping portrait of Native American life. Erdrich's lyrical prose and rich character development bring to life the complexities of identity, tradition, and survival. With its nonlinear structure and interwoven narratives, *Love Medicine* challenges conventional storytelling, making it a landmark in contemporary Indigenous literature. Emotionally profound and beautifully crafted, this novel is essential reading for those seeking to understand Native American experiences.



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](mailto:kmothershed@pci-nsn.gov).





POARCH 101:  
*Preparing*  
THE *Ground*  
—A TRADITION OF COMMUNITY  
AND CULTIVATION

By Megan Zamora and Justin Rolin

A

s the warmth of spring approaches, many of us begin preparing our gardens for planting season. Turning the soil, pulling weeds, and preparing the earth are time-honored tasks that mark the transition from winter's rest to the promise of new growth. For the Mvskoke Creek people, gardening has always been more than just a seasonal chore—it is a way of life, deeply connected to our history, our community, and our future.

Traditionally, Mvskoke Creek people tended both personal and communal gardens. Individual families maintained their own gardens which provided sustenance, ensured self-reliance, and reinforced the cultural knowledge of planting, harvesting, and caring for the land.

Beyond personal gardens, the community also came together to cultivate shared plots. These communal gardens were not only practical—helping to feed those in need, including elders and families facing hardship—but they also served as gathering places where knowledge was exchanged, bonds were strengthened, and the values of cooperation and collective well-being were reinforced.

This tradition of communal gardening continues today through the community gardens we have throughout Poarch. These shared spaces reflect our deep-rooted understanding that caring for the land is not just an individual effort but a collective responsibility. They provide fresh produce for our people, teach younger generations the importance of growing their own food, and create opportunities for connection between Tribal Citizens of all ages.

As you prepare the ground for your own garden this spring, consider the ways in which this practice ties us to our ancestors and to one another. Whether planting for yourself, for your family, or for the broader community, each seed sown carries forward a tradition of sustenance, resilience, and unity—values that remain as strong today as they have for generations.

*This tradition of communal gardening continues today through the community gardens we have throughout Poarch. These shared spaces reflect our deep-rooted understanding that caring for the land is not just an individual effort but a collective responsibility.*





# OWA's Spring Fling

## MARCH

1	2	8	15	22	29	29
<b>Puppy Gras</b>	<b>Mardi Gras Parade</b>	<b>Gulf Coast Diabetes Walk</b>	<b>Pandora's Box: The Ultimate Aerosmith Tribute</b> at OWA Theater	<b>Rubber Ducky Regatta</b>	<b>Lawn &amp; Leisure Expo</b>	<b>Lady Legends of Country</b> at OWA Theater

**OUR SPRING CALENDAR** is full of can't-miss events throughout OWA! Enjoy great weather and a wide range of family-friendly events. Make plans for your Spring Fling plans at [VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com).





# PERDIDO RIVER MEATS CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

**P**erdido River Meats, a division of Perdido River Farms, is excited to announce the opening of its new \$29 million facility at 490 Atmosphere Rd. in Atmore.

The grand opening celebration, which took place Tuesday, February 6, was open to the public, offering attendees the opportunity to learn more about Perdido River Meats' commitment to providing high-quality, locally sourced products.

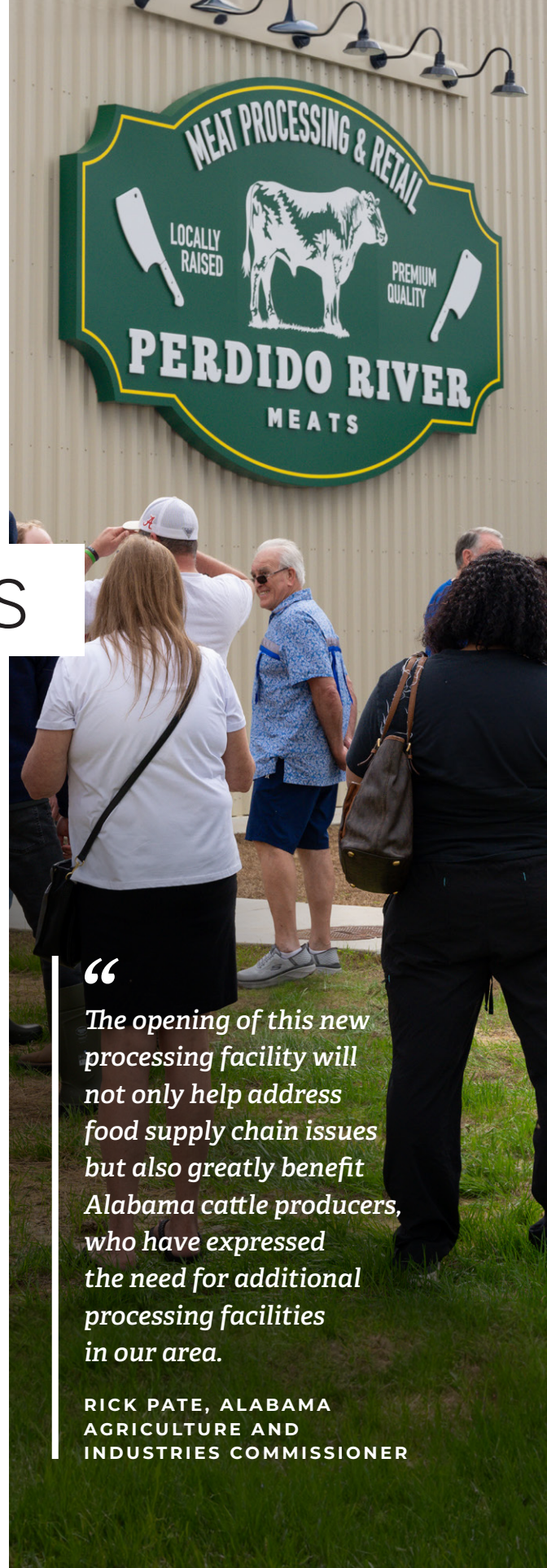
The facility specializes in premium meats, continuing the farm's mission of supporting local farmers and offering fresh, quality products to the community. "The opening of this new processing facility will not only help address food supply chain issues but also greatly benefit Alabama cattle producers, who have expressed the need for additional processing facilities in our area," said Alabama Agriculture and Industries Commissioner Rick Pate.

Perdido River Meats represents the latest chapter in Perdido River Farms' legacy of agricultural excellence and dedication to sustainability.

Perdido River Meats specializes exclusively in beef products and offers the unique opportunity for customers to have their own cattle processed or to purchase whole and half cows directly from the facility. You can also visit the retail store offering everything from soup bones to filet mignon, all made from high-quality beef.

"This grand opening marks a significant milestone for Perdido River Farms and the community, said John English, Director of Perdido River Farms. "We are proud to expand our operations and look forward to sharing our passion for quality, locally sourced meats with our neighbors and community."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** visit the Perdido River Meats Retail Store or contact us at 251-446-5080 or [PRMinfo@pci-nsn.gov](mailto:PRMinfo@pci-nsn.gov).



“

*The opening of this new processing facility will not only help address food supply chain issues but also greatly benefit Alabama cattle producers, who have expressed the need for additional processing facilities in our area.*

**RICK PATE, ALABAMA  
AGRICULTURE AND  
INDUSTRIES COMMISSIONER**



# SEASONAL FUN IS IN THE AIR THIS MARCH AT OWA PARKS & RESORT

By Catherine Hasty

J

ump into spring and celebrate the season with OWA's Spring Fling. From community fundraisers to great live shows and events, spring is in full swing at OWA!

**March 8th | 10 a.m. -12 p.m.**

Make an impact and walk with us! Enjoy a spring walk and support a great cause at the **GULF COAST DIABETES WALK**. Be a part of a meaningful event that supports children and families living with diabetes. The Diabetes WALK for Camp Seale Harris is a fun, family-friendly walk/run designed to raise awareness of diabetes and raise funds for kids to attend Camp Seale Harris's camps for kids and families living with diabetes.

**March 22nd**

**RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES RUBBER DUCKY REGATTA**

Make a splash for a great cause at the Rubber Ducky Regatta! Get ready for a splash-tacular event at the RMHC Rubber Ducky Regatta, featuring exciting activities, games, delicious food, and the main event—the thrilling rubber duck race across Lake OWA! Watch as thousands of ducks paddle to the finish line, with the first three winning grand prizes for their adopters. Beyond the fun, this event supports Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mobile, which provides vital support for families with seriously ill or injured children. Adopt a duck, enjoy the festivities, and make a difference!

**March 29th and 30th**

**LAWN AND LEISURE EXPO**

Join us for a Lawn and Leisure Expo showcasing outdoor living, home décor boutiques, lawn care, and more! It's the perfect way to kick off the spring season and support local merchants in our community.

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

**March 15th**

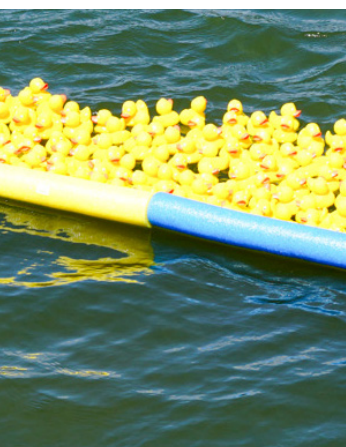
Pandora's Box - The Ultimate Aerosmith Tribute Band

**March 29th**

Lady Legends of Country: A Tribute to the music of Tammy, Loretta, Patsy and Dolly

For a full listing of events at the OWA Theater, visit their website at [visitowa.com/entertainment/owa-theater/](http://visitowa.com/entertainment/owa-theater/)





Watch as thousands of ducks paddle to the finish line, with the first three winning prizes for their adopters.



And don't miss Brandon Styles Theater at OWA, as he continues to offer a line-up of ever-changing acts and shows. From family-friendly to date night, the quick-witted Brandon Styles will have you doubling over in your chair. Be sure and catch one of his variety or magic shows this season.

**BRANDON STYLES VARIETY SHOW**  
*Every Tuesday & Saturday at 7 p.m.*  
*(excluding March 29th)*

Discover the many faces of Brandon Styles in this year-round Variety Show including impressions ranging from Frank Sinatra to Justin Bieber, with 60 additional impressions in between! Sprinkled with just the right amount of comedy and magic to make this a great entertainment hour for all ages.

**BRANDON STYLES COMEDY MAGIC SHOW**  
*Select Wednesdays at 7 p.m.*

This show is filled with a variety of magic tricks, both big and small, that will astonish and entertain you. This show is designed to make you laugh and leave you in awe. There are plenty of opportunities for audience participation, and fun props are used to create a lively and enjoyable experience for everyone. Make sure you don't miss Alabama's only magic show!

**STOKED COMEDY HYPNOSIS SHOW FOR ALL AGES**  
*Select Fridays at 7 p.m.*

Join legendary hypnotist Terry Stokes for 60 minutes of hilarious antics and unbelievable hypnosis at the Stoked Comedy Hypnosis Show for all-ages. One of the few shows where the audience is the "stars" of the show, this unforgettable show is your opportunity to see or be seen! The kids will love watching parents and grandparents on the stage!

For more event information on shows and tickets at the Brandon Styles Theater, visit [visitowa.com/entertainment/brandon-styles/](http://visitowa.com/entertainment/brandon-styles/) or call the box office at 251-237-3330.

*Keep up with the latest news on events, entertainment, and activities via our website at [VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com) or by following us on social media @VisitOWA.*





# WIND CREEK DONATES TO REESE'S SENIOR BOWL CHARITIES

By Amelia Tognoli



***“It was gratifying to see the players and kids have such a great time interacting. The Senior Bowl team does an amazing job giving back to our communities. I am proud to have the opportunity to participate.”***

**TIMOTHY RAMER, EVP GENERAL MANAGER AT WIND CREEK ATMORE**

Wind Creek was honored to donate to the Reese's Senior Bowl Community Service Day. During this annual event, college football seniors participating in the Senior Bowl engaged in various volunteer activities to give back to the Mobile, Alabama community.

“It was gratifying to see the players and kids have such a great time interacting. The Senior Bowl team does an amazing job giving back to our communities. I am proud to have the opportunity to participate,” said Timothy Ramer, EVP General Manager at Wind Creek Atmore.

This charity event took place in the days leading up to the game. Players visited local schools, hospitals, and community centers and participated in service projects like food drives and youth mentorship programs.

“These pro-level athletes were genuine in their engagement with the children. We witnessed the players meeting the kids in their moment was inspiring. It's an honor to partner with the Reese's Senior Bowl Program again this year! Good luck to all the guys on their journey to the professional football league,” said Terri Breckenridge, Assistant EVP of Human Resources.

The event highlights the importance of leadership and community engagement among the professional football league's prospects while positively impacting the local area. Wind Creek was proud to support and assist the players with community day.





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Contact Katie Mothershed at [kmothershed@pci-nsn.gov](mailto:kmothershed@pci-nsn.gov) to request your copy and subscribe today!

*Let's keep the connection flowing!*



**POARCH CREEK INDIANS**





## BOOK CLUB:

# CHIEF ALEXANDER MCGILLIVRAY OF THE CREEKS

*By Carolyn M. White and Deidra Suwanee Dees, Ed.D.*

“

I like this book because the letters of Chief Alexander McGillivray show the truth; his letters provide insight into the man, what kind of character he had,” said Carolyn M. White. She noted that the letters strengthened his worthiness of the titles bestowed upon him by four major sovereigns of the world: Creek, Britain, Spain, and America. He was made Chief of Creek Nation in 1776, commissioned British Colonel in 1778, installed as Spanish Agent in 1784, and made United States Brigadier General in 1790.

White and Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees established the new Book Club whose participants selected John Walton Caughey’s book, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, which contains over 200 letters written by Chief McGillivray between 1783-1793 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938). It was established in order to elevate our knowledge on Creek ancestry and history, and began on January 7, 2025.

“This group is a benefit to the other group in the Senior Reading Program,” participant Carrie Martin said. They are reading a book about the history of Chief McGillivray, but this book contains the actual words that he wrote.

Tribal Council Secretary, Charlotte McGhee Meckel, noted that Chief McGillivray engaged in brilliant negotiations trying to preserve Creek land at a time when everyone wanted to take our land away from us.

Book Club participants attended the kickoff last year at Dr. Christopher D. Haveman’s Book Talk on September 10 at the Bradshaw Building. His book, *Rivers of Sand*, addressed the treatment of Indigenous people at the time of Removal and the routes Creeks traveled under great hardships.

In Caughey’s book, participants learned about the hardships that Creeks faced during Chief McGillivray’s lifetime after the Revolutionary War (1776 to 1783). Chief McGillivray’s letters give us insight into the aftermath of the war and the effects it had on Creek Nation.

For example, he was uncertain if the British, Spanish, or Americans were going to attack Creek Nation, therefore, he had to stand alert diplomatically to prevent attacks. A new threat arose in 1784 when thousands of renegade American colonists of the thirteen states left the colonies to get out from under heavy taxation levied against them because of war indebtedness. Chief McGillivray wrote, “...[G]reat numbers of the inhabitants are retired from their homes to avoid the taxes and are gone to seek new ones in the wilderness and are chiefly directing their course to the Mississippi together with numbers of disbanded soldiers, who wish to possess themselves of a great part of that River and mean to erect and establish what they call a Western Independency out of reach of the Authority of Congress” (pp. 64-65).

Chief McGillivray, who was propelled into international affairs, found himself representing, not only Creek Nation, but also the Chickasaw and Cherokee Nations. Opposing Indigenous land being stolen by the embryonic United States of America, on July 10, 1785, Chief McGillivray wrote, “It behooves us therefore to object to, and we the Chiefs and Warriors of the Creek, Chickasaw, and Cherokee Nations, do hereby in the most solemn manner protest against any title claim or demand the American Congress may set up for or against our lands, settlements, and hunting grounds...” (pp. 90-91).

York Public Library/Art Resource, NY.



In that same letter, he also said, "...[N]or did we the Nations of Creeks, Chickasaws, and Cherokees do any act to forfeit our independence and natural rights to the said King of Great Britain that could invest him with the power of giving our property away..." (pp. 91-92).

Chief McGillivray wrote a number of letters similar to this one to protect our land and sovereignty. In his letter of January 1, 1784 to Governor Arturo O'Neill, governor of Spanish West Florida, Chief McGillivray asserts the sovereignty of Creek Nation, by writing, "If, in the event of a war, Britain has been compelled to withdraw its protection from us, she has no right to transfer us with their former possessions to any power whatever contrary to our inclination and interest. We certainly, as a free Nation, have a right to choose our protector..." (p. 64).

The archival record is unclear on the exact date of Chief McGillivray's birth, but the historical marker, erected by the Pensacola Historical Society in 1935 (three years prior to the book publication), fixes the date of his death. The monument says, "Site of Pantan Leslie & Co's Indian Trading Post established during the English occupation 1763-1783 and burial place of Alexander McGillivray, born Ft. Toulouse, Ala. 1746, died Pensacola, Fla. 1793."

According to this monument, Chief McGillivray was only twenty years old when he was made Chief of Creek Nation. How many twenty-year-olds do you know who could serve in this position?

In the Book Club meeting, we watched the silent film of Chief Calvin McGhee attending Chief Alexander McGillivray Day (obtained from the Office of Archives and Records Management). The event was held in Pensacola, Florida on August 15, 1961. In the film, we see Tribal Citizens attending the event including dancers in bright colored regalia. We see a dignified Chief McGhee, wearing his well-documented red and white regalia, respectfully laying flowers at the grave stone of Chief McGillivray.

Book Club participants are planning a fieldtrip to McGillivray's monument on February 17. Each participant is responsible for their own transportation and supplies including the purchase of the book. The Book Club meets on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the old Fred L. McGhee Building. If you would like to join the Book Club, please contact us at (251) 253-9181.

One poignant letter from his close friend Pantan stood out in the book. Participant, Carrie Martin, read Pantan's letter to Chief McGillivray's father, Lachlan McGillivray, in Scotland. "He died on the 17th February, 1793... No pains, no attention, no cost was spared to save the life of my friend. But fate would have it otherwise, and he breathed his last in my arms" (pp. 362-363). **MVTO**

You can access a photograph of this historical marker by scanning the QR code below.



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# OTIS DEES POETRY AWARD 2025 CONTEST ANNOUNCED

By Douglas “Poncho” Kelley and Deidra Suwanee Dees, Ed.D.

“

**T**he first place winner of the Otis Dees Poetry Award is Dannie King of Atmore, Alabama!” This announcement, along with the other awards, was made to the audience at the Fall 2024 Workshops & Awards put on by the Alabama State Poetry Society on November 2, 2024. This event was held in Birmingham and was attended by members including Douglas “Poncho” Kelley and Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees, who sponsored the inaugural Otis Dees Poetry Award.

King was awarded \$400 and a certificate which was presented to him at the SAIL Center by Dr. Dees. King said he was so surprised that he won. “I was not expecting this!” he exclaimed.

The contest topic was on Native Americans. King wrote about Native Americans in his poem titled, “Here Still,” addressing the subject of colonization in 1559 and contrasting it with the work of Chief Calvin McGhee. After all of the colonization efforts, he beautifully and poetically pointed out that WE ARE HERE STILL.

Because of their love for poetry, Kelley and Dr. Dees said they sponsored this contest to encourage others to write poetry. “I named it after Daddy because he inspired me to become a writer,” Dr. Dees said.

Contestants ranged from eighth graders to elders who addressed a variety of topics on the Native American theme including pow wows, elders’ passing, and Tribal identity.

The contest was a blind competition which means the names of the entrants were kept hidden from the judges who made selections based on the merit of the poem. The panel of judges included five judges: Charlotte McGhee Meckel, Amy Gantt, Venus McGhee Prince, Dr. Karla Martin, and Martha Gookin. Several judges stated that the selection process was difficult because there were so many excellent poems.

The second, third, and fourth place winners are Linda Raven Woods, Arelene Mack, and Leslie Harper Worthington, respectively. Dr. Dees read King’s stirring poem, as well as Arelene Mack’s poignant poem, to the attentive audience at the Fall 2024 Workshops & Awards. Congratulations to all! A full list of winners of all the contests can be accessed at [alpoets.org/events-asps](http://alpoets.org/events-asps).

The membership voted on new officers which can also be accessed on the website. Dr. Dees was voted as the Historian and is working on archiving the history of the Society.

The 2025 Otis Dees Poetry Award was announced at the Alabama State Poetry Society Winter Meeting on February 1, 2025. Everyone is invited to enter the Otis Dees Poetry Award contest, as well as other contests, which are listed on the Alabama State Poetry Society website: [alpoets.org/contests](http://alpoets.org/contests). Questions? Call (251) 253-9181. **MVTO**

## HERE STILL

By Dannie King

in 1559, 10 ships loaded with 700 men  
sailed into Tampa Bay,  
‘twas the beginning of an invasion  
of this land, remembered to this day;

he searched for gold and treasures  
as he plundered, raped, and killed,  
tried to wipe them all out  
but their spirit was too strong willed;

disease and war would take its toll  
but this culture would survive,  
hundreds of years with pure deceit  
but they remained alive;

another time of anguish was  
when Jackson came along,  
made many treaties that he broke,  
moved them/thought all were gone;

a few to the swamps they fled,  
with defiance they remain,  
Calvin and others petitioned in D.C.  
and in ‘84, Federal Recognition came;

how I wish all the elders that fought  
could witness the Tribe now,  
they would be so proud of how  
in 40 years things changed – wow!

what the future holds is a mystery  
but this we all know,  
God has blessed us in our midst  
and will guide us as we go

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## IN LOVING MEMORY OF AUTREY GENE HENSON, SR.

August 11, 1942 – January 18, 2025

Autrey Gene Henson, Sr. “Big Gene” or “Papa Gene” of Frostproof passed away Saturday, January 18, 2025, at his residence.

He was born August 11, 1942, at Huxford, Alabama to the late Carey and Girlie Henson and he came here in 1970 from LaBelle. He was 100% Native American Indian and member of the Poarch Creek Indians Tribe. He loved his family and friends and being a truck driver. He was very well loved by everyone and was known as a very giving person. He enjoyed going on trips to Statenville, Georgia to see Wayne and Wendell. He had a green thumb and enjoyed going to breakfast at the Roost. He liked the casinos and his black ‘72 Chevy truck. He looked forward to going on the senior trips with the Poarch Creek Indians Tribe.

Autrey was preceded in death by his wife, Raquel Henson, his son, CJ Henson, and a brother, Ray Henson. Survivors include his children, Becky Williams (Jeff) of Avon Park, Autrey Gene Henson, Jr. “Willie” of Frostproof, Marty Henson of Avon Park, Laurie Painter (Mike) of Avon Park, Maggie Elyard (Tom) of Frostproof, Rebecca Henson of Frostproof and Jessie Henson of Frostproof; sisters, Kay Pierce of Arkansas, Ellen Creel (Larry) of Fort Pierce, Judy Flint (Chris) of Fort Myers, Yvonne Hunt of Lehigh, Beverly Balint (Serb) of Lehigh and Nancy Rispoli (Tony) of Lehigh; brothers, Terry Henson (Janet) of Tennessee, Wayne Henson of Avon Park and Kenneth Henson of Frostproof; 12 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

## IN LOVING MEMORY OF GLENDA EILEENE ELLIS

December 22, 1948 – January 23, 2025

Glenda Eileene Ellis of Frostproof passed away Thursday, January 23, 2025 at her residence.

She was born December 22, 1948 in Atmore, Alabama to the late Glenn and Thelma Henson; she came here as a child from Alabama. She was retired from Cargill and a member of the Church of God. She was a Tribal Citizen of the Poarch Creek Indians. She enjoyed watching her soap operas, going to casinos and her bowling league.

Glenda was preceded in death by her parents and a brother, Gary Henson. Survivors include her daughter, Brenda Pruitt and husband, Gary of Frostproof; sons, Bryan Hutto and wife, Denisha of Fairfield, Illinois, Stacy Gregg Jr. and fiancé, Kendall Townsend of Frostproof, Michael Hutto and wife, Billie of Frostproof and Davis Ellis and wife, Natasha of Frostproof; 18 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandchild.





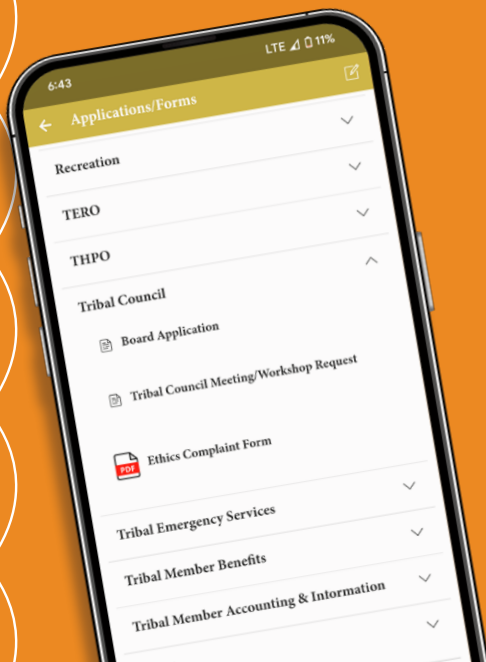
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the Ethics Complaint Form and Advisory  
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# CREEK CORNER

## MARCH 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

<b>3.3</b>	<b>SUBMISSION DEADLINE</b> April Issue	
<b>3.3-4</b>	<b>MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED</b> Inventory	
<b>3.6</b>	<b>TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING</b> TC Chambers	<b>4:00 PM</b>
<b>3.8</b>	<b>PCI WARRIOR MUD RUN</b> Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve	<b>8:00 AM</b>
<b>3.11</b>	<b>TRIBAL COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom	
<b>3.14</b>	<b>FAMILY COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom	
<b>3.20</b>	<b>TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING</b> TC Chambers	<b>4:00 PM</b>
<b>3.25</b>	<b>TRIBAL COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom	
<b>3.28</b>	<b>FAMILY COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom	